

# Association of Pet Dog Trainers New Zealand Inc

## Newsletter

### President's comment

Everyone enjoyed the opportunity to hear a variety of speakers at our inaugural conference this year.

The conference was attended by 94 delegates and it was the icing on the cake after a year of hard work for the committee! We are currently assessing the feedback forms for a bigger and better conference next year which will again be held on Queen's Birthday weekend.

One of our confirmed speakers for next year is Veterinary Behavioural Medicine specialist Dr. Paul McGreevy. In his latest book 'A Modern Dog's Life' McGreevy answers questions such as what do dogs value, why they get so excited by their daily walk and why dogs of different breeds may have different needs, with authority and humor.

At our AGM all committee members were re-elected and we welcome new committee member Kate Butler.

I would like to thank all committee members for their continued support of the APDTNZ.

That's all from me, happy reading!

Susie Londer  
President

**APDT NZ Mission statement:** *To promote human-dog relationships of understanding and trust by offering education in canine behaviour and effective, up to date, dog friendly training methods and skills.*

**APDT NZ Vision statement:** *All dogs are effectively trained through dog-friendly techniques and therefore are lifelong companions in a relationship based on mutual respect and trust.*

### Guest Editorial: Gone to the Pack

On a recent trip to Cambodia I developed a fascination – as most dog trainers would – with the countries stray dogs. As I began to think more about their lifestyle one question nagged at me: *Why hadn't these dogs formed packs?*

Everywhere I looked, at markets, busy street corners, the rivers edge or rural village there were stray dogs. But not once did I see a *group* of stray dogs. These dogs, although sometimes loosely associated with a particular shop or village hut, were nobody's pets – they were essentially feral. They skulked around, avoiding humans for the most part and it was common to see them sit down to a meal they had just scavenged off a rubbish heap. Dogs that ventured into another's territory were fiercely chased away.

So if feral dogs don't form packs, why then, is there still the common perception amongst the general dog owning community that dogs are 'pack animals'? And how many times have we heard that we must ensure we are the leader of this so-called pack?

Dogs are definitely highly social animals capable of forming strong social bonds. But the very way they evolved from wolves into dogs has set them up for a life living close to human societies, scavenging for food amongst our waste (discarded from the campfire if you will) rather than hunting for food in packs. This seemed to be exactly the lifestyle of feral Cambodian dogs. Had they left the cities and set off into the wild to form packs and hunt prey then we could declare that dogs are pack animals but they don't! In fact a review of the scientific studies on feral dogs shows that they don't live in structured packs but rather form loose and constantly changing associations. Their food supply comes from scavenging in their environment, which means it is more efficient to forage, alone or in pairs rather than maintaining a structured pack.

So perhaps it is time for this notion of packs (brought about by the misinterpretation of a few early captive wolf studies) to be put to rest. From a dog-training point of view it means very little anyway. Most owners don't want to have to eat first, make sure they go through door ways first, or alpha roll their dog when they suspect them of being 'dominant'. And what does all this mean to the average dog? At best that their owner has some strange habits and at worst that it may get grabbed by the scruff of the neck and flipped onto the ground for no apparent reason.

Dog training should be so much simpler than this. As trainers we know that all operant behaviours either increase or decrease in frequency due to their consequences. This simple concept alone could help countless dog owners that are struggling with dogs that pull on lead, jump up and won't come when called. Just like children, dogs need to be taught boundaries, may sometimes need supervision, and always need to earn the right to certain privileges. They should learn that their owners are the bearers of all good resources and that these resources don't get handed out on demand. The relationship is one of give and take where the dog trades appropriate behaviours in return for desired resources (positive reinforcement) making pack status irrelevant.

More serious problems, such as growling at family members should be approached not with a reference to decreasing the dog's position in the pack but by a qualified behaviourist who has a good understanding of classical conditioning.

With some patience, kindness and a basic knowledge of how dogs learn, owners can teach

dogs how to live in their homes in harmony - and stop thinking they are living with a wolf in dog's clothing!

*Jo Thorne MSc*  
D'For Dog Training

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## Save the date!!

### ***Upcoming 2010 events organised by your local APDT NZ representative***

Friday 17<sup>th</sup> September (DVD + social evening)  
Masterpet's "Blue Room," Petone, Wgtn, 7pm.  
**"Are Puppies Really Learning What We Teach Them?"**

**By Trish King - Marin Humane Society (USA)**  
**Excellent resource for instructors or veterinary staff involved in Puppy Preschool or older puppy classes.**

Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> November, Devonport, Auckland  
(DVD daytime event, 10am )

**Jean Donaldson and Ian Dunbar**  
**"Fighting Dominance in a Dog Whispering World" and**

**"Really Reliable Recall" featuring Leslie Nelson**  
For up to date info on events please visit

[www.apdt.org.nz](http://www.apdt.org.nz)

All welcome. Free admission for members. \$10 for non-members.

APDT Australia Annual Conference 29-31 October  
Bankstown Sports Club, Sydney Featuring  
Ken Ramirez and Steve White

Dr Patricia McConnell : 27 & 28 Nov. 2010  
Leslie McDevitt : March 2011  
Contact: <http://www.learningaboutdogs.co>

# Learning Theory Article 4 – Conducting a Functional Assessment

Susan Smith

Finally! We get into the nitty gritty of learning and behavior. Remember – **learning is a change in behaviour based on experience.**

Three crucial pieces to the learning puzzle are: antecedents, behaviour and consequences (the ABCs). These three pieces of the puzzle are integral to understanding learning and changing behaviour, as behaviour never exists in a vacuum. The ABCs are the smallest unit of analysis.

In this article we're going to do a couple of simple functional assessments to illustrate the ABCs. I rely heavily on Dr. Susan Friedman's Living and Learning with Animals (LLA) course, which she has developed to teach professionals about learning and behaviour.<sup>i</sup>

## The ABCs

**Antecedents** are those stimuli, events or conditions that occur *immediately before* the behavior, which function to set the occasion for the animal to exhibit the behavior. (Friedman, S.G. (2007). *A framework for solving behavior problems: Functional Assessment and Intervention Planning. Journal of Exotic Pet Medicine. 16,(1) 6-10.*)

Antecedents are the signals for what behavior, if performed, will be reinforced. Friedman uses the example of traffic lights. When the light turns red it signals to the driver to step on the brake, which is reinforced by the car stopping. The red light doesn't *cause* the driver to step on the break. More precisely, it *signals* the behavior-consequence (B-C) contingency in play: if you do x, then y will occur. When analyzing behavior, identify the antecedents that set the occasion for the behavior you are assessing.

**Sample Problem:** Jane's dog Rover gets into the garbage and strews it about the house.

**Background:** Jane uses plastic grocery bags for her garbage, and she hangs them off a cupboard door in the kitchen. Rover is a medium-sized dog whose nose is about level with the garbage bags. When Jane is

not in the kitchen, Rover will get into the garbage.

The **behaviour** is Rover getting into the garbage.

The **antecedents** are Jane leaving the kitchen where garbage is hanging.

The **consequence** is that Rover gets great stuff.

Identifying the antecedent immediately reveals one intervention strategy. As a consultant, probably 99% of us would advise Jane to manage her garbage better – using a closed container, putting it under the sink, or putting it in the garage would resolve this problem quickly and easily.

By changing the antecedent, we have changed the behavior.

**Behavior** is anything an animal does under certain conditions that can be measured. (Friedman, 2007).

In behavior assessment, our first task is to identify the behavior we intend to target. Although this seems obvious, we sometimes target a constellation of behaviors, rather than one specific behavior. Additionally, we sometimes tend to focus on labels instead of behavior – i.e., dominance or jealousy. By focusing on one behavior, we make our task much easier. It may be that to resolve a problem we have to target more than one behavior, but if we do each behavior that makes up the problem individually, the task will be easier and the problem resolved more quickly.

**Sample problem:** When Jane and Rover are at the park and Jane calls Rover, Rover runs away; when Jane finally catches up with Rover, he squirms and wiggles to the point that it takes five minutes to attach the leash. Additionally, Rover tries to back out of his collar and if successful, he runs off again.

The problem is that Jane isn't able to leave the park when it's time to go. However, there are several behaviors causing this problem.

Problem #1: Rover doesn't come when called

**Antecedent** – Jane calls Rover

**Behavior** – Rover runs away from Jane when called

**Consequence** – Rover doesn't have to leave the park

Problem #2: Rover tries to escape

**Antecedent** – Jane holds Rover's collar

**Behavior** – Rover tries to back out of his collar

**Consequence** – Rover doesn't have to leave the park

Problem #3: Rover won't sit quietly while Jane puts the leash on

**Antecedent** – Jane tries to attach the leash to Rover's collar

**Behavior** – Rover squirms and wiggles

**Consequence** – Rover doesn't have to leave the park

Notice that each of Rover's behaviors has the same consequence. However, they all have different antecedents. For the most efficient and satisfactory result, each of these behaviors should be addressed separately, as the solution for each problem will vary, depending on the situation.

*Consequences are those stimuli, events or conditions that occur immediately after the behavior, which function as feedback about how to behave again in the future. (Friedman, 2007.)*

The first important researcher into animal learning was Edward Lee Thorndike. Thorndike was studying intelligence in animals and through his research observed what we now call the **law of effect**. The law of effect states that "the strength of a behavior depends on the consequences the behavior has had in the past." Or, more simply stated, behavior is a function of its consequences. (Chance, Learning & Behavior, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., pg 137.) Considering this law with every behavior consult will improve your performance immensely.

**Sample Problem:** Rover only jumps on Jane when she comes home from work. When Jane comes home from work and opens the door to the house, Rover jumps on her in excitement. Jane pushes Rover off and tells him to get down.

The **behavior** is Rover jumping on Jane

The **antecedent** is Jane walking through the door

The **consequence** is attention from Jane

In this situation, the obvious thing to address is the consequence. Jane decides to have treats at the ready when she opens the door, and cue Rover to sit as she walks in. If Rover sits, he gets a treat and Jane will squat down and pet him at his level; if Rover jumps, Jane will walk back out the door, wait 30 seconds, then try again.

### The Functional Assessment

We can also make use of **distant antecedents** or **background** information to help us ferret out the immediate antecedent. When looking for an antecedent, we must identify the event that is most closely related to the behavior. However, there are often other events that predict the behavior, as well, such as medical, nutritional or species specific variables. When we do our functional assessment, we'll want to take note of this background information as it does play a part in the behavior and may need to be addressed within the program.

Take the example of Rover jumping on Jane – Rover only jumps on Jane when she comes home from work. It's likely some other events occur that we may identify to better predict the behavior. We can make some educated guesses as to what these events may be; the time of day, the length of time Jane has been gone, perhaps the morning routine or the way she enters the door. Through systematic assessment and analysis, we can include or eliminate our guesses. Understanding the background may or may not affect your decision on how to address the problem; regardless, it should be considered.

The final step in a functional assessment is to determine whether or not the antecedent and consequence you have pinpointed is **functionally related** to the behavior. I.e., would the behavior happen if the antecedent were not present? Would the consequence happen if the behavior were not present? Remember – behavior has function! We behave for a reason. If the antecedent or consequence is not functionally related to the behavior, then you have not pinpointed the correct antecedent or consequence.

We can't be sure that the events we've identified explain the behavior without testing them. The intervention step is where we test our hypothesis. It's often quite obvious what the function of a behavior is. In the example of Rover and the park, it's fairly obvious that Rover doesn't want to leave. However, in the jumping up scenario, it's a little hazier – we assume that Rover wants attention, but then why doesn't he jump on Jane at any other time? It's highly unlikely that Rover never wants social attention except when Jane comes home from work. Delving a little deeper into the antecedents and consequences of Rover's jumping may reveal something totally unexpected. For example, Jane may feed Rover shortly after arriving home.

By using functional assessment, we can resolve quite complex and difficult behavior problems in a systematic and efficient manner. As Bob Bailey says, "Think, plan, do!" The doing is the least of it – the thinking and the planning is where the real work comes in. As dog trainers, we want to get right in there and start training the dog, but we might be better served to take the time to think and plan before we start doing.

### **Involving the Client**

*A **consultant** is someone who is paid for their services, has a specific area of knowledge, tries to improve a situation, and does **not** have control over the implementation of the plan.* (Block, Flawless Consulting, pg. xxi.)

We should involve our clients in the thinking and planning. We traditionally use the client only for the information gathering and doing. If we guide the client so they come up with the antecedents and consequences, they will be more invested and more likely to implement the plan. They will have a clearer understanding of what the problems are and how to resolve them and will learn that solutions are found by changing the environment they often control.

We tend to think that as consultants, it is our job to come up with the answers. We can't forget that the client is the one with the information and the end-goal vision – we simply have the know-how. Let's not forget that the client is the life-long teacher of the dog, and the mark of a good consultant is leaving the client with more skills than they started with. It should be our job to guide our clients through the process instead of simply telling them what to do.

What if, instead of having our client fill out an intake form, we have them fill out a functional assessment form, and we guide them through that process until they pinpoint the real problems?<sup>ii</sup> What if, instead of us telling them what to do, we give them background information in the areas of behavior and learning, and guide them through the process of figuring out what needs to change? My guess is that we will have more committed clients!

## **Socialising a Litter of Puppies:** **Gwen Bailey**

### **1. Introduction**

**If you help raise puppies from birth until they are ready to go to new homes, you will have a tremendous impact on their character and behaviour as adults, and, hence, on their future lives.**

Following these guidelines will help to ensure that the puppies you raise will be well adjusted and friendly in later life.

### **2. Why socialise?**

Puppies need know how to relate well to humans. More than anything else, this determines their success as pets, show dogs or working dogs.

**How sociable a dog will be is determined by the experiences it has as a puppy**, especially those it has before the age of 12 weeks. Sociable dogs rarely bite and are less likely to be returned to breeders because of aggression.

As well as humans, puppies need to be able to interact readily with animals that they may encounter in later life, such as other dogs, cats and livestock (see later how to ensure protection against disease).

Socialising with other dogs at an early age can make the difference between a good pet that can be let off the lead to play and one that has to be taken out in the dead of night when all others are asleep. **It can also make the difference between a confident show dog that displays itself to the full and one that is worried by others and presents poorly.**

**At the same time as socialisation is taking place, puppies also need to get used to the environments in which they are to live when they mature.** They need to get used to things in the world that we take for granted. If this is done when the puppy is really young, it will be happy and confident in any new situations it may encounter

later and much less prone to developing behaviour problems in later life.

**Puppies that have been well socialised will definitely make better pets, so you should be able to charge a premium rate for them.**

Explaining to new owners the work that has been done already and sending them away with the tools (see [The Perfect Puppy & Training for Life](#) as examples) to make sure they can continue with this is something that new owners should value highly.

### 3. Timing

As soon as a puppy is old enough to move around, it will approach anything or anybody willingly and without fear.

**By the time it reaches about 12 weeks of age,** anything new will be approached with caution and trepidation. Therefore, the critical time for meeting people and other animals, and getting familiar with things in the environment is between 3 and 12 weeks of age.

Puppies usually go to new homes from the age of about 6-8 weeks.

**This means that about 3 to 5 weeks of the critical socialisation time is spent with the breeder.** During this time, puppies should be exposed to a whole range of different encounters and experiences to equip them for life in the human world.

As a puppy gets older and its brain develops, it gradually becomes more and more able to take in and retain information. Therefore, it is necessary to begin slowly at a very young age and gradually increase the amount of exposure as the puppy matures.

**Puppies need to be continually socialised and exposed to different environments up to the age of one year if they are to stay sociable.** This is particularly important in the case of puppies that are kept in kennels and 'run on' to develop their show potential.

**By the time puppies are 7-8 weeks old and ready to go to new homes,** they should be friendly and outgoing with people and other animals and readily accept any new situation they may find themselves in.

**In comparison, puppies that have been kept in**

**kennels until this age** will be shy, concerned about leaving the security of littermates and will actively avoid encounters with people and other animals.

**Outgoing puppies** are more likely to develop a sound temperament and fit easily into new homes, whereas shy puppies readily develop unsociable tendencies making them less than perfect as pets or show dogs.

The optimum period for socialisation is between 6 – 8 weeks and it is important that a lot of work is done with different people of all ages during this time.

**If this is not possible,** it may be better to consider placing them in homes sooner rather than later where socialisation will occur more readily.

### 4. How to be successful

Use the 'Sounds Familiar' audiotape and the 'Weekly Socialisation Chart' every day to help you achieve and record progress (from [The Blue Cross](#))

If the puppies' mother is friendly and confident, have her present during socialisation. If she is nervous and unsure, it is best to socialise the puppies by themselves.

**People needed** It will be necessary to arrange for a number of different people of different appearance and ages to visit the litter from the age of 4 weeks onwards. As well as adults of all ages, it is important that puppies meet and have pleasant encounters with children of all ages; toddlers, school-age children and teenagers.

It is not difficult to get families to play with puppies, but you will need to make an effort to find them. An advertisement in your local veterinary surgery, perhaps, may bring in local people of all ages who will be happy to help. All visits will need to be supervised to ensure that the puppies have enjoyable experiences.

**How much is enough?** The amount of time needed with people will vary according to age, but you should be aiming for a minimum of 30 minutes each per puppy per day by the time they are ready to go to new homes. Three or four sessions per day are better than one long one.

Aim for someone to spend a few minutes per session with very young puppies, increasing it to at least 10 minutes as they get older.

How many people will need to visit will depend upon how often they come and how long they stay for.-.3

Aim for at least one person other than those caring for the litter to see the puppies once a day from the age of 4 weeks onwards, each person visiting for at least two days.

**If a puppy gets to know about 10 people of all ages really well before they go to new homes, they should be happy in the company of most people later in life.**

When puppies have met many different types and ages of people in this way, they tend to generalise and react in a positive way to most people.

**Play and handling sessions.** During each session, each puppy should be talked to, picked up, handled and played with individually. Soft collars of different colours can be put on during the session to help visitors distinguish between them. As the puppies get older, containing the ones not being worked with behind a barrier is useful as it allows for good quality one-to-one contact with each puppy. Visitors should be taught how to hold and lift puppies gently but securely so that they do not learn to struggle.

Playing with toys should be a big part of the session. Use soft toys that can easily be carried by the puppy but which are too large to be swallowed. Teaching puppies how to play with humans at this early stage helps to avoid them learning to play-bite human hands.

During each session, gently teach puppies to accept being handled all over. Gently examine ears, eyes, mouth and tails. They will also need to learn to cope with being restrained, holding on when the puppy struggles and letting it free when it relaxes, ensuring always that no discomfort is being caused. Once the puppies have got used to wearing a collar during these sessions, teach them to accept being restrained by it and, a few days later, to be held and walked on a lead (never use a check chain, only a soft buckle collar). Teaching them they cannot pull against the lead at this young age leaves a lasting impression that makes taking them for a walk much nicer in later life. Training puppies to 'stand like a show dog', 'sit' and 'come' when called with a 'hands-off' approach and titbits can begin as early as 6 weeks of age.

Throughout early life, the puppies nails should be trimmed carefully and frequently by an

experienced person so they learn to accept this.

**Animals needed** You either have different animals around or you don't. Bringing in animals from elsewhere is not always recommended unless you are certain of their temperament and health status. If you do not have other animals around, taking the puppies out individually to meet confident cats and livestock should happen regularly from about 5 weeks of age. If you do have other animals around, puppies can begin meeting them from 4 weeks of age. Always plan ahead to ensure that the puppies are protected from injury and fright during these encounters.

If puppies meet and have pleasant encounters with different breeds and sizes of adult dog at a young age, it ensures they will be able to relate well to others in later life. Make sure that all the dogs they meet are healthy, vaccinated, have not recently been walked in areas where other dogs have toileted, and are known to be good with puppies. Such dogs are not always easy to find, but contact with them will really make a difference to future temperament.

**Different experiences.** You should aim for the puppies to have at least one new experience per day. This can range from placing a novel object in with the puppies during the 3rd week, to taking them out for short car rides at 5 weeks of age. Choose experiences that are unlikely to overwhelm them at their stage of development, but try to stretch them a little every day.

Gradually accustoming the puppies to different experiences will provide an opportunity for them to become familiar with a wide range of different scents, sights and sounds.

**Remember to imagine how it feels to be that small, vulnerable and inexperienced and try to make sure each puppy is enjoying the experience and not feeling overwhelmed.**

If the puppies live predominantly in kennels, they will need many different experiences each day to ensure they will cope well with a household environment when they go to new homes.

If you are unable to let the puppies grow up in a household, it would be very beneficial to bring them into the house during times when the family are cooking and eating. This is a time when there is much noise and movement and, even from behind a barrier, they will learn much that will help them adjust to family life in future.

When they reach about 5 weeks of age, puppies can be taken on outings. Choose places where they will encounter different types of people, such as old people's homes, school or veterinary surgery.

Moving the whelping box to a different room or area about three times during the 7-8 week period will help to provide a change of scene which will help them learn to deal with different environments.

**Different smells** . Since a dog's primary sense is that of smell, part of the socialisation process involves getting used to different scents. This can be achieved by hanging pieces of cloth in different places, such as the veterinary surgery, a kitchen or wiping them on a baby, a man (if only women care for the puppies), cat or another dog.

This may not seem very important to us as humans, but it can play a big role in the process of familiarising puppies with the world outside.

**Keep it positive.** All encounters and experiences should be enjoyable. If puppies become scared or anxious, it will set back progress.

Try to plan ahead so that unpleasant events are avoided and arrange for all encounters to be successful and rewarding. Visitors will need to be supervised and everyone responsible for the pups will need to learn to read their body language so that they will know whether they are enjoying the experience or not.

Never overwhelm puppies with too much at once, and always allow them plenty of time for sleep and rest between each encounter.

**Learning to be alone.** Puppies will need to learn to cope with being isolated from others by the time they are old enough to go to new homes. Begin this process slowly, beginning with each puppy being separated for a few minutes but able to see and hear its siblings. Gradually increase the time it is left alone for until it can cope with about 10 minutes isolation by the time it is 6 weeks old.

If a puppy becomes unduly distressed when left alone at any stage, reduce the time it is left for, until it can cope and progress more slowly next time. After a period of isolation, give the puppy plenty of social contact with people rather than putting it straight back in with the litter as this will help to speed up the process of socialisation with humans.

**Housetraining** As soon as puppies are able to move away from the nest, it is important to give

them easy access to a toilet area covered with a material different to that which they sleep on. This will ensure that their instinctive desire to be clean is encouraged. As the puppies mature, it is useful to begin the habit of taking them out onto grass to eliminate as soon as they have woken up or just after a feed or play session. Praise and titbits given for toileting outside will encourage this behaviour.

## 5. Special needs for some pups

Dogs from some breeds, such as Collies and German Shepherd Dogs, are more reactive and sensitive than others and they are likely to need more socialisation earlier than other breeds. They will also need very careful exposure to new experiences to ensure that they are not frightened, or overwhelmed, by too much too soon.

Some puppies in the litter may also need more careful treatment than others, perhaps those that are smaller or more shy than their littermates. Taking care of individual puppies and making sure that each one is feeling comfortable with every situation will ensure that they all grow up to be well adjusted.

## 6. Keeping safe from diseases

**Vaccination v socialization.** Young animals are very susceptible to disease before their immune systems have had a chance to become effective. Very young puppies acquire some immunity from their mothers if she has been fully vaccinated, which protects them during the early weeks.

This fades over time and needs to be replaced by immunity stimulated by vaccinations. Some vaccines (e.g. Nobivac) allow the vaccination course to begin at the age of six weeks allowing earlier protection than was once possible.

Since keeping puppies isolated until they have developed full immunity can ruin their future character, a compromise must be reached between the need to protect against disease, and the need to ensure good mental health. As most of the socialisation will be with humans rather than other dogs, such a compromise is feasible and, if the following guidelines are adhered to, it is possible to socialise your puppies and avoid the risk of infection.

**Until puppies are fully protected by vaccination they should:**

Not be allowed to mix with dogs of unknown



vaccination status.

Not be taken to parks or walked in other areas which other dogs have fouled

Be taken out and about often in 'non-doggy' areas, carrying them if necessary to allow them to experience new sights and sounds without the risk of contact with disease.

**Worms and children** Young puppies are likely to have more intestinal roundworms than adults, unless they have been adequately treated with medication.

Humans can become infected with the larval form of the worm. The larva develops in the egg about 10 days or more after the faeces have been passed. Ask your veterinary surgeon for an effective worming medication (e.g. Panacur) and pick up and dispose of faeces regularly.

For hygiene reasons, try not to allow the puppies to lick the children's faces, particularly their mouths, encourage children to wash their hands after playing with the puppies.

## 7. Producing good pet dogs

Socialisation is not difficult, but it does require a steadily increasing effort from the time puppies begin to move around to the time they go to new homes.

For the stock that you decide to keep, maintaining the socialisation until the puppies are a year old will produce confident, sociable show or working dogs with excellent temperament. Such dogs will find it easier to cope later if the decision is made to place them in homes rather than keep them in kennels.

Making the effort to socialise is always worthwhile, particularly if you have selected the parents for their temperament, as well as their looks.

For the dogs that go on to be pets, all that is left to do is to choose suitable new owners.

### Breeders:

#### Practical Socialisation - What to do

Keep the environment friendly and safe, but not unnaturally quiet. Keep the mother present during socialisation, if she is friendly and confident.

**Weeks 1 - 3** Pick up and hold each puppy gently every day. Stroke and examine all over.

**Week 4** Handle each puppy individually every day. Novel object placed in with puppies daily. Cloths with different smells. Provide obvious sleeping place with easy access to toilet area.

#### What's new in weeks 4-5

Arrange for new adults and children to visit. Teach puppies to play with toys.

Familiarise with handling and gentle restraint until accepted.

Familiarise with collars and leads.

Provide items to chew.

Meet cats and other animals on property.

Carry individually to road to see traffic.

Opportunity for exploration of new surfaces.

Individual isolation in view of others for few minutes.

#### What's new in week 5 onwards

Take out to meet other animals and people.

Simple training using reward-based methods should begin.

Lead training should begin.

Short car journeys.

More individual outings as they get older.

Short periods of isolation for each puppy.

Tasting different foods, dried and wet.

Take out at appropriate time for toilet training.

#### Website review: Mainly for fun...

Check out <http://drawthedog.com/>

This is a fun site that you can link to and get a different cartoon appearing on your computer each morning! It also has fundraising ideas for shelters / rescues, along with some great free stuff and links. I wasted quite a bit of time on this site so be warned!

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## How to Train Clients: Veronica Boutelle, MA, CTC

Most trainers agree that working with clients is the most important—and most challenging—part of the job. Even when the trainer does the training in board and train or day training situations, the work with the client remains the central ingredient to success. Transferring complex skills and understanding to a human is tremendously more involved than employing the laws of operant and classical conditioning to train a dog. It's no wonder, then, that it is this part of our work that trainers most often struggle with.

### What Do They Really Need to Know?

There is a temptation to share everything we know. To take clients on a tour through the learning theory quadrants, explain the process of D/CC in detail, or give them the ins and outs of CERs and DRIs. In short, too often we look to transform our clients from dog owners to junior trainers.

Instead, ask yourself two questions. In order to reach their specific training goals:

What does this client need to understand?

What does this client need to be able to do?

Your answers will be tempered by the training structure you're using. Trainers employing the

coaching model will necessarily answer somewhat differently than those training for the client through day training or board and train. Regardless, all dog pros should translate their answers to lay language and think beyond behaviors. Does the client need to understand that how often she treats her dog effects his focus on her, or that rewarded behaviors will happen more? Does she need to learn how to handle the distractions that occur all around us? Less really is more here—the more you try to fit in, the less well the client learns each thing.

### How Will You Teach Them?

This isn't a question of how you will explain things. Telling is not teaching. Hearing is not learning. For a client to truly own a new concept or develop a skill means the ability to apply it to new situations without instruction. This requires guided experiential opportunities to use and “discover” the new concepts and skills you wish clients to have.

In our Master the Growlies seminars we walk trainers through a number of ways to create these situations with private clients. The following example could be used in any format (coaching, day training, board and train) to teach clients to work in the face of environmental distraction. In this case we'll use Watch, but it could be any cued behavior.

The behavior is not the central priority here; handling distraction is the real goal. The behavior is the vehicle to teach this larger concept and skill. But if the larger goal is reached—that the client understand the role of distraction in her dog's behavior and be able to recognize and respond to it effectively—the behavior is much more likely to be successfully proofed.

Teach the Watch (There are many ways to initially teach or transfer an already installed behavior, but that is a large topic in and of itself.)

Have the client practice working with the dog in a low-distraction area inside the house. Guide and give feedback until the human-dog team is working smoothly together and reliably getting the behavior.

Move the duo to a somewhat more challenging location, such as a backyard. Don't talk about distractions or anything along those lines. Just cheerfully suggest moving into the yard to continue practicing.

Chances are the client will find the exercise more challenging in the backyard than in the kitchen. At that point, a conversation about what has made it harder for Spot to respond and why is likely to have much richer meaning than a warning ahead of time. The context of immediate experience creates the basis for understanding, and you can then show the client how to work around distraction.

Once she has her dog's focus back and is again successful with the Watch, suggest that you now move to the front yard. But this time, before you go, ask your client to name the distractions she's likely to encounter in the front yard and ask her how, based on the experience in the backyard, she plans to handle the situation.

In moving to the backyard and refraining from initially giving instruction, you create a teachable moment to introduce a concept and set of skills when they are most likely to take hold—in the context of real experience. And in this last step, you begin to hand over the reins. Notice how quickly we're asking the client to begin making decisions and *applying* what they've learned. It's critical to begin fading the prompting early on so that clients learn to act for themselves. Without fading the prompt (called "removing the scaffold" in educational terminology) clients are less likely to learn the skills and concepts we wish them to, to be able to apply them when we are not there to whisper instructions at their elbow.

### **Train for the Real World**

We talk a lot in our profession about working at the client's level and splitting complex mechanical skills down into smaller pieces. We also look to break behaviors down into more manageable pieces for people to work with. These are very important concepts, but we can't forget in the process of using them that clients live in the real world.

For example, we love the idea of breaking down the Three D's—distance, duration, and distraction. And we particularly like the notion of training first without distraction, then with a little of it, then a little more, etc. And that is certainly ideal. But dog guardians don't live in a vacuum. We can't wait to introduce distraction as the last D, and we can't afford to assume that clients will always be able to avoid certain levels of distraction until their dog is ready for them. Life's just too messy.

This is another reason to begin handing those decision making and application reigns over early. Think about your sessions with clients as opportunities for discovery and application. Add as many experiential learning moments as you can so that clients are practicing encountering the kinds of challenges that will face them every day when you're not there to give instruction. Working on Stay? Introduce distraction in the very first session. Show them how to respond. Then toss distractions in when they aren't expecting it. Prompt as needed in the beginning, but look to fade those prompts quickly. If they don't respond, waiting for you to tell them what to do, counter with a question: "What could you do next time I drop the tennis ball to help Fido be successful?"

Heavily reinforce all unprompted action. And think about taking your client sessions on the road when appropriate to work in the environments clients will find themselves in over the course of their daily lives with their dogs.

### **Emotions Matter**

Factor client emotions into your training plan, particularly in behavior modification cases. As with dogs, strong emotions like fear can impede human learning and a successful plan must address this.

One of the sample cases in the Master the Growlies seminar is a leash reactivity case in which the client has become so sensitized to her dog's reactions to other dogs that she has stopped walking him altogether. She's just too scared to take him out. This is a situation in which day training or board and train is a real advantage. The trainer can work on changing the dog's behavior, the dog gets out for his walks, and the client gets a needed

break. (If coaching, I would recommend introducing some alternative exercise outlets until the client's skills and confidence are built up.)

In the sample case, the trainer installs some basic behaviors (Sit, Watch, Find It) and then the client works on these at home while the trainer takes the dog for walks to proof the behaviors and work on the classical conditioning portion of the plan.

Very important to the plan is the gradual desensitization of the client to walking her own dog. Over many sessions she is led through steps one at a time. Only when she is ready (noted in this case by a relaxed approach to the activity—a positive Conditioned Emotional Response) is she graduated to the next. She practices with her Fido and a stuffed animal. She watches the trainer handle Fido with a therapy dog so she can see how poised her dog is capable of being. She practices with Fido and the therapy dog as the therapy dog handler.

Only when she is very comfortable does she take up her own dog's leash with the therapy dog present. And the first time she and the trainer take it on the road the trainer handles her dog for her, narrating her decisions, then asking the client to suggest actions. Finally, she takes the leash with the trainer there to prompt as needed. By this time, however, the client is less likely to require that prompting. As with all other teaching, any prompting should be faded as quickly as possible to engender the client's confidence in her own ability to walk her dog without the trainer present.

This example shows how central the human teaching plan is to the positive outcome of a case. The dog training cannot be overlooked; without a solid training plan, well executed, the client cannot succeed. But the dog training plan is only half of the picture. A thoughtfully designed teaching plan for the client must accompany it. Because whether you offer coaching, day training, or board and train services, careful attention to teaching people is central to dog training success.

*Veronica Boutelle is the founder of dogTEC and author of **How To Run A Successful Dog Business: Putting Your Career Where Your Heart Is**. Many of*

*the examples in this article are taken from dogTEC's Master the Growlies seminar. Veronica and dogTEC colleagues Gina Phairas and Kim Moeller will present Master the Growlies seminars in NJ, Portland, and San Francisco this Spring and Summer. The seminars cover working with on- and off-leash aggression and reactivity, from training plans to working with clients to effective business practices. Details at [www.dogtec.org/master-growlies.html](http://www.dogtec.org/master-growlies.html)*

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## **Medical Causes and Treatment of Behavior, Temperament, and Training Problems**

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Trainers, as first line of defense in tackling behavior problems in dogs, should have some appreciation and knowledge of medical problems that may impact behavior. Certain medical issues contribute to behavior problems while others are actually instrumental in causing them. The fact that a medical problem may underlie a behavior problem is something that trainers should always bear in mind and certain factors can clue you in that health matters may be involved. These factors include obvious problems with the dog's physical condition (overweight, underweight, excessive shedding, alterations in thirst or appetite, and so on). Also arousing suspicion are behavior problems that occur unusually early in life, especially if the dog is the runt of the litter, any problems occurring seemingly out of the blue with no obvious environmental cause, any extreme or dysfunctional behaviors, and any behavior problems arising for the first time later in life. Medical problems can lead to enhanced aggression, anxiety, phobias,

compulsive behavior, house soiling, and altered thought processes.

### *Hypothyroidism*

The full blown condition of hypothyroidism is quite easy to recognize. Affected dogs tend to be of certain breeds (Golden Retrievers rank #1) though any dog can be affected. Cardinal signs include weight gain, lethargy, and hair loss. It is jokingly said in veterinary circles that this condition is so easy to diagnose that it can be spotted from the top of a double-decker bus or a telescope turned the wrong way around. That said no vet worth his or her salt would make the diagnosis without running a blood test to check the levels of thyroid hormones. But full blown hypothyroidism is not the issue here. All vets are aware of the two extremes normal (“euthyroid”) and hypothyroid, but there may also be an in-between state of “borderline” hypothyroidism, as occurs in people. Some of us believe there is such a state variously known as sub-clinical or sub-threshold hypothyroidism, in which clinical signs of hypothyroidism are subtle at best, perhaps only a little premature graying of the muzzle or year-round shedding, with thyroid hormone levels in the low/normal range or only slightly below normal. Believers in this limbo state of borderline hypothyroidism believe that it contributes to anxiety and aggression and perhaps some other behavior problems. Some more signs of this condition include a tendency to gain weight (which the owner may have taken steps to address), dry skin, allergies, susceptibility to infection, and heat seeking behavior (affected dogs are very susceptible to the cold). If a few of these signs exist in a dog that is displaying anxiety or aggression, it is worth advising the owner to go and see a veterinarian to have the dog’s thyroid levels checked. Bear in mind that not all vets are aware of the sub-threshold diagnosis and some are skeptical about it. However, if the vet does accept the possibility and agrees to trial treatment, a period of four to six weeks of hormone replacement therapy at standard levels is sufficient to see if things improve.

### *Behavior Related Seizures*

These events also known as partial seizures or limbic epilepsy express themselves in many different ways. Depending on the precise region of the brain involved, aggression, extreme fear, appetitive or predatory behavior may be expressed. Consciousness is not lost during this type of seizure though the dog’s affect may be profoundly altered. Generic signs of a seizural disturbance of this nature are bouts of aberrant behavior preceded by a mood change and followed by reduced responsiveness bordering on depression. The behavior itself can be quite bizarre and dysfunctional and is sometimes associated with autonomic nervous system signs such as dilated pupils, drooping eyelids, salivation, or urination. Probably the best known form that behavioral seizures take is that of sudden uncontrolled aggression for trivial or no reason. This is termed “rage” and affects seizure-prone breeds like, for example, cocker and springer spaniels. Frequently, owners are the subjects of aggressive attacks, which, unlike typical owner-directed aggression are sporadic in occurrence and typically last longer than a few seconds. Diagnosis is not easy but is based on the extreme irrational nature of the aggression, its sporadic incidence, and other circumstantial evidence. Confirmation may be made at veterinary centers by electroencephalography (EEG) but not many veterinary centers are equipped to perform this test. The alternative is to have the dog’s veterinarian agree to treat the dog with a short course of an anti-convulsant drug, like phenobarbital, to see if this improves the situation. Owners must be informed of safety issues involved and advised of what must be a guarded prognosis. Even one rage attack per year can be one too many.

Other possible manifestations of dogs with seizures include fly snapping, tail chasing, abnormal ingestive behavior, and paroxysmal fear. Look alike conditions that must be ruled out before a diagnosis of partial seizure can be made include attention-seeking behavior, canine compulsive behavior, and an assortment of other medical conditions. For example, a dog that is circling may have a brain tumor; a dog displaying abnormal ingestive behaviors may have anemia or a gastrointestinal

problem. It's best to involve the local veterinarian right from the get-go to rule out any or all of these medical causes of aberrant behavior before embarking on a retraining program.

### *Canine Cognitive Dysfunction*

Only relatively recently recognized, canine cognitive dysfunction is the canine equivalent of Alzheimer's disease in people and the signs are quite similar too. Affected dogs tend to be at least ten years old and display signs such as disorientation, altered social interactions, sleep disturbances and/or a breakdown of housetraining. Disorientation takes the form of getting stuck behind furniture, standing at the wrong side of the door to go out, vacuous staring, and failure to respond to verbal cues or name. Altered interactions with family members includes soliciting less attention, not wanting to be petted, and less enthusiastic greeting behavior. Sleep abnormalities involve sleeping more in a 24-hour period and sleeping less and more fitfully at night. A breakdown of housetraining where there is no medical explanation is a cardinal sign of this condition and is, all too often, the *straw that breaks the camel's back* of the owner's patience. A customized form is available on the Pfizer Animal Health website which allows owners to check boxes and get a rough idea whether their dog is heading in the direction of canine cognitive dysfunction or not. It is especially helpful to fill in the checklist more than once and note increasing impairment, though sometimes the condition is evident right from the start. Canine cognitive dysfunction is not simply normal aging but is a pathological condition in which plaques of a protein, beta amyloid, are deposited between nerve cells in the brain. This is what causes the mental perturbation and the degree of pathological change (post mortem) correlates well with the behavioral change. The deposition of amyloid plaque is now thought to be instrumental in human Alzheimer's disease also.

The changes that take place in the brain of dogs with canine cognitive dysfunction are many but include decreased release of a neurotransmitter called dopamine. Dopamine is a vital neurotransmitter that essentially connects thought

with action. Too little dopamine causes Parkinson's disease in people and is probably responsible for the sluggish behavior of dogs with canine cognitive dysfunction. Fortunately, a treatment is now available in the form of a drug called Anipryl® which works by preventing the breakdown of dopamine, vastly enhancing its action. The results of treatment can be quite spectacular and can buy affected dogs several months or more of quality existence. Other things that can be done to help combat aging changes are to switch to a prescription diet, Hill's b/d (available only from veterinarians) and suggest to the veterinarian that (s)he considers other innovative strategies to combat cognitive dysfunction such as the addition of supplements like acetyl L-carnitine, coenzyme Q10, or even Resveratrol. Melatonin given at night will also help an old-timer sleep through and, in addition, has antioxidant effects which some think prolong active life.

### *Nocturnal Separation Anxiety*

This condition is easy to confuse with canine cognitive dysfunction because nighttime anxiety attacks are a feature of both conditions. However, dogs with nocturnal separation anxiety exhibit no signs of cognitive decline, quite the reverse they appear anxious and hyper vigilant and, temperamentally, are somewhat on the sensitive side. Frequently, dogs with nocturnal separation anxiety have shown some mild separation anxiety earlier in their lives but suddenly, on reaching the ripe old age of ten, twelve, or fourteen, the wheels fall off and the dog can no longer handle being alone at night when deprived of the awake attention of his owners. In all cases of this pathetic problem that I have encountered, once cognitive dysfunction and noise phobia have been ruled out, the cause has been some painful medical condition that has not always been obvious on initial presentation. Clearly this is a situation where the vet should be involved immediately to try and determine the underlying cause of the anxiety. Causes I have found in the past include brain tumor, bone tumor, bladder tumor, eye tumor, and severe arthritis of the spine. Note that "tumor," a.k.a. cancer, figures prominently in the list of causes. So common is

nocturnal anxiety in people with cancer that there is even an outpatient handout on what to expect and how to deal with it. So it is with dogs. Their pain seems much worse at night when there is nothing else to distract them from it, so they become exceptionally needy. The obvious solution is for the veterinarian to find and remove the offending cause of the problem but this is not always possible. Sometimes palliative treatment with medications to reduce pain and anxiety is all that can be done while owners prepare themselves for a difficult decision.

#### *Rapid Eye Movement (REM) Behavior Disorder*

Rarely dogs present with violent movement disorder accompanied by vocalization and/or perambulation and wanton aggression arising midst a deep sleep, in fact the REM phase of sleep, which is the dreaming phase. One such dog I saw would wake from a deep sleep, barking and growling, sometimes with his eyes shut attacking his own blanket and shaking it in a predatory way or he would get up and uncharacteristically go after his owners or the other dog in the house. Within minutes the problem had resolved and the dog was its normal contrite self. There are only two possible explanations for this type of behavior disorder, either REM sleep disorder or a partial seizure (which we have dealt with previously). There is no point in trying to train this out of a dog as it is a medical problem. Veterinary treatment ranges from the use of a Valium®-type drug, Klonopin, which seems to have specific anti-REM behavior disorder effects, or anti-depressants. Treatment is not always 100% effective but can substantially reduce the frequency and intensity of these troubling nocturnal attacks.

#### *Attention-deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)*

Opinions vary about whether this condition actually exists in dogs. Some behaviorists believe it is really quite common, as it is in children, but others do not believe in it at all. I believe it does occur but that it is rare. It is common to misdiagnose ADHD in a dog that is reactive or just plain overactive for genetic or managerial reasons. True ADD is a veterinary diagnosis made

by observing a paradoxical (calming) effect to the administration of stimulants like Ritalin®. The test is easily done in hospital where the dog is observed for a couple of hours after the administration of oral Ritalin®. A calming effect plus reduction of the heart rate and respiratory rate confirms the diagnosis. Normal (non ADD) dogs become agitated and somewhat hyper when given Ritalin®. One dog I heard of could be barely be restrained during a walk and ended up pulling his owner's pants down. That was a first!

#### *Narcolepsy*

Dogs with narcolepsy fall asleep at the drop of a hat, more specifically, at the sight of food or exposure to some exciting event or opportunity. Common in Dobermans, Poodles, Labradors, and Dachshunds, it is caused by a single recessive gene (hypocretin-receptive 2) which prevents molecules called hypocretins from facilitating the wakeful state. Treatment is with either Ritalin®, Provigil (a drug that has been shown to reduce excessive daytime sleepiness), or anti-depressants.

#### *Liver Shunts*

Certain breeds, including the miniature schnauzer, Yorkshire terrier, Irish wolfhound, Cairn, Maltese, Australian cattle dog, retrievers, and old English sheepdog are predisposed to congenital vascular shunts that cause blood coming from the intestines to bypass the liver instead of going through it. Consequently, unprocessed toxins, in particular, ammonia, reach the general circulation unmodified causing a variety of behavioral and physical signs ranging from inappetence to disorientation, circling, pacing, and staring. Some dogs become considerably worse a short time after eating a meal, particularly one high in protein. There is no way to train a dog out of any of these behaviors so it is important for trainers to suspect this curveball diagnosis because of the odd assortment of clinical signs and immediately to steer the dog on to the local vet for treatment. Sometimes shunts can be treated surgically or managed medically but other times they are overwhelming and will eventually lead to the demise of the affected dog.

### *Lethal Acrodermatitis*

This rather specific disorder appears only in bull terriers. It is called lethal because affected dogs usually die young if not put to sleep first. The term *acrodermatitis* refers to inflammation of the lower extremities of the limbs, in particular the paws, which become secondarily affected with bacteria and fungi. Signs of the full blown condition are really unmistakable that include stunted growth and aggression even in very young pups. Along with the skin problems, affected dogs also have difficulty in swallowing and often get aspiration pneumonia. The message to trainers here is that if you are presented with an undersized, aggressive bull terrier pup in a puppy training class, it is probably a good idea to turn it over to a local vet immediately for a thorough physical examination and blood tests.

### *Lissencephaly*

This is a rare condition in dogs that, to my knowledge, has only been reported in Lhasa Apso's. The condition is one in which the normal vermiform corrugation on the surface of the brain are absent leaving it with a smooth, unwrinkled surface. This serious neurological problem causes affected dogs learning difficulties and visual deficits that owners sometimes don't recognize. It is often the fact that affected dogs are almost impossible to houstrain that first brings them to the attention of a canine behavioral professional or vet.

### *Other Medical Causes of Behavior Problems*

The list of medical problems leading to the behavioral abnormalities compiled above is not comprehensive. Any painful condition can affect behavior in a variety of ways, including increased irritability and aggression as well as the nighttime anxiety referred to earlier. Certain infections, most notably rabies, also affect behavior in a variety of ways and should be considered when a dog's behavior is quite different from the run-of-the-mill cases that we all see on a daily basis and is extreme or dysfunctional. Finally brain tumors, which occur most commonly in older dogs, can cause profound personality changes and a plethora of behavior disorders. It is almost a rule of thumb that if you

see a behavior problem arising for the first time mid to late life in a dog that *some medical problem* underlies it.

### *Conclusion*

While it is not a trainer's job to be fluent in medical matters and it is not legal for them to make diagnoses or institute medical treatments, it is nevertheless imperative for them to realize that not everything that appears behavioral necessarily is purely behavioral. Keeping an eye out for things that are out of the ordinary - extreme, unexpected, bout-like or just plain strange behavior - makes a valuable contribution to overall behavioral and health care management of the pet. As I said before, trainers are often in the front line when it comes to recognizing oddities in behavior and it is vital for them to know when to refer things to their medical colleagues.

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This article was first published in *The APDT Chronicle of the Dog*, copyright 2010. The Association of Pet Dog Trainers, [www.apdt.com](http://www.apdt.com).

## **AVSAB position statement on the use of punishment**

[http://www.avsabonline.org/avsabonline/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=80&Itemid=366](http://www.avsabonline.org/avsabonline/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=80&Itemid=366)

AVSAB's position is that punishment (e.g. choke chains, pinch collars, and electronic collars) should not be used as a first-line or early-use treatment for behaviour problems. This is due to the potential adverse effects which include but are not limited to: inhibition of learning, increased fear related and aggressive behaviours, and injury to animal and people interacting with animals. AVSAB recommends that training should focus on reinforcing desired behaviours, removing the reinforcer for inappropriate behaviours, and



addressing the emotional state and environmental conditions driving the undesirable behaviour. This approach promotes a better understanding of the pet's behaviour and better awareness of how humans may have inadvertently contributed to the development of undesirable behaviour. Punishment should only be used when the above approach has failed despite adequate effort as part of a larger training or behaviour modification program that incorporates reinforcement of appropriate behaviours and works to change the underlying cause of problem behaviour. AVSAB recognises that both positive and punishment require significant skill, effort and awareness on the owners part. Both must be applied as the animal is performing the target behaviour or within one second of behaviour to be effective. Additionally both work best when applied every time the behaviour occurs so that the animal is not inadvertently rewarded for undesirable behaviour during the modification process. If punishment is added to a modification plan, it should only be used if the owner has first demonstrated reasonable ability and consistency at rewarding appropriate behaviours and removing the reward for bad behaviour. If punishment is suggested as part of a complete behaviour modification plan, owners should not begin using it until they have ensured that the person helping them is able to articulate the major adverse effects of punishments, judge when these effects are occurring over the short term and long term, and can explain how they will reverse the adverse effects if they occur.

Punishment, or the use of aversives, force, coercion, or physical correction in order to change an animals behaviour is commonly used by the general pet owner and by many dog trainers. Some punishments are seemingly innocuous, such as squirting a cat with water when it jumps up on a counter or shouting "no" when your pet misbehaves. Other punishments, such as jerking a choke chain or pinch collar, throwing a dog down on its back in an alpha roll when it nips, tightening a collar around a dogs neck and cutting off its air supply until it submits, or using an electronic collar to stop a dog from barking are more severe. Punishment is frequently a first line or an early-use tool by both the general public and traditional dog trainers. While punishment can be very effective in some specific contexts depending on the individual animal, it can be associated with many serious adverse effects. These adverse effects can put the safety of the pet and the person administering the punishment at risk. Because of these safety risks, people recommending these techniques are taking a liability risk. Thus, just as anti-cancer drugs can be

effective in treating specific disease in individual but can cause serious side effects in those same individuals or when used inappropriately, punishment is fraught with difficulties.

The adverse effects of punishment and the difficulties in administering punishment effectively have been well documented, especially in the early 1960's when such experiments were still allowed. For instance, if the punishment is not strong enough, the animal may habituate or get used to it, so that the owner needs to escalate the intensity. On the other hand, when the punishment is For instance electronic bark collars can cause burn marks on dogs. Choke chains can damage the trachea, increase intraocular pressure in dogs this potentially worsening or contributing to glaucoma in susceptible breeds, cause sudden collapse from non-cardiogenic pulmonary oedema (water in the lungs) due to temporary upper airway obstruction, and cause nerve damage. The risk of damage is greater when the choke chain sits high on the dogs neck.

Even when punishment seems mild, in order to be effective it often must elicit a strong fear response, and this fear response can generalise to things that sound or look similar to the punishment. Punishment has been shown to elicit aggressive behaviour in many species of animals. Thus using punishment can put the person administering it or any person near the animal at risk of being bitten or attacked.

Punishment can suppress aggressive and fearful behaviour when used effectively, but it may not change the underlying cause of the behaviour. For instance, if the animal behaves aggressively due to fear, then the use of force to stop the fearful reactions will make the animal more fearful while at the same time suppressing or masking the outward signs of fear; (e.g. a threat display/growling). As a result, if the animal faces a situation where it is extremely fearful, it may suddenly act with heightened aggression and with fewer warning signs. In other words, it may now attack more aggressively or with no warning, making it much more dangerous. Perhaps one of the most compelling reasons to use punishment sparingly is that punishment fails to address the fact that the behaviour is occurring because it has somehow been reinforced- either intentionally or unintentionally. That is, owners tend to punish bad behaviours some of the time while inadvertently rewarding these same behaviours at other times. In this way, they accidentally set their pets up to receive punishment repeatedly by sometimes unintentionally rewarding the bad behaviour,

which is how the behaviour was learned in the first place. This inconsistency is confusing to the animal and can cause frustration and anxiety. Punishment also fails to tell the animal what it should be performing instead. Without an alternative appropriate behaviour the animal may have no option but to perform the undesired behaviour. A more appropriate approach to problem solving is to determine what is reinforcing the undesirable behaviour, remove that reward, and reinforce an alternative desirable behaviour instead. For instance, dogs jump to greet people in order to get their attention. Owners usually provide attention by talking or yelling, pushing them down, or otherwise touching them. A better solution would be to remove the attention by standing silently and completely still and then to immediately reward with attention or treats once the dog sits. This learning-based approach leads to a better understanding of our pets and consequently to a better human-pet relationship.

The standard of care for veterinarians specializing in behaviour is that punishment is not to be used as a first-line or early-use treatment for behaviour problems. Consequently the AVSAB urges that veterinarians in general practice follow suit. Additionally punishment should only be used when animal owners are made aware of possible adverse effects. The AVSAB recommends that owners work with trainers who use punishment as a form of behaviour modification in animal choose only those trainers who, without prompting:

1. Can and do articulate the most serious adverse effects associated with punishment
2. Are capable of judging when these adverse effects are occurring over the short and /or long term
3. Can explain how they would attempt to reverse any adverse effects if or when they occur.

**Definitions:** For the purpose of Position Statement and Guidelines on the Use of Punishment for dealing with animal behaviour problems, we have defined punishment as the use of force, coercion, or aversives to modify behaviour because this is what the general public understands punishment to be. The scientific definition of punishment is slightly different. The scientific definitions are important because pet product companies using punishment often incorrectly call it negative reinforcement in order to avoid the negative connotation of the word punishment.

**PUNISHMENT** is anything that decreases the likelihood behaviour will occur again

**REINFORCEMENT** is anything that increases the likelihood behaviour will occur again

*Both punishment and reinforcement can either be positive or negative, meaning they can have something added or removed.*

**POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT:** by adding something the animal wants, you increase the likelihood the behavior will occur again.

For instance, if a cat approaches your house and you put food out for it, it's more likely to visit your house again.

**NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT:** by removing something aversive, you increase the likelihood a behavior will occur again.

For instance, traditional trainers may teach dogs to fetch using "force retrieve" method. In this method, the handler says 'fetch' and then pinches the dog's ear until it yelps. As soon as the dog opens its mouth to yelp, the handler puts a wooden dumbbell in its mouth and stops the pinch. By doing so, he increases the likelihood that the dog will open its mouth and grab the dumbbell when he says, "fetch" the next time. Note the goal of this training is to teach the dog to grab the dumbbell

**POSITIVE PUNISHMENT:** by adding something the animal dislikes or finds aversive, you decrease the likelihood the behavior will occur again.

For instance, a common method for teaching dogs to stop jumping is to knee the dog in the chest when it jumps on you. Doing so will decrease the likelihood the dog will jump again. The goal of the technique is to stop a behavior from occurring, whereas the goal of negative reinforcement is to increase a behavior. Another example of positive punishment is the use of ultrasonic trainers to stop dogs from barking. When the dog barks, the device emits an ultrasonic tone that is theoretically loud enough to disturb the dog, so the dog stops barking.

**NEGATIVE PUNISHMENT:** by removing something the dog wants, you decrease the likelihood that behavior will occur again.

For instance, if your cat meows for attention, removing your attention until the cat is quiet will decrease the likelihood that she will continue meowing to get your attention. Or, if your dog jumps on you to greet you, stand quietly and

completely still, so it's clear you are ignoring him, will decrease the jumping behavior.

**POSITIVE PUNISHMENT AND NEGATIVE REINFORCEMENT INVOLVE AVERSIVES.** Of these four categories, both positive punishment and negative reinforcement fall under what the public thinks of as punishment. These are the two categories that involve the use of aversives, force, coercion or physical corrections to modify behavior. What's the difference between the two? Many companies refer to their products as negative reinforcement when they are actually punishment products because their goal is to stop a behavior by adding something the animal dislikes. For instance, ultrasonic anti-bark devices are punishment devices because their goal is to stop barking. Whether a technique is punishment or reinforcement depends on whether the predominant goal of the technique is to stop a behavior (punishment) or to increase it (reinforcement). In the case of negative reinforcement, it's important that the aversive should stop as soon as the animal starts behaving appropriately/

**VETERINARY BEHAVIOURISTS FOCUS AND PH.D.BEHAVIOURISTS FOCUS ON POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT COMBINED WITH NEGATIVE PUNISHMENT.**

Of these four categories, the two most used by veterinary behaviorists and PH/D behaviorists are negative punishment combined with positive reinforcement. That is they remove the rewards for the undesirable behavior, and then reward the appropriate behavior. For instance if a dog greets by jumping, they remove their attention (negative punishment) when the dog jumps, and when the dog sits or stands calmly, they reward the dog (positive reinforcement).

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## Further reading

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## Adverse Effects of Punishment

Punishment can be effective in specific cases, but it must be used carefully due to the difficulties of performing it properly compared to positive reinforcement and due to its potential adverse effects. The following is a description of the difficulties and adverse effects that one should be aware of when using punishment (aversives).

1. It's difficult to time punishment correctly  
In order for the animal to understand what it is doing wrong, the punishment must be timed to occur: while the behavior is occurring, within 1 second, or at least before the next behavior occurs.
2. Punishment can strengthen the undesired behaviour  
In order for punishment to affect a lasting change, it should occur every time the undesirable behavior occurs. If the animal is not punished every time, then the times it is not being punished, it is actually receiving a reward. Additionally these rewards are on a variable rate of reinforcement (i.e. inconsistent punishment), which may actually strengthen the undesirable behavior. Variable rate of reinforcement is a powerful reinforcement schedule that is used to maintain behaviors trained with positive reinforcement. The animals know the reward will occur eventually, but since they don't know which time the reward will come, they keep performing the behavior with the expectation of an eventual reward. Thus the animals become like gamblers playing the slot machines.
3. The intensity of the punishment must be high enough. For punishment to be

effective, it must be strong enough the first time. If the intensity is not high enough, the animal may get used to it (habituate), so that the same intensity no longer works. Then, the owner must escalate the intensity in order for the punishment to be effective. No matter

when it is administered, punishment may cause physical harm or fear when used at the required intensity for learning to occur.

4. Punishment may cause physical harm when administered at high intensity. Many punishments can cause physical harm to the animal. Choke chains can damage the trachea, especially in the many dogs with collapsing tracheas or hypoplastic tracheas. They can also occasionally cause Horner's syndrome (damage to the nerve to the eye). Some dogs, especially brachycephalic breeds, have developed sudden life-threatening pulmonary edema, possibly due to the sudden upper airway obstruction leading to a rapid swing in intrathoracic pressure. And dogs prone to glaucoma may be more susceptible to the disorder since pressure by collars around the neck can increase intraocular pressure.

5. Regardless of the strength, punishment can cause some individuals to become extremely fearful, and this fear can generalize to other contexts. Some punishments may not cause physical harm and may not seem severe, but they can cause the animal to become fearful, and this fear may generalize to other contexts. For instance, some dogs on which the citronella or electronic collar are used with a preceding tone may react fearfully to alarm clocks, smoke detectors, or egg timers.

6. Punishment can facilitate or even cause aggressive behavior. Punishment has been shown to increase the likelihood of aggressive behavior in many species. Animals in which the punishment does not immediately suppress the behavior may escalate in their efforts to avoid the punishment to the point where they become aggressive. Those who already show aggressive behavior may exhibit more intense and injurious aggressive behaviors.

7. Punishment can suppress behaviors, including those behaviors that warn that a bite may occur. When used effectively, punishment can suppress the behavior of fearful or aggressive animals, but it may not change the association underlying the behavior. Thus, it may not address the underlying problem. For instance, if the animal is aggressive due to fear, then the use of force to stop the fearful reactions will make

the dog more fearful while at the same time suppressing or masking the outward signs of fear. Once it can no longer suppress the animal may suddenly act with heightened aggression and with fewer warning signs of impending aggression. In other words, it may now attack with no warning.

8. Punishment can lead to a bad association. Regardless of the strength of the punishment, punishment can cause animals to develop a negative association with the person implementing it or the environment in which the punishment is used. For instance, when punishment is used for training dogs to come when called, the dogs may learn to come at a trot or walk (or cower while approaching) rather than returning to the owners at a fast run as if they enjoy returning to their owners. Or when punishment is used during obedience competition training or agility training for competitions, dogs may perform the exercises with lack of enthusiasm. This negative association is particularly clear when the dog immediately becomes energetic once the exercise is over and it is allowed to play. Pets are not the only ones who can develop a negative association from this process. Owners may develop a negative association, too. When owners use punishment, they are often angry, thus the expression of force is reinforcing to them because it temporarily decreases their anger. They may develop a habit of frequently becoming angry with their pet because it "misbehaves" in spite of their punishment. This may damage the bond with their pet.

9. Punishment does not teach more appropriate behaviors. One of the most important problems with punishment is that it does not address the fact that the undesirable behavior occurs because it has been reinforced— either intentionally or unintentionally. The owner may punish the bad behavior some of the time, while inadvertently reinforcing the bad behavior at other times. From the dog's view, the owner is inconsistent and unpredictably forceful or coercive. These characteristics can hinder the pet/human bond. A more appropriate approach to problem solving is to focus on reinforcing a more appropriate behavior. Owners should determine what's reinforcing the undesirable behavior, remove that reinforcement, and reinforce an alternate appropriate behavior instead. This leads to a better understanding of why animals behave as they do and leads to a better relationship with the animal.

## Voting on Motions at AGM.

No postal votes were received.

Motion 1: Constitution Clause 10.1: Para 1. Full Member (proposed changes to wording)

Full member means any adult person who provides training services and agrees to abide by standards and guidelines promulgated by the Association. This level of membership includes a listing in the membership directory, reduces fees to official Association events, subscription to the newsletter, use of the APDT logo on marketing literature and voting privileges.

To be replaced with:

Full member means any person who provides dog training services **and/or any adult person who has an interest in the field of dog training** and agrees to abide by standards and guidelines promulgated by the Association. This level of membership includes a listing in the **trainer's** directory, reduced fees to official Association events, subscription to the newsletter, use of the APDT logo on marketing literature, **eligibility to stand for the Association Committee** and voting privileges.

An amendment to the motion was proposed and accepted:

"Full member means any adult person 18 years or over who provides dog training services and /or has an interest in the field of dog training and agrees to abide by standards and guidelines promulgated by the Association. This level of membership includes a listing in the trainers directory reduced fees to official Association events, subscription to the newsletter, application for the use of the APDT NZ logo on marketing literature, eligibility to standard for the Association Committee and voting privileges."

Motion 2: Constitution Clause 10.1: Para 2. Associate Member (proposed changes to wording)

Associate member means any adult person who has an interest in the field of dog training and agrees to abide by the standards and guidelines promulgated by the Association. This level of membership includes reduced fees to official Association events, subscription to the newsletter and voting privileges.

To be replaced with:

**Associate member means any adult person who has an interest in the field of dog training.** This

level of membership includes reduced fees to official Association events, subscription to the newsletter and voting privileges.

An amendment to the Motion was proposed and accepted:

"Associate Member means any person who has an interest in the field of dog training. This level of membership includes reduced fees to official Association events and subscription to the newsletter."

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