



# Behavior News



The Newsletter from the Animal Behavior Program

**Welcome** to the sixteenth edition of *Behavior News*, the newsletter designed to keep veterinary staff and other animal handlers up to date on current behavior recommendations for companion animals. In this issue we will introduce a new member of our team, give reviews and continue the discussion on socialization in puppies.

For additional resources on animal behavior at The Ohio State University, please visit: [vet.osu.edu/Behavior](http://vet.osu.edu/Behavior) and [vet.osu.edu/CommunityPractice](http://vet.osu.edu/CommunityPractice).

## Animal Behavior in Social Media

Social media is rapidly becoming the front-runner for delivering information and sharing knowledge. Check out the following veterinary-behavior-related pages and blogs:

Dr. Carlo Siracusa discusses the similarities between human and canine social behavior and emotions at the following link: [Dogs and Humans Have Similar Social and Emotional Brains](#)

Follow the legacy of Dr. Sophia Yin at Cattle Dog Publishing's page:

<https://www.facebook.com/cattleDogPublishing>

Reisner Veterinary Behavior and Consulting Services on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/ReisnerVetBehavior>

## In the News

Dr. Herron takes calls and questions on All Sides with Ann Fisher in support of the WOSU membership drive.

### [Learning About Dog Personalities](#)

Dr. Herron is featured in the Ohio State Alumni Magazine and answers pet behavior questions from fellow alums.

### [Questions for animal behaviorist](#)

Dr. Herron participated in Association of American Veterinary Medical Colleges' Diversity and Inclusion On Air, creating a podcast that discusses animal behavior in assistance animals.

### [Podcast](#)

Dr. Leanne Lilly from our Behavior service appeared on the Oct. 12th ABC 6 News pet segment to discuss fear in dogs at Halloween and how to address. [Click here](#) to watch.

## New Additions

### Welcome Dr. Maggie O'Brian



The Ohio State Veterinary Medical Center is pleased to welcome a new resident to Behavioral Medicine. Dr. Maggie O'Brian joined the team on July 15, 2018. Dr. O'Brian is no stranger to the Ohio State community. She completed her undergraduate degree in 2013 at Ohio State and then graduated from the Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine in 2017. She worked as a small animal practitioner at Rascal Animal Hospital during her post-graduation year. Her interests include geriatric canine and feline behavior, low-stress handling and canine aggression. She joins Dr. Leanne Lilly, who is in her third and final year of residency.

### Congratulations are in order!

Congratulations to our third-year resident, Dr. Leanne Lilly, for being invited to speak at the Veterinary Behavior Symposium in Denver this past July. She presented findings from her work entitled "Evaluation of Behavior Knowledge in First Year Veterinary Students: Pre- and Post- an *Introduction to Animal Behavior* Course".



## Book Review by Meghan E. Herron, DVM, DACVB

### *The Domestic Dog: Its Evolution, Behavior, and Interactions with People, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*

The long-awaited second addition of *The Domestic Dog: Its Evolution, Behavior, and Interactions with People* provides an in-depth, scientifically documented exploration into the role of canines in today's society. Covering topics such as evolution, domestication and even beyond the development of each breed, this text is a review of what science has uncovered.

Not many studies on dog behavior go without mention in this edition. The editor, James Serpell, provides a compilation of science-based chapters from leading experts in the fields of ethology, genetics, cognition and companion animal behavior and welfare.

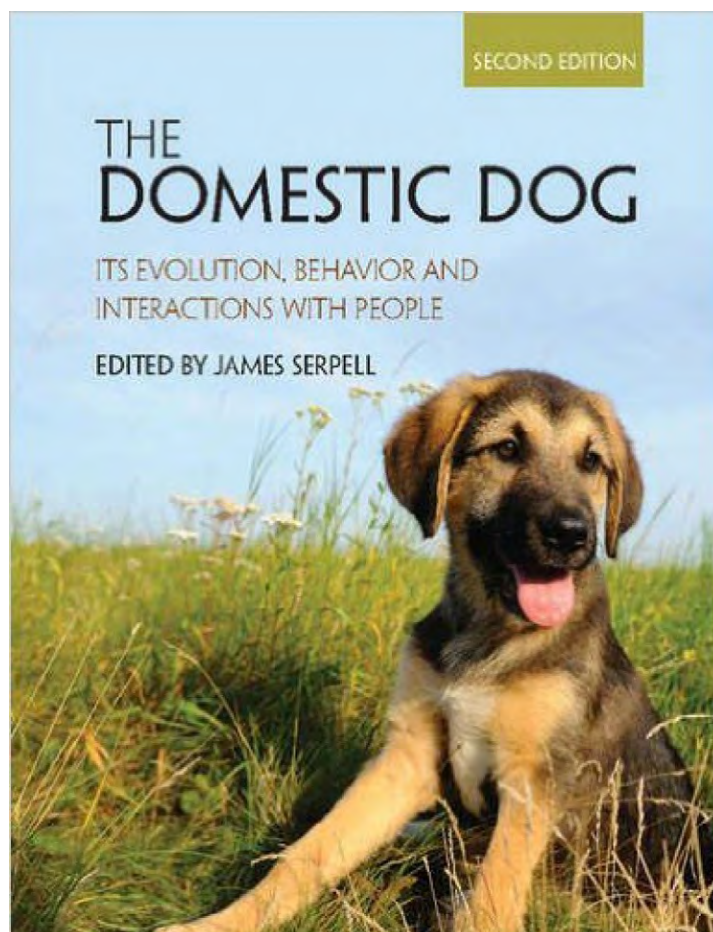
The book is divided into four sections, starting with an introduction to the origins and evolution of today's household and working dogs. The next sections go into great detail regarding genetics, breed and gender differences in dog behavior, social and emotional cognition and the role of applied animal behavior and behavior modification. What makes this section unique is its walk through the ever controversial world of dog training and how it has changed and evolved in the two

decades since the initial edition of this book. Terminology that was once commonplace is now outdated, inaccurate and misleading to the point of being dangerous.

The final section walks through the life and ecology of free-roaming and feral dogs and their interactions with society and wildlife.

This book is a must-read for both veterinary and non-veterinary behavior professionals and will likely appeal to anyone who works with dogs and pet owners who want an in-depth, scientifically sound explanation for how their furry best friend has made his mark in the human world.

The paperback version of this book is incredibly priced at \$35.99.



## Socializing Your Puppy

### Part two: Do's, Don'ts and What-ifs

In our last issue we discussed socialization in puppies (special neuro-developmental response to stimuli during ages 3-12 weeks of age) and the balance between risks of exposure (viruses) versus isolation (fearful puppies). Having evaluated those risks and benefits, you have decided to carefully socialize your puppy, or advocate for socialization over isolation. Great! So, what do you do? How do you appropriately socialize a puppy?

Remember to follow the AVSAB (American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior) guidelines for minimizing risk of exposure to diseases by careful selection of settings (see last year's newsletter).

What do puppies need to be socialized to? All the things they are likely to encounter in their lives would be ideal, but that is in no way feasible. Consequently, variety is the name of the game: people of different appearances, sizes, shapes, clothing styles. Got a summer puppy? Teach her about scarves, puffy coats and hats. Got a winter puppy? Teach him about sunglasses and floppy sun hats. Not planning to crate your pup for trick-or-treating? Teach him about people in costumes. Teach your puppy about dogs of various sizes, shapes, and ages, as well as a variety of environmental sensations: sounds (cars, storms, television, doorbells, microwaves, trash cans), objects (trash bins, statues, trees) and surfaces (linoleum, wood, carpet, concrete, grass, cars, other houses etc.).

Though the socialization period is characterized by a predisposition toward positive generalizations, dogs, like people, are individuals and experience things as a range. This means that mere exposure to things is not a guarantee for a well-adjusted, non-fearful dog. During this time puppies benefit from neutral and positive experiences, but can be particularly sensitive to negative experiences. In order to prevent teaching your puppy that situations are frightening, we need to be able to recognize fear.

Some amount of hesitation is normal in a new situation. However, as a new object or situation continues to be nonthreatening, increased relaxation and confidence, such as approaching

to sniff should be seen. If you see persistent moving away, cowering, tail tucking without recovering, then you need to change the situation or remove the puppy from it and try again.

Take introducing your puppy to an umbrella as an example. To us, it is an every-day object that has good value in keeping you dry in the rain and predictably behaves by folding up and expanding out. Now imagine you have never seen one before. Suddenly the umbrella is no longer an inherently useful item, but a strange, shape-shifting device that moves strangely, makes noises (as the hinges snap into place) and then looms above you and your puppy!



Simply opening and closing an umbrella repeatedly near your puppy may not help your puppy feel more comfortable with umbrellas, just as repeated visits to the dentist may not increase your enjoyment of those visits. Instead, the exposure should start at a level at which the puppy is not showing fear or "below threshold." In this emotional state, a puppy readily conquers any initial hesitation on their own. Then work to gradually increase their enjoyment of the umbrella incrementally without forcing exposure.

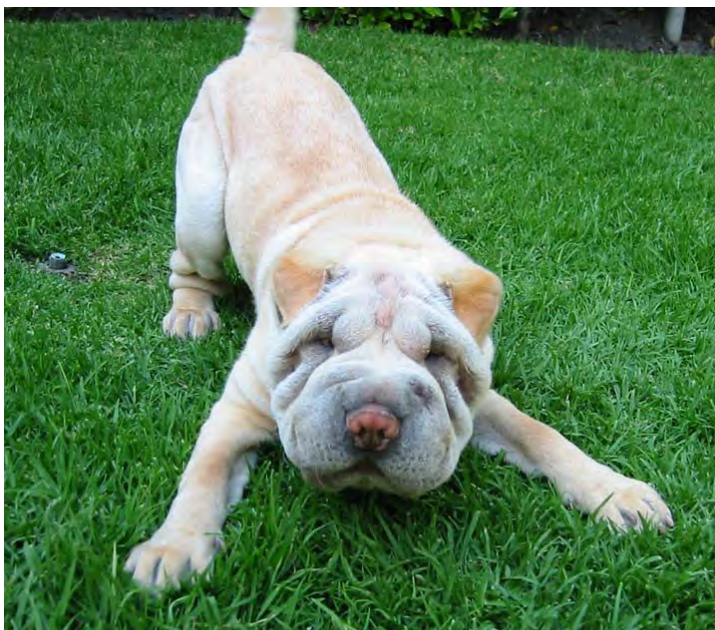
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## Do's, Don'ts and What-ifs - continued

How do we make exposure more positive? Well one easy way to do that is to use food. Sounds easy: new experiences equal food, food is good, new experiences are good! There are a few important caveats to this:

- Eating good food in a situation that's comfortable improves the experience from comfortable to fun.
- If food is highly valuable, dogs and puppies may approach frightening objects/situations but are not necessarily having a good time.
- Adding food to a terrifying experience will not necessarily make it awesome and can teach a puppy that food means a frightening situation is happening if we are not careful.

In the example of the umbrella, all three of those principles can be integrated by rewarding approach behavior, working below threshold and avoiding luring. That may look like starting with a closed umbrella on the floor and tossing a treat when the puppy looks at it, then approaches it, and then touches it. Then repeating the same reward situation with you holding the closed umbrella, then opening the umbrella at a distance and associating that with treats, and then decreasing the distance to the open umbrella.



What about socializing your puppy to dogs?

Avoid dog parks at least until they are fully vaccinated and then with great care after; not all dogs at dog parks are tolerant of puppy behaviors, or dogs in general. It is important for puppies to have monitored, positive interactions with other puppies and socially appropriate adult dogs with no history of aggression to dogs or puppies; a known history of interacting with younger dogs is a plus. Puppies who only play with other puppies are a little like children trying to learn how to operate in society by going to kindergarten without a teacher. If your puppy is an addition to a household with an adult dog already, access to socially mature (aged 3-4 or older) dog will be much easier. If not, seeking out those dogs, asking your trainer, family or friends for dates with an appropriate dog can be a critical exercise for your puppy's social development.

Since we want puppies to grow up into adults that like people and other dogs, do we need to have a celebration every time the puppy encounters one of those things? We don't. There is also value in the social exercise of ignoring another dog/person, etc., amiably. This is something you are apt to want your adult dog to be able to do in the future on walks, or in vets' offices. Best practice is to start rewarding behaviors you want later in life, as soon as possible.

Remember that a well-socialized dog is the result of positive exposure and minimal negative exposure. The positivity or negativity of an experience is in the eye of the beholder (puppy). If you are in doubt, or are seeing your puppy experience day-to-day situations as negative, stop and talk to your veterinarian or a veterinary behaviorist for help.

Happy Socializing!

continued on page 6

## Do's, Don'ts and What-ifs - references

American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. (2014) *Decoding Your Dog: Explaining Common Dog Behaviors and How to Prevent or Change Unwanted Ones* Debra F. Horwitz, John Ciribassi, Steve Dale. (Horowitz DF, ed.). New York, New York: Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company.

American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior. (2008). *ABSAB Position Statement on Puppy Socialization*. Retrieved from [https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Puppy\\_Socialization\\_Position\\_Statement\\_Download\\_-\\_10-3-14.pdf](https://avsab.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Puppy_Socialization_Position_Statement_Download_-_10-3-14.pdf)

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Serpell J, Jagoe JA. Early experience and the development of behaviour. In Serpell J (ed). 1995. *The Domestic Dog*, p.82-102, Cambridge University Press

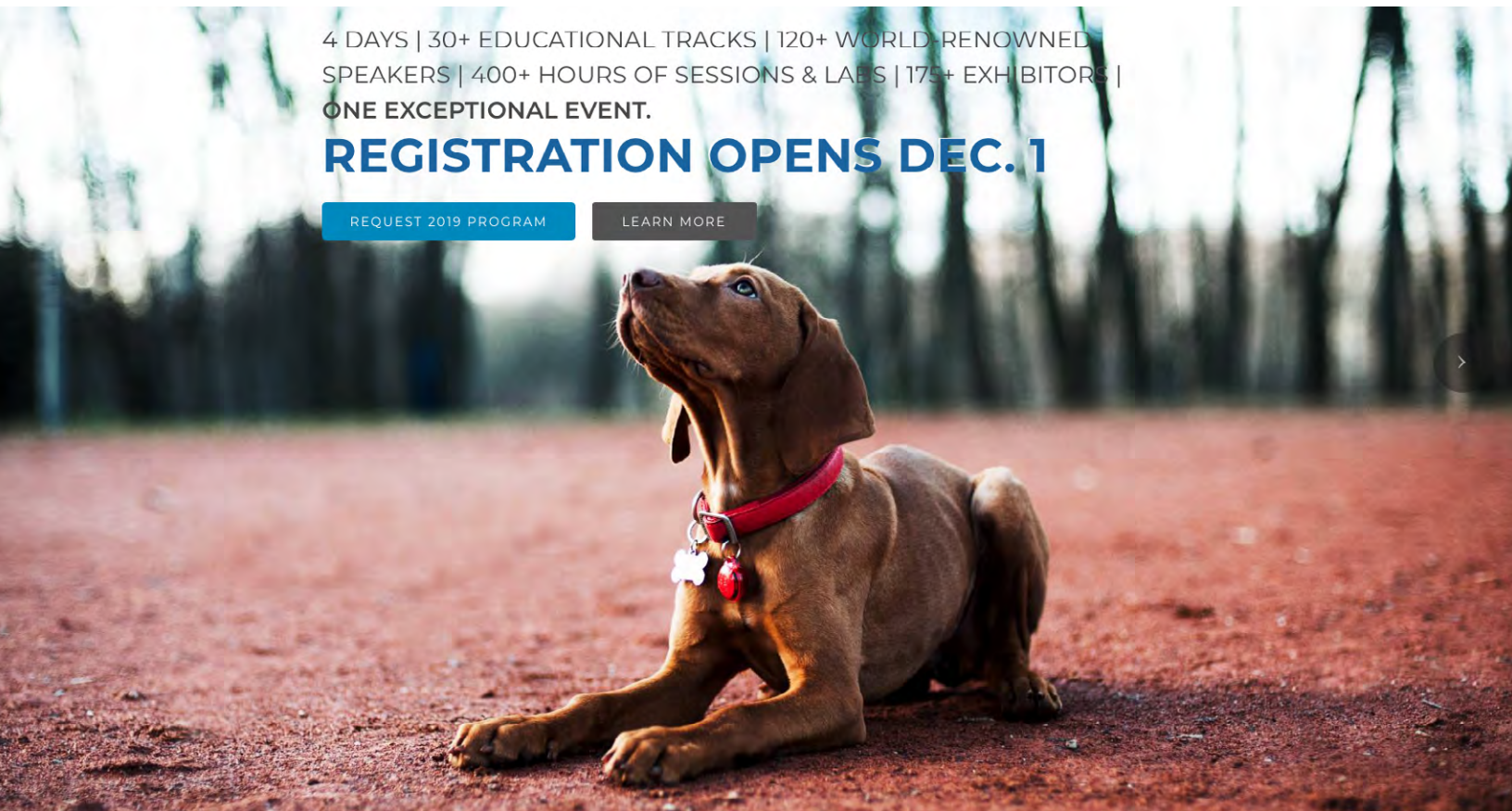


## Upcoming Events

### 2019 MidWest Veterinary Conference

4 DAYS | 30+ EDUCATIONAL TRACKS | 120+ WORLD-RENOWNED SPEAKERS | 400+ HOURS OF SESSIONS & LABS | 175+ EXHIBITORS | ONE EXCEPTIONAL EVENT.

## REGISTRATION OPENS DEC. 1

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The 2019 MidWest Veterinary Conference will be offering a range of topics on animal behavior, including canine behavior, feline behavior and hands on labs for aggressive dog leash and handling skills. Each day will offer between 6-12 talks by internationally known speakers, including Dr. Chris Pachel, Dr. Amy Pike, Ms. Trish McMillan-Loehr and Mr. Mike Shikashio.

**Where:** Greater Columbus Convention Center  
400 N. High St., Columbus, Ohio 43215

**When:** Behavior Education and other tracks run Thursday, February 21, 2019 - Sunday, February 24, 2019  
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Hands-on lab: *Aggression in Dogs: Defensive Handling and Training*

Part 1: Friday, February 22, 8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Part 2: Saturday, February 23, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.

These one-of-a kind hands-on seminars are run by world renowned trainers Mike Shikashio of [completcanines.com](http://completcanines.com) and Trish McMillan-Loehr of [loehranimalbehavior.com](http://loehranimalbehavior.com). These are a must-do for anyone with an interest in or working with aggressive dogs. You can participate in either or both: part 1 is not a requirement for part 2.

Limited space – sign up early!

Register now at: [www.mvcinfo.org](http://www.mvcinfo.org)

Behavior News: The Newsletter from the Animal Behavior Program

## Student Section, brought to you by the Behavior Club

### Pet-safe, Pet-friendly Decorations

by Mary Swiger, Behavior Club Vice-President, Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine 2021

It is about that time of year when families look forward to decorating their homes with the fanciest and brightest Christmas trees, lights, garland and ornaments. With this time of year comes many worries and concerns among pet owners who want to ensure that the decorations they use are not only beautiful, but also safe for their pets. Pets — whether it be cats, dogs or small pets — are known for chewing and ingesting foreign objects and this is noted more during the holidays than any other time of the year. Knowing in advance which decorations are safe for animals will make the holidays less stressful and more enjoyable for the whole family.

#### Selecting a Christmas Tree

While pine trees themselves are not toxic, their needles can be if ingested in large amounts. Furthermore, pine needles are sharp and can scratch or damage a pet's skin. Choosing an artificial tree is a safer option. The National Tree Company's Dunhill® Fir and blue spruce trees are both safe artificial tree options for a household with pets. It is recommended to purchase a medium-sized tree that is approximately five feet tall. Avoid trees over seven feet tall, as they have a greater chance of being knocked over.

Christmas lights are a stronger draw for a pet than a tree, so it is best to avoid having lights. Avoid using tabletop trees because dogs can snatch them and decorations may turn into a chew toy. Choose a tree that is more traditional rather than one that contains glitter and is sparkly. These bright decorations can cause extra curiosity in your pets and could be fatal if ingested.



#### Choosing Decorations and Ornaments for the Tree and Home

Choose ornaments that are simple and that do not attract the attention of your pets. Ornaments that should be avoided include overly shiny or glowing ones, in addition to glass and edible ones. Ornaments that are unbreakable and shatterproof are the safest options for the tree. Shatterproof ornaments include snowflake Christmas balls, regal peacock ornaments, festive season assorted sparkle ornaments, and many more. These pet-friendly ornaments are beautiful decorations for the tree and are completely shatterproof.

Avoid using food substances as decorations because they can be toxic to animals and can cause the formation of foreign bodies. Candy canes, popcorn and gumdrops should be avoided at all costs. Don't use real candles, which increase the risk of a fire that could be caused by an accidental swipe of a pet's paw or tail. Electric battery-operated candles are a great replacement and are not a fire hazard.

#### Choosing Safe Plants for the Holiday Season

Plants are another decoration that can add beauty to the house during the holidays. There are several plants that are toxic and should be avoided. They can cause severe symptoms such as decreased blood pressure, vomiting, diarrhea, nausea, and convulsion, along with painful intestinal problems. These plants include mistletoe, holly berries, poinsettia, Jerusalem cherry, as well as lilies and daffodils. Plants that are safe alternatives include red roses, white orchids and Christmas cacti.



## Product Review: PetSafe Deluxe Easy Walk Harness

by Allie Sheetz, Behavior Club Treasurer, Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine 2021

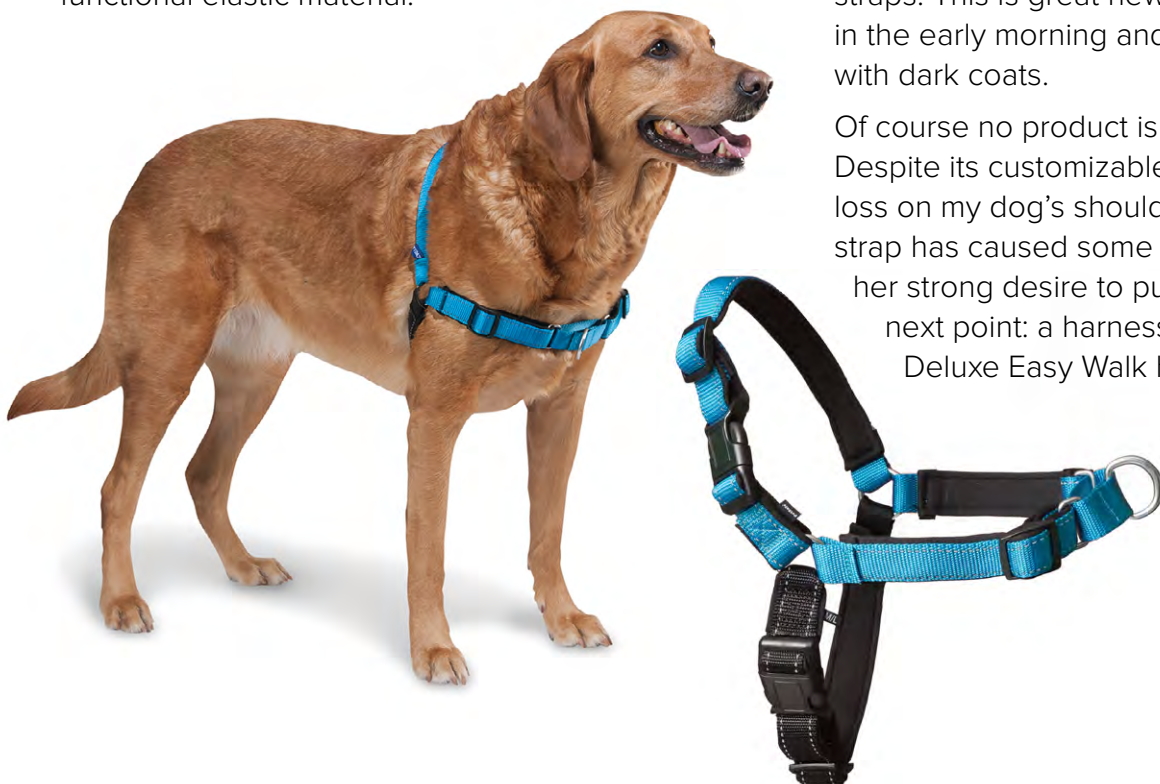
The Deluxe Easy Walk harness has been a game-changer for daily walks with my two curious Border Collies. I've tried a number of leash/harness combinations in the past, but none with the success that I've seen with this particular product.

A number of endearing qualities set the Deluxe Easy Walk apart from others in a saturated market. First and foremost: comfort. My dogs seem to be more comfortable in the Deluxe Easy Walk than all others we have tried. In the past, there was an adjustment period when first trying out a new harness, lasting anywhere from days to weeks, during which they would show various signs of discomfort: stopping, scratching, shaking, etc. From the moment I slipped the Deluxe Easy Walk on my dogs, they acted as if it didn't exist and yet, no leash pulling! It is as if there is a magic wall preventing them from lunging forward. In fact, that "magic wall" is formed by brilliantly designed chest and ventrum straps, the latter of which is made of functional elastic material.

The Deluxe Easy Walk harness is designed with the leash attachment on the dog's chest, rather than the traditional back attachment. I have found this feature to be unique to the Deluxe Easy Walk harness, and I love it because it helps to redirect the dog's attention back to me when needed. The combination of strap and leash placement gently discourages harsh forward movement and eases would-be stressful situations for the handler.

Comfort also comes from the high degree of customization. The Deluxe Easy Walk offers strap adjustment from three different angles, allowing for optimal fit no matter what the shape of your dog. This also makes my life easier while walking them, because there is less risk of anyone wiggling free when a squirrel suddenly appears - a common problem with previous harnesses. The designers of the Deluxe Easy Walk also kept security in mind when creating this harness, as there are a number of reflectors present on the chest and shoulder straps. This is great news for those out and about in the early morning and evening hours, especially with dark coats.

Of course no product is perfect, including this one. Despite its customizable fit, I have found mild fur loss on my dog's shoulder points where the chest strap has caused some friction. I attribute this to her strong desire to pull, which leads me to my next point: a harness can only do so much! The Deluxe Easy Walk harness is a great behavior modification tool, but it is not a "magic bullet". If you really want to stop your dog from pulling, additional training is likely required. That said, this is still an excellent product and one that I continue to recommend to fellow dog owners.



## Product Review: Twist n' Treat Teaser

by Courtney Carlson, Behavior Club President, Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine 2021

The Twist n' Treat Teaser is a fantastic toy for the cat or kitten who needs something to keep him entertained. It works effectively as a food puzzle toy with the additional benefit of being entertaining to bat around and wrestle. I bought this a while ago for my two very food-motivated cats, and they absolutely LOVE it! My cats were always getting into trouble jumping on counters and the table constantly begging for treats, but once I got them the Twist n' Treat Teaser they stopped begging for their treats and started playing to get them!

The Twist n' Treat Teaser is an oval disc with openings along the side that allow food or treats to fall out once the disc has been knocked around by the cats. The disc itself is made out of hard plastic and it unscrews to make filling it with treats or cat food easier. The openings along the side of the Twist n' Treat Teaser are smaller openings compared to other products, so it is best to use smaller treats and food in order for the cats to be able to get their treats.

In addition to the food puzzle portion of the Twist n' Treat Teaser, it also has a very attractive feather attached via Velcro to a metal bar that attaches the feather to the disc. If your cats get all of the treats out of the Twist n' Treat Teaser like mine tend to do, then they have an additional feature with which to play!

Not only does the Twist n' Treat Teaser make an amazing toy for your cats to play with while you are at work or busy at home, but it is also a fun way for you to engage with your cat. I like to move the feather around and have them chase it (bonus: do this when there are still treats in the disc and watch as your cats jump from the feather to the treats and back)!

There are some cons with the Twist n' Treat Teaser, though they are few and minor. First, there really is not an opportunity to increase the size



of the openings on the disc without unscrewing the disc, so you may be limited in what items you can place in the disc. Secondly, while the feather is a lot of fun for cats, it can also detach from the Twist n' Treat Teaser and provide a choking hazard for your cats. If you are worried that your cats may try to consume the feather, I recommend removing it if your cats are going to be alone playing with the Twist n' Treat Teaser and just use treats as an incentive.

Overall, I give the Twist n' Treat Teaser four paws up for its entertainment and engagement value. If you have a cat at home who is food-motivated this is a good choice for you!