



FEATURES

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President's Message

Hi All,

Welcome to another newsletter jam packed full of info! Articles on play, operant conditioning, classes in the outdoors and attentive dogs. Hope you enjoy.

The committee has decided that only individual full members will be given permission to use the logo; not clubs or businesses. For more details see page 16.

Vice-president Helen Reynolds has left for Manchester, England to pursue a masters in Animal Behaviour. We wish her all the best and hope she will be back so we can claim her as ours!

Look forward to seeing many of you again at the conference and hopefully I will find some spare time to have a chat !

Susie Londer

Teaching Dogs to be Calm and Attentive

By *Sheri Gintner, MS*

This article first appeared in 'Chronicle of the Dog' March/April 2009

Training dogs with certain temperaments, learned behaviors or training histories pose problems for professional dog trainers and even more so for handlers who are not professionals. Most dog owners and new shelter volunteers are just gaining experience with dog training and find that the techniques they are familiar with don't work with these "training challenge" dogs:

Anxious dogs will not follow food lures to earn a reward for assuming a position and cannot be physically moved into position.

Stressed, over-stimulated and under-exercised dogs do not focus on the handler long enough to earn rewards for anything more than the most basic behaviors. Many shelter dogs fit into this category. Long-term shelter dogs have learned to ignore the handler and charge outside for a potty break and some exercise. They frequently course around at the end of the leash, bark and pull as if no one was at the other end.

Second-hand dogs can experience interference from previous training. This is especially a problem when the dog's history includes correction-based training. I have observed volunteer trainers at the shelter training young pit bulls and pit bull mixes. As many people do, these handlers cue the dogs to sit and attempt to lure them. Several of these dogs have moved away and turned their backs to their handlers. I hear this type of behavior labeled as stubbornness. What I think is that the dog has previous experience with the cue and it had been paired with an aversive such as a flurry of negative verbiage, e.g., "no, no, no" or physical punishment.

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The dog physically moves away and steels itself against what could be a painful consequence.

Non-professional handlers enjoy training more when training techniques are step-by-step and give quick results such as intense focus in a short amount of time. These handlers, especially clients that pay us an hourly rate, are happy when they can do a large part of the work on their own with a hand-out guiding them. The behavior they have taught the dog during the hour should be used as a starting point for other learning. For example, to desensitize the dog to touch and handling, or to desensitize and counter-condition the dog to strange dogs or people.

Lilian Akin, CPDT and I have been using the Calm and Attentive Protocol with dogs that are training challenges through free pit bull training seminars that we give in conjunction with Hellobully (www.hellobully.com.) We have also used this protocol in our private practices and in working with dogs at shelters in Pittsburgh. The protocol starts from the point of the dog earning rewards for *not* doing anything wrong. In *Click to Calm*, Emma Parsons (2004) clicked her Golden Retriever for breathing (which meant he was not barking at another dog.) The idea is that the dog could be *clicked, praised, and rewarded* for not barking (breathing), not moving and looking at the handler. If *the dog is not doing anything wrong, he is doing something right*. It seems simple, but this point is important for dogs and handlers to experience some success quickly.

By the time the handler has worked through barking, coursing around at the end of the leash, and scanning the environment to develop a dog that is still and attentive, the dog has had a good reward history. The dog is more prone to be attracted to the handler than to the environment. Food and praise have trumped the “goings on” in rest of the world.

With the “training challenge” dogs we can capture or shape behaviors that we like more easily than we can command the dogs to execute behaviors. Also, a dog choosing to exhibit a behavior without prompting makes positive training even more appealing to the handlers.

Most dogs will sit eventually, but raising the criteria for a reward from attention to sit is

problematic for the “training challenge” dogs. These dogs simply stop working or exhibit dangerous behaviors when they get frustrated. Many Golden Retrievers, pit bulls, cattle dogs, and German Shepherd Dogs have gripped our clothes and arms. Simply ignoring this gripping does not stop the behavior—often the gripping gets more frenzied.

When the handler raises the criteria the dog needs lots of information. Simply clicking/treating for attention then standing there looking at the dog (or worse yet ignoring the dog!) until it does something else can be dangerous. In *Excel-erated Learning* Pamela Reid (1996) discusses using a secondary reinforcer to indicate that the dog is on the right track. By withholding the click/food reward until the dog meets the new criteria while at the same time praising the dog while it continues to pay attention, these dangerous “frustration bursts” can be reduced. Praise for remaining attentive keeps the dogs focused on the handlers, reduces outbursts, and eventually the dogs sit and earn a jackpot of praise and rewards.

After three 10-reward practice sessions of sit, we change the criteria to lying down. The same process is repeated, i.e. the dog is praised for attention and sitting but receives no food. Click/treat is only delivered for lying down. Down is the final behavior in the calming protocol and other training builds on it.

The Calm and Attentive Protocol

The Setup

1. Work on-leash in a quiet room without other dogs present. If this is not possible, move the dog as far away from other dogs as you can. Distractions will cause the process to take longer.

2. Have on hand at least three different high value food rewards to use as primary reinforcers. Note that it is often impossible for a trainer to meet with a handler and dog multiple times a day for three to five minute training sessions. Many dogs have worked for one full hour and complete this entire protocol. By using the least delicious food first, as the dog tires and is sated, better rewards will keep the dog’s interest.

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3. Stand still and give the dog about three feet of the leash. By standing on the leash or tethering the dog, movement can be minimized.

Rewarding the Cession of a Unwanted Behavior

4. Criteria #1 – Dog stops barking/straining/moving. These unwanted behaviors tend to stop almost at the same time. When the dog stops barking, praise the dog and click and feed him. If the dog is not looking at you, no food should be delivered. Continue with praise for no barking and lack of movement. Deliver food only when the dog turns to face you. We develop two secondary reinforcers here—praise and click—because we want to use them separately later. The click is used as a marker and the praise will be used as a way to encourage the dog to keep going.

5. Count out 10 food rewards. While the dog is standing still and facing you, praise and click/treat. The dog is not getting a jackpot, but instead he is having ten different opportunities to listen to the praise and get a food reward while being still.

6. Release the dog: Free! Hold onto the leash and change positions by taking three large steps in any direction and repeat from step three.

7. Change position once more and repeat steps three through six.

Changing the Criteria

8. Criteria #2 – Dog sits and is attentive. By now the dog has learned that it can earn reinforcement by being still and looking at you, the handler. The dog has earned at least 30 rewards for this behavior. With this reward history you can continue to praise the dog for being still and paying attention which encourages the dog. Withhold the click and food rewards until the dog sits.

9. When the dog sits, click and treat him with a better food reward. You are now giving the primary reinforcer for the sit, and not for the dog simply looking at you anymore. The exception to this rule will be when you start working in exciting situations, e.g. in the presence of other dogs or in high traffic areas of the training center or shelter. Then it may be all the dog can do to look at you!

10. Continue to reward the dog for sitting attentively—click/treat. Deliver 10 food rewards. Change positions and reinforce the dog 10 more

times. Change positions one more time and deliver 10 more rewards for sitting attentively.

11. If the dog gets up, do not command him with “sit.” Ideally we want the dog to choose to sit to get you to reward him. Continue to praise him for being still and looking at you until he sits again, then click and feed him.

12. If the dog knows how to sit from previous training experience, this all goes very quickly. However, I have worked dogs that could not sit due to physical injury or that had never learned to sit. Eventually, these dogs lie down completely—click/treat to capture that behavior. Shaping the dog into a sit or a down position by catching them making slight movements in the right direction has worked for the remaining dogs.

The Final Criteria

13. Criteria #3 – Dog lies down and looks at you. After 30 rewards for sitting, change your criteria. Facilitate the dog’s continued participation using praise for attention and sit, but withhold the click/treat until the dog lies down. Reward the dog for lying down using the best food rewards you have. Reward him with 10 pieces of food then move to different spaces in the room as above.

14. An occasional handler has reverted to teaching their dog to move down with a lure because the dog was not choosing to lie down on his own in the timeframe the handler had in mind. Because the food is in hand for a long period and it is natural for the dog to nip and paw at that hand, luring is not advised. Shelter volunteers who want to use food as a lure for teaching have first taught the dog to be gentle using the work of Bauman (2006).

Generalizing the Behavior - Owned Animals

1. Working in the home, with the leash on and food in pocket, stand still and when your dog sits praise him. When he lies down give him a food reward or two or three—the idea is that you are going to vary the number of food rewards you deliver. You want your dog to start understanding that he will get treats for being calm and attentive—he may get many or he could earn a few. Vary the amount of time between the treats by 3 to 10 seconds to build patience.

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2. After your dog is calm for a while, tell him “Free!” and walk to another quiet room in the house. Your dog should lie down and pay attention—then you should give him treats and then free him. Walk in to a third room—maybe a busier room—and repeat. Expect your dog to get your cue to do nothing! Work in the kitchen, the back porch, the yard, the sidewalk, etc.

3. Take every opportunity to have your dog calm. Ideally, you should require your dog to be calm anytime your dog wants something and at times when your dog would be too aroused/excited naturally.

Before you release your dog to eat

Before the leash is on and before he goes out the door

Before he leaves the yard for a walk

When you stop to talk to someone on a walk.

Before your dog gets to play, greet people, etc.

Before throwing the ball (or tugging) and after the dog gives it back to you

Generalizing the Behavior – Shelter Dogs:

1. Working with the dog on leash and rewards in your pocket, expect the dog to be calm in many places around the shelter. When you dog sits praise him, when he lies down give him a food reward or two or three—you are going to vary the number of food rewards you deliver. You want the dog to start understanding that he will get treats for being calm and attentive—he may get many or a few. Vary the amount of time between the treats by 3– 10 seconds to build patience.

2. Work in a room with a few dogs. Work in the hallway when it is empty and in the lobby when it is not busy and then when it is. Being busy with people traffic can be more or less exciting than if the lobby is busy with animal traffic. Work in the adoption rooms, and out on the sidewalk both near and far away from the shelter.

Calm and Attentive is the Beginning

For most dogs the Calm and Attentive Protocol is just a starting point. For dogs that are overly excited during greeting we teach them that they can touch the stranger, then they immediately turn

back to their handler for a reward as was explained in Long (2008). Dogs that dislike handling are rewarded for remaining calm while their bodies are touched.

Teaching shelter dogs to become calm in order to gain access to what they want dramatically changes their behavior. We train shelter dogs to be calm to gain access to a bowl of treats in the middle of the floor—then the dogs take turns heeling up to the bowl to eat. Our dogs learn they can approach people and dogs after lying down, rather than bouncing, barking, and lunging toward a dog or person. Having a dog become calm is particularly useful for keeping tension as low as possible during meetings with the pets of potential adopters.

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Sheri Gintner, MS works with the dedicated staff and volunteers at the Western PA Humane Society to improve the adoptability of shelter dogs.

Through the WPHS Super 7 Program bully breeds receive dog-friendly obedience training to bring out the best them. Sheri provides at-home training and classes for all breeds through Good Dog! Behavior Training. She can be reached at sheri@gooddogbehavior.org.

*The APDTNZ
Newsletter—a great
read*



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Article 8 Operant Learning Continued

By Susan Smith

This article first appeared in the Chronicle of the Dog April 2009 issue.

In the last issue we discussed the operant quadrant and extinction, two very important concepts in operant learning. In this issue, we'll discuss some more concepts of operant learning.

Primary & Secondary Reinforcers

A primary reinforcer is any reinforcer that is not dependent on another reinforcer for its reinforcing properties. (Chance, Learning & Behavior, 5th ed., pg 453.) There are actually very few primary reinforcers. Chance states that primary reinforcers are those that are not dependent on their association with other reinforcers. (Chance, Learning & Behavior, 5th ed., pg 149.) So, primary reinforcers are food, water, sexual stimulation, and shelter from the elements. Chance also states that some weak electrical stimulation of certain brain tissue and certain drugs can be primary reinforcers. It's also probable that movement is a primary reinforcer.

A secondary reinforcer is any reinforcer that has acquired its reinforcing properties through its association with other reinforcers. Also called conditioned reinforcers. (Chance, Learning & Behavior, 5th ed., pg 454.) Creating a conditioned reinforcer is a respondent operation. We use respondent learning to condition the secondary reinforcer, but we then use that respondent conditioned reinforcer in operant procedures.

Many dog trainers have been taught that a primary reinforcer is the reinforcer that follows a secondary reinforcer. For instance, you click the clicker then throw a ball – the click being the secondary reinforcer and the ball being the primary reinforcer. The ball is actually a secondary reinforcer. A ball has no intrinsic value to a dog; before it has value it must be associated with something else. For most dogs the association that makes a ball reinforcing is chasing. We can absolutely use conditioned reinforcers to maintain behavior, once they have acquired a strong reinforcement history.

So, how do we change the way we think about reinforcers? If you are in the habit of using the terms "primary" and "secondary" when talking about reinforcers, you can just train yourself to drop the word "primary" entirely, and change the word "secondary" to "conditioned." So, instead of saying "the click is the secondary reinforcer and the ball is the primary reinforcer," you can say "the

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click is the conditioned reinforcer which precedes the ball,” or “the ball is reinforcing to the dog, so we condition the click to the ball . . .”

Another thing we’ve learned as dog trainers is that a secondary reinforcer must always be followed by a primary reinforcer. Well, as the ball example illustrates, this is not exactly true, either! We can condition a reinforcer so strongly that it becomes reinforcing in and of itself. Now, I need to qualify this somewhat. We cannot condition just anything, and the reality is that the things we can condition to this level are usually surrounded by other stimuli which help that conditioned reinforcer maintain its effectiveness.

Let’s take that ball as an example. When we throw the ball, some of the other things going on around the dog that make the ball reinforcing are chasing and happy interactions with the thrower. These are the things that keep that ball reinforcing.

We can take this concept to the next step and help our clients condition a word that will be reinforcing to their dogs. When training obedience classes, I don’t use a clicker in class, but I use clicker principles. I have my clients use a marker word and I explain the above concept. Over time, that word gains reinforcing qualities and remains a potent reinforcer with just occasional backup from food (or perhaps no food backup at all!). When the dog hears that word, the surrounding environment – Mom’s happy, and all’s well with the world – helps that reinforcer maintain its reinforcing properties.

Finally, I don’t want to end this discussion of reinforcers without making sure that everyone understands that it is reinforcers that maintain behavior. We’re very used to thinking about reinforcers when we want to train a new behavior or increase a behavior, but we must also use reinforcers to maintain a behavior.

Shaping

First, I want to clarify some terminology. Because the term “free shaping” is so common in the animal training world, I distinguish free shaping from shaping. When I refer to shaping, I am simply talking about training through successive approximations and that may include luring, capturing and molding. When I refer to “free shaping,” I am talking about shaping using no luring or molding – only capturing.

This is, again, a concept that we are very familiar with. Almost all training uses shaping; it’s very rare for a behavior to be perfect the first time. As trainers, we can’t help manipulating a behavior into a form that is more pleasing to us! We must credit B.F. Skinner for our understanding of shaping principles. Although it seems obvious now, it wasn’t always so. Here is a quote from Thorndike

which describes his attempts to train a behavior:

I would pound with a stick and say, “Go over to the corner.” After an interval (10 seconds for 35 trials, 5 seconds for 60 trials) I would go over to the corner (12 feet off) and drop a piece of meat there. He, of course, followed and secured it. On the 6th, 7th, 16th, 17th, 18th and 19th trials he did perform the act before the 10 seconds were up, then for several times went during the two-minute intervals without regarding the signal, and finally abandoned the habit altogether. (Chance, Learning & Behavior, 5th ed., pg 153.)

This quote shows us how much we’ve benefited from those who went before us. And it also shows the benefit of the systematic study of behavior – taking measurements, compiling data, and better understanding how behavior works. Thorndike was not able to train the dog to go to the corner on cue. Undoubtedly, the dog went to that corner more frequently than he had before this exercise because he has been reinforced in that corner, but it never became a “trained” behavior. It took Skinner’s systematic study to turn that exercise into something that today any of us can do in just a few minutes.

When shaping, we take the behavior *closest* to what we want and *shape* it into the behavior we ultimately want the animal to do. So, let’s say you want that dog to go to the corner on cue. Probably the first, closest behavior the dog will display is looking or taking a step in that direction. So, we reinforce that look or that step. Then, once we have the dog looking or stepping in the direction of the corner reliably, we raise the criteria.

Everyone has their own measure of reliability, but there is research to fall back on. The Brelands and Bailey came up with the 80% rule – in other words, when an animal is correctly performing the behavior 80% of the time, you can raise the criteria. This means that, if the animal is performing the behavior correctly 80% of the time **to your criteria**, you can safely raise the criteria without risking the behavior falling apart.

The key here is “to your criteria.” You must define your criteria to train efficiently. If you don’t know what the criteria is, how can you expect the animal to know? Most people have a vague idea of what they want. “I want the dog to sit on cue.” But they haven’t defined what that really means – how long after you give the cue; does it make any difference how he sits (i.e., over on a hip, straight, etc.); does he have to be in any particular position in relation to the trainer; does he have to be any specific distance from the trainer; and so on.

This is where shaping comes in. We start with fairly loose criteria. The dog needs to sit within “x”

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seconds of the cue, in any position, facing any direction, and at any distance. Once we get the sit, we can then refine it through shaping. Once the initial criteria is met (80% compliance), we can require something new. Not too much, but something!

Shaping is the foundation of training, and something every trainer should know how to do. Anyone who has read Karen Pryor's book, "Don't Shoot the Dog" is familiar with the game "101 Things to Do With a Box." This is an introduction to shaping. Personally, I have a hard time with that game, because I like to have a specific goal, but it's a good place to start. The first time I tried that game, I changed it a bit and did set a specific goal – the dog had to sit inside the box. In my beginning trainers' course, everyone is required to shape a behavior. It doesn't have to be a complex behavior, but it is a requirement. I urge anyone who has not tried shaping to give it a go – it will add a very valuable tool to your training toolbox.

In the next issue, we'll discuss punishment – what it is and why we need to understand it.

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.

The APDTNZ Newsletter is now available in hard copy. If you would like to receive the next newsletter by post please let Jo Thorne our membership co-ordinator know by sending an e-mail to: membership@apdt.org.nz

Outdoor Adventure:

"Leaving Tracks All Over Town"

By Lauren Fox

This article first appeared in the Chronicle of the Dog March/April 2008

Outdoor Adventure is an 8-week course that focuses on applying practical behaviors learned in the classroom in a different outdoor environment every week. This class allows instructors to work with dog/handler teams on proofing and performing behaviors while experiencing novel distractions. It also creates a great opportunity for continued socialization with other dogs, animals, situations and humans of all kinds. Lastly, Outdoor Adventure offers the perfect opportunity for a dog training business to be seen by the community, in addition to helping you build and maintain clientele.

I created the Outdoor Adventure class for several reasons:

I noticed that many clients were having trouble making the connection between the classroom and real life scenarios. This course allows them to practice using the cues taught in the classroom out in the "real" world, with coaching still available to them.

Creating a course like Outdoor Adventure gave me a chance to get us out of the classroom. Colorado is majestic! We frequently experience beautiful weather, in addition to having gorgeous environments to hold class. Your city or town is bound to have its own unique and enjoyable settings for you and your class to explore.

Outdoor Adventure allows me the chance to educate the public on multiple levels. It is highly common for me to encounter situations in which I get to teach the general public appropriate ways to greet dogs. A side benefit of this is that I also have the chance to teach both the dogs and their handlers how to deal with the general public, such as having them reinforce polite greeting behavior by their dogs. I also get the chance to give examples to the public about positive reinforcement training. I often am asked if the dogs in our class are getting "special training". This opens the door for me to explain that they are mainly companion dogs who are being trained to be good pets in public without the use of corrections, choke chains etc. Lastly, I have the opportunity to educate the public on all breeds of dogs, including "bad breeds". The public witnesses well-behaved dogs with educated owners, and oftentimes they will end up interacting with breeds that they otherwise might have avoided in the past.

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Outdoor Adventure is a great class for dogs with competition in their future. Many competition dogs are awesome in the training facility, but lose their brains once they are in the dog show environment. This class allows the competition dogs to work on behaviors with various distractions without being in the ring, saving your clients from wasting money on NQ's due to these distractions. It's like a fun match every week!

From a business perspective, Outdoor Adventure is a very advantageous class to offer. It is a great way to market your training program to the public without costing you anything extra. My clients and I are stopped by the public during every Outdoor Adventure class and are told "I want my dog to be that well behaved in public" or "My dog could never handle being out in public like that because he *fill in the blank*". This is a perfect opportunity for me to hand out business cards or brochures outlining the type of classes and programs that I offer. Most of my clients don't mind the interruption- in fact they are usually willing to carry my business cards and love the attention they get from the public!

Another great way to get the word out about your training is to have the class, or at least the instructor and assistant, wear t-shirts with your business name and logo on them. Some people may not want to come up and interrupt the class, so if your number or logo is readable on the shirts from a distance they can jot it down, or even memorize it if it is catchy. (For instance our website is www.haveanicedog.org, which is easy for most people to remember).

Outdoor Adventure is also one of the most popular advanced classes I offer. I can always rely on it to provide dependable income, and have never had to cancel a course due to lack of interest. The reality is that people want their dogs to behave in public. Dog owners, for whatever reason, take their dog's behavior as a personal reflection of themselves. If their dogs are well behaved, that says something in their minds about them as a person, and vice versa. This class allows them the chance to practice their "performance" of good public manners without the pressure of doing it in front of family, friends, or an agenda.

Clients also love Outdoor Adventure because of the opportunity it affords them to explore their town for dog-friendly places. Many clients take this class because they enjoy spending time with their dogs and want to find as many "cool" and accepting places to take them as possible. A lot of clients end up going to places in Outdoor Adventure that are out of their comfort zone, finding superb dog-friendly places that they never would have found on their own.

A wonderful bond tends to emerge between the

clients in the Outdoor Adventure classes, thanks to spending so much time with these other like-minded dog people. Oftentimes clients who take Outdoor Adventure together end up becoming, at the very least, doggie playmates and at the most, life long friends. The old adage goes "dogs that play together, stay together", so it is not surprising that the clients who become friends in Outdoor Adventure end up taking other classes together, and tend to encourage each other to stay in classes. Another side benefit to your training business!

Clients love to take this class over and over again! That is rare to find in a curriculum. The difference with Outdoor Adventure is that they get to decide during Week 1 where the class will be visiting every week. Therefore, they can take the class over and over again and visit old favorite spots, in addition to exploring new and different places. It is also important to note the difference in the dogs and handlers between the first time they take the class and the second, third, fourth etc.- it is amazing! This is one of those classes where you are really see improvement, which is also rewarding for you as a trainer.

One of the most obvious reasons why clients love Outdoor Adventure is because of the opportunity to proof behaviors. This is something you really can't achieve in the classroom to the extent that is needed. Regardless if you are working with clients whose aspirations are to compete with their dog or to have reliable companion dogs, there is real benefit in having a dog that can focus and follow through, regardless of distractions. In Outdoor Adventure, we get to practice this every week on different surfaces, surroundings and weather.

So now that I've given the reasons why you should consider adding a class like Outdoor Adventure to your curriculum, stay tuned for my next installment of "Outdoor Adventure: Leaving Tracks All Over **Your** Town", in which I will outline how to set up the course, and list special considerations before you start.

Lauren Fox CPDT, has been the Executive Director of All Breed Rescue & Training, in Colorado Springs, CO since 1998. She presented on Outdoor Adventure: Leaving Tracks All Over Town, at the 2007 APDT conference in Portland, OR. She is happy to be contacted at fox711711@msn.com.

Canine Play Intrigues Scientists and Trainers

By Karen B. London, Ph.D., CAAB, CPDT

Scientists tend to be happy when there are questions that they can explore with their research, whereas dog trainers tend to be pleased when they get answers that they can apply to their own dogs and to clients' dogs. As both a scientist and a dog trainer, play is the perfect topic to ponder. As an active area of research for scientists and a hot topic of interest for dog trainers, play provides an overwhelming abundance of both questions and answers.

In recent years, more scientists are studying play than ever before. For trainers, it can be frustrating that so much remains mysterious about play, but to scientists, there is mounting excitement about the research being done in the area of play behavior. Play is like that: It divides, it confuses, it stimulates.

Interpretations of playful behavior can vary between people, even those who are observing the exact same behavior at precisely the same time. When I was living on Catalina Island off the coast of California, I remember sitting in the howling wind at the edge of the cliffs surrounding our cove with a friend watching a gull careen around in the strong air currents. I said, "I bet that gull is thinking, 'Wheeee!'" and my friend replied, "That's funny, I was just imagining that poor bird thinking, 'Oh, #*% *#%*!'"

An effective way to get some healthy disagreement is to attempt the radical feat of defining play. The brilliant Harvard scientist E.O. Wilson, when speaking of attempts to define play, once said, "No behavioral concept has proven more ill-defined, elusive, controversial, and even unfashionable." (Wilson 1975). Why is a category of behavior as ubiquitous as play so hard to define? Problems with defining play stem from the fact that play is a large, diverse category of behavior that we seem to be able to recognize quite easily, such that definitions add no clarity to our

understanding of it. In fact, without trying to define it, Wilson gives an excellent and useful description of play when he states, "we know intuitively that play is a set of pleasurable activities, frequently but not always social in nature, that imitate the serious activities of life without consummating serious goals." (Wilson 1975).

Most people who write about play include the following definition and then discuss the difficulties with this definition. I will stick to this pattern myself. Play is "all motor activity performed postnatally that appears to be purposeless, in which motor patterns from other contexts may often be used in modified forms and altered temporal sequencing (Bekoff & Byers 1981). Although it may be the best we've got, the difficulties with this definition are numerous. It is difficult to distinguish behavior that "appears to be purposeless" from behavior that does not meet this criterion. Another problem is that this definition fails to exclude behavior associated with stress in caged animals such as excessive self-grooming and pacing, which is not regarded as play by anyone. All definitions of play seem, ironically enough, to suck the joyful fun out of it entirely.

The fact that there is great value in play is well recognized, and we in the dog community can be proud of our emphasis on this important aspect of our dogs' lives. Until recently, the scientific community was not nearly so supportive of play as a legitimate area of interest and play was considered unimportant and even frivolous. As dog trainers, we have long been well aware of all the purposes of play in the lives of dogs. Play has value for physical and mental exercise, attention work, proofing cues of any kind, socialization, fun, learning about boundaries and manners, working on specific skills such as retrieve and drop, learning that people and dogs are fun, developing bite inhibition, and for practicing emotional control. As dog trainers, we know that for most dogs, playing with other dogs and playing with other humans enhances quality of life and improves overall comportment.

Ironically, despite the well-known practical benefits of play and its great value, the purpose of play generally from an evolutionary perspective remains controversial. That play does have a purpose is NOT controversial. It makes no sense from an evolutionary perspective that such an energetically costly and risky set of behaviors would continue to exist unless it has great value. Furthermore, it is well documented that individuals of many diverse species who are deprived of the opportunity to play as youngsters are often profoundly maladjusted and antisocial as adults.

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FOUNDING STATEMENT

The aim of the APDTNZ is to give credibility to affiliated members and confidence to the public for all dog related issues by encouraging and supporting the continuing education of members.

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One of the most compelling current theories about the purpose of play is that it allows animals to train for the unexpected. Spinka, Newberry, and Bekoff (2001) proposed a completely new structural framework for the study of play and the interpretation of play behaviors. Their hypothesis is that play allows animals to develop physical and emotional responses to unexpected events that result in suddenly experiencing a loss of control. They assert that the function of play is to provide animals with opportunities to increase the versatility of movements that are necessary for recovering from loss of balance, falling over, and other sudden shocks. They also propose that play functions to improve animals' emotional abilities to cope with stressful situations that arise unexpectedly. They believe that in order to train for the unexpected during play, animals actively create and seek out situations in which they are in situations that unexpected events can precipitate. They deliberately relax control over their own movements or put themselves into positions or situations that are not advantageous. Their theory explains why play consists of rapid change between sequences of behavior with controlled movements much like those used in other situations and movements that cause a temporary loss of control. They discuss that this type of switching between forms of behavior is cognitively demanding and that it results in a complex emotional state that is generally referred to as "having fun."

As we in the field of dog training become collectively more interested in and knowledgeable about science in general, and in ethology in particular, new information and ideas are available to us that our predecessors were not privy to. In recent years, scientists have learned much about play that is relevant to us, as dog trainers. The study of play signals is an especially active area of research into play. Because play can cause injury and fear, animals often signal their intent to be playful. Play signals are the way that dogs announce to each other that play is about to commence or that they wish to play. Play signals mean that the behavior to follow is playful and that there is no intent to harm. Many behaviors in play are borrowed from other contexts, especially the actions of chasing, biting, and shaking. These actions are likely to be misinterpreted, and play signals help maintain social play by clarifying the intentions of the dog about to perform them.

Bekoff (1995) found that dogs most often perform play bows at the beginning of play sequences in order to initiate play and also right before performing an action that is likely to be misinterpreted by a play partner. For example, play

bows in the middle of play sessions frequently preceded actions such as biting with rapid side-to-side shaking of the head. Signaling in this way implies that the dog giving the signal knows both what action he or she is about to perform next, and is also aware of the potential effect of this behavior on a play partner. The ability to be aware of the future, of the mental states and of the potential future actions of another individual requires advanced cognitive abilities that are only relatively recently recognized to exist outside of primates.

Scientists like Bekoff are using play as a tool for learning more about our dogs' minds, and by observing our own dogs play, we dog trainers can learn more about who they are as individuals and

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WANTED! Newsletter Editor
Would you like to become more 'hands on' involved with APDTNZ? No experience required. Contact president@apdt.org.nz for more info.

**Deadline for contributions to be included in
Issue 9, July/Aug/Sept 2011
1st August 2011**

APDTNZ Advertising Policy

- APDTA will not advertise training services or courses.
- All material in the newsletter must be in line with the APDTNZ Vision and Mission Statements and the Code of Ethics
- Placement of material in the newsletter is at the discretion of the Editor and the Committee
- No paid advertising is accepted
- Members may place merchandise ads free of charge in the newsletter, but must include a discount for members
- Events may be advertised in a maximum of 5 lines
- Positioning of ads is at the discretion of the Editor and Committee
- The publication of any advertising material does not constitute the endorsement of the APDTA for the event of merchandise.

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as a species. It is very gratifying to have the beliefs that many dog trainers have long held about dogs' advanced cognitive abilities being investigated with serious scientific inquiry at long last. Bekoff (1998) and Bekoff and Allen (1998) discuss that the social play observed in domestic dogs reveals much about their cognitive abilities. To be able to play with each other, individuals must have the cognitive abilities necessary to negotiate cooperative agreements, they must be able to request permission to engage in certain activities, to place their behavior in an imaginary context, and perhaps to make mental attributions to others. Dogs may be ascribing mental and emotional states to their play partners, which yields the exciting insight that dogs likely have their own concept of self, a capacity which has mainly been explored only in the higher primates.

Research about play signals includes a 2001 study by Rooney, Bradshaw, and Robinson that investigated dogs' responses to human play signals. They found that humans do communicate a playful intent to their dogs and that their various behaviors when doing so can be considered interspecific play signals. Additionally, they found that the success of human signals at instigating play was unrelated to the frequency of use. For example, patting the floor as well as whispering were both often used by people attempting to initiate play with their dogs, but dogs showed a low rate of playful responses to these signals. In contrast, running towards or away from the dog as well as tapping their own chest were two human signals that were highly effective at initiating play with dogs but neither was used frequently by participants in the study. Two of the successful signals used by people to initiate play with their dogs, the play bow and the lunge, were more successful at eliciting play when accompanied by play vocalizations, including the whispering that was not particularly effective at play initiation when it was used as a signal on its own. As dog trainers, their study indicates that we should pay attention to whether or not the way we try to entice our dogs to play is effective and that we should consider adding vocalizations to our visual play signals.

In another study about play between dogs and humans, researchers found that dogs scored higher in obedient attentiveness after play sessions with people than before the play session (Rooney & Bradshaw, 2002), suggesting that there is good evidence behind the common wisdom that training after a play session can be highly effective. In the same study, the researchers found that relative status of a human-dog pair was unaffected by whether or not dogs were allowed to "win" at games such as by being allowed to

maintain possession of the toy at the end of playing tug. However, the most playful dogs in the study exhibited significantly higher amounts of playful attention seeking when they were allowed to win. These findings indicate that there is no problem from a status point of view in allowing a dog to "win" at games, but it may be better not to allow it with those playful dogs who become relentlessly pushy about seeking more play time.

In a third study about play between dogs and humans, Rooney and Bradshaw (2003) found no evidence of any role for play in determining the status relationship of dogs and humans, but their results do suggest that games with a lot of physical contact may affect attachment. Specifically, their study found a correlation between games with a lot of physical contact and low separation-related behavior such as staying by the door through which their owner just left or vocalizing in the absence of their recently departed owner. In other words, dogs who played games involving a lot of physical contact were less likely to exhibit the behaviors that show up in dogs who are distressed about being separated from their owners. Since the study only addressed correlations, it is impossible to know whether certain games influence our dogs' attachment to us, but it is worth considering that increased physical contact, including during play, may impact our relationship.

Although a lot of research lately has focused on dog-human play, some excellent studies of dog-dog play are being done. For example, Bauer and Smuts (2007) conducted a comprehensive study of play between pairs of dogs and found that contrary to popular belief, dogs can maintain a playful atmosphere even if they are not equalizing their behavior according to the 50:50 rule so commonly discussed as essential for appropriate play. They observed significant departures from symmetrical behavior in pairs of dogs in which the dogs differed greatly in either status or in age. They found that role reversals were common during chasing and tackling, but never during mounts, muzzle bites or muzzle licks. Their results suggest that when assessing play between pairs of dogs, the specific dogs and specific behaviors being observed need to be taken into account when deciding whether any asymmetries in play are potentially problematic. It is worth noting that, although breed and breed types were not a variable investigated in this study, the pairs did differ in terms of breed and/or breed type. The study contained 55 dyads made up of 23 individuals. There were 13 dogs of mixed breed status, and ten were purebred, representing six breeds.

Perhaps the most profound insight into play that

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scientists can offer dog trainers comes from the evidence that the exhibition of playful behavior is tightly linked with good relationships with others. This is especially true of parents and their relationships with their children, among other close relationships. In a variety of primate species, including chimpanzees and macaques, the warmest, most loving and sensitive mothers who share especially close relationships with their children are also observed to be especially playful with their children (Fagen 1984, pp. 350-351). Across a variety of species, parents who are most playful with their children have the best relationships with them. Given the loving and fulfilling emotional relationships so many of us share with those of our family members who happen to be dogs, scientific evidence combines with our own experience to lead us down the same path. All that we know about play behavior takes us towards a better understanding and appreciation of the value of play and towards sharing a closer, ever more loving relationship with our dogs.

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Karen B. London, Ph.D., CAAB, CPDT lives and works in Flagstaff, Arizona and is a canine behaviorist and dog trainer specializing in the evaluation and treatment of serious canine behavior problems in domestic dogs. An expert in canine aggression and play-related issues, she has written widely about training and behavior. Dr. London is the author (with Patricia B. McConnell, Ph.D.) of Feisty Fido: Help for the Leash-Aggressive Dog, Feeling Outnumbered: How to Manage and Enjoy your Multi-Dog Household, and Way to Go! How to Housetrain a Dog of Any Age. She is currently a columnist for The BARK Magazine, has served for three years on the Animal Behavior Society's Board of Professional Certification for Applied Animal Behaviorists, and is busy writing her next book, which will be about playing with our dogs, and co-authored by Patricia B. McConnell, Ph.D.

From the Library: **Click for Joy! Dog Writer's Association of America - Best Training & Behavior Book of 2003** Clear and accurate answers for over one hundred commonly asked questions about clicker training in one essential reference. Click for Joy! is packed with information experienced trainers and newcomers alike can put to use immediately. Whether you are sorting out the principles and methods of clicking for yourself or need answers for your students, Click for Joy! is the source for facts and advice that you will turn to again and again.



D'For Dog Case Study - Coda

Breed: Miniature Schnauzer
Sex: Spayed Female
Age: 2 years

Issues

Becomes destructive and barks when left home alone.

Background

Coda's owner phoned us on the day they arrived home to discover that Coda had ripped up the linoleum floor of the laundry she had been confined in while they were out. The owners were understandably upset, as the estimate to repair the damage to the laundry was around \$3,000!

Coda was being left alone on week days for around 5 hours a day, usually with free access to the majority of the house and the backyard. Over the previous year when Coda was left alone she was causing some minor damage by chewing the carpet and furniture, and recently the neighbours were starting to complain about Coda's barking in the backyard.

Not wanting to further upset the neighbours and in an effort to minimise damage to the house, on this particular day Coda was confined to the laundry. She had never been confined to such a small area before.

Observations

Coda was clearly a nervous little dog. She was reluctant to approach us until we had been in the house for some time and did not welcome being touched or looked at. During our initial session we were able to see for ourselves the damage to the laundry floor. A large patch of linoleum had been ripped up near the door, strongly suggesting that Coda had panicked and was trying to dig her way out.

Coda was being verbally reprimanded when her owners came home and discovered that something had been chewed.

We also discovered that her owners were making a huge fuss of her when they arrived home and got to experience this when one family member arrived half way through our session. There was a lot of high pitched excited talking, pats and general 'fuss', to the point that Coda became uncomfortable as the greeting was so over the top.

Treatment

Setting aside the laundry incident, and taking into account Coda's previous history of only minor chewing and barking while left alone, we weren't convinced that this was full blown separation anxiety. However, because the damage in the

laundry indicated that Coda had panicked at being confined we advised her owners not to leave her in this space again. We chose the kitchen/living room as the area to leave Coda when her owners left. This area didn't allow Coda access to the backyard which is where she seemed to do most of her barking.

We tackled the 'home alone' issues in several parts:

Things to do when left alone: Coda needed something to do other than fret and bark while she was home alone. We gave her owners a list of things to set up for her to occupy her time – leave breakfast and yummy treats in stuffed kongs and treat balls, hide small food treats around the room and organise a visitor to come at lunch time to let Coda outside for a toilet break and a play on days where she would be left for more than 4-5 hours.

Amp up physical and mental stimulation: We encouraged Coda's owners to increase her physical and mental exercise with more frequent walks, car rides, short training sessions and games.

Getting used to being alone: We wanted Coda to get used to spending short amounts of time alone even when her family were at home. We got her owners to practice this by throwing some treats into a room for Coda and shutting the door behind them, initially for very short periods of time (around 1-2 minutes). We asked them to very gradually increase the time they left Coda alone and to carry out the exercise with as little fuss as possible - no talking or excited greetings.

Home coming: We sensed that Coda had some anxiety about her owners coming home due to the exuberant and over the top greetings they gave her on arriving home. We asked them to change their greeting by saying hello quietly and avoiding cuddles, pats or prolonged eye contact until they had been home for 5 minutes or so. When they did give her attention we asked them to be very calm and quiet. We had them practice leaving the house and coming back in the front door with as little fuss as possible several times a day.

Ignore any destruction: We didn't want to increase Coda's anxiety towards being left alone and so asked her owners to ignore any chewing incidents that they discovered on arriving home. We explained that it would only add to her fretting if she learnt that her owners coming home predicted a reprimand.

As Coda is generally unsure and nervous about novel environmental stimuli, her on-going program

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includes careful and slow desensitisation to stimuli such as visitors to the house and novel aspects of her environment while she is out on walks.

Result

Thankfully Coda has not caused any more destruction to her family's house! With some very simple exercises and desensitisation the family managed to teach Coda that their departure was a good thing. The family's departure has now come to signal breakfast and treat time for Coda and any food left out for her is being eaten while the family are out. A few changes to the family's behaviour have also helped to reduce Coda's anxiety about them coming and going.

Jo Thorne MSc
Paula Thorne MSc
D'For dog Training

Committee Members

Dennis Nuberg media@apdt.org.nz
Diana McKay secretary@apdt.org.nz
Helen Reynolds vicechair@apdt.org.nz
Jan Voss events@apdt.org.nz
Jo Thorne membership@apdt.org.nz
Kate Butler librarian@apdt.org.nz
Margarette Marshall treasurer@apdt.org.nz
Paula Denby-Gibbs conference@apdt.org.nz
Simon Goodall education@apdt.org.nz
Susie Londer president@apdt.org.nz

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Homemade cleaning recipes

Dogs count on us to take care of them. House-keeping is one of those things. There are so many toxins in our cleaning supplies that if ingredients were listed on their labels, we would never, ever buy them. Most contain a potpourri of toxins, including artificial fragrances, acids, bleach, ammonia, and more. These toxins can be inhaled or absorbed through the skin, and can cause illness, including neurological problems, hormonal issues, and cancer. Some contain antibacterial agents that can actually make bacteria stronger. Many are made using petrochemicals, further depleting oil supplies. All wash into our soil and water.

According to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) studies, indoor air pollution may be 2 to 5 times higher and sometimes more than 100 times higher than outdoor air pollution. Indoor air pollution is caused by many things, not just cleaning supplies, but this is an area we can easily control, while saving money. Some air pollution sources, such as air fresheners, release pollutants continuously. Other sources, including cleaning products and pesticides, release pollutants intermittently. Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are one culprit. According to the EPA, "VOCs are chemicals that are found in many household products, including...aerosol sprays, cleansers and disinfectants, moth repellents and air fresheners... and dry-cleaned clothing. VOCs evaporate into the air when these products are used or sometimes even when they are stored. VOCs irritate the eyes, nose and throat, and cause headaches, nausea, and damage to the liver, kidneys, and central nervous system. Some of them can cause cancer."

In 2008, the Washington, D.C. based Environmental Working Group conducted a study to determine the effects of cleaning solutions on our pets, and found high levels of toxic chemicals from household cleaners in dogs and cats. For dogs, blood and urine samples were contaminated with 35 chemicals, including 11 carcinogens, 31 chemicals toxic to the reproductive system, and 24 neurotoxins.

Obviously the cleaners, waxes, sealants, and stain barriers we use on our floors and carpets are critical – dogs spend a lot of time lying, sitting, and walking 'barefoot' on these areas, and occasionally find something to lick off the floor – or off their paws. And clearly the detergents we use on their dishes and beds can be hazardous. Less obvious,

but just as dangerous, are most commercial cleaners, flea bombs and sprays.

The good news is that using non-toxic cleaners is easy, they can clean as well as the commercial products, and they cost much less. With a little preparation (1/2 hour at the grocery store, 1/2 hour at the health food store, and 1/2 hour of mixing up your own cleaners), you can have a sparkling house that will make your mother-in-law proud; make your home safe for you, your children and your pets; and save money.

Laundry powder - This recipe requires Dr. Bronner's castile soap and I suggest you buy a 1ltr bottle which will last a very long time. You will need 1 cup of washing soda, 1 cup of baking soda. 60ml castile soap and 10 drop of lavender oil. Put the washing soda in the food processor and reduce the lumpy crystals as much as you can. Slowly drizzle in the castile soap while the processor is still running to create a white frothy paste. Then add the baking soda and the lavender oil and continue to process until you have something resembling white clay. Keep it in an airtight container and use 2 tablespoons for an average load.

Disinfectant - Put 1/2 cup of vinegar and 1/4 cup of rubbing alcohol in a spray bottle. After your pet is removed from his eating, sleeping or eliminating area, spray judiciously. Both the alcohol and vinegar act as disinfectants and, because the alcohol evaporates very quickly, it is a non-toxic cleaner.

Food Bowls - Baking soda has many uses. In cleaning, it can replace the sometimes toxic commercial abrasives such as Ajax. Sprinkle baking soda in the bowl and, using a good wet sponge with some abrasion to it, scrub away. Use it also in the toilet and sink. Add a touch of vinegar and you'll be disinfecting, too.

Happy Cleaning!

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.

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.

Code of Ethics for Association of Pet Dog Trainers New Zealand

As a member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers New Zealand I will:

- Make the long term welfare of the dog of primary importance bearing in mind the needs of society.
- Employ only humane, dog-friendly techniques in the training of dogs and I shall develop and apply training programs in line with the APDTNZ's mission of advocating dog-friendly training. Refer to Appendix 1 (Source APDT UK Code of Ethics).
- Please also refer to Appendix 2 AVSAB Position Statement: http://www.avsonline.org/avsonline/images/stories/Position_Statements/Combined_Punishment_Statements.pdf and Appendix 3 Delta Professional Standards for Dog Trainers <http://www.deltasociety.org/Document.Doc?id=374>
- Promote conscientious dog ownership and incorporate what it means to be a socially responsible dog owner into training programs.
- Promote a nurturing human/canine relationship between owner and dog.
- Treat all dogs and clients with respect, taking into account their physical and emotional well-being and respecting clients' wishes regarding the training of their dogs.
- Continue professional development by reading relevant material, attending conferences, workshops and seminars, and pursuing other education opportunities in order to provide a service based upon sound scientific principles and current best practice.
- Be honest and trustworthy in my dealings with clients.
- Refrain from giving guarantees regarding the outcome of training, because there is no sure way to guarantee the cooperation and performance of all parties involved and because the knowledge of animal behaviour is incomplete. This should not be confused with a desire to guarantee client satisfaction with professional services.
- Represent accurately the source of any information and disseminate to clients and members of the public.
- Respect the confidentiality and privacy of clients.
- Be respectful of colleagues and other professionals and not falsely condemn the character of their professional acts.
- Not advertise myself as a member of the APDTNZ Inc or use the logo of the APDTNZ without prior approval of the Association.
- Not represent myself as a spokesperson for APDTNZ Inc without prior approval of the Association.
- Refer any and all suspected medical problems to a veterinarian before beginning or continuing a relationship. The relationship between dog trainers and vets must be cooperative for the benefit of dogs and their people.
- Perform services to the best of my ability within the guidelines of this code of ethics.

Appendix 1

There can never be a definitive list of equipment and techniques that the APDTNZ does not endorse. The following list gives examples of some of the equipment and training methods which are covered by the Code of Ethics not to be used as training tools in a dog training class:

- Pet corrector – emits a hiss of cold air
 - Dog stop – emits a high pitched sound
 - Remote controlled spray collars
 - Automatically triggered spray collars
 - Antibark collar – emits spray directed onto dog's skin (including new product jet master)
 - Training discs
 - Liquid sprays
 - Loud noises – inc. rattle cans/bottles/chains/keys
 - Throw stick/chain
 - Strong smelling substances – inc. smelling salts/bite back
 - Any electronic training collar
 - Any check/choke chains, prong or spike collar
- Punitive methods not to be used in a dog training class:
- Pinching – ears/feet/toes
 - Hitting
 - Biting (of dog)
 - Alpha roll
 - Any manhandling that causes pain or discomfort.

Alteration

This code may be altered by the committee of the Association provided that the proposed alteration is notified to all members and their comments requested and duly considered by the committee.

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The logos may be used in a professional manner on the user's business cards, stationery, literature, advertisements, and storefront window or in any other comparable manner to signify the user's membership of APDTNZ. The logo may never be used independent of the term "FULL MEMBER". Notwithstanding the foregoing, the logos may not be used in any manner that, in the sole discretion of APDTNZ: discredits APDTNZ or tarnishes its reputation and goodwill; is false or misleading; violates the rights of others; violates any law, regulation or other public policy; or mischaracterizes the relationship between APDTNZ and the user, including by but not limited to any use of the logos that might be reasonably construed as an endorsement, approval, sponsorship or certification by APDTNZ of the user, the user's business or organization, or the user's products or services, or that might be reasonably construed as support or encouragement to purchase or utilize the user's products or services.

If a member changes their membership level to associate, they must immediately discontinue use of the logo.

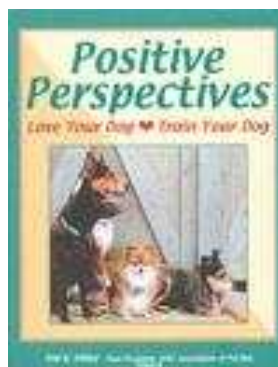
The logo can be displayed on the front page of a full members website with the following text beside it: *Are you up to date? Heard of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers New Zealand? Check the link.*

Permission to use the APDTNZ logo is given to individual full members only, and not to a business or club. If the business or club has a number of staff/volunteers, the logo can only be displayed in connection to the full member, i.e. in the 'about us' section of the website.

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Positive Perspectives, Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog and Positive Perspectives 2, Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog by Pat Miller.

In the interest of full disclosure, I should mention that I'm a huge Pat Miller fan and follower, and my own training philosophy and methods are very close to Pat Miller's. When I first decided to become a dog trainer and study behavior, I started digging through stacks of books about dog training that all proclaimed to be the "essential" dog training book, and whose authors all claimed to be the ultimate authority on training and understanding dog behavior. There is a LOT of conflicting information out there, and even more so now that there are several dog-training shows on TV. It's hard for both prospective trainers and dog owners to know what is the real deal and what works best. Pat Miller is the Real Deal! One of the most respected Positive Trainers in the world, she's what is referred to as a "Crossover Trainer," which means she started out years ago training her dogs with aversive, or punishment-based methods, and later changed to reward-based methods. That experience gives her great perspective and a solid foundation for arguing why Positive Training works better. She has tried both and seen the difference in the results. Not only is Pat incredibly skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced, she's also an excellent instructor and writer who is able to convey - in very simple, practical, and user-friendly terms - the information a novice trainer/owner needs. That's the power of her books. I once saw a review of another one of her books, written by a dog trainer, who said that if everyone bought Pat Miller's books, we (trainers) would be out of work. I agree. Positive Perspectives has a very clear table of contents in the front, and a comprehensive index in the back that makes it easy to look up a specific topic. The book is also laid out in very easy, short sections that make it a breeze to read from beginning to end. Part One, for instance, literally begins with How Dogs Think and Learn. BAM - this is key information to understanding how to be successful in training a dog. It immediately sets the trainer's expectations at a realistic level and helps them understand a dog's limitations and capabilities. Part Two addresses puppy training and house training; there's also a chapter on problem behavior solving and a section on basic training that is very step-by-step and easy. This is an absolute must-have book for any new dog owner, or anyone who is interested in committing to Positive Training. **Rikke Brogaard**