

Canine Body Language

A Photographic Guide

Interpreting the Native Language
of the
Domestic Dog

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25 GREETING “I LOVE YOU” STRETCH

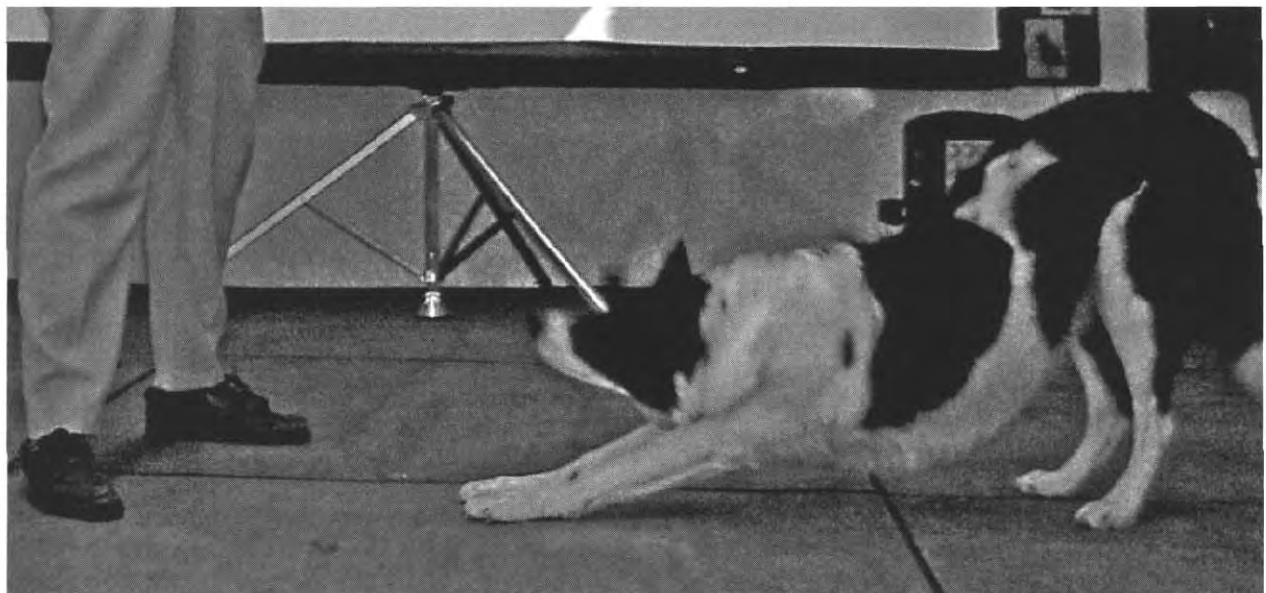
The Greeting Stretch is a posture used only towards someone the dog likes and with whom he is comfortable. There is also a version of this where the dog leans forward and stretches his rear legs out behind him. My dogs use this with me frequently when they approach me or I approach them. Sometimes the “front” stretch, where the dog lowers the elbows, is followed immediately by a “rear” stretch, in which the dog leans forward and drags the rear legs out behind him.

How does this differ from other kinds of similar body postures? In the Greeting Stretch, you do not get the feeling the dog will pounce forward as they do in a Prey Bow. This is not a “Ready-Set-Go” position. In the Greeting Stretch, there is usually not the extreme lowering of the body that you see in a Play Bow; the dog will just go partially down. In the Greeting Stretch, you will also see more relaxed ear carriage, and more squinty eyes.

The best way to tell of course, is the context. The activity level is indicative, too. You will see in these photographs that the dogs have a languid, liquid look about them, rather than the intensely coiled spring look of the Prey Bow or the lively anticipation of the Play Bow.

#25.1: Greeting Stretch

- lowered forequarters
- raised hindquarters
- nose oriented up toward the person the dog is greeting
- elbows remain off the ground (usually)





#25.2: Greeting Stretch

When dogs greet me like this, I get all mushy and gooey. It is very flattering to have a dog greet you in this unrestrained, friendly and very respectful manner. This greeting acknowledges your personal space and is a request for the two of you to interact.

The relaxed manner, combined with the body silhouette tell you this is a dog who is happy to be with whomever he is gazing at. The front legs are braced, but this is not a Prey Bow, not enough intensity. The ears are floppy, the tail is up and confident, but not forced or tense.

This is the equivalent of a child offering you a tiny bouquet of "I picked these just for you" flowers.



#25.3: Greeting Stretch

Notice the soft eyes and long lips of this dog as she gazes at her owner.



#25.4: Greeting Stretch - Rear Leg Stretch

As Willie greets his owner, (who luckily happened to have a camera!) he stretches his rear legs out behind him, stretches his tail out and Yawns. His eyes are squinty in friendliness. Sometimes dogs will greet you with a Front Leg Stretch followed by a Rear Leg Stretch.

On rare occasions I have seen dogs use a stretch like this when you are working them and they are a little confused about the task.

Photo Credits:

Photo #1 & #2: Joanne Weber

Photo #3: Rachel Plotinski

Photo #4: Joanne Weber