Behavior News
The Newsletter from the Animal Behavior Program

Welcome to the eighteenth 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 provide an update on our service’s function during COVID19, say goodbye to a colleague and provide a few book and product reviews. For additional resources on animal behavior at The Ohio State University, please visit: vet.osu.edu/Behavior and vet.osu.edu/CommunityPractice.

Goodbye to a Good Friend

As a client liaison, Vince Harold served as the face of The Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center. As his retirement job, his family described this as the favorite job of his career. Vince was often the first voice or person patients interacted with. He was always ready with warmth, compassion, a smile or a dad joke. This was particularly true for our clients and patients — always diligently and compassionately helping to decrease their stress and provide safe entry into the hospital. Vince had an amazing talent for being what people needed most, whether they were there brimming with joy for a first-puppy visit or facing challenging situations with their beloved, furry family members.

Vince passed away suddenly on October 13th, surrounded by his family. We will miss him every day and we will honor his legacy with warmth, smiles, and the compassion for which he was so beloved. His obituary can be found here at snyderfuneralhomes.com/obituary/vincent-charles-harold/

Moving up and on!

Our own Dr. O’Brian will be completing her residency in July. She will be joining Southeast Animal Behavior and Training in Charlotte, North Carolina. We will be sad to see her go, but are very excited and proud of her accomplishments in her residency!

vet.osu.edu/Behavior
Animal Behavior in Social Media

Social media is rapidly becoming the frontrunner for information and knowledge. For those of you with an interest, consider checking out the following links:

The American College of Veterinary Behaviorists on Facebook:
facebook.com/dacvb/

Psychology Today’s Decoding your Pet Section:
psychologytoday.com/us/blog/decoding-your-pet

Applying Eye Drops with Low Stress handling,” Cattle Dog Publishing, a VIN company. Published on Veterinary Partner web page and Behavior Bytes News Letter: Author - Dr. Leanne Lilly
veterinarypartner.vin.com/default.aspx?pid=19239&id=9845937

In the News

September 2020 “Teaching Your Dog a New Trick? These 15 Training Treats Are Expert Favorites”
Author Katherine McLaughlin interviews Dr. Leanne Lilly and others
popsugar.com/pets/expert-recommended-dog-training-treats-47734390?fbclid=IwAR1ip3wHtzX7T8o9ZAF1A8sD9OTOpqVu_uX6PU3Pov7dqMhQlWXifJSn_s

June 2020 “Prep your new dog for an empty home” OSU INSIGHTS.
Author Ross Bishoff interviews Dr. Leanne Lilly
insights.osu.edu/life/coronavirus-pet-anxiety

April 2020 “Why your pet is acting like a weirdo during quarantine, explained by animal behaviorists”
Author Michael Waters interviews Dr. Leanne Lilly and others

March 2020 “Your dog is listening but may not recognize your ‘inner face’ study says”.
Today interview about voice recognition and face processing
Author Meghan Holohan interviews Dr. Leanne Lilly and others
today.com/health/dogs-hear-us-don-t-recognize-human-inner-face-t175615

The specialty of veterinary behavior got a big boost when the former President and one of the founders of the American College of Veterinary Behavior, Dr. Bonnie Beaver, was recognized for her contributions to the veterinary field with the 2020 American Veterinary Medical Association Award.
Rebecca King attended the CABC’s Lemonade Conference, and Drs. Bohland and O’Brian attended the 2020 Veterinary Behavior symposium remotely. Our team members enjoy learning from world renowned leaders in behavior and training science, as well as about cutting-edge research, and then bringing it back to the Ohio State Veterinary Medical Center.
Book Reviews

The Education of Will by Patricia McConnell, PhD
Review by Sandhya Arya

I started reading The Education of Will this summer over a lunch break at work. I flew through 100 pages in under an hour. A single anatomy lecture takes me all day, but I devoured half this book in one sitting. The stories about the author’s behavior clients alone would’ve been enough to keep me going. Reading accounts of handling fearful and aggressive animals in a manner that the world has yet to grow accustomed – gently, rather than matching aggression with aggression – was astonishing and wonderful to me. I laughed out loud at some of her interactions with her clients, all too relatable. I loved learning how she found her place in life, built her business and her career.

I loved learning about Dr. McConnell’s past as a person, a human, a woman. When you see someone amazing in their field, you wonder what drew that person to that path. What were the experiences they had that made them so passionate about and dedicated to what their current career. My interest in animal behavior stems from my own life experiences and I learned that Dr. McConnell’s interest did, too. I empathized with her decade-long wrestling with both her own trauma and her fear.

When Will came into the picture, he appeared to be a great, well-adjusted dog. But if anybody were to end up with a behavior case, of course it would be an animal behaviorist. Will’s unpredictable behavior shocked Dr. McConnell. She relates that, though she may know how to advise a client, that conversation is taken to a much higher level when it’s your own animal.

Seeing Will, this amazing, adorable, young border collie, deal with these unpredictable outbursts reminded me of my own troubled herder mutt and had me rooting for Dr. McConnell with every turn of the page. Reading as she fought through her own trauma in order to be able to help her dog was breathtaking and, admittedly, made me cry more than a few tears. She found that the best way to help her dog was to help herself along the way.

The Education of Will is a beautiful memoir and serves as a reminder that healing is possible. Trauma is hard and changes you forever, but it is possible to overcome your demons and come out the other end, stronger. And that journey means so much more when you have your dog by your side.

I highly recommend this book and have been moved to read it more than once. If you like dogs, if you’re interested in animal behavior, if you’ve experienced trauma, if you have a troubled dog, if you’re human, read this book. It’s worth the time.
Book Reviews

Decoding Your Cat: The Ultimate Experts Explain Common Cat Behaviors and Reveal How to Prevent or Change Unwanted Ones
Edited by Dr. Meghan Herron, written by members of the Diplomates of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists

Review by Dr. M. Leanne Lilly

Published July of this year, Decoding Your Cat provides the most scientific approach to feline behavior available in popular press, with a delightfully easy to read, accessible format. Going well beyond training tips and tricks, the book systematically evaluates the multifaceted aspects of common cat behaviors, including behavioral issues. In the United States, behavioral problems are still a leading cause of euthanasia or rehoming of cats. This book presents a comprehensive framework for understanding our feline friends in order to prevent these unfortunate outcomes.

Laid out in 13 chapters, the book covers feline communication, social behaviors, how cats learn, common problems such as aggression and elimination outside the box, and, my favorite chapter, “I know it’s normal, but how do I make it stop?” Each chapter begins with a story to draw the reader in followed by the sections:

- “Facts, not fiction”
- “What does that mean?”
- “Is that really true?”
- “Avoiding pitfalls and staying on track”
- “What did we say?”

Each chapter is filled with memorable quotes, such as, “if communication has volume, cats would whisper,” designed to bring the subtlety of cats to the forefront of the reader’s understanding. The book also includes wonderfully useful appendices for a variety of feline situations, such as introductions to dogs or administering medications. Whether you are bringing home your first cat ever, or you are a well-seasoned veterinarian looking to beef up your explanations to clients about feline behavior, you will not find a more insightful, readily accessible resource.
Product Review: **Snuffle Mats**
by Courtney Adams, Class of 2022, President ABWC

Snuffle mats are a wonderful enrichment tool for your canine or feline companion. Made up of fabric strips securely adhered to a thick base, snuffle mats mimic the outdoor grassy environment and can provide entertainment and mental stimulation for your pet when you are at home or away.

Your dog loves to communicate and explore their world through smell — hence why they love going for walks! By using especially odoriferous kibble or treats your dog can satisfy their olfactory needs by sniffing through the strands of fabric on their snuffle mat to hunt for their reward. Searching for their food also increases the amount of time it takes for your dog to eat their meal. This makes snuffle mats a great slow feeder option for dogs that eat their food too quickly.

Let’s not forget our feline friends! Snuffle mats are highly underutilized in feline enrichment. In addition to treats or food, you can spread catnip, non-toxic herbs or spray feline pheromones on the mat for your cat to sniff and roll in. Cats also communicate and investigate their environment through scent signals and are encouraged to play and explore when exposed to new scents.

Snuffle mats are not limited to any type of dog, cat or age either. Because it only requires a nose, old, deaf, or blind pets can reap the rewards and interactive time with a snuffle mat without any barriers to play.

As with any new toy, it is wise to monitor your pet’s interaction with a snuffle mat. Excited puppies and kittens love to play and are at risk of tearing apart or shredding the mat and probably should not be left alone with it. If used for a puppy or a pet that loves to chew on toys, it may be wise to roll up the mat and store it when not in use to prevent damage to the mat or injury to your pet.

Snuffle mats encourage natural behavior and provide great interactive enrichment. Whether you buy a snuffle mat from the store or create a DIY mat at home, your pets will be thankful for the exercise for their noses and their minds!
Editor’s note

Dr. Herron started the Behavior Newsletter a decade ago to build the connection with our local animal care clinicians and staff, which continued to grow into the amazing network I inherited from her. Though we miss Dr. Herron here at the VMC, the foundations she built in this service have allowed us to stand strong not only through the transition in faculty, but through the trials of COVID19. Thank you for your continued support of our service and our shared patients.

Our appointments have changed in some functions — with limitations on number of people in the hospital, students in our rooms, and of course masks. We were fortunate to be able to invest in a camera and microphone system to allow students to attend remotely when not primary on the case. This has allowed us to not only continue in our commitment to student education, but to expand the numbers of students on our rotation by utilizing technology for secure, remote access.

We will continue to passionately provide quality clinical behavioral services and give students and practitioners tools to handle animals safely, humanely and effectively, despite the limitations of the pandemic. It may be business as un-usual, but we will continue to be here for our patients, students and care takers of central Ohio.

Dr. Lilly