

SUMMER 2009

Association of Pet Dog Trainers New Zealand Inc

Newsletter

President's comment

Happy New Year to all of you, your family and your dogs!

I hope you enjoyed time off to unwind and relax and you are ready for 2010.

I have just spent a relaxing time in the Coromandel with husband and dogs. But it wasn't relaxing for all of us. Despite socialising our beagle Sophie in the best way we could (she now is just over a year) the new environment proved quite challenging for her. She developed a lick granuloma due to what I think was stress. The question I ask myself now is, how could I have missed the fact that she was so stressed? I feel I have failed in my job as her guardian. The life we share with our dogs is full of learning opportunities and I am sure this little beagle that has stolen my heart is going to teach me a lot in the coming years.

What wonderful creatures they are, you make a mistake and they just keep on being your best friend. Sometimes I think for those of us that 'only' train dogs we would become better trainers if had to try our training skills on a less forgiving species (birds spring to mind...). To me that is the exciting part of training, that you never stop learning if you want!

And that is one of the reasons the APDTNZ is so important, it provides opportunities for education and knowledge sharing for those that never want to stop learning. The first of many learning opportunities will be the Inaugural Conference, for more info see page 3 and www.apdtnz.org.nz Please spread the word about the conference to anyone and everyone that wants to listen.

Susie Londer

Editorial

After a fabulous holiday in the UK through August to October I came back to the Hamilton City Council proposal on the management of Minogue park, a large open space which has had a decent off lead dog area. The new proposal not only significantly reduced the off lead area but also resited it to so that it was completely bounded by either a road or a car park. In spite of quite significant lobbying from dog people and others the plan to go ahead with a new organized sports field got the council thumbs up. This was in spite of NO organised sports clubs or organisations bothering to turn up to any meetings or to make one submission. In the councils view this very silent and very invisible 'majority' was more important than the fairly large group who wanted an increased dog off lead area, retention of green space and no organized sports ground.

Having spent 8 weeks in the UK taking photos of 'dogs welcome' or similar signs it was very disheartening to be back in dog unfriendly Hamilton. However the clouds are not all grey. The positive outcome of the Minogue park episode has been (along with a alteration in the placement of the off lead dog area) to bring together a group of people who want a change to a dog friendly environment – the Hamilton Dog Lobby.

Part of achieving this dog friendly city will be about encouraging an increase in knowledge and responsibility amongst dog owners. Having the APDT NZ to promote best practices in training and to provide direction and leadership among the 'doggy' community will, I hope, raise the profile of dogs in New Zealand in a positive way. So I look optimistically towards a future for Hamilton and other New Zealand cities in which I can take lots of photos of 'dogs welcome' signs.

Cheers
Tracy

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Save the date!!

Association of Pet Dog Trainers NZ Inc.

2010 conference:

5 & 6th June
Brentwood Hotel, 16 Kemp
Street, Kilbirnie, Wellington

Keynote speakers:

- Kevin Stafford,
- Karin Bridge and
- Debra Milikin.

Please go to:

www.apdtnz.org.nz for
registration and/ or page 18 for
details

Ian Dunbar: Feb. 2010

Susan Friedman and Ray Coppinger: 7
- 11 July 2010

Dr Patricia McConnell :27 & 28 Nov.
2010

Leslie McDevitt : March 2011

Contact:

<http://www.learningaboutdogs.co.nz>

dogs, the possible consequences of using aversive training techniques, and where to go for appropriate advice on training and behaviour issues'. It has some very good information on dominance and canine social behaviour and the impact of aversive training methods. The supporting groups are authoritative organisations such as the RSPCA, BSAVA, AVSAB, Dogs Trust, CCPDT, and the British Veterinary Association. All articles are well referenced to peer reviewed journals.

<http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/DogRead/>

I have just stumbled on to this yahoo group and am still navigating my way around it. It provides a forum for people to read a book and have the author answer questions on line about the book. There is a back catalogue of previous discussions and there seem to be some very good books and authors. For example the November and December 2009 books were "Reaching the Animal Mind" by Karen Pryor, "Canine Behavior: A Photo-Illustrated Handbook" by Barbara Handelman, and Dee Ganleys "Changing People Changing Dogs". Well worth a look.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgEwiH8CeUE>

For a lovely look at how to get a dog to let you clip its nails have a look at this youtube link. Keep watching through the talking head at the beginning to get to the demonstration.

The fearful Dog Website is at <http://www.fearfuldogs.com/index.html>

This is great site for anyone working with fearful dogs and for owners with fearful dogs. It has some useful articles on topics such as reinforcing fear, incompatible behaviours, games and exercises and using rewards. It is also realistically and pragmatically acknowledges the difficulties faced by people owning fearful dogs. The site has links to a number of other useful sites and resources

Website reviews

<http://www.dogwelfarecampaign.org/index.php>

Welfare in Dog Training: This is a website whose aim is to 'provide the media and members of the public with more information about the behaviour of

Journeys End

By Peta Clark with an introduction by John Lane

Introduction

Hi All,

The article to follow was written by a friend of mine who has given permission to use her article here. I think many of us here can relate to it very well. I know I can.

Like many of us, am I perfect in the application of what I have learned from animal training brings out the best in dogs and parrots when dealing with my own species? No way!! But do I now make many conscious efforts to try to as a result of my experiences at the hands of people like her and another teacher of mine? Yep often do.

To quote from another teacher (who in my experience is also a life style behavior analyst not just a professor and teacher of the subject) which sums up in a simple one sentence the maxim of what this story outlines.

"The ultimate test of understanding positive reinforcement theory is not how we practice it with our parrots but how we practice it with one another."

Journey's End.

When you start out on a journey you usually know where you expect to end up. You get in the car to travel to work, on a plane to go visit some wonder of the world. You enrol in university to arrive at a degree. If asked the question, "where will you be this time next year?" most of us would feel pretty confident in our answer. Trouble is though, that this is as far from reality as the stars from the earth. For when we find ourselves in that moment of wide comprehension of all of the possibilities that even just today may bring our way, we are confronted with that stark fact: our destination is never guaranteed.

When I was first getting interested in dogs my boyfriend at the time told me that it was clear to him that anyone who got into dog training was in it for the control it afforded. In his mind it didn't matter whether you were jerking their heads off or throwing treats down their throats. It was still about control. At the ripe old age of twenty two I scoffed at his suggestion that I was a control freak. I knew I was in it for much more noble motives. It was about bettering the world for dogs, showing that you could bend behaviour without breaking spirit. The desire to learn as much as I could about the power of positive reinforcement has introduced me to people, animals and places that made my jaw drop in astonishment as I continued to see the envelope of what was possible stretched by fellow control enthusiasts.

After fifteen years working professionally as a dog trainer and exotics trainer, I have been privy to some amazing journeys. I have seen minds open, understandings expand and egos burst. I have also experienced these things first hand, several times. Our experiences are all similar I am sure. You get interested in positive reinforcement as a tool to modify behaviour, you begin to play with things like 101 things to do with a box and you see before your very eyes an animal that is actively engaged in the process of joyful learning. You are hooked. 'It brings the best out in them!' we cry. I remember being on set once with my short billed corella, Gilmore. We were at the end of our second day on a Korean television commercial. Over the course of the twelve hours we were on set the day before and the ten hours we had been there that day Gilmore had flown, rolled over, screeched, targeted several body parts and pulled a pretend kitty tail for various food reinforcers. As you can imagine by the end of that second day I knew 'food motivation' was a term I could throw out the proverbial window. The last behaviour he needed to perform was a back up of about four feet. I was pretty sure that this little bird had nothing more to give, so as I got him out for the final scene I took a big deep breath. Gilmore stood in front of me,

registered the cue and waddled himself backwards. They cut, told me it was perfect and we would go again. By this point "cut" had become a conditioned reinforcer for Gil, and he waddled back to me looking expectantly, which lifted my spirits greatly. He took what I offered, placed it to the side and set himself up again. He did this several times, always taking his earnings and stashing it off to the side. I was lovingly dumbfounded.

What we strive to do with our dogs and other animals is to be commended. As we get better and better at applying the scientific principles of learning to our everyday doggy dealings, the more happy super mutts there will be. That's the destination we all assume.

But for me, the port of call has become something quite different than I ever expected. You see somehow, gradually - without me even knowing - the journey of being the best animal trainer I could possibly be turned into one of becoming the best human being I could possibly be.

I know when you think of training you think of behaviour. Sit. Down. Shut-up. I do too. But for me the most important part of any training is the emotional associations we can create in our animals. How our animals feel about us for instance, their partner, is in the end going to greatly effect the behaviour we get. Birds that are not comfortable with you will sit in a tree. Seals that don't see you as someone worth having in their space may try and kill you. I learned very early on training exotic animals that unless I got good at making my animals like me, I may as well give up there and then.

I remember specifically the moment I realised it was the same with humans. I was working with a lady whom I hated and who obviously hated me. It was your typical 'personality clash'. Then one day driving into work, as I'm cussing and moaning the fact that I was going to have to spend the whole day with this woman, the thought came over me; "well oh grand animal trainer, what would you do with a bird that hated you, but you had to work

with?" Talk about a bombshell.

From there on I vowed to give her nothing but support and affection. True. Even when she spoke to me in a way that I perceived as rude and unnecessary, I offered a smile and a kind word. Even when I was well within my rights to tell her to pull her bloody head in, I behaved in a caring way. Reinforcing undesirable behaviour? Well apparently not, because very soon that unwanted behaviour began to dwindle...and be replaced with behaviours more closely related to friendship. So much for personality clash.

How we choose to treat each other should be no different from how we treat our animals. We of the positive reinforcement fraternity should be exceptional at personal interactions, always leaving those we have interacted with feeling better than before. In my case, I chose to treat my workmate like that out of purely selfish motives. I'm comfortable to admit that to you. But in the process of my selfish endeavour I left her with nothing to fight against and in a very short while classical conditioning worked it's powerful magic and our feelings about one another began to change. Today we are firm friends. She is someone I know I can trust and will be supported by. I still think of this as amazing, but really, it's not. It's simply good use of the science of learning.

All of us find it easy to open our hearts to a young dog that hasn't had the best start in life. It may just be cowering, whale eyed and trembling or it may be defensive and lashing out, but all of us would treat that dog in a similar way, a little counter conditioning, a dash of reinforcement and a lot of time. Very few dogs or humans get though life without a scar or too on the inside or without being the reason someone else feels cut.

The bleeding truth is that none of us are saints. How we treat each other is a decision made by each individual in each given moment. Unconditional, loving relationships are vitally important but unfortunately rare between humans. It's the reason why so many of us prefer canine company. It's true, humans are

harder to trust, more easy to dislike that dogs, but I kind of think we owe it to one another to begin, at least trying, to treat each other the way that we have learned brings the very best out of our dogs. I can pretty much promise that you will be pleasantly surprised where your journey ends.

Peta Clarke has been an animal trainer since 1996. After working solidly with dogs for three years, Peta took to the air and traveled to Florida USA where she worked for Steve Martins Natural Encounters. Natural Encounters produces animal shows all over the world and during her year with the company she worked with all sorts of birds-from chickens to condors. Peta says this was a real turning point for understanding the power of reinforcement training. "I thought I was a positive, sensitive trainer when I would work with dogs. Training birds that can fly away at any moment really teaches you about your sensitivity and training skills. That birds really taught me that if I wanted to truly be the best trainer I could be, it was time to pull my socks up..." Since her time in America Peta has worked in several zoos in Australia presenting animal shows to visitors. Currently she owns and operates Animal Training Solutions (ATS). ATS is dedicated to the education of humans in the science and art of animal training by providing written material, lecture and workshop presentations, practical classes and lessons and private consultations. ATS also offers services in developing and presenting animal shows within the zoological and pet industry

How to raise a confident dog

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Dogs, like people, display a wide variety of personalities. Some are robust and outgoing approaching each new life experience as a wonderful fun adventure. Others are more reserved, needing frequent reassurance and time to assimilate to a situation before jumping in and trying something new. Your dog's own genetic makeup will define the limits of his natural personality however there are many external factors that you can control which will help your dog become the best, most confident, well adjusted dog he can be. Put simply these are the three 'E's - Enriched Environment, Exposure and Education.

ENRICHED ENVIRONMENT – The Breeders (0-8 weeks)

Many puppy tests have been developed to try and pick puppies with particular personalities for particular tasks. This is often a difficult task because within a litter will be a 'hierarchy' with some pups consistently dominating other pups. A puppy that was at the bottom of the litter hierarchy however may blossom into a confident dog when removed from its bossier litter mates. This will particularly be so if the breeder has provided all the pups with an enriched environment which repeatedly has been shown to have an enormous influence on the ability of the puppy to develop confidence and social skills later in life. A good breeder will try to provide an environment rich in:

- Sounds and smells common to life in a family home such as – children's' screams and voices, vacuum cleaners, hair dryers, thunderstorms, TV and music. Always look for a breeder that has pups in the home rather than isolated far away in a kennel or barn.
- People – particularly children and men (most dogs seem to be more comfortable with women though it is not known whether this is a

result of more exposure to women breeder/handlers or because of a natural preference).

- Other puppies (especially if the pup has come from a single litter) and a few adult dogs.
- Textures and surfaces to explore such as grass, dirt, concrete, shallow water.
- A variety of angles and heights to climb and explore such as a slightly raised 'wobble board' (uneven surface), an angled slope or one or two shallow steps. Puppies who are exposed to these mild physical 'stresses' have been shown to cope better with new stresses they encounter later in life.

EXPOSURE - a new world (8-16 weeks)

You bring your beautiful new puppy home to a whole new world away from brothers and sisters and all he has known. If your dog is from a shelter or pet shop you probably don't know what sort of early life he has experienced. If your breeder has been doing all the right things you are off to a great start – in either case however it's important to continue providing for your pup an enriched environment with increasing amounts of exposure (particularly exposure to people and dogs also known as socialisation). Even if you do not wish to put your puppy on public ground prior to the completion of his vaccination programme, you can:

- Continue exposure to - children of all ages – babies, toddlers, school age and teenagers. You can carry puppy to schools and playgrounds where they are bound to attract the attention of young kids. The more your pup is used to the jerky movements and loud noises kids make the more relaxed he will be in their company.
- Throw a 'welcome to the puppy' party and encourage everyone to treat and play with the puppy when awake. Even when puppy takes a nap, the exposure to party

noise and music will be a useful experience. Your puppy is learning that loud noises and strangers of all kinds are nothing to worry about.

- Introduce other animals from both within and without the family home such as cats, birds, rabbits and of course other friendly, healthy dogs.
- Gently handle and restrain your puppy regularly. Making certain your pup feels safe and relaxed when being handled will make all health care issues such as nail trimming, grooming, and veterinary check-ups much less stressful for you and your dog!
- Take car trips – to accustom your pup to the sounds and smells of traffic as well as the motion of the car. Make sure to include some fun destinations - not just the vets for vaccinations.
- Attend a well run puppy pre-school. A good instructor will provide lots of opportunities for socialisation with people and pups in a clean, safe, fun environment. Make certain the curriculum is based on positive reinforcement training only and beware of any classes that encourage puppies to wear choke chains. To build confidence in a young dog it is important that emphasis should be placed on teaching the puppy what is right rather than punishing mistakes.

Adolescence and beyond

Although puppyhood is considered the most important period in a dog's life – a time when he will 'bounce back' quickly from any initial fright that causes no harm – it is important to continue to expose your dog to as many situations as possible throughout his life. Continued socialisation to people and dogs is particularly important throughout adolescence (6-12 months) when lessons previously learnt may be put to the test.

EDUCATION

Dogs have shared our lives for so long that we sometimes forget that they are a different *species*, with a different 'culture' and a very different language. Today, more than ever before dogs are not free to live a substantially 'normal' doggy life, wandering the neighbourhood freely, socializing with dogs, kids and stay-at-home mums. If your dog is to feel confident within his human pack, he needs to learn how to cope with all the restrictions of modern life that go with it – he needs an *education*. The education of dogs is normally referred to as 'training' – a term which is sometimes erroneously associated with an attempt at punitive robotic obedience. Good training is the key to developing a mutually beneficial *communication* system between you and your dog. A dog already knows how to sit, stand and down, what he doesn't know are the human names for these behaviours and *why* he should do them? Training is the vital link that will help provide these answers to your dog helping him to feel confident in every situation.

Positive reinforcement works best.

The way you chose to train will have a tremendous impact on whether your dog becomes more or less confident. Traditional training methods focused on correcting dogs for wrong behaviour. The result was that dogs often disliked training and lacked motivation. At worst, they became confused, fearful and aggressive. Positive trainers look for what the dog is doing *right* and reward the dog with things it wants such as food, toys, games and social interactions.

The benefits of positive reinforcement training for your dog include:

- **Positive attention.** Training time should be the best time you and your dog spend together, a time when your dog enjoys your full attention.
- An enhanced, **positive association with learning** and the learning environment.
- **Increased confidence** fuelled by success. Success quickly becomes self-motivating and encourages the dog to keep playing 'the training game'.
- An **outlet or "brain game" for active, outgoing dogs** which will redirect rather than destroy energy and confidence into more desired, acceptable behaviours.
- **Minimal stress.** As positive training looks only to reward desired behaviour, there is no appropriate application for the use of physical scare tactics such as scruff shakes, alpha rolls or shouting. Your dog learns that you can be trusted to remain cool, calm, and emotionally consistent - not rewarding one minute and punishing the next.
- More opportunities to **socialize** as a dog that is well trained is more likely to be invited on social outings such as sports days or picnics.
- An **enhanced relationship** based on 'authority without domination, love without subservience and respect without fear' (*also known as The Clicker Trainer's Goal*).
- "In positive reinforcement training, the relationship between dog and owner is a partnership of **mutual empowerment**" (Pat Miller - *The Power of Positive Dog Training* 2001). The dog learns a way to control his environment by doing the things you have selected to reward - a win/win situation for both. In studies of both humans and dogs it has been found that 'empowerment' to control one's environment plays a substantial

role in reducing stress and increasing the self confidence of an individual to cope with daily life.

Consistent Routines = Confident Dogs

Perhaps even more important than teaching your dog commands or cues for basic behaviours, is establishing routine good manners around the home. When you first get your dog, plan *exactly* what you would like him to do in every situation (not just 'be good' because "good" is *not* a behaviour) and consistently train him to do it. All dogs learn best with consistency, but shy dogs in particular will benefit from knowing what is expected of them in routine situations from home comings to meal times to going for a walk. For example, if you sometimes allow your dog rush out the front door to greet strangers, and sometimes reprimand him, he will quickly become confused and unreliable. On the other hand if you teach him that his greeting etiquette is *always* to sit just inside the front door, your dog will not only be more reliable but will also be more confident, knowing he is doing the right thing at the right time.

The Timid Dog

Timid, shy, submissive, fearful are all words to describe dogs who seem to be overly sensitive to certain stimuli such as loud noises, certain people, changes in their environment, touch or a variety of other fear inducing sights and/or sounds. This timidity may vary from well within the normal range (activated only by a few things or only to a mild degree) without affecting the dog's ability to enjoy a substantially normal life to extreme fearfulness which effects and diminishes every aspect of the animal's life. (Extreme cases would require the attention of a qualified Veterinary Behaviourist).

Factors which may contribute to shyness in dogs include:

- inherited genetic trait

- a physical problem such as reduced vision, deafness or pain.
- lack of early exposure/socialisation to the world the dog will eventually occupy i.e. people, children, domestic noise, urban traffic etc. A gross lack of exposure prior to four months of age is likely to have a life long effect on the dog's ability to bond with people and/or cope with new sights and sounds.
- early learning – a negative experience causing shock, pain or trauma
- inappropriate training methods
- a currently stressed environment - dogs are not immune to family conflicts such as divorce, illness, abuse, moving house etc. and may behave fearfully in a response to such surroundings.

The Fear Biter

Behaviorists generally agree that the vast majority of dog bites stem from fearfulness not dominance – a good reason for wanting to help your puppy develop confidence early in life! Fearful dogs with 'active defense reflexes' might initially try to escape a scary object but quickly change to fight, if escape is not possible. Soon, they learn that attack is successful in removing the scary object and biting soon becomes a routine coping strategy. These dogs can be dangerous and will require an individually tailored behaviour modification programme from a Veterinary Behaviorist to help them overcome their fears and learn better coping strategies.

The Avoider

Many more fearful dogs display 'passive defense reflexes' – preferring to avoid or escape their fears rather than actively attack. These dogs are generally safe to handle and there is much you can do to help them. It is essential to use positive reinforcement techniques *only* when dealing with shy or fearful dogs both for general training and behaviour

modification. Training success may take a little longer with a very shy dog whose fear and anxiety levels will effect it's ability to learn so patience and understanding are always going to have to play a part in building a shy dog's confidence.

Desensitization and counter conditioning programmes are usually designed individually for dogs with severe levels of anxiety . When exposing a dog to something that frightens them, it is important to start at a very low level of exposure. Reward the dog for coping with this low dose by associating it with something the dog really likes such as games or food. Very slowly, at the individual dog's pace, the scary stimulus is intensified. While some specific fears may never be alleviated – the most common fear in dogs being a fear of thunderstorms – improvements can generally be made.

Other strategies to help develop confidence in a shy fearful dog are:

- Any type of positive reinforcement training particularly **agility training** . Agility develops a dog's mind and body, improving co-ordination and co-operation in an atmosphere that most dogs love.
- **Games** such as tug, retrieve and 'find it' are great ways to build enthusiasm, fun and success in a shy dog. Be sure to quit with the dog still wanting more.
- Regular **exercise** – to help relieve stress and provides opportunities for exploration and environmental stimulation.
- **Set a good example-** by singing a song or simply acting happy. Your dog will pick up your happy vibes and realize if the leader of the pack isn't worried it *must* be ok.
- Try **doggy massage** such as ttouch massage (Tellington Touch) and cue it with a word such as 'relax' which can then be

used to encourage relaxation in different settings.

- **DAP** (dog appeasing pheromone) is new on the market but is safe and easy to use and is thought to control and calm dogs exhibiting behavioural stress and fear related signs.
- Play a **CD of sound effects** to help with a desensitization programme, while massaging, feeding or playing with your dog. Remember to keep the level down to a non-fear inducing level.
- Try **Bach Flower Remedies** such as Rescue Remedy, Aspen and Mimulus. Sometimes a Vitamin B complex supplement can help (try adding a little Vegemite !).
- In severe cases, **pharmaceutical intervention** may be advised by a Veterinary Behaviorist.

A confident dog has learnt to trust you

- to provide safety and security in his life. The Australian Pocket Oxford Dictionary defines confidence as "firm trust" pointing once again to the importance of a trusting relationship between man and dog. Dogs through decision or circumstance are tagging along with us on our whirlwind ride through the 21st century. We owe it to each and every one of them to provide them with the environmental enrichment, exposure and education necessary to help them cope with that challenging ride in confidence and joy.

'COMMAND' V 'CUE'

© Karin Larsen Bridge (*This article is a selection from an article 'Top Ten Commands' which first appeared in the Sept/Oct 2005 issue of Dog's Life Magazine*).

'Command' is traditionally the term we use for telling our dogs what we would like them to do. Many trainers today prefer the word 'cue' not only because it

sounds less like a demand for robotic obedience but also because it emphasizes the need to teach a signal or 'cue' that your dog can easily recognize and respond to. The better a trainer is at associating the exact same signal with the same behaviour, the quicker a dog can learn. Many of us however spend little time thinking about the cues we use and how these cues may make learning easier or harder for our dogs.

Commands or cues need to be:

- Clear
- Consistent
- Easily recognizable
- Linked to the *exact* same behaviour everywhere, everytime.

A Word about Words.

When most of us think of 'commands' we think of words – that's because we're human and we're very good at language. Dogs on the other hand are not very good at discriminating the finer points of language and most verbal commands are guessed at dependent on your tone of voice and the general sound of the word or phrase. For instance 'sit' is a short sharp word, if you said 'hit' 'bit', or 'lit' in the same tone of voice your dog would probably also respond with a sit. Phrases which can be said in a different lilt can also make useful commands for instance a rising "do you want to go out?" The most important factor is that you use the same tone of voice for the same command and a different tone of voice for different commands. Commands should be spoken clearly, consistently and with a little authority rather than a nagging plea however they need not be harsh, loud or threatening. Dogs have very good hearing and if a pleasantly voiced 'drop' command is followed by rewards your dog will learn to 'drop' just as reliably as a dog who is trained using a loud, growling, guttural 'drop!'. There is no 'right' tone of voice or 'correct' word choice that will magically train your dog for you.

Visual Cues

If you want to make life easier for your dog, you may choose to take advantage of some non-verbal cues. Dogs are expert at reading visual cues – such as hand signals and body gestures. Indeed, most dog-to-dog communication is based on visual cues such as submissive roll-overs and play bows. It makes sense then to teach a visual cue such as a hand signal in addition to a command word whenever possible.

'Sit', 'stand' and 'down' are all behaviours usually 'cued' with both a hand signal and a word.

Context Cues

Dogs also rely heavily on context cues such as time of day, what clothes you are wearing (walking shoes or work shoes) what you pick up (car keys/lead) or the presence of certain smells (dog shampoo-bath time). You can use these context cues to teach the behaviours you want in routine situations. For example, if you do not attach a lead until your dog sits, the dog soon learns that a quick sit leads to a faster exit out the door.

Clear commands + good rewards = effective training.

The elements of effective training are simple. Choose a command that your dog can recognize, associate it with the behaviour you want and follow correct responses with rewards such as praise, a treat or a game. The command or cue tells your dog '*what*' you want him to do while the reward provides the motivation or the '*why*' he should do it. When a dog fails to learn, there is usually a problem in one of these two areas – either the dog isn't recognizing the cue (the '*what*') or he's failing to see the '*why*' due to insufficient rewards or too many unintentional rewards for the wrong behaviour (such as the fun of playing in the park instead of coming when called).

Disobeying commands

What most people refer to as 'disobedience' can be traced back to three common training errors:

1. failure to link a consistent command/cue/signal with the behaviour you want
2. failure to provide sufficient rewards for doing a behaviour
3. failure to have the dog's attention before you ask for a behaviour.

Professional trainers rarely use terms such as 'disobedience' because they know that getting an animal to do the things *we* want is simply a training issue. If you think about it, a dog must first be obedient –that is nine out of ten times demonstrate understanding and compliance to a command – before he could possibly be considered '*disobedient*'. Hence all puppies and most dogs are not 'disobedient' but rather are not yet fully trained

It's all in the training.

Dogs are perfect at being dogs. If we want to alter their behaviour to fit into our human life style we have to teach them. If we hit problems along the way it's just because we're two different species still working to perfect our communication system.

Book reviews

Control Unleashed : Creating a Focused and Confident Dog by Leslie McDevitt, Clean Run Productions LLC, 2007.

Question:-How would life be if we could always pick our perfect Dog?

Having owned a steady, dog for years-life was all peace and quiet-then came my new bearded collie and wow, was it was time for a change. With a play drive of 100% plus, Rosie is loud and proud, lives and loves life to the full.

Funny, how things turn out, I used to cringe at noisy live wire dogs, and here I am with one myself seeing people cover their ears yet watching in fascination as she enthusiastically throws herself round the courses

Therefore reading this book was like a breath of fresh air, at last an author who understands and offers advice in a practical manner, such an easy read for any dog owner. Reading of Leslie's own adoption of Snap, a little dog, with big serious impulse control issues, and their subsequent progress to their 1st Novice win helps drive home the value of the Control Unleashed techniques.

It was especially poignant for me to read about Snap being attacked whilst on an agility high as Rosie was, and I, too, worried she would be too badly shaken to return to competitive agility. But we humans should never underestimate the resilience of our canine friends especially when their favourite sport is involved.

It is all too easy to dismiss "problematic" dogs, leading to them leaving agility classes totally disheartened, when there could be so much pent up potential waiting to be discovered.

I've purposely not given much content away in this review, go out and read it for yourselves guys. Meanwhile, armed with this book, well motivated agility instructors out there can be ready and able to run safe and sound classes for all.....

In answer to my question- I think life would be so predictably boring, I wouldn't swap my bearded collie girl for the world.

Many thanks Leslie, keep up the good work ...

About Stef: As a dog crazy girl – I finally pestered parents to let me have my 1st dog- a cairn terrier. Spent any term breaks from 14 onwards at the local vets- even when training as a dentist.

Adoption of a fearful aggressive dog from a local rehoming kennel led me to

becoming involved in domestic dog training, including offering free classes for re-homed dogs using the UK Kennel Club's Good Citizen scheme and funded by the local council.

Whilst in the UK, Roddy, my beardie/border crossbreed- one of the rare Rodinglea Scruffies, and I were members of the Pets As Therapy and Prodog educator schemes and the UK Kennel Club Safe and Sound demonstration team.

We arrived here (in New Zealand) late 2004, instructing at Hamilton Dog obedience club, volunteering at the local SPCA and visiting local rest home. On observing a need for dog education talks in the Hamilton area, I began visits and the K9 sense team was formed in 2007.

**Excel-erated learning:
Explaining in plain English
how dogs learn and how best to
teach them.** Pamela J Reid PhD. James
and Kenneth Publishers, 1996.

I love this book. It provides a simple yet comprehensive overview of how dogs do or don't learn. If you already have a sound theoretical back ground this may not extend it, but it will help you explain it to others in simple, understandable ways. It covers key concepts such as classical and operant conditioning, factors that affect learning, stimulus control and learning and behaviour change. It also offers a good section on the effects of using of aversives (R- and P+) in training. This book explains the learning process clearly and is probably one of the most straight forward books on learning theory I have read. It is not however a how to train specific behaviours book- it is about the theory so don't get this one if you want a manual on how to train a recall or a down stay. However I would recommend reading it before you try to train a recall or a down stay if you want to understand why what you are doing is or isn't working for you or your dog. .

We will be running a series of articles by Susan Smith in the coming newsletters. These are the first two.

Article 1

Science – what it is and what it isn't

Susan Smith

While thinking about how I wanted to approach this new column on learning theory, it occurred to me that, before we get into the actual learning theory, it's important to talk about what science really is and how it can help us.

There is a big divide within the dog training community about the importance of using science in training. Some feel it is the only way to train, while the others feel that it is cold and leaves too much out of the equation. I am a proponent of using scientifically established principles of learning when training. However, I think that part of the problem is that too many of us don't really understand what that means. So – here's why I choose to use science in my training!

The first thing to address is the word **theory!** Too often, I hear a trainer say "well, it's only a theory, after all" As if that means that what they are discussing is somehow weak or unproven. In science, however, a theory is a well established principle which is highly unlikely to change. It may be tweaked here and there, but the foundations will remain. A theory has been tested, analyzed, re-tested, re-analyzed, and tested ad nauseum!

The term the trainer is actually looking for is **hypothesis**. A hypothesis is a

speculation or educated guess based on information – it is not just a wild guess, but something that has merit and needs to be tested further before rising to the level of a theory or failing to be proved.

As Dr. Susan Friedman explains in her telecourse, “LLP-Tele,”:

There is, at times, criticism of science because it changes. How many of us quit eating butter because we thought margarine was better for us – based on research? Now we know that margarine is terrible for us! Same with red wine – we thought alcohol was bad for us with no redeeming qualities. Now we know that red wine in moderation is actually good for us. Well, science, by its nature, is fluid and subject to change as we learn more. However, *it is the best information we have at the time!*

Dr. Friedman goes on to say:

- Behavior is a natural phenomenon; a part of the physical world (thus, it can be studied by the scientific method)
- Science helps us get past personal recipes in training and behavior (sometimes personal recipes work, but when they don't work, they often go uncorrected)
- Science helps us get past partisan politics (science has shown that compulsive methods are not usually necessary)
- Science has its own self-correcting methods (that ferret out hypothesis and studies that are not valid):
 - Public, peer review (science is published for review by third parties that can examine the techniques used to be sure the science is valid)

- Verification across independent researchers (valid scientific studies can be replicated time and again with the same results to ensure that the results are not flawed or skewed in some way)
- Science provides us with the most reliable information at a particular point in time (and subject to future self-correction)

This does not mean that anecdotal information is not valid – it simply means it has not been tested, reviewed, revised, and re-tested and should therefore be used with caution. This is what we need to keep in mind during our training.

Learning theory, of course, is only one of many science disciplines, but it is crucial to the field of behavior modification. Ultimately, in my opinion, the best way for animal consultants to be critical thinkers is to understand how animals learn and the science behind that learning. Once we understand that, we can assess the anecdotal information from an educated view and make an informed decision.

Article two

The Language of Behavior

Susan Smith

Every profession develops its own terminology to better facilitate communication amongst ones peers. Having a common language allows us to be very specific using a minimum of words, because our peers know exactly what we mean when we use a particular word. Additionally, using an established vocabulary allows us to communicate with others who work in the field of science, but not in our field

– for instance, vets, behaviorists, ethologists and biologists.

Just for fun, here are some common terms that can mean different things to different people:

- **Tort** – to a baker, a tort is a pie-like dessert; to an attorney it is an act for which a civil lawsuit can be brought
- **Male** or **Female** – to most of us, this is about gender; to a plumber it indicates a certain type of fitting
- **Credit** – to the general public it generally means a ranking which indicates how much money you can borrow; to an accountant it's a column on a ledger sheet
- **Tart** – to our mothers a tart is a woman of questionable morals; to a baker, it's a dessert

Of course there are many, many more and we could probably spend a fun evening sitting around thinking them up. However, the point is that every profession has its language and the specific terminology of that profession facilitates communication. I also believe it is the mark of a profession when there is a common language. It shows that there is a set of standards and practices that everyone within that profession understands.

Bob Bailey, who works with trainers all over the world, finds that there tend to be regional differences in understanding of terminology. For instance, he finds that in the Northeast United States and Europe, trainers often use the word “interval” when describing “duration.” Although they seem to be similar, they are actually quite different.

An “interval” is a moment in time. For instance, if you want to reinforce a “sit” on an interval schedule, you will

determine the interval (1 minute), and reinforce the animal for sitting any time *after* one minute – for instance, at 61 seconds. A duration is a continuation of time. So, if you want to reinforce a “sit” on a duration schedule, you will determine the duration (1 minute), and reinforce the animal at the end of the 1 minute duration *if he sat for the entire duration*. A duration schedule is a shaping schedule – i.e., you are working on increasing the duration through successive approximations.

And, as with science itself, terminology can and will change as our understanding of behavior changes. This is a normal evolution and shouldn't be used as a reason to not have a common vocabulary.

Dog trainers are in the business of modifying behavior. We are lucky because we have a language that already exists and quite elegantly meets our needs. The language of behaviorism has been developed and refined over almost a century. As with any professional language, it continues to evolve and refine, but the bones are there for us to use.

There is, however, a significant amount of resistance to using this language. I've never been able to figure out exactly why, but I do have some thoughts. My speculations have arrived at basically three reasons people might resist using the language of behaviorism.

- Some people are resistant to using the language because of the emotionally laden associations we have with words such as “punishment” or “aversive.” However, when you really understand what those terms mean,

those emotions go away. Punishment simply means that behavior is decreasing. We all use punishment on occasion. An aversive is simply something an animal will work to avoid – this can be as benign as moving into a dog’s personal space a couple of inches to get them to sit.

- Some people may be insecure in their ability to learn the language, or don’t want to take the trouble to learn it.
- Some people already understand the terminology, but don’t want to admit that their techniques are primarily aversive.

There are a couple of common red herrings out there, as well.

- There’s the argument that John Q. Public will not understand this terminology. However, there’s no reason you have to use this language with your clients – it’s for use with your peers. Understanding the terminology, and the underlying principles behind the terminology will certainly be beneficial in helping you explain what your client’s dog is doing and what to expect when they begin modifying their dog’s behavior.
- There’s the argument that using an aversive tool is positive because the dog is happy when he sees it. However, if you understand learning theory, you understand that the dog has a “conditioned emotional response” (CER) to the tool, which is most likely associated with good things like going out to play and train. The technique is still an aversive technique because it’s based on avoidance. You can argue that it’s “positive,” because it’s “positive punishment”; you could argue that it’s reinforcement-based because

it’s “negative reinforcement.” But, these are still aversive methods. And again – we all use aversives!

So, my vote is for using the precise and extremely useful language of behavior. It will allow us to communicate more efficiently and will help us understand behavior!

Both these articles have been reprinted with the permission of the author.

Susan Smith’s business, Raising Canine (www.raisingcanine.com), provides remote education opportunities for animal behavior consultants, as well as business and marketing products to help their businesses, including an intensive course for beginning dog trainers. Sue is the co-author of the book “Positive Gun Dogs: Clicker Training for Sporting Breeds.” Sue is certified through CCPDT, IAABC and the San Francisco SPCA. She is an ex-Board member for the CCPDT, an active, professional member of the APDT, former Chair of the APDT Member Relations & Communications Committee, moderates the APDT list discussion group and was named APDT Member of the Year in 2004

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ASSOCIATION OF PET DOG TRAINERS NEW ZEALAND INC

“SMARTER TRAINERS, BETTER DOGS” CONFERENCE 2010

At the Brentwood Hotel, 16 Kemp Street, Kilbirnie, Wellington

KEYNOTE PRESENTERS

Prof Kevin Stafford (FRCVs, MACVs) - The Director of Postgraduate Studies at the Institute of Veterinary Animal and Biomedical Sciences, Massey University (Palmerston North). Kevin is a Professor of Applied Ethology and Animal Welfare and has been at the forefront of teaching about animal behaviour to veterinary nursing, agricultural and extra mural students since 1992. He is well known in dog training circles as a specialist canine veterinary behaviourist having particular interest in companion animal behaviour problems. Kevin has authored many papers and publications with his authoritative text “The Welfare of Dogs”, first published in 2006 becoming a valuable reference. Kevin is the owner of Irish Water Spaniels and Chinchilla cats.

Karin Bridge – a founding member and immediate Past President of the APDT Australia. Karin is at the forefront of positive motivational training across the Tasman and operates her pet dog training and private consultation business “Get S.M.A.R.T. – Successful Motivational and Reward Training”, from the north shore of Sydney, Australia. Graduating with the first Delta Australia Canine Good Citizen class in 1996, the experience she has to impart is both practical and wide ranging. She has been an active and successful competitor in obedience and agility competitions with her German Shepherd Dogs and Papillons over the past 25 years. She was the first director of training for Australian Support Dogs, an organisation that trains dogs to assist people with physical mobility problems and is regularly invited to present seminars by the Veterinary Nurses Council of Australia on running successful puppy classes and advising on common problem behaviours. Karin is a regular contributor to Dogs Life magazine.

Debra Millikan (AABP) – Debra is a Professional Animal Behaviour Consultant with the Association of Animal Behaviour Professionals, a member of the Delta Professional Dog Trainers Association and a full member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers Australia. Debra has been appointed to the Advisory Board of the AABP and is also part of that association’s Professional Practice Guidelines Committee and Membership Examination Committee. Debra’s dog training experience spans more than 30 years and includes many titling successes with her dogs in conformation, obedience and endurance. She is currently Head Instructor at the Canine Behaviour School Inc, a positive reinforcement club based in Adelaide, Australia. Debra has written articles for various journals and magazines including the peer reviewed Journal of Applied Companion Animal Behaviour, Australian Dog World, the Canine News, Dog Blog n Cat Chat and Pet Lifestyle Magazine. She is familiar to many in the New Zealand dog world having been a regular contributor on behavioural issues to the NZ Dog World magazine (formerly NZKC Gazette). Deb’s current dogs are two Brussels Griffons (Joe and Bruno).

THE APDT NZ CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

SATURDAY 5th June 2010 DAY 1

- 8.15 – 8.45 a.m. Registration, collections and check in. Trade booths open
- 8.45 – 9.00 a.m. Conference Opening – APDT NZ President Susie Londer
- 9.00 – 10.30 a.m. Prof Kevin Stafford (Professor of Ethology, Massey University)
- “Humans and Dogs – The Story So Far”
- 10.30 – 11.00 a.m. MORNING TEA
- 11.00 – 12.30 p.m. Debra Millikan (Head Trainer Canine Behavioural School – Adelaide)
- “Argumentative, Critical or Just Plain Impossible! Dealing with Difficult People in the Dog Training Field”
- 12.30 – 1.30 p.m. BUFFET LUNCH
- 1.30 – 3.00 p.m. Karin Bridge (Director Get S.M.A.R.T. Dog Training)
- “Understanding Laws of Learning – A Guide for Club Instructors”
- 3.00 – 3.30 p.m. AFTERNOON TEA
- 3.30 – 5.00 p.m. Debra Millikan
- “Keeping it Fun – Tricks and Games for Dog Training Class”
- 5.00 – 5.05 p.m. Susie Londer - APDT NZ President
- 7.00 – 9.00 p.m. Conference Dinner

SUNDAY 6th June 2010 DAY 2

- 8.45 – 9.00 a.m. Welcome – APDT NZ President Susie Londer
- 9.00 – 10.30 a.m. Prof Kevin Stafford
- “Behavioural Problems – Mixed Messages and Mayhem”
- 10.30 – 11.00 a.m. MORNING TEA
- 11.00 – 12.30 p.m. Karin Bridge
- “Dog Eat Dog – Why Nice Dogs Do Bad Things”
- 12.30 – 1.30 p.m. LUNCH
- 1.30 – 2.15 P.M. Panel Discussion – Prof Kevin Stafford, Karin Bridge and Debra Millikan
- “Dominance Theory – Mythical or Mighty”
- 2.15 – 3.00 p.m. Dog Training Games with People
- 3.00 – 3.20 p.m. AFTERNOON TEA
- 3.20 – 4.50 P.M. Debra Millikan
- az“People and Dogs – What’s right? What’s wrong? Can we make it all right?”
- 4.50 – 5.00 p.m. Conference close – Susie Londer APDT NZ President

For more information on The Association of Pet Dog Trainers New Zealand Inc access the website www.apdt.org.nz