Welcome to the seventh 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 talk about dog and child safety, and helping to set parents up for success.

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

Research Update by Taylor Kirby-Madden

This past summer, the Franklin County Dog Shelter hosted an Ohio State veterinary research team who carried out a study on the efficacy of the enrichment program, under the direction of Dr. Meghan Herron. The study was designed to mimic the existing enrichment protocol of daily food toys and cage-behavior training provided by Ohio State veterinary students. The study groups were divided into one group that received enrichment every day (Ward A) and a control group that did not get any extra enrichment (Ward B).

The research team found that dogs in the enrichment group improved in three areas: a) 68 percent of enrichment dogs increased their percentage of time spent sitting or lying down (vs 22 percent of control ward dogs); b) 39 percent of enrichment dogs increased their percentage of time being quiet (vs 12 percent of control ward) dogs; and c) 54 percent of enrichment dogs had a decrease in the amount of time spent jumping (vs 9 percent of control ward dogs). In short, enrichment dogs were sitting and resting more often, barked less, and jumped less than dogs that didn’t receive enrichment. Interestingly, we also found that dogs in the control group had an increase in barking behavior, an increase in jumping behavior, and a decrease in sitting or lying down behavior, suggesting that without enrichment, the behavior of shelter dogs can actually get worse.
Preparing Your Dog for a New Baby – Tips for Success

Before Your Baby Comes

Before your baby arrives, introduce your pet to the physical changes that will occur in your home because of the baby. You should also establish a regular schedule for spending time with your pet to reassure him with special attention each day.

• You will not want your pet to be in the baby’s room without supervision, so please accustom him to gates or a closed door to that room. Even if the room is not finished yet, it’s good to start now, especially if this is a room your pet has been allowed to enter.

• If you anticipate gating your pet out of other areas of the house so that you can tend to and play with the baby without having to supervise the pet, start putting those gates up now. The web sites on our Reading List handout are a good source for different gate styles and sizes.

• Exercise pens (X-pens) can sometimes be helpful confining a dog away from a baby while still in the same room with you. The Reading List handout will have sources for these as well. X-pens are used as portable “safe zones” for dogs, and dogs should have appealing toys, possibly food-based, when confined there. If you plan to use one, you might try the X-pen now while you are working around the house to see if your dog is distressed by it.

• If you will want to walk your dog and the baby at the same time, work with him now on leash walking, so that by the time the baby comes he will be good at walking without pulling.

• If your dog is aggressive to people or animals on walks, it’s best not to consider walking baby and dog at the same time.

• Any baby furniture, including swings, cribs, bassinets, etc. that you will be using should be introduced now so that it will not be part of the changes that happen when the baby arrives.

• If you plan to use a baby sling to carry the baby, wear it frequently now. You can put a doll in it to help acquaint the pet with your “new look”.

• It may be helpful to get a CD of baby sounds, such as crying and gurgling, and play it frequently so that these sounds are not new to your pet when the baby arrives. It is also helpful to have your dog perform his favorite tricks for treats and eat his meals while the CD plays, so he develops a positive association with these noises. See www.preparingfido.com.

• Teach your dog to associate a pleasant experience with certain baby scents, such as baby lotion or baby powder, by rubbing some on your hands just prior to treat training and relaxed petting.

• If you have friends or relatives whose babies visit you, please note your pet’s reactions to them and share that information with your behavior professional. Your pet does not need to have contact with them, but it is important to know whether he considers these babies routine or seems anxious or upset by them.

• Before a baby arrives, it is not possible to determine what will be her sleeping, waking, or fussy periods of the day. However, you might choose a time when there would generally be more than one adult at home, and begin spending 15-30 minutes with your pet at that time of day. Even if you can’t always give your pet attention at this time, it may be helpful to accustom him to the idea that a certain part of the day will usually be spent playing or interacting with you.

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Preparing Your Dog for a New Baby – Tips for Success - continued

After Your Baby Comes

• If possible, while you are still at the hospital, send home an item of your baby's clothing for your pet to smell, to help accustom him to the scent of the baby.

• When you bring the baby home, it’s important for at least one other adult to be there to help. This can be an overwhelming time for everyone, and excited or anxious pets can add to the stress. The best strategy may be for you to come in and greet your pet yourself and have someone else carry the baby.

• Once you are home and your pet has had a chance to greet you, you may want to have another adult deal with him while you settle in and attend to the baby. If your pet has become accustomed to staying in a “safe room”, behind a gate, or in an X-pen, he could be put in that place.

• Some parents elect to send the dog to a familiar relative for the first day or two after a baby arrives home, just to let them settle the baby in without other responsibilities.

• Remember that even the most tolerant pets should never be left unsupervised with babies or young children. It’s very tempting to leave the room to answer the phone or turn down the oven, but the baby should go with you or the pet should be confined to his “safe zone”.

• If your pet has shown aggression to people, there should always be one adult supervising the pet and one supervising the baby, if they are in the same area. Otherwise, the pet should be in his “safe zone”.

• Please consult a behavior professional if your pet shows distress in the presence of the baby, or to the crying or other activities of the baby.

• Remember that many pets first become anxious about babies when they become mobile. Be very observant when the baby first scoots and crawls.

• Babies can inadvertently hurt pets by pulling on them, stumbling and falling over them, or stepping on them. This can cause a pet to react aggressively out of surprise and pain. It’s important to supervise babies who can move about when the pet is around, or confine the pet safely away from them.

• Babies and toddlers cannot understand danger. Even if snapped at or scratched by a pet, they are unlikely to stay away. Even a child who has had a negative experience with a pet will approach him again. Supervision is essential.

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Preparing Your Dog for a New Baby – Tips for Success

After Your Baby Comes - continued

• It is better to work on teaching your child to respect and be gentle with animals than to attempt to teach a pet not to react to rough handling. Even a pet conditioned not to react to such activities can bite without warning if he becomes painful or ill for some reason. Children who are tired or frustrated may escalate their roughness to the point where even a very tolerant pet may react. A child used to being gentle and appropriate with animals will not be in danger when visiting other households where the pets may not be so tolerant.

• Pets can be very attractive to children when their parents are busy, and children who can move about may go back to the pet again and again when they are not engaged in other activities. When you are busy, it’s best to put the pet in his “safe zone” and try to interest the child in something she can do while you work.

• If visitors are a problem for your pet, the arrival of a baby brings new challenges. When adults or other children visit, he should be in his “safe zone”.

• Once your child has other children visiting, your pet should be separated. Even if each visiting child has a parent present, it’s too much to expect people to visit with you, attend to their children, and watch their children with your pet. Please place your pet in the “safe zone”.

• Older children may be curious about the pet and try to open a closed door. A lockable door to the pet’s room, or even a hook and eye at the top of the door, should help.

• Please keep your pet separated from your child when there is food present. A pet can try to snatch a piece of food and make contact with the child instead. A larger pet can knock a child down trying to get food, without meaning to be aggressive toward the child.

• If your pet steals the baby’s toys, please see our handout, Attention Seeking: Stealing. It may help to make sure the pet has a variety of his favorite kinds of toys, and rotating them may help keep them interesting. It may be simplest to gate the pet out of the room where most of the toys are, such as a family room.

• If your dog is actively avoiding, showing fear of, or aggression toward your baby, please completely separate him from your baby and contact your veterinarian immediately.

• Additional information can be found at: indoorpet.osu.edu
Low-Stress Handling

A Model Veterinary School Program for Training Patient Compassion

Blog posting by Sophia Yin

While most veterinary and technician schools strive to provide the best medical training they can, very few address the importance of providing a positive, low-stress experience for the pet. Only a handful of veterinary schools have a veterinary behaviorist, and even fewer have structured classes that teach low-stress handling techniques. One school, however, The Ohio State University College of Veterinary Medicine, takes patient comfort more seriously. Applied Animal Behaviorist, Traci Shreyer, with the support of staff board-certified veterinary behaviorist, Dr. Meghan Herron, is on her third year of running a program within the Community Practice service that trains veterinary students to handle and care for pets in a manner that optimizes comfort. The Community Practice services includes low-stress handling techniques and a low-stress handling ward as one aspect of its training. Students spend a two-week rotation on the service and devise medical treatment plans that include plans to improve the patient’s comfort and care. Here’s the plan:

Step 1: Approach, observe, and interpret the pet to assess the needs
When students meet a patient, the first step is to assess the patient so they can write up a low-stress handling plan.

Step 2a: Determine which foods the pet likes and if it is comfortable enough to eat
For dogs, students offer spray cheese, Kong Stuff’n Liver Easy Treat, chicken baby food, cat food, or peanut butter. Shreyer states, “Meats are most widely accepted even by the stressed animals.” First, students test whether the dog will eat the treat off their finger, then they put the treat in a Kong. “About 60 percent will eat the treats in the Kong, which will be left with the dog in its cage,” states Shreyer. “But some who ate treats when offered directly from the student will not eat when it’s left on the Kong in their cage. That’s a good gauge of how comfortable the pet is, because if an animal is uncomfortable, it will no longer eat.”

Step 2b: Assess food motivation in cats
In addition to the treats offered to dogs, cats are offered Purina ProPlan Adult Tuna Entree (pieces of fish in sauce). Shreyer states that cats tend to like fish flavors best with about 30 percent of cat patients eating offered treats in a clinical setting.

Step 2c: Use treats during procedures
Once taste preference is determined, the treats are used during procedures. Here a technician uses a treat to help lure the dog onto the scale so that the experience is positive. Other options for making the scale more comfortable include placing a rug or rubber mat on the scale, or using a scale that is level with the floor.

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Low-Stress Handling - continued

**Step 2d: Offer enrichment toys**

Both cats and dogs are offered treat-filled enrichment toys that will stay with them in the cage. For dogs, students try Kong toys and for cats, they use tiny cat Kongs or Premier Pet’s Twist-n-Treats. Says Shreyer, “We err on the side of safety and choose the hard black Kong toys for dogs.” For dogs with soft mouths, they use the Twist-n-Treat.

**Step 3: For cats, also use non-food toys for enrichment.**

Cats are offered tiny balls, catnip (if the owner states the pet responds positively), or wheat grass. “Wheat grass is very popular,” says Shreyer. Compared to dogs where about 60 percent will interact with a food toy while it has food in it, only about 10 percent of cats use their food or non-food toys. Therefore, cat enrichment relies mostly on the use of pheromones, a quiet atmosphere, music, and a place to hide.

**Step 4: Apply pheromones**

Feliway is sprayed in cat cages and on handling towels, while dog bedding and/or a neck bandanna is sprayed with Dog Appeasing Pheromone (DAP).

**Step 5a: Offer Privacy**

Cats are routinely provided with a place to hide—a box with a mouse-hole shaped opening or their crate. Generally the opening will face the side for added privacy. Cats tend to rest in or on top of the crate. A litter box and comfortable bedding are provided as well.

**Step 5b: Additional privacy**

can be achieved with a towel hanging over half of a dog’s or cat’s cage door. The entire front can be covered for dogs who react to the sight of people or other dogs

**Step 6: Provide a quiet setting**

A quiet setting is essential for keeping the overall anxiety in patients low. Steps 1-5 aid in creating a calm environment. “Through a Dog’s Ear” music can be used to further enhance comfort.

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Low-Stress Handling - continued

The Results with Cats

“The biggest differences we see with cats is the behavior within the cage,” says Shreyer. “Cats no longer hide in the back; rather, they rest on top of their box or front of their cage.” The cats are also easier to handle, with a higher threshold of tolerance before they begin to struggle.

The Results with Dogs

The situation with dogs has improved dramatically, too. “I used to go in the wards and dogs would be barking and shredding their paper bedding due to anxiety. Dogs have even damaged their teeth trying to get out of cages. Now our low-stress wards are always quiet, whereas the other hospital wards are still noisy,” states Shreyer.

What if Steps 1-6 are not enough?

If the previous steps do not provide enough stress relief and a dog continues to bark, then it is moved to different ward or a run, and assessed again. Sometimes this prompts a separation anxiety assessment and management plan and the pet is treated solely as an outpatient. Regardless of the intervention, the findings are documented within the chart, thereby providing a more comfortable future visit.

How are students responding?

“The students like that they are able to do something comforting for the patient,” says Shreyer. “I hear them saying things like, ‘I covered him up and now he’s quiet’, or ‘I gave a cat wheat grass and he really liked it’.” She continues, “When they see the animal use the enrichment, they want to go back and watch. Then they want to try the same enrichment in other areas of the hospital.”
Student Section
brought to you by the Veterinary Behavior Club student officers

Product Review – The Lickety Stik
By Ashley Ham, Behavior Club Vice-President

The Lickety Stik is a new tool to help with training dogs and cats. It is a liquid treat that utilizes a roller-ball top so pets can lick up their treat. If used properly, the roller-ball top allows the dog or cat to only get a small amount of tasty treat at a time so the pet will not become full from the treats.

The Lickety Stik is great when working with animals that are overweight or animals that you want to prevent from becoming overweight. The Lickety Stik for dogs has only one calorie for every ten licks and the feline version has one calorie for every twenty licks. It is also a great value since there is over 500 licks per bottle. With it being such a low calorie snack and because it is a treat that can easily be given continuously, the Lickety Stik is a good product to use when a pet needs to be distracted for an extended period of time, such as during a physical exam, or passing other dogs on leash that might cause alarm.

There are currently three flavors for dogs including; savory chicken, braised liver, and smoky bacon flavor. The Lickety Stik for cats currently has six flavors including; turkey, dairy, beef, salmon, tuna, and chicken. The variety of flavors allow owners to cater to picky pets.

Unlike most other treats, the person administering the Lickety Stick treat never has to touch the actual food substance and can avoid getting the smell on their fingers. The liquid treat also prevents the mess of crumbs that other treats may leave behind. It is in a somewhat small bottle that allows it to fit in most pockets and the palm of the hand.

There are some drawbacks to the Lickety Stik that some users have reported. The bottle must be squeezed in order for the dog or cat to get the treat, and if you squeeze too hard the fluid will drip onto the floor. The product has a strong smell which some people find unappealing. Some picky pets have also refused to even sniff in the direction of the Lickety Stik.

Some dogs and cats have had trouble learning to lick the bottle and instead try to bite at it, which can cause frustration when this is supposed to be the time the dog or cat is being trained. For dogs with powerful jaws, this has led to the roller ball dislodging and being swallowed. If the Lickety Stik has not been used for a few days, the roller-ball can become stuck and will need to be manually rolled.

Overall, the Lickety Stik is a much-needed, innovative product. If used properly, it can provide a no-mess and low calorie treat to a pet. As with any treat, the Lickety Stik may not be right for certain pets or in certain situations.
Student Section
brought to you by the Veterinary Behavior Club student officers

Feline Feeding Made Fun
By Kelsey Krammer, Behavior Club Secretary

If I could use one word to describe my cat, Squash, it would be hungry. Although he is not deprived of food, almost all of his favorite activities involve being fed. When I first started vet school at Ohio State, Squash also started something new: demanding food from one to four o’clock in the morning. This game of his involved digging at covers, hair pulling (mine of course), and figuring out how to turn on my radio. I only obliged when completely desperate for sleep, but it was often enough to start a bad habit. Even after wearing him out with hours of play at the end of the day, he still couldn’t seem to sleep through the night. When my sanity was almost lost, I discovered the automatic food dispenser, the Cat Mate C3000. Compared to the average food dish it was a little pricey, but you can’t put a price on good sleep.

For the extra-determined cat that could crack a safe to get to his food - like my cat - I recommend placing the feeder on a high shelf or table that is unreachable by the cat. Mine is on top of my book shelf. The bowl part, of course, must then be removed, and the food falls to the floor. This works in my case, as my cat is the greatest vacuum I’ve ever owned. This feeder allows me to give a set amount of food at any three times of the day, and Squash no longer associates me with receiving his meals. It decreased his nagging, slowed the speed at which he gobbled up his food at meal times, and entertained him as he searched for fallen pieces. Just in case there is any confusion, this feeder is for dry food only.

For extra entertainment and exercise for those curvy cats, I also recommend a food or treat dispenser ball, such as the Pet Safe Slim Cat variety. Despite the name, this toy is excellent mental stimulation for any size cat. The size of the dispensing holes can be altered to fit the size of the dry food or treat, and it can be made easy or difficult for long or short bouts of entertainment. This does not replace play time, but can provide for more fun than the average cat meal. Whether you have an energetic cat, a chubby cat, or a perpetually hungry and nagging cat, they can all benefit from a more interactive food experience.
Do you need to teach your new puppy some manners? Are you interested in diving into agility training? Do you want to learn to teach your dog not to jump on visitors? Or are you wondering how to approach a dog without your pup straining at the leash? A quality dog trainer can assist you with any of these, plus help you build a stronger bond with your dog in the process. But with so many dog trainers out there, how do you choose who is best for you and your dog?

Before I became interested in behavior, my family enlisted the help of many dog trainers. My dogs had been fighting unpredictably, and we were doing our best to reintroduce them with a goal of peaceful coexistence. On the recommendation of a family friend, we enlisted the help of a local dog trainer. He seemed confident and well-spoken, and was eager to help with our situation. Under his watchful eye, we leashed my two dogs and placed choke chains on them, a training tool we had never used before. When we brought them into the same room, my female immediately ran to attack my male. As we hurried the male out of the room, the dog trainer reached out his hand, grabbed my twenty-seven pound female by the collar and lifted her off the floor. My twelve-year old self watched in horror as this recommended “expert” choked my dog and cut off her air supply, all the while ensuring me that he was not hurting her, that he knew what he was doing, and that I could leave the room if it made me uncomfortable. While I did not speak out at the time in protection of my dog, that situation has haunted me for years. I vowed to speak up next time, whether for my own dogs’ benefit or for someone else’s.

In today’s world, anyone can call themselves a dog trainer. Unfortunately, there is no national regulatory body that licenses dog trainers, so any person off the street who has read a book or seen a TV show can practice and advertise as a dog “whisperer,” “guru,” or “expert.” Dog training has come a long way in the past few decades, moving from training regimes that focused on dominating and controlling our companions to ones that aim to foster a positive, mutually beneficial relationship between dogs and people. In behavior speak, we have transitioned from training that involved positive punishment methods (the addition of a stimulus to decrease an unwanted behavior) to methods involving mostly positive reinforcement (the addition of a stimulus to increase a desired behavior). Instead of telling Fido what not to do, we’ve learned that, in most cases, it’s more helpful to Fido to tell him what to do. But not all trainers have transitioned to this new way of thinking. Many are still using a variety of outdated techniques that rely on positive punishment, including shock collars, leash pops, alpha rolls, dominance downs, and flooding, all of which can be dangerous in the wrong hands (as demonstrated by Herron, et al. 2009). While these techniques may have some benefit in the short-term, they are more likely to create a fearful, anxious dog that is shut down to a point of learned helplessness because it cannot do anything for fear of being “corrected.” Many negative outcomes can be associated with positive punishment techniques. I often like to tell people that the worst thing that will happen to their dog if they feed it too many treats while using positive reinforcement is that he’ll gain a few pounds. The same cannot be said for positive punishment techniques which can have many unintended and dangerous consequences. While it takes spectacular timing and careful monitoring to make correct use of positive punishment, anyone can feed a dog a treat (this is also a great way to get kids involved in dog training).

Now that you have decided to use a positive reinforcement-based trainer, where do you turn? While there are no national licensing bodies, there are a few organizations that have sprung up under the leadership of experts in the field to provide sound recommendations to owners seeking a well-trained and knowledgeable professional.

Some of these are listed below:
KPA-CTP (Karen Pryor Academy Certified Training Partners): Trainers must have completed a six-month course that involves both online learning and extensive hands-on teaching from some of the most experienced...
teachers in the field, as well as pass a series of written and practical testing procedures. Graduates become part of a community of trainers who demonstrate a consistent level of excellence in positive reinforcement based training.

CPDT-KA (Certification Council for Pet Dog Trainers): Trainers must have completed 300 hours of instruction in dog training, most of which must be as a lead instructor. Trainers must pass a 250-question multiple choice examination testing their knowledge of learning theory, dog training equipment, and ethology. Following certification, trainers must undergo recertification every three years, either by retaking the exam or by attending 36 hours of continuing education seminars.

IAABC (International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants): Trainers must have a minimum of 1,500 hours of animal behavior consulting, including 500 hours of advanced instruction and education in learning theory and behavior knowledge over a period of three years. In addition, trainers must submit written case studies.

Others include courses and certification by Jean Donaldson, Karen Pryor, and Victoria Stilwell, each with varying requirements for membership and continuing education. If you are interested in using a trainer with letters behind his or her name, look on the web to see what their certification required.

There are also two professional titles which require advanced degrees:

CAAB (Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist through the Animal Behavior Society): Requirements include a doctorate degree (or master’s degree for an Associate Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist) in applied behavior or biological sciences (with an emphasis in animal behavior) from a recognized university including 30 hours of coursework in behavior science. Individuals must have five years of experience professionally in the field, have presented a poster or oral presentation at an Animal Behavior Society conference, and have three letters of recommendation from professionals in the field.

ACVB Diplomate (American College of Veterinary Behaviorists): This a professional specialization following the pursuit of a veterinary medicine program. ACVB diplomats have graduated from a recognized, accredited veterinary school, have completed the equivalent of a one-year internship, and then a three year residency under a current diplomat. To become certified, veterinarians must author a scientific article in the field of veterinary behavior, write three peer-reviewed case reports, and pass a comprehensive examination. They are also the only professionals that are able to prescribe psychopharmacologic medications to assist with treating severe behavior issues.

Not finding any of these titles in your area? If a dog trainer you are interested in using does not have any of these credentials, there are other guidelines you can use to determine if he or she is appropriate for your pet. Here are some tips to keep in mind when scouting:

1) Ask how long they have been in the field. Beginner trainers may be working under a more knowledgeable individual or may have just started out on their own. Beginners may be well-equipped to teach basic obedience, but may not be the best resource to handle cases of resource guarding or fear aggression.

2) Do your homework. Ask around town what the trainer’s reputation is. Do they have a lot of satisfied customers? Peruse the trainer’s website if they have one. Ask the trainer pointed questions. How do they deal with dog-dog aggression? How about an anxious dog? How do they teach a dog to sit or come? It is best to stay away from trainers that are ambiguous with their answers (“we only use shock collars when we need to”). Ask for phone numbers of satisfied customers. If a trainer is hesitant to let you speak to past clients, it is best to look somewhere else.

3) Ask to observe a class. This is the best way to see the trainer in action. Every single trainer I’ve known that I would recommend to a friend allows potential clients to sit in on their classes to see how they work with dogs and people. You can learn a lot from watching a class. Do the dogs seem happy? Do the people? Training should be enjoyable for both the dog and the human. Are the facilities clean and sanitary? Are training tools used (if you don’t see any, ask)? I stay away from trainers that mention choke, prong, pinch, or shock collars. No-pull harnesses and gentle leaders are useful training tools that are not, when used correctly, aversive to dogs. Owners and trainers should be using praise, treats, or toys, to reward dogs for good behavior. Make sure the
methods used in the class are consistent with the guidelines in the AVSAB position statements (see below for links).

4) For puppy kindergarten classes. Do the trainers allow the puppies to socialize? Socialization with other dogs is the hallmark of a good puppy class. While it is helpful to teach young dogs basic obedience, one of the most important skills that puppies can learn is bite inhibition, which they largely learn from interacting with other dogs.

5) Beware of trainers who make guarantees. Dogs are individuals. While a trainer may have a lot of success working with a certain behavior problem, no one can guarantee how an animal will react under a given set of circumstances. Even though a trainer should not guarantee to transform your dog into Lassie, you should walk away confident that your trainer will do everything possible to help you and your dog.

6) Go with your gut. This is something I wish I had done when I was twelve. If a trainer doesn’t feel right to you, there are many others out there. Don’t put yourself or your dog at risk unnecessarily. Training should be fun. If you keep that in mind, you can’t go wrong.

Good luck, and happy training!

References: