Welcome to the seventeenth 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, say goodbye to our lead faculty member, and provide a few book/product reviews. For additional resources on animal behavior at The Ohio State University, please visit: vet.osu.edu/Behavior and vet.osu.edu/CommunityPractice.

New Additions

Welcome Dr. Kyle Bohland

The OSU-VMC is pleased to welcome a new resident to Behavioral Medicine. Dr. Kyle Bohland is originally from Fremont, Ohio and did his undergraduate work at The University of Akron in economics. After graduation, he worked full time and obtained a Master of Science degree in agricultural, environmental, and development economics from The Ohio State University. While working towards this degree, Dr. Bohland realized he wanted to pursue veterinary medicine - his dream career since childhood. He graduated from The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 2018. Following graduation, he worked in a busy general practice in central Ohio doing preventative medicine, general medicine, urgent care, surgery, and dentistry. His professional interests in behavioral medicine include shelter animal behavior and welfare, canine aggression, and improving the human-animal bond. Dr. Bohland lives in Columbus with his wife, son, and six animals (some with multiple, managed behavior problems).
Animal Behavior in Social Media

Social media is rapidly becoming the frontrunner for information and knowledge sharing and delivery. For those of you with an interest in veterinary behavior, you might consider checking out the following pages and blogs.
Reisner Veterinary Behavior and Consulting Services on Facebook facebook.com/ReisnerVetBehavior

In the News

Dr. Herron was featured in Ohio State Insights, giving advice on helping pets survive the 4th of July and other loud noise events insights.osu.edu/life/dogs-and-fireworks

Dr. Herron gives advice on ABC 6 Pet Check, with a discussion on best tips for traveling with pets. youtube.com/watch?v=td8GylYJkxY&list=PL58oiOGVFe9oqvz3CllNUK4KP2MDWtPnP&index=22&t=0s

Dr. Lilly is featured in Pawp.com, discussing several commonly asked canine behavior questions:

“Is it a bad idea to share your bed with your dog?” Author Kerri Wiess pawp.com/is-it-a-bad-idea-to-share-your-bed-with-your-dog/

“How many dog treats are too many?” Author Kerri Wiess pawp.com/how-many-dog-treats-are-too-many/

“9 Signs you should call your vet for a checkup” Author Kerri Wiess pawp.com/9-signs-you-should-call-your-vet-for-a-checkup/

2019 CLINICAL ANIMAL BEHAVIOR CONFERENCE

Rebecca King and Laura Donaldson attend the Clinical Animal Behavior Conference

We are excited to have attended the 2019 Clinical Animal Behavior Conference October 4-6, in Las Vegas. The focus of the conference was aggression, a common concern for our patients and their owners. The lectures helped us more thoroughly understand different types of aggression and how to help change the conversation for our patients who have exhibited aggression in the past. We participated in learning labs to enhance our teaching and communication skills and learned new techniques in consent work and teaching patients alternative behaviors that reduce their need to reach for aggression.

The speakers were truly superb and we were happy to have the opportunity to attend and bring these skills back to the VMC.
Book Review

Blackwell’s Five-Minute Veterinary Consult Clinical Companion – Canine and Feline Behavior 2nd Edition

Anyone who has been asked about a behavior problem during a routine exam knows there is rarely a quick way to address it. Fortunately for us there is a resource for prompt and easy access to point us in the right direction. This quick reference text allows the practitioner to gain information on just about every behavior problem under the sun for dogs and cats – all in a bulleted, shorthand format with drug recommendations and doses included. Editor Debra Horwitz, DVM, DACVB brings the second edition up to date with the most current information and scientific references. A must have for anyone seeing behavior in a general practice or emergency setting!

Decoding Your Cat with lead editor Dr. Meghan Herron

The cutting-edge, scientifically accurate, definitive book on the most popular behavioral issues that cats face

In the United States, one of the predominant reasons that owners abandon or give up their pets (often leading to euthanasia) is because of unwanted behaviors. Many have tried to instruct proper cat training, but this is the first book of its kind to provide an in-depth understanding of the underlying reasons for a cat’s problem behavior, the essential key to unlocking the best for your cat and avoiding pitfalls. Decoding Your Cat gives owners new insight on promoting their cat’s physical and psychological health and wellness and maintaining a long and fulfilling relationship together.

Written by the leading experts in cat behavior from the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists, this book conveys the newest and best information on cat behavioral science in a fun, interesting, and understandable way. Together with anecdotes from real life situations and the science behind how cats relate to their world, Decoding Your Cat empowers owners to provide a home environment that is happy, safe, and functional, to identify and seek treatment for medical health problems, to understand how to deal with unwanted behaviors, and in general to help cats live longer and fuller lives.

Publication June 23, 2020
Pre-order here: amazon.com/Decoding-Your-Cat-Ultimate-Behaviors-ebook/dp/B07T3JHVQD/ref=sr_1_3?keywords=decoding+your+cat&qid=1574786933&sr=8-3
Upcoming Events

2020 MidWest Veterinary Conference

The 2020 MidWest Veterinary Conference (MVC) is hosted by the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association and is a growing regional veterinary conference packed with educational, networking and social opportunities for every member of the veterinary team. Bringing together highly regarded experts from around the world and hundreds of industry vendors, the MVC is a national-caliber conference—at a Midwest price.

The MVC 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. Emma Grigg, Dr. Kat Pankratz, and our own Dr. Leanne Lilly.

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

When: Behavior Education and other tracks run Thursday, February 20, 2020 - Sunday, February 23, 2020
8 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Register now at: www.mvcinfo.org
Passing the torch!

Dr. Leanne Lilly to take on lead faculty role as Dr. Meghan Herron moves to Gigi’s

Dr. Meghan Herron, associate professor-clinical, and head of the Veterinary Medical Center’s (VMC) Behavioral Medicine Service, will be leaving in January to oversee the design and implementation of a new and innovative Behavior Treatment Center at GiGi’s in Canal Winchester, Ohio. GiGi’s leads a collaborative resource network within the dog sheltering community to improve the health and well-being of shelter dogs and increase efficiencies within the network – all to help more dogs and organizations in more communities.

Dr. Herron’s departure is bittersweet for all who have worked with and alongside her. Dr. Herron’s contributions have been immeasurable: She created a robust behavioral medicine program—in science and practice—at the VMC, where none existed before. Under her leadership, the program has become a productive clinical and academic teaching service that includes a full-time, boarded faculty member, two residents, two veterinary technicians, a 2-hour core Introduction to Animal Behavior course, an elective in Shelter Dog Behavior, and clinical rotation and behavior lectures as an integral part of the curriculum.

She says her most proud accomplishments include helping aggressive animals get wellness care and “even advanced diagnostics and surgery”; helping educate graduating veterinarians to feel confident in treating behavioral problems; and serving as a resource for referring veterinarians.

At GiGi’s, Dr. Herron will work to develop a model to care for homeless dogs who are on the fringe of being adoptable due to mild- to-moderate behavior problems, by funneling them through a program that assesses and addresses their needs, thus preparing them for adoption in select source shelters. The goal, she says, is to create a model for shelters nationwide.

“GiGi’s is a state-of-the-art center focused on not just sheltering animals, but on maximizing its impact on the lives of shelter animals throughout the state of Ohio,” she says. “One of GiGi’s main missions is to serve underserved areas of Ohio, rural communities with limited resources and a surplus of dogs, many of whom are getting sick, behaviorally deteriorating or have few families able to adopt them. This is not just an Ohio problem, it’s a nationwide problem.”

Dr. Herron will be transitioning her service leadership to Dr. Leanne Lilly, who has worked with Dr. Herron for more than three and a half years. She says clients are in good hands with Dr. Lilly, who Dr. Herron says, “came to us as an expert”, with four years of her own practice plus a year of specialized behavioral medicine before she even started her residency here at the VMC.

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“Dr. Lilly has really fine-tuned this program by integrating with our other services, including internal medicine, neurology and orthopedic medicine. She is a remarkable clinician.”

Says Dr. Lilly: “Following wonderful opportunities under Dr. Herron’s mentorship, I’m aiming for a seamless transition in which the amazing team members of our service continue to provide the exceptional behavioral care and compassion that allowed Dr. Herron to grow this service, both in clientele and in service members. My hope is that our electronic medical record transition in 2020 will be a bigger, better change for our clients and veterinary colleagues.”

Vet-to-vet consultations are one of her favorite aspects of her work, Dr. Lilly adds. “I am ever grateful to be part of such an amazing, personable veterinary network in our Small Animal Behavioral Medicine Service.”

To refer patients, call 614-292-4655 or email OSUVET.BehaviorMedicine@osu.edu.
The Fear Free Clinic

Back when I was younger, I shadowed a veterinary clinic. It was a single veterinarian practice and he had only two technicians who worked with him. It was a good clinic and treating the animals effectively and efficiently was the veterinarian’s primary concern and little attention was paid to psychological status in terms of stress and anxiety levels before, after, and during the vet visit. This was many years ago and well before the Fear Free movement. Fast forward several years and I now have the privilege of working with a clinic making strides towards Fear Free.

The trained staff within a Fear Free Clinic strives to promote and encourage regular visits with patients in an environment that eliminates fear, anxiety, and stress (FAS). Within these clinics, nestled in a readily accessed place in the treatment area or up at the front desk, sits the FAS Scale. The FAS scale effectively ranks the level of Fear, Aggression and Stress from Level 0, which is no signs of FAS being displayed through the body language or demeanor of the animal, to Level 5, which is high FAS where we see severe signs of aggression such as growling, lunging, or biting. Fear Free Clinics try their best to never get past moderate FAS, however, this is sometimes unavoidable if it is a procedure that must be done and options are limited.

Often for an animal with moderate FAS the veterinarians of the clinic may suggest some PVPs or Pre-Visit Pharmaceuticals such as trazodone or gabapentin. These medications are usually quite efficacious in aiding the dog or cat by calming them down to where certain stimuli that would usually trigger FAS are not so agitating or scary.

The medications combined with a few aids such as turning down the lights, playing classical music, or using delicious and highly palatable foods can also be effective.

The clinic that I work at right now is taking large strides in creating protocols for our dog and cat patients. There is a special spot in the computer system that lists out what worked well with that specific patient and what did not work well. For example, maybe that dog was a medium sized breed and preferred to not be on the table, but on the floor close to his owner. Maybe he also liked squeeze cheese whilst getting his physical exam completed. On the other hand, maybe the dog does not like his paws touched. With the permission and help of the owner, this is something that we could possibly try to work on with some positive association and reinforcement training.

Our younger puppy and kitten patients are of great interest because we have the unique opportunity to start them off on the right paw. This means that when the family comes to their first vet visit, we try to make it the most happy and exciting visit by utilizing yummy foods and happy (or calming) voices, and helping the puppy or kitten feel safe under our care. In addition, this will hopefully transfer to the client and help build that trust and bond that is so extremely important.

We hope the majority of the days where forcibly holding down the patient in order to get a procedure done, such as a subcutaneous injection or a routine nail trim are in the past. The physical and physiological health of the patient is vital. We will continue the transitioning process day by day, and continue to spread information and education regarding Fear Free protocols.
An interview with Behavioral Medicine resident, Dr. Maggie O’Brien

by Courtney Carlson Animal Behavior & Welfare Club President

I had the opportunity to interview Dr. O’Brien, the second year veterinary behavior resident, about her background, interests, and advice for future veterinary behaviorists.

Q: Tell us a little about yourself.
A: I am a second year veterinary resident in the Ohio State – VMC Behavior Clinic. I went to Ohio State for my undergraduate degree, veterinary school, and now I’m back for a residency! I have a handsome 11 year old dog named Balto who knows many tricks and still gets into the trash anytime he is given the opportunity.

Q: What first interested you in animal behavior?
A: As a kid, I always loved dog training, watching Animal Planet, and reading books about animals. Homeward Bound still makes me cry... I adopted my dog when I was 19 years old, and he took to eating my chemistry text books whenever I left the house, reigniting my interest in behavior.

Q: Why did you decide to pursue a specialty in animal behavior?
A: As an undergraduate, I worked on a study that Dr. Herron was doing on canine cognition. Once I found out that you could specialize in behavior as a veterinarian, I was immediately sold. So I actually went to veterinary school with the intentions of doing behavior.

Q: Which area of behavior interests you the most?
A: It’s all interesting! I find certain types of cases to be very rewarding, such as overtly fearful dogs who need help coming out of their shell. I also have a fondness for senior pets.

Q: What is your current area of research?
A: I am doing a study on senior dogs and how their behavior changes over time.

Q: What advice would you give current veterinary students who may be seeking a behavior internship/residency after vet school?
A: I would recommend shadowing veterinary behavior appointments and talking with clinicians in the behavior specialty. If you work at a clinic, you can consider developing science based handouts. During your clinical year, you can also use your externship time visiting other veterinary behaviorists in addition to our behavior rotation.

Q: What book(s) or article(s) would you recommend for students to read if they are interested in learning more about animal behavior?
A: ‘Decoding Your Dog’ is a book written by veterinary behaviorists that addresses many of the myths and common behavior problems of pets. If students are looking for a more in-depth look at diagnoses and treatment, ‘Behavior Problems of the Dog and Cat’ by Gary Landsberg, et al. and ‘Equine Behavior’ by Paul McGreevy are great resources.
Product Review: Cheerble Wicked Ball
by Courtney Adams, Animal Behavior & Welfare Club Outreach Coordinator

Roll, flash, bounce ... the Wicked Ball seems to do it all. This automatic moving ball is meant for inquisitive pets and can keep them entertained and happy while you are home or away. I had purchased this toy to provide my tennis ball-loving dog hours of entertainment while I was away from home and was quite surprised to find my cats were actually far more enamored with this rolling, flashing object than he was.

The Wicked Ball has three movement settings that range from slow motion to fast motion, and the light changes color according to the setting. Because the Wicked Ball can get moving pretty quickly, I suggest starting your pet off at the lowest setting and adjusting the level according to your pet’s response. The Wicked Ball also has a sensor that can detect when the pet is playing with it and will react and move as your pet touches it.

The inside is made out of a hard plastic that protects the inner core from damage. The outside of the ball designed specifically for dogs is made of soft plastic that is resistant to chewing and tearing and is also waterproof. I would remain cautious around heavy chewers, however, as it is possible to damage the ball. As with any new toy, it is wise to monitor your pet’s interaction with the Wicked Ball before leaving them alone with it. The company also makes a cat version that has a softer, wool surface for gentle play. I had purchased this version thinking the softer texture would mimic my dog’s beloved fuzzy tennis ball, but I found that it felt more like velvet than wool.

The cats enjoy stalking and chasing the moving ball, and you never have to worry about it getting trapped in corners as it contains a feature that turns it around when it cannot move forward anymore. The ball gets stuck on my high pile shag carpet, but still works on carpets with shorter fibers and on my hard wood floors. In addition to the waterproof and intelligence features, the Wicked Ball also contains a safety feature that prevents damage to your pet if they happen to get the ball open. When opened the toy will automatically turn off preventing possible injury to your pet. Similarly, the toy will not turn on until you have tightly screwed the outside pieces together. The Wicked Ball is rechargeable and claims to have about 1 – 5 hours of battery life depending upon the activity of your pet. While I have not needed to keep it on that long, I have been able to use it for several hours over the course of a couple of days without needing to recharge.

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Lastly, the Wicked Ball contains a small treat port that can fit a piece of kibble to attract your pet’s interest. I think this is a great feature to use to introduce your pet to the toy, but because it can only hold one piece of small kibble it does not fall under the category of a puzzle toy or a treat toy.

I think it is important to mention that I would take caution when ordering this product online as there are many interactive balls that are labeled “Wicked Ball” that are not the Cheerble brand. These balls function in a similar manner, but do not contain all of the features of the Cheerble Wicked Ball. I ordered mine on Amazon and received the product in a very timely manner and in great condition.

Overall, I am pleased to have found something that is made of quality, durable material that gets my indoor cats exercising physically and mentally.

I would certainly recommend the Cheerble Wicked Ball as an enrichment toy for the curious puppy, playful adult dog, kitten, or adult cat that enjoy interacting with toys and new objects in their environment. However, the enjoyment your pet receives out of the Wicked Ball solely depends on the individual pet and their personality.

cheerble.com/wicked-ball

Editor’s note

The very first newsletter I put together close to a decade ago was one of my first attempts at connecting with our local animal care clinicians and staff. I never imagined how far these connections would grow. It is with bittersweet emotions that I move onto my next adventure with Gigi’s. Thank you all for your support and loyal readership over the years. I promise I leave you in good hands with a team of talented individuals, led by Dr. Lilly. I feel confident she will keep our mission moving forward and continue to provide quality clinical animal behavior services to the dogs and cats of central Ohio and to give students and practitioners the tools needed to handle animals safely, humanely and effectively.

Sincerely,
Meghan Herron, DVM, DACVB