Welcome to the third 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. This season we introduce a new section on “Low Stress Handling.” Look for continued information in subsequent newsletters. For additional resources on animal behavior at The Ohio State University, please visit: vet.osu.edu/Behavior, vet.osu.edu/AnimalWelfare and vet.osu.edu/CommunityPractice.

Notes on Puppy Socialization

Proper exposure and handling of puppies during their first months of life is essential to the prevention of behavior problems. The socialization period in puppies begins at age three weeks and continues to age 12-14 weeks, depending on the breed. During this time, a puppy’s brain is developing social capabilities and associations. Puppies that do not experience appropriate socialization during this period often suffer behavior problems throughout life. Early socialization allows for healthy social development, preventing avoidance behaviors and acts of aggression based on fear of other dogs, people or new environments. In addition puppies between 8 and 10 weeks of age are particularly sensitive to negative experiences and one scary event can change their behavior for life.

Appropriate socialization involves exposing a puppy to a variety of novel people, animals, places and situations without causing him to become afraid. Consider any and

continued on page 2

Behavior Textbook Review/Recommendation

Veterinary Psychopharmacology by Sharon Crowell-Davis DVM, PhD, DACVB

For those of you interested in a more detail-oriented text on psychopharmacology, this is the book for you. Dr. Crowell-Davis provides an inclusive summary of the animal research history of psychotropic drugs, their indications, effects, and contraindications. She also provides details - down to the receptor level - to present the mechanism of actions for most of the psychoactive drugs used in veterinary medicine today. Dosing charts are mixed within each chapter and can sometimes be difficult to access quickly. The reader should refer to the index for direction on specific drug dosing charts.
Notes on Puppy Socialization - continued

all people, animals, objects and locations that a puppy may be exposed to at a later age. Friendly interactions with other animals are especially important for your puppy's social development. Because puppies are not fully vaccinated during their peak socialization period, it is important for owners to make wise choices to avoid exposing their dogs to infection diseases, such as Parvovirus. Owners can arrange “play dates” with friends who have other dogs or puppies who are healthy and vaccinated. Be sure that owners supervise all interactions and that the dogs with whom the puppy plays are socially appropriate. The best play pal for a new puppy is a mature adult who is known to be friendly and eager to play with other dogs, but also one that does not tolerate excessive mouthing or jumping.

Remember that puppy socialization is intended to convince the puppy that the world is interesting and rewarding to explore and to help him be confident in unfamiliar situations. Care must always be taken to prevent frightening experiences as one socializes a puppy. The effects of improper puppy socialization can be devastating, leading to fear-related aggression, anxiety, and extreme shyness around people and other animals. It is also important to remember that proper socialization should continue throughout a dog’s life to maintain the benefits gained from early socialization.

A more detailed discussion on socialization and other problem prevention techniques can be found at:
indoornet.osu.edu/dogs/puppy/socialization

The AVSAB position statement regarding puppy socialization can be found at: avsabonline.org
Low-Stress Animal Handling

Many of us groan when we see a “difficult” dog or cat on our schedule; we think, “this is going to be a stressful appointment.” If this is how you feel, imagine how the animal, as well as the client and your staff, is feeling? Wouldn’t it be great if we all could feel differently - better? This new section of our newsletter will help you change such visits into the positive encounters they can be and help you save time and stress during future visits.

Part I: Using food as a handling tool

To create a positive emotional response, we pair veterinary experiences with something that naturally elicits a positive emotional response in the animal - food. Food is the easiest and most powerful means of providing this response because all animals are programmed with an innate positive response to food (otherwise we would not survive for long).

Ideal times to use it:

- First meeting - continue to toss a few treats during history-taking for anxious and fearful dogs and cats
- First touch
- Socially invasive contact - e.g. head, ears, mouth, feet, rectal
- Painful activities or procedures - injections, blood draws
- Any time you change location, handlers, activity
- Feed fearful and or aggressive animals continuously throughout handling

Examples of highly palatable foods we use:

- Chicken baby food
- Peanut butter
- Squeeze cheese
- Kong paste
- Braunschweiger
- Canned version of restricted diet
Student Section, brought to you by the Veterinary Behavior Club student officers

Product Review: Premier’s Tug-a-Jug

By Ashley Berardi
Behavior Club Fund-raising chair, VME class of 2014

Premier is a company that specializes in manufacturing pet toys and other products that assist in companion animal training and in physical and mental enrichment for pets. The idea behind many of the toys they produce is to provide stimulation for animals, as well as to promote animal health and well-being, by allowing pets to pursue natural behaviors such as hunting and gathering. As a first year veterinary student with a newly acquired dog, I purchased one or two of Premier’s pet toys.

The Tug-a-Jug is a jug shaped container with an opening at the end of the neck that is occluded by a rope toy that extends the length of the jug. The bottom of the jug can be opened by removing a screw cap, and treats or food can be added to the jug. The idea behind this toy is that the dog will see, smell (via small pores at the end of the jug), and hear the food rattle around in the jug and be inclined to play with the jug as the dog tries to get to the food. As the dog is playing with the toy, pieces of the added food will fall out of the rope end in small increments. This keeps the dog occupied and wards off boredom and also promotes natural, instinctive behavior, such as hunting for food.

For my dog, Pedro, my main reason for purchasing the Tug-a-Jug was to slow down his food consumption at meal times. As a very food driven dog, he spends no time at all polishing off the cup of food I give him for dinner. The Tug-a-Jug really helped to impede his gobbling behavior and allowed his meal time to be extended. When first giving dogs the Tug-a-Jug, it is a good idea to show them how the toy operates or they might stare at you quizzically. With Pedro, I played with the toy on the floor so he could see what he had to do to dispense the food. After some trial and error, he eventually mastered the Tug-a-Jug and now is excited to see it every mealtime.
Thunderstorm Season has Arrived

By Audra Hanthorn
Behavior Club Vice-President, VME class of 2014

Spring thunderstorm season is here, and even with the promise of warmer weather shortly to follow, some of the canine population is less than excited. Many dogs suffer from anxiety associated with thunderstorms and the accompanying noise and bright flashes of light. They may even become anxious before the storm rolls in due to changes in temperature and barometric pressure they can sense. So how can we help our beloved canine companions cope with the storms?

Animal behaviorists have recommended a number of practices for owners to try to help minimize the level of anxiety their dogs experience during a storm. The first recommendation is to pay little attention to anxious behaviors and go about your normal activities. This should send the message to your dog that you are not concerned about what is going on, and help them to be less stressed in response.

If your dog tends to migrate to a certain place in the house during storms, ensure access to that area whenever a storm occurs, if possible. In many cases this makes them feel more secure, and essentially lets them “hide” from the storm. If you notice they have indeed found a place, you can place their bed and maybe a toy or a treat there to stimulate a positive response. Owners have placed their dogs’ bedding down in the basement, in the bathroom, under a bed, in a closet, or in their crate covered with a blanket to get away from windows and to dampen the sound of rain and thunder. Dogs can learn to seek out this area to alleviate some of their stress and anxiety.

You can enrich the environment by adding in some background noise to lessen the focus on the sounds of the storm. Just be sure the sounds you are adding aren’t stressing your dog further. The CD “Through a Dog’s Ear” is a compilation of classical music that can be calming for some dogs. You can also add in DAP (Dog Appeasing Pheromone/Comfort Zone), a synthetic pheromone that can have a great calming effect on your dog. This can be in the form of a plug in diffuser, or a spray that can be applied near their safe area where they are most of the time throughout a storm. For dogs in need of the comfort of DAP throughout the day and night, this product is available in a collar form from a veterinarian or online.

If you find your dog is still not able to cope with their fear and anxiety of storms, you should seek help from a behaviorist to devise a plan that may include carefully designed and implemented behavioral modification, desensitization, and drug therapy to manage the situation and help your furry friends cope with their fears.
Most individuals recognize the traditional theory that wolf packs are strict, hierarchical systems, overseen by a dominant male who governs with an “iron paw.” This paradigm is frequently referenced (using terms such as dominance, alpha/beta, pack mentality) to explain domesticated dog behavior, but research in the last forty years has fundamentally challenged this theory and its application to domestic dogs.

Early literature in wolf ethology and social structure point to a linear dominance hierarchy. However, Packard’s 2003 paper suggested that fundamentally, wolf packs are fluid and dynamic in terms of dominance, varying “…with pack composition, food availability (and thus competition), and even in the eyes of the observer.” Alpha males (or breeding males) do not enjoy elevated status for their entire life spans; rather, they assume the breeding role at sexual maturity and hold it for an average of only three to four years, after which they are replaced by another male. Social living arrangements are mediated by a complex array of agonistic signals, and pack members of all ranks employ these expressions to express intent and ultimately to avert conflict.

A study on agonistic signals and their relative use between dogs and wolves further highlights the very significant differences between them. A 1997 study published in the journal *Animal Behavior* compared the use of agonistic signals in fourteen breeds of dogs, ranging from those that were morphologically similar to wolves (Husky) to the farthest extreme (Cavalier King Charles Spaniel). Researchers found that physical paedomorphosis, or the retention of juvenile features by a mature adult, also carried with it a behavioral component; namely, that dogs that were morphologically “underdeveloped” by wolf standards had a smaller repertoire of agonistic signals used in dominance/submissive displays. Furthermore, the dogs with smaller “vocabularies” had retained agonistic signals that corresponded with the earliest stages of puppy development. In other words, an adult King Charles Spaniel had the vocabulary (growl and displace) of a wolf puppy within the first twenty days of its life.

While these findings may seem merely interesting, there are ramifications when we turn our eye to training methods based on dominance. If dogs are only able to comprehend social relationships to the extent that a wolf pup could, and wolf pups have, by definition, an “elementary” understanding of the complexities of agonistic indicators, imagine how confusing it must be to try to decode a human miming wolf signals (the alpha-roll comes to mind). Even if a dog does have a more robust agonistic vocabulary, since we lack the necessary equipment (ears, tail, nose) that dogs use to communicate with one another, at best we are confusing to our canine companions. It behooves us, as veterinary professionals, to suggest to our friends, family, and especially clients, that asserting dominance over their pet is not only ineffective, but generally counterproductive to establishing a relationship, which for most, is the reason we have dogs in the first place.