

February 4, 2026

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Bryn Goldinger, and I have been in the pet care industry through volunteer work and employment for over eight years. In the last five years I have worked solely with dogs at a daycare and boarding facility in a neighboring city where I regularly receive continued education opportunities to further my understanding of dog behavior. I feel my experience is relevant to this case as part of my duties as the assistant manager include training staff on reading and interpreting body language and non-verbal cues to prioritize safe interactions between dogs and humans- a topic of immense importance when responsible for the safety and wellbeing of dogs in my care.

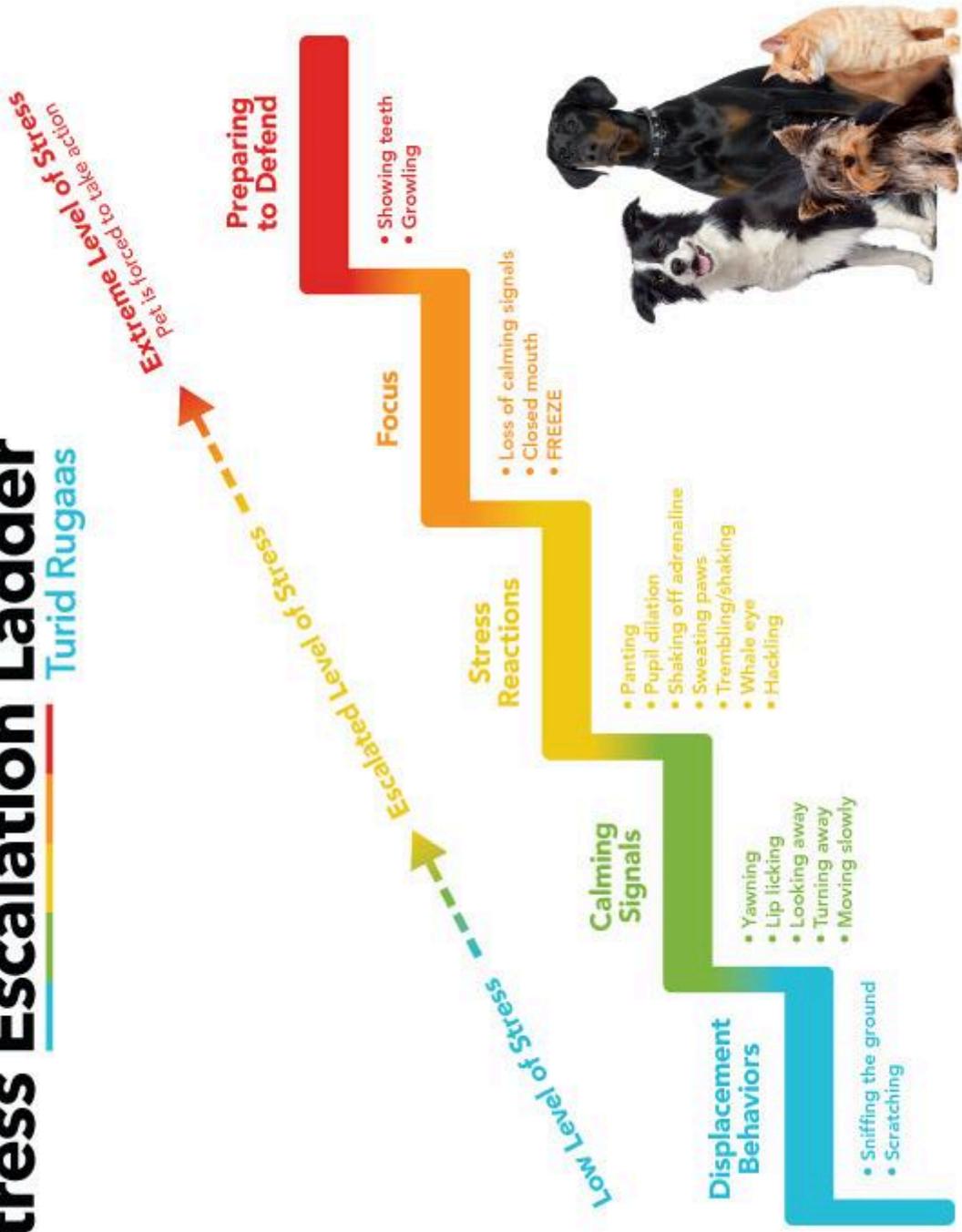
As it pertains to Clyde's case, I feel the articles referenced below will provide a clear and objective view of the event that occurred on December 24, 2025t. It is my hope that the contents of this letter in addition to the other evidence provided will see Clyde's declaration of Prohibited Dangerous Animal under Appleton Municipal Code 3-134 be lifted to Dangerous Animal and owners in compliance with all provisions deemed necessary per Sec. 3-132. I will focus specifically on articles from accredited authors referenced during my training process to explain the escalation of stress in dogs and how humans often unknowingly and unintentionally exacerbate this when interacting with a dog for the first time.

Norwegian dog trainer/behavioralist and founder of the Pet Dog Trainers of Europe (PDTE), Turid Rugaas, provides a useful tool in her Stress Escalation Ladder. In many cases of aggressive displays, people often miss subtle cues that communicate a dog is uncomfortable. Based on the fast paced influx of new stimuli and stress experienced by Clyde just before the incident, I believe he felt forced to act in defense- though not tormented or abused into doing such. This event highlights that advocating for dogs with extra needs is crucial in maintaining public safety. Removing Clyde from environments like this would alleviate that risk. While reviewing the Stress Escalation Ladder, please consider the following possible factors influencing Clyde's stress:

- Bonnie and Clyde were located in an enclosed and isolated basement- a less familiar environment away from the comfort and safety of their home routine.
- Prior to the incident, Clyde was resting comfortably on the ground with a child alongside him and an adult male relaxed on the couch. No clear tension or stress can be observed here.
- Each person who enters and greets or interacts with the dogs prior to the recipient of the injury does so from ground level and does not reach or hover over the dogs.
- In the one minute and seventeen seconds preceding the injury, the pace of new stimuli increases rapidly. One male enters the room to sit down and interact with the dogs next to the door, the dogs and child now station themselves near him and the door, Alex (owner) enters and promptly exits the door, the man on the couch gets up and enters this now crowded space, and the recipient of the injury enters and begins petting and leaning over both dogs initially blocking Clyde's access to the rest of the open room when taking into account the spatial pressure posed by the other people in the room.

The Stress Escalation Ladder

Turid Rugaas



Please take a moment now to read an excerpt from the article “Why Do Dogs Duck When You Pat Them on the Head?” published by the AKC (American Kennel Club) and written by Stephanie Gibeault, CPDT-KSA (Certified Professional Dog Trainer- Knowledge and Skills Assessed).



Why Dogs Dislike Head Pats

You might ask, “Why does my dog duck when I pat them on the head?” Well, in dog language, a [direct stare](#) or looming over another dog is considered a threat. Therefore, when humans do these behaviors, it makes dogs uncomfortable or downright [anxious](#). And of course, leaning over a dog to pat them on the head accomplishes both staring and looming all in one intimidating, albeit well-intentioned, gesture. Plus, a hand coming directly at their face is an invasion of personal space. No wonder dogs duck!



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How to Know if Your Dog Doesn't Like Head Pats

Although some dogs tolerate head pats, most instinctively feel uncomfortable when a hand reaches down from above their head. If you scroll through social media, you'll easily see examples of distressed dogs suffering through pats on the head. To verify how your pet feels, look at [your dog's body language](#). Chances are you'll see [signs of stress](#). Things to look for include:

- Lowering their head or ducking away from your touch
- Walking away
- Pinning back their ears
- Licking their lips
- [Yawning](#)
- Showing the whites of their eyes (known as whale eye)

I am not here to argue or in any way suggest the recipient of the injury deserved harm, nor am I making an argument for Clyde's exoneration. I hope to simply highlight how many owners and "dog lovers" alike do not speak the language through which their dogs communicate. This results in unnecessary stressful situations in which a dog with the propensity to perceive a threat has the potential to feel pushed into a reaction. To declare Clyde Prohibited is a death sentence for a dog who, inside his home, is gentle, friendly, and cared for deeply. It is undeniable the City of Appleton is responsible for maintaining the safety of the public, and I feel strongly that justice and safety look different than the current label Clyde has been given.

To summarize: while in a less familiar environment awaiting his owner's return, Clyde felt threatened in a confined space by a stranger forcing an interaction and hindering him from fleeing or otherwise deescalating the conflict through avoidance. I believe Clyde felt forced to take action out of fear and exhibited the behaviors described in the Focus stage on the above chart at the time of the incident. Note: the shake off seen earlier in the video indicates a clear presence of stress and displacement signals, but the other signals indicative of lower rung stress cannot be picked up on that camera angle. Immediately following the incident, Clyde jumped back and fled to the open area of the room with a tucked body and nursed his paw, further signalling a fear and flee response once the perceived threat moved away. He did not pursue or show any aggression once she moved away, and he was able to retreat and deescalate. Due to the event itself and injury sustained, I believe Clyde fits the definition of Dangerous Animal per the definition in Article 1 Sec. 3-1 "Any animal with a known propensity, tendency or disposition to attack, to cause injury to, or otherwise threaten the safety of humans or other domestic pets or animals", and with the proper provisions in place, he would live out a long, happy, and peaceful life without risk to the general public.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this matter.

Sincerely,
Bryn Goldinger