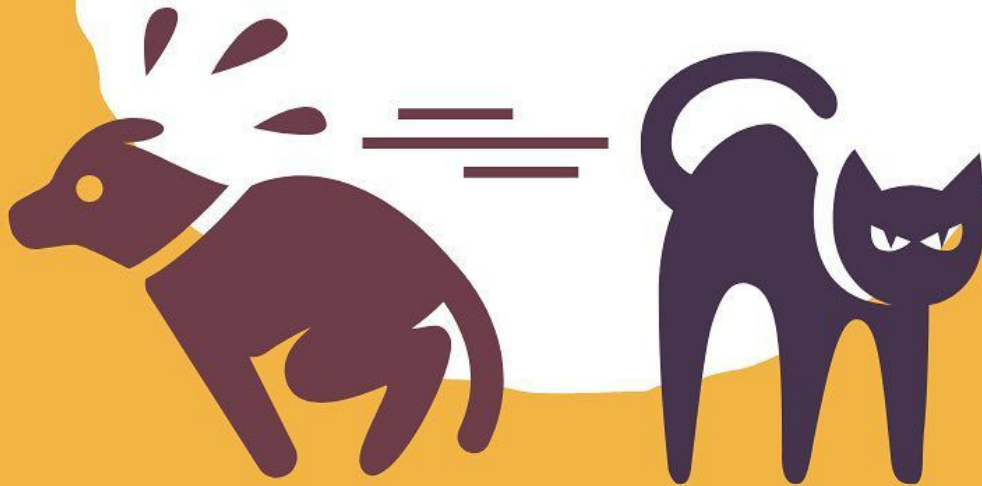




# Is there more to Fight or Flight?

**Differences in the stress  
response between individuals**





# The Stress Response

**What exactly is it? The stress response is a complex set of processes occurring in acute stress. Thought processes involve fear and anxiety, whereas physical symptoms are increased heart rate, blood pressure, trembling, & more. Pets may be fearful of something non-harmful, for example the postman. However, their physical and mental response still indicate stress & reduced welfare, so it's important to take seriously. There are more than only 'fight or flight' stress states...**



**..what other things should I look out for?**





# FIGHT

**A surge of adrenaline, and the dilation of air passages provide muscles with oxygen & cause your pet's body to prepare to confront the perceived threat. This may mean your pet shows aggression toward the triggering stimulus, but could also redirect on to someone else nearby, such as an owner or another pet. The animal is in a state of high arousal and requires time for them to regain calm before you attempt to interact with them.**





# FLIGHT

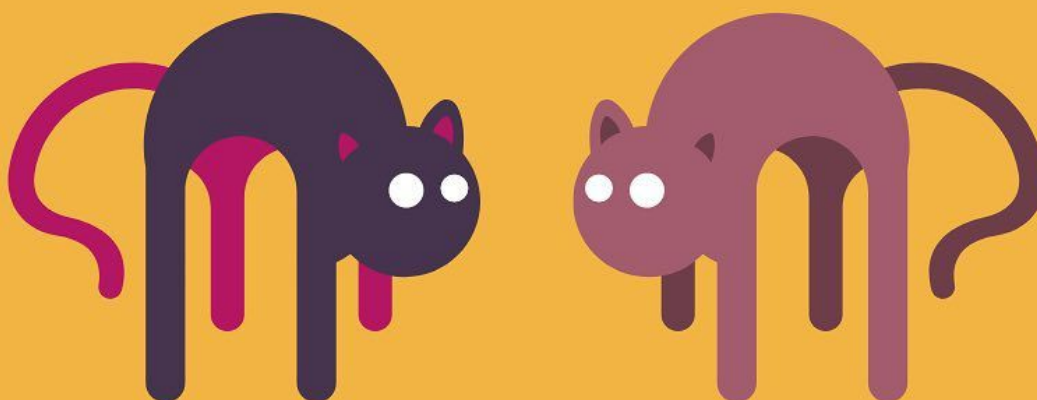
**Instead of engaging with the trigger, your pet may choose to remove themselves from the fear-inducing stimulus. Flight is more evolutionarily adaptive than fighting, as confrontation often results in injury to both parties. Your pet may run in the opposite direction of the trigger and is at risk of getting lost if they are in an unfamiliar place. They need to recover from the adrenaline before you attempt to interact with them.**





# FREEZE

**More frequently seen in prey species, but not uncommon in cats and dogs, is the freeze response. Naturally this may serve as functional in avoiding the gaze of a predator or opponent, or de-escalating a social interaction that was becoming aggressive. It is important to note that these animals are often overwhelmed and also require cooling-off time.**





# FAFF

**Faffing is one of the least recognised signs of stress in household pets. Just as you might look at your phone to distract yourself if an intimidating person is staring at you on the train, when pets are uncomfortable in the situation they may show 'faffing' behaviours like sniffing or grooming. These serve to show the stress-inducing stimulus (i.e. the starey man on the train) that they are not a threat, and to avoid engaging with them unless they are confronted. It's surprisingly common.**



# Oxidative Stress



**All pets are going to find themselves in acute stress, and exhibit one of the four behaviours at some point in their lives. However, ongoing, chronic distress leads to 'oxidative stress'. Living long-term in a state of stress influences your pet's body and can lead to serious health as well as behaviour problems. Seek professional help today if your pet is suffering from chronic stress.**