

# Shadow chasing and tail chasing

Seen mostly in Collies and other herding breeds, shadow chasing and tail chasing may appear to be amusing at first, but can result in severe behavioural problems.

The first manifestation of this unusual behaviour is usually seen as the dog jumps on a shadow on the floor, tries to dig at it with the front paws, or tries to bite it as it moves. Sadly, children playing with a torch beam often trigger this problem, and laughing as the dog tries to 'catch' it. In some dogs this behaviour can become so addictive that it develops into an obsession, meaning that the dog cannot rest or behave normally, but spends all its time hunting for shadows.

Tail chasing can occur in the same way - dogs love laughter, and watching a puppy spin round and try to catch its own tail may be funny to begin with, but can soon become an obsession, or an addictive attention-seeking behaviour. Ignoring such stereotypical behaviour patterns at the outset is usually the best way of preventing their development.

However, in some individuals, such behaviours can indicate a deeper behavioural disturbance, or even a clinical problem. If you have consistently ignored the problem and it still persists, or your dog is damaging itself, ask your vet for advice and referral to a pet behaviour counsellor with experience in such cases.