

# On the Horizon: An Amazing New Treatment for Aggression in Dogs

A researcher has found a way to use laser therapy to successfully treat canine aggression in just five weeks. Can you imagine how many shelter dogs' lives could be saved?

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## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Aggression is the most common and serious behavior problem in dogs, and the longer a dog stays in the shelter, the more likely he is to become aggressive
- A researcher has found a way to use low level laser therapy (LLLT) to treat aggression in dogs in just five weeks
- LLLT could be an ideal way for shelters to save aggressive dogs from euthanasia, but the treatment requires further research, and there is currently no funding available to conduct a clinical trial

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What do lasers and aggressive dogs have in common? Both can cause damage if they are too powerful or if they are used the wrong way. But, one person has found a way to use the gentle power of low level lasers to cure aggression in shelter dogs in just five weeks. Unfortunately, nobody will believe him unless he proves it with research.

## Aggression: The Most Common and Most Serious Behavior Problem in Dogs

According to the ASPCA, aggression is the most common and most serious behavior problem in dogs. It is one of the top reasons dogs are admitted or re-admitted to shelters. And the longer a dog stays in a shelter, the more likely he is to become aggressive.

This is because even the best-behaved dogs may choose to begin guarding their shelter "home" once they've stayed there long enough. Unfortunately, guarding behavior makes them less attractive to potential new owners.

The longer they stay in the shelter, the more aggressive and possessive they become about anything they consider theirs. Dogs with fear aggression tend to become even more aggressive because they become even more fearful in the shelter environment. If they're lucky enough to be adopted, their new owners may not be willing or equipped to work with them to help them overcome their problems. Once returned to the shelter, it becomes a vicious cycle of escalating aggression.

## A New Method to Treat Aggression in Dogs in Just Five Weeks

The way aggression is treated outside the shelter environment typically involves a combination of behavior modification with the help of a talented trainer or animal behaviorist who specializes in aggression, and drugs. Herbs and acupuncture can also be helpful when used in conjunction with behavior modification.

The biggest hurdle in working with aggressive dogs is the huge investment of time and patience required, along with an understanding of the basic problem and how to treat it (for example, this not the time for an alpha roll).

Most shelters can't afford to hire the services of an animal behaviorist to work with dogs with aggression issues. The shelters able to hire a behavior expert, or that have those services donated, usually do not have the staff available to carry out the recommended treatments.

Many shelters can't even afford anti-anxiety medication for fear-aggressive dogs. Even no-kill shelters are sometimes forced into euthanizing especially aggressive dogs after they have seriously injured people or other dogs.

What if shelters had a new treatment method that was quick, easy to perform, and could change a dog's behavior within five weeks? One research investigator has invented a method using laser therapy that only needs to be applied once a week, with a simple pattern, instead of multiple times in a day or week with changing patterns like laser treatments for other problems.

An added bonus: you don't have to be a laser therapy technician to learn how to do the procedure.

## **Low Level Laser Therapy (LLLT)**

Laser lights can be very hot and concentrated. Those lights are the kind used for surgery. They burn through tissue.

Milder or "cold" lasers at a lower level of energy are used for healing. Treatment with them is sometimes called LLLT, or low level laser therapy. What makes a laser special is that it emits just one wavelength, so you can be very specific about the kind of light used for treatment. Normal light is too "noisy," containing lots of different wavelengths. Pure light is more concentrated and gets the best results.

Laser light beams also stay concentrated together, so the beam does not spread apart as it travels away from the instrument. This allows very precise application in a very precise area, making the actual treatment easier to define as a specific "dose." This is important when teaching others how to perform the treatment, and when doing research, since researchers like to see precise numbers.

## **LLLT Could Be An Ideal Way to Treat Aggression in Shelter Dogs**

LLLT is the type of laser therapy used to treat pain and speed healing, it's the type of laser the researcher I mentioned earlier uses to treat aggression in dogs, and it's the therapy the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Foundation wants to fund a scientific study on.

Although these lasers are much cooler, they do have side effects. That's why they are categorized as a medical device and aren't available for purchase at your local drugstore.

If a laser beam was pointed into your eyes or your pet's eyes, it could cause blindness. Goggles take care of that problem for both the laser technician and the patient, but they must be the right kind of goggles.

It's also possible for even cold lasers to cause skin damage sooner or later. But lay people can be trained in the proper safe use of LLLT, so for the purpose of treating aggression in dogs, it is ideal for a shelter.

## Laser Therapy to Treat Aggression Needs Research Funding

The research the foundation hopes to fund will tell us whether anyone, with a little training, can use LLLT to treat aggression using this new method. Instead of multiple treatments given close together, this method is used in once a week treatments. Once a week is much easier for a shelter to fit into their schedule.

But we need research to learn, for example, if it will work for most breeds, if 5 weeks of treatment is enough for most dogs, if the results will last after the final treatment or if dogs need a “tune-up” treatment every now and then.

Currently, not enough dogs have been tested using laser therapy, and there has not been enough time to evaluate the long-term effects. Instead of having to wait for months or years to see whether this will work, the researcher would like the opportunity to work with several shelters so that a larger population of dogs can be treated and evaluated.

It would be dangerous to allow these dogs to be adopted or even fostered without knowing whether the treatment works in all situations, for a long period of time.

If laser therapy turns out to be a treatment that works for most cases of aggression, thousands of dogs will be saved from death and can be adopted into loving forever homes.

## How You Can Help

To donate, go to the [\*\*AHVMF website\*\*](#), click on [\*\*Ways to Give\*\*](#) on the top menu, and there you'll find a number of different ways to make a donation. If you're not comfortable donating online, scroll down to the bottom of the Ways to Give page, and you'll see a Ways to Donate Online and Offline link.

At [\*\*AHVMF.org\*\*](#), you can also read amazing stories of animals who have been healed with holistic medicine, as well as stories of animal teachers. There's also a blog that reports on some of the projects the foundation is working on. If you have any questions while visiting the site, you can send the foundation an email at [\*\*office@ahvmf.org\*\*](mailto:office@ahvmf.org).



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