

Puppy Visits: Early Detection & Problem Behaviour Prevention
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Impact of UNWANTED behaviour

- ~6.5 MILLION pets are relinquished annually
 - **50%** of these are dogs
 - Many are adolescents
- ~1.5 million euthanized
ASPCA.org

Impact of UNWANTED behaviour

“Dogs with behavioral problems and little veterinary care were at greater risk of relinquishment than were dogs with regular veterinary care, and behavioral problems were associated with inappropriate care expectations”

- Developmental Factors THAT Impact behaviour
- Dog Developmental Stages
 - Neonatal (1-2w)
 - Transitional (3rd w)
 - Socialization (4-14w)
 - Juvenile Period (14w-sexual maturity)

Behaviourally-Aware Practice

- Practical Tips
 - Watch patient body language
 - This will help you catch problems early
 - Interact gently
 - Less is often more
 - If puppy resists, change the plan
 - behaviourally-Aware Practice
- Practical tips
 - Use treats liberally for every puppy visit
 - Even if the puppy “doesn’t need it”
 - Have treats available in all areas a puppy may be visiting
 - Giving treats at the vet won’t teach clients bad habits
 - Educate them about how this is part of preventive care
 - behaviourally-Aware Practice

Test different treat deliveries

- By hand
- By toy
- On table or floor
- Paper plates

- Paper cups

Behaviour Problem Prevention

- Client Education
 - Body language
 - Common puppy concerns
 - Preventing Problem Behaviours
 - Early intervention
 - Socialization services
 - Selecting appropriate trainers
- Client Education: Body Language
- Understanding body language allows for early detection of a problem
 - Mild signs of stress → Early intervention
 - Prevention is always easier than treatment
- Client Education: Body Language

Body language indicating stress is a prelude to the development of a stronger fear, and a potential bite

- Body Language: Dogs
- Comfortable
 - Relaxed face
 - Relaxed body
 - Ears up or relaxed
 - Tail neutral, easy wag
- Body Language: Dogs
- Uncomfortable
 - Leaning away
 - Turning away
 - Whale eye
 - Ears back
 - Tight facial muscles
 - Tail down or tucked
 - Piloerection
 - Avoidance
 - Hiding
 - Vocalize (whine, growl, bark)

Common Puppy Concerns

- Client Education: Common Puppy Concerns
 - Housetraining
 - Biting
 - Destructive behaviour
 - Normal puppy behaviours
 - Don't scold or punish
 - Provide appropriate outlets

- May need structured schedules and training to address
- Client Education: Housetraining
 - Does puppy eliminate in the house?
 - How much and how frequently?
 - When?
 - What is their response?
 - What cleaners are they using?
 - Tips for Client
 - Don't scold or punish
 - They don't feel guilty
 - Clean with enzymatic cleaner
 - Take out after meals, play and naps
 - Prevent unsupervised access
 - Reward when eliminate outside
 - Rule of Thumb:
 - Number of hours can hold urine = #months+ 1
- Client Education: Biting
 - When does the biting occur?
 - How often?
 - How deep are the bites?
 - Is it predicable?
 - Does it frighten the family?
 - What is their response?
 - Play biting
 - Normal behaviour
 - Learn how to inhibit bite strength
 - Avoid rough play
 - Avoid play that encourages biting at the hands
 - Redirect puppy to a toy
 - Confine or tether if not able to supervise
 - Avoid scolding, grabbing muzzle, rolling onto back, or any other punishment
- Client Education: Destructive behaviour
 - When does the chewing occur?
 - How often?
 - What's being destroyed?
 - Is the puppy ingesting items?
 - What is their response?
 - What chew toys are available?
 - Puppy destructive chewing
 - Normal behaviour
 - Puppies explore with their mouths
 - Provide appropriate items for them to chew upon

- Redirect to toy if they start to chew on inappropriate item
 - Bitter apple?
 - Do not scold or punish
- Appropriate Environment
- Provide puppies with:
 - Mental enrichment
 - Predictable, positive social interactions
 - Opportunities for appropriate play
 - Age-appropriate exercise
 - Not the cure
- Puppy Socialization Classes
 - True or False?

True or False: Puppies attending a properly-run puppy socialization class prior to full vaccination are at higher risk of contracting infectious diseases

 1. True
 2. False
 - True or False?

True or False: Puppies attending a properly-run puppy socialization class prior to full vaccination are at higher risk of contracting infectious diseases

 1. True
 - 2. False**
- Prevention: Socialization Classes
 - Age-appropriately vaccinated puppies were no more likely to contract parvovirus than vaccinated puppies who did not attend a class.
 - Don't need to wait to attend puppy class until fully vaccinated.
 - Controlled, **positive** exposure to life events
 - Building a trusting relationship
 - Client education on common behaviours
 - Housetraining
 - Play biting
 - Destructive chewing
 - Normal vs. atypical behaviour
 - What to avoid
 - Strictly obedience (sit, stay, down)
 - Forced interactions with other people or puppies
 - Aversives
 - Spray bottle
 - Alpha rolling / holding down
 - Physical manipulation
 - Uncontrolled puppy play
 - Early Interventions for Puppies
- Early Intervention

- Veterinarians see puppies before trainers
 - Consult on appropriate environment
 - Assess for early red flags
 - Signs of fear or aggression in clinic
 - Signs of guarding behaviour
 - Client reports fear or anxiety-related problems at home or other environments
 - Puppy becomes too emotionally aroused to learn
 - True or False:
 - True or False: Puppies with fears and phobias tend to outgrow them as they get older
 - 1. True
 - 2. False
 - **FALSE!**
- Puppies with fear- and aggression-based conditions need help immediately. Puppies **do not** outgrow fear or aggression.
- Early Intervention
 - Treatment
 - Avoid/prevent access to fear- or aggression-provoking stimuli
 - No punishment
 - Desensitization and counter-conditioning with an appropriate trainer (or referral to a veterinary boarded behaviourist or resident)
 - Early Intervention
 - Treatment
 - Behavioural medications can be used
 - Fluoxetine
 - Gabapentin
 - Trazodone
 - Medication is **NOT** a last resort

The more brain chemistry is normalized early, the better chance for more normal behaviour long-term

Choosing a Trainer

- I Get It!
- We're veterinarians, not animal trainers
- BUT...
 - We are caretakers of mental as well as physical health
 - Clients respect our opinion, AND
 - Animals are learning all the time
- Choosing a Trainer
- Why is this important?
 - Basis of the relationship
 - Training is a completely unregulated field

- No licensing
- No legal oversight
- No standardized education

It's important to know how to interact with animals and what to recommend, that will benefit their mental health

Associative Learning

Title of Presentation

- Associative Learning
 - Classical Conditioning
 - Pavlovian Conditioning
 - Learned association between an environmental stimulus and a predictive event.
 - Doesn't rely on what the learner is doing
- Example of associative Learning
- Examples of Associative Learning
 - Other Examples
 - Opening can → Cat's dinnertime
 - Doorbell → Arrival of visitor
 - Presence of crate → Vet visit
 - Entry into Vet Clinic → Vet visit
- Example of associative learning
- Associative Learning
- Key Points of Associative Learning
- Emotions can be associated with stimuli, resulting in positive or emotional states
 - Positive (good)
 - Food, play
 - Negative (poor)
 - Scolding, corrections, aversive
 - Emotional associations can be made in a SINGLE trial
 - Key Points of Associative Learning
- Operant Conditioning
- Consequence-Based Learning
 - Instrumental learning
 - Operant conditioning
 - The **outcome of a behaviour** dictates whether or not the behaviour will happen again.
- Operant Conditioning
- Terminology
 - Positive
 - Something is applied/given
 - Negative
 - Something is removed/withdrawn
 - Reinforcement
 - Behaviour is likely to increase
 - Punishment

- behaviour is likely to decrease
- BUT...
- Learning doesn't happen in a vacuum!
 - Associative learning impacts consequence-based learning and vice-versa
 - Associative learning can condition emotional responses
 - This can profoundly impact the human-animal bond and animal welfare

Therefore HOW you train is as important, if not more so, than what is being trained.

Animals are always learning, even if you are not actively training them

- Consequence-Based Learning
- Is the consequence...
- Consequence-Based Learning
- Training Style: "Reward-Based"
- Consequence-Based Learning
- Training Style: "Traditional"
- Consequence-Based Learning
- Training Style: "Balanced"
- Research on Training
- Research has shown:
 - Positive reinforcement-based training is as effective as traditional training
 - Positive reinforcement training tends to be more liked by clients
 - Training that uses aversive methods results in higher amounts of stress-related behaviours
- Recommending Trainers
- Screen trainers carefully
 - They may use terminology that is attractive but not accurate
 - How do they treat clients and pets?
 - Are they using appropriate methodology?
 - Many certifications and programs
 - Certified applied animal behaviourist (CAAB)
 - Karen Pryor Academy (KPA)
 - International Association of Animal behaviour Consultants (IAABC)
 - Certified Pet Dog Trainer (CPDT)
- Conclusions
 - Puppies have developmental stages that impact their learning
 - Preventing behaviour problems is easier than treating them
 - Educate clients on normal behaviour and body language
 - Early intervention is important
 - Choose referral trainers wisely.

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