Welcome to the second bi-annual newsletter from the Behavior team at The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine. Our goal is to inform veterinarians and other animal professionals regarding new research efforts in behavioral medicine at the college as well as to provide recommendations based on current science.

In this issue we are delighted to share current behavior and welfare publications from the College, as well as to offer insight into environmental enrichment, helping pets survive the coming holidays, and product and book reviews. We encourage you to share information provided in this newsletter with clients, colleagues, and anyone with an interest in animal behavior.

For more information about behavior programs at the College of Veterinary Medicine, please visit: vet.osu.edu/Behavior, vet.osu.edu/AnimalWelfare and vet.osu.edu/CommunityPractice.

**HOT OFF THE PRESS!**

The following citations provide a snapshot of recent and in press behavior and welfare publications from the College:


**Behavior Textbook Review/Recommendation**

*Handbook of Behavior Problems of the Dog and Cat* by Gary Landsberg, Wayne Hunthausen, and Lowell Ackerman

This text offers an expansive introduction and review of common behavioral problems in dogs and cats. It is a well-organized book that begins with behavioral development and problem prevention and then walks the reader through treatment protocols for most of the behavior problems seen in practice today. The text ends with an extensive psychotropic drug dosage appendix, as well as appendices for product information, internet resources, and client handouts. Also included is a CD-ROM from which most handouts can be printed and distributed to clients.
Environmental Enrichment
by Traci Shreyer

WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT?
Environmental or behavioral enrichment is the process of manipulating an animal's environment to increase physical activity and species-typical behavior that satisfies the animal's physical and psychological needs. It reduces stress and therefore promotes overall health by increasing an animal's perception of control over their environment and by occupying their time. Techniques utilized to enrich an environment generally fall into five categories:

- Food based enrichment
- Sensory enrichment
  (sight, smell, touch, hear, taste)
- Novel objects
- Social enrichment
- Positive training

Do remember that to be effective, the animal can not be made fearful and must actually utilize or engage in the activity for it to be enriching.

WHO NEEDS IT?
All captive living animals need environmental enrichment whether they live in a zoo, shelter, laboratory, sanctuary, or your home. Animals at risk for and with chronic behavioral or physical problems are in special need of environmental enrichment.

HOW DO I GET STARTED?
Think about the behavior that your animal might exhibit in the wild. For example, cats might stalk, hunt, and catch small prey items punctuated by climbing, running, and resting during a normal day. Look for activities that encourage or mimic these:

- **Food based enrichment** - hide a small ball filled with food so she can hunt and find it. It will zip around the house like a mouse when batted and pushed, encouraging chasing, catching, and consuming behaviors.

- **Sensory Enrichment** - place a fleece covered (touch) perch near a window so that your cat can climb up and observe (sight, hear, smell) birds and squirrels at a strategically placed feeder.

- **Novel Objects** - offer your cat empty cardboard boxes and paper bags to climb on, around, and through to explore one afternoon.

- **Social enrichment** - multi pet households where the animals are in stable healthy relationships offer valuable opportunities to be social with their own species. Cross species socialization between you and your cat are important too. Avoiding punishment and creating predictable interactions for your pet are critical.

- **Positive Training** - when it is fun, everyone likes to learn something new. Be sure sessions are not frustrating, and never use techniques that make your pet fearful. For more information see [www.clickertraining.com](http://www.clickertraining.com)

There are many environmental enrichment items on the market for almost every species imaginable, but also allow yourself to get creative. No one knows your animal better than you!
1. Try to maintain a consistent and predictable daily schedule, even though you may have time off during the holidays. For example, wake up, walk or play with your pets, and keep meals on a similar schedule as you would on work or school days.

2. Unplug the Christmas tree and block your pet’s access to it when you are not able to supervise. Lights and ornaments may look like appealing toys to pets, many of which may be dangerous if ingested or chewed. Other decorative items that are potentially toxic or dangerous include mistletoe, poinsettia plants, lilies, tinsel, electrical cords, gift-wrap ribbons and lit candles. Do not let them drink water in the base of your live Christmas tree if you have added plant preservatives.

3. Ingestion of holiday foods can cause foreign body / toxic reaction / pancreatitis. Inappropriate bones (e.g. turkey bones), chocolate, high fat foods, onions, macadamia nuts, raisins, and grapes are some foods that are very dangerous. Provide your dog with a special enrichment toy (i.e. Kong, Twist-n-Treat) during large holiday dinners to discourage begging and to prevent your pets from eating human food items that may be high in fat or contain chocolate. Your guests may not realize that certain foods are toxic for pets, so be sure to inform them before they may sneak your pet some treats.

4. If your pet does not do well with visitors, it may be best to board her if you are having a large gathering in your home during the holidays. If that is not possible, try to set up a safe, quiet room where stressors are minimized and visitors will not bother your pet. Enrichment toys, dog appeasing pheromone (D.A.P*), soothing music (Through a Dog’s Ear*), and a source of sound-blocking white noise may also encourage relaxation in this special room.

5. Some pets may not travel well and may feel more secure if left home with a pet-sitter, or boarded, rather than traveling with you over the holidays.
Referring a Behavior Case

The Behavioral Medicine Clinic at The Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center is led by Dr. Meghan E. Herron, board-certified by the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. The clinic offers services to owners of companion animals with behavioral issues, including, but not limited to, human-directed aggression, inter-pet aggression, separation anxiety, inappropriate elimination, fears, phobias, compulsive behaviors, and cognitive dysfunction.

An initial appointment for a dog usually lasts two to three hours, and one to two hours for a cat. If two or more pets are involved or if the behavior problem is complicated, the appointment is likely to last longer. Clients can be referred to the Behavioral Medicine Clinic website at vet.osu.edu/behavior for more details about the appointment and fees and to download the behavioral history questionnaire. They also may call 614-292-3551 for scheduling. Clients receive a $20 discount for returning their history questionnaire three days prior to their appointment.

Please fax medical records, including any laboratory or advanced diagnostic tests results to Dr. Herron at 614-292-1454 before the scheduled appointment date. We appreciate a brief synopsis and pertinent historical information from veterinarians or veterinary staff members who have worked closely with the patient. You will receive a copy of the discharge instructions following the patient’s appointment. Please feel free to contact Dr. Herron through our referral coordinator, Stephanie Yochem at 614-292-0950 if you have questions regarding a patient you plan to refer or have already referred to the Behavioral Medicine Clinic.

Current Research in Animal Behavior

The goal of my research project is to investigate the cognitive abilities of domestic dogs and wild canids, including wolves, coyotes and foxes. I am interested in the canine ability to solve problems, and to what extent breed, early socialization, temperament and familiarity play a role in their problem solving abilities.

My research interests in animal behavior and cognition began as an undergraduate researcher in OSU’s Department of Psychology, where I conducted projects in the fields of behavioral neuroscience and animal behavior and cognition. As I have become more familiar with my areas of research, I am more aware of the significance of behavior and cognition on overall animal health and well-being. Understanding how animals develop their cognitive abilities as a result of outside influences will not only inform us on how to optimize their environment, it will also assist with improving human-animal interactions. More research into the relationship between cognitive, behavioral and systemic health and well-being of animals is key area in the future of veterinary medicine, and I am excited to be part of it!

Students interested in similar animal behavior research may contact Dr. Croney at croney.1@osu.edu.

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF VETERINARY MEDICINE

Behavioral Medicine News: THE NEWSLETTER FROM THE BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE PROGRAM

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Book Review

By Emily Walz, Vice-president Behavior Club, class of 2012

Help for Your Fearful Dog: A step-by-step guide to helping your dog conquer his fears by Nicole Wilde, CPDT

A great resource for veterinarians and owners of dogs that range from nervous to fear aggressive, Help for Your Fearful Dog offers advice on living and interacting with fearful canines. The book is divided into five sections. In the first, Wilde walks the reader through causes of fear, anxieties, and phobias, and diagrams ways to identify or prevent them. Next, she discusses basic steps to establish the groundwork for working with a fearful dog, including environment, mental stimulation, exercise, and more. Readers next learn about key behaviors to teach the fearful dog, which are later integrated into detailed step-by-step instructions that are specific to particular phobias or anxieties. Fourteen common conditions are addressed, including thunderstorm phobia, veterinary visits, car rides, touch sensitivity, fear of strangers and crates.

Wilde writes at a level that is appropriate for the average pet owner, and takes time to define vocabulary such as positive reinforcement, counter-conditioning, and sensitization. She is thorough in her descriptions and methods, making this book a great ‘how-to’ guide for someone who wants to implement a change in their dog’s behavior, but does not know where to begin. At 395 pages, it is not a quick read, nor would this book be as useful for someone who prefers to skim only a chapter or two before launching into a new training program. Still, Help for Your Fearful Dog is a well-written resource that is worth recommending to owners of fearful dogs.

Product Review

By Margaret Crary, President Behavior Club, class of 2012

New Enrichment Toy: Premier Funkitty™ Egg-Cersizer™

As a busy student I am always looking for new ways to help my cats be more active, mentally stimulated, and keep them out of trouble, especially while I am trying to study. My cats were already using enrichment toys for meals, but with one on a dental diet I had a really hard time using his dry food in the toys: the food was too big to fit through the openings. So when Premier Pet Products® came out with their adjustable size and adjustable skill treat and food feeder, the Funkitty™ Egg-Cersizer™, in March 2010 I was excited to give it a try.

The Egg-Cersizer™ is an egg shaped treat and feeder toy with three adjustable holes along the side, and one hole, with plastic prongs that can be trimmed, in the bottom. The adjustable holes are great because you can tailor the toy to your cat’s kibble size and skill level. The mechanism to adjust the hole size is located at the top Egg-Cersizer™ so it can be adjusted after it is together, which is really handy when trying adjust the holes to the proper size. The egg shape is great; the toy rolls in a more unpredictable pattern than a round toy.

Both my cats, 3 years and 11 years, love this toy. I have one cat on small-sized dry food and the other on large-sized dry food and can use this one toy for both cats. My cats are also at very different levels when it come to energy and skill with enrichment toys, and I can accommodate them both by setting size and number of open holes differently for each of them. The biggest problem I have now is locating the Egg-Cersizer™ after they are through with it.

For those who currently free feed or have never used enrichment toys to feed their cats, the Egg-Cersizer™ comes with suggestions on how to transition to meals and how to transition from bowl feeding to using the enrichment toy to feed meals.

I love this toy and have recommend it to several friends who were looking for ways to increase their cats’ activity lever, give the cat something to do while they are gone all day, or just a way to combine two things cats love: food and play time!
I could barely contain my squeal of delight as I signed up to be a puppy kindergarten volunteer. As a first-year vet student, I spent most of my time hunched over a dog cadaver or hundreds of pages of notes. The irony of veterinary school was that my life now consisted of studying and lectures, instead of animals. I decided I was in desperate need of puppy kisses.

In behavior class we learned that the sensitive socialization period in a puppy’s life is between three to 12 weeks of age, because their brains exhibit plasticity which is not found later in life. The experiences a puppy has in this critical time period are extremely influential on their behavior for the rest of their life. I memorized this fact for the test and moved on, but I don’t think I really understood it until Puppy Kindergarten.

First, there was the sweet Yorkshire Terrier who was fearful of every person who approached her. In six short weeks she learned that approaching people and offering a sit caused bits of cheese to rain from the sky, and her confidence grew. Her worried owner learned not to protectively sequester her puppy, and instead set about finding new people every day to feed her puppy a treat.

Then, there was the hyper Labrador Retriever mix who had more enthusiasm than common sense. He learned that jumping up and nipping was not the way to get attention. This puppy didn’t just learn to offer a sit and wait, he learned that being patient paid off in the end. His owner changed from being skeptical of positive reinforcement-based training to being amazed at his puppy’s transformation.

I could go on forever. The ability of these puppies to learn and adapt so quickly amazed me. I felt privileged that these people shared with me this unique opportunity to shape their puppy for adulthood, and to witness the human-animal bond forge deeper every day.

And, yes, I did get those puppy kisses. Lots of them.

For more information about The Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center Puppy Kindergarten, please visit: vet.osu.edu/vmc/puppy-kindergarten