



FEATURES

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Chair's Message

Hi All,

Your committee is already working hard behind the scenes on the 2012 conference. Keynote speaker is Sarah Kalnajs who you might know from her DVD 'The Language of Dogs'. Sarah is an expert on dog body language and temperament testing. Start saving your pennies now as we want to see you at the conference next year! Maybe conference attendance can be your Christmas present! Registrations will open February 2012. Speaking of Christmas, I wish you and your family (two and four legged) a relaxing break and a 'positive' New Year.

Susie Londer

Dog Bites in Children

By Donelle Whiu

A year long research project was completed looking at children 15 years and under who presented to Middlemore Emergency Department in South Auckland, following a dog bite. The parents/guardians were given a questionnaire to answer which investigated the situation leading up to the bite. One of the main questions of the research was, 'What is causing these bites and could education of the children have prevented any of them?'

Also recorded was statistical information such as relationship to the dog, breed, age, sex and what level of supervision was around the child at the time of the incident.

A total of 62 patients were recorded as presenting with dog bite as the primary diagnosis between June 2010 – May 2011.

29 patients were aged under 5 (44%), 24 patients (36%) were aged 5-10 and the remaining 12 patients (18%) were aged 10-15.



The ethnicities of the children who presented to hospital were as follows; 45% identified as NZ Maori and 22% identified as NZ European/Pakeha. Pacific, (including Tongan, Samoan and 'Other Pacific') peoples made up 14% of all patients and Cook Island Maori were 15%. This shows an over-representation of Maori as the total population of Maori people in South Auckland is between 19-24%. NZ European/Pakeha were vastly under-represented and the number of Pacific patients sits with the population demographic.

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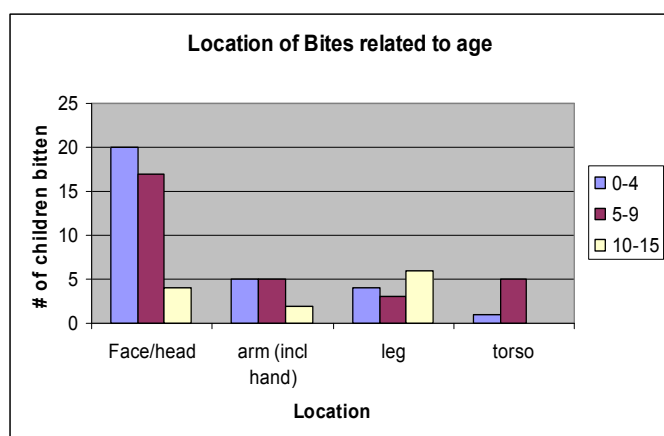
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The presentations appeared to be seasonal with an increase in presentations during the summer months. There was a decrease in February though and the highest recorded months were December and March with 8 apiece.

Of the 52 cases where the relationship of the dog to the child was recorded, 33 dogs were known to the family (63%), 10 dogs were family dogs (19%) and 9 dogs were unknown (17%)

47% of respondents report having someone over 18 years of age supervising the child when the bite occurred. 53% of children were not being supervised at the time of the injury.

The location of injuries was broken down into 4 main categories, face (including lip, scalp and cheek), arm (including hand), leg (including foot)



and torso (including back and chest). The overwhelming result shows that children are most likely to be bitten on the face. 57% of bites across all the age groups are to the face. 0-4 years old showed 66% of children bitten in the face/head. The 5-9 age group followed the same trend as the younger children with 56% of them bitten on the face/head. The 10-15 year olds were more likely to be bitten on the leg (50%) and this was shown to be usually running away from an attacking dog.

10 different breeds were recorded (also including the cross-breeds thereof) These are Pitbull, Staffy (X), Kelpie, Labrador, Rottweiler, Alaskan Malamute, German Shepherd, Terrier, Shar Pei and "cross breed". It is important to note however that the "Staffy" was *always* recorded as a "Staffy X" and were not associated with a purebred English Staffordshire Bull Terrier which is also commonly known as a "staffy". It is because of this factor and my belief that the true origins of these dogs in South Auckland is difficult to ascertain by a lay-person that I have included 'Staffy X' in breed also recorded as "Pitbull" or "Pitbull X".

Pitbull (and Staffy X) were responsible for 58% of all the bites where a recognised breed is recorded. The next prolific breed was Shar Pei with 8%. German Shepherd, Alaskan Malamute, Labrador and cross-breed dogs were responsible for 5.8% of bites respectively. (Note; of the 2 bites recorded by German Shepherds, 1 of them was a police dog who restrained a 15 year old who was engaged in criminal activity.)

Only 16 respondents reported the age of the dog that bit the child, and 27 reported the dogs sex, so it is difficult to accurately record trends with such a small control group, however 37% of dogs with a recorded age were aged 1 or less and 85% of the dogs who bit (where the sex of the dog is known) were male.

When examining the events leading up to the bite, I placed them in categories as follows,

- Breaking up a fight
- Playing near or walked past
- Mother with puppies
- Child caused contact with dog, patted or touched or fell on
- Food related
- Dog tied up, child approached dog
- Toy related
- Dog strayed into or out of a yard
- Child ran away
- Teasing dog

Two of the incidents where a bite occurred, fell into 2 or more categories but the majority of incidents had one clear event prior to the bite. It is also worthy to note that 9 incidents were also recorded where the caregiver was unsure what happened. These cases were all in the pre-verbal 0-4 year old age group where there was no immediate adult supervision. 23% of the cases indicated that the child caused contact with the dog. This was usually through trying to pet the dog but in a couple of instances the child was playing and fell on the dog. In 14% of the cases the dog was tied up and the child approached the dog and another 14% were food related. 4 children were bitten after running away from an approaching dog and interestingly all of these cases were in the 10-15 year age group and in all cases the injury was to the child's leg. In only 1 of these cases the dog was unknown to the child.

58 of the 65 bites were examined for intensity and scaled using Dr Ian Dunbars 'Dog Bite Scale' as follows;

LEVEL ONE BITE: Air snap. This is a warning bite

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that doesn't connect. The dog intentionally inhibits his bite and "missed" on purpose. The dog is doing everything possible to get your attention and tell you that all is not well. There were probably many signs leading up to this snap

LEVEL TWO BITE: Air snap with skin contact. There might be a red mark or a slight bruise, but no skin is punctured. The dog has purposely not bitten down hard. The dog is inhibited to bite, but could be losing that inhibition. If level One and Two snaps are not working for him, he could escalate to level three

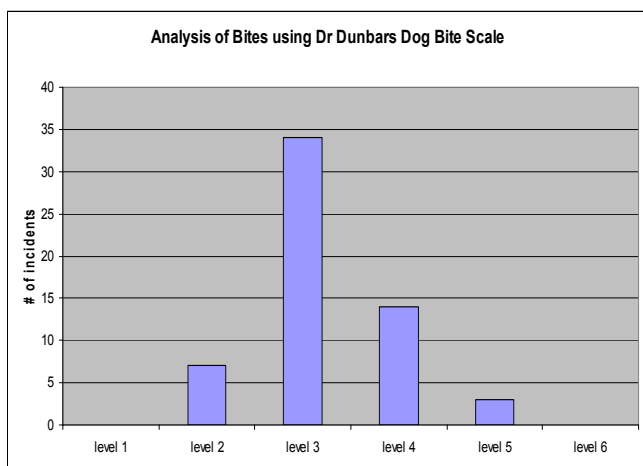
LEVEL THREE: There may be one to four puncture holes from a single bite. Skin punctures are no deeper than HALF the length of the dog's canine teeth.

LEVEL FOUR BITE: one to four holes from a single bite, deeper than half the length of the teeth. There is soft tissue damage such as (a) severe bruising telling us the dog clamped down HARD, and/or (b) slashes in both directions from the puncture indicating the dog bit and shook his head.

LEVEL FIVE BITE: Multiple Level Four bites with deep punctures or slashing due to clamping down, shaking, or repeated gripping in an attempt to move the bite to a "better" advantage.

LEVEL SIX BITE: The victim dies as a result of the attack.

Level One bites did not require medical attention and fortunately we received no Level 6 bites where the victim died. The rest of the bites were scaled level 2-5 as shown in the graph below.



Results showed that 58% of children sustained a level 3 bite, 24% sustained a level 4 bite and 3 children (5%) unfortunately received a level 5 bite.

47% of patients were admitted to Kidz First Surgical ward and 53% were discharged. All of the level 4 bites were admitted and 2 of the 3 level 5 bites were admitted.

Discussion of a couple of particular individual cases and their corresponding scoring on the scale:

A 15year old youth was brought to the Emergency Department early on morning after running from the police and being 'attacked' by a police dog. The youth sustained multiple lacerations to his thighs and right calf, scratch marks to his back and lacerations to his forearm. The wounds were deep but able to be sutured in Emergency. The dog was doing his job and successfully restrained the youth until the officer could arrest him. According to Ian Dunbar's scale the bites fit into the Level 5 bite where there are repeated deep bites and shaking of the head or 'slashing' of the teeth. This is an example of where a dog has decided he wants to bite the human and doesn't give up until instructed to by the handler. The youth was discharged after being sutured up in time for his court appearance.

The problem arises where a dog (not a working police dog) attacks a child without warning and continues the attack with the intent of doing damage to the child. This occurred with another of the victims where a 6 year old child was brought to the Emergency Department by ambulance after being attacked by a neighbours dog. The mother reports that she was in the kitchen and the children were playing on the driveway of their house. The gate to the neighbours house had been left open and the neighbours pit-bull dog ran over to the group of children. The 6 year old screamed and turned to run, when the dog bit her on the back. She continued to scream and the dog bit her multiple times on the back, buttocks and legs. The dog was seen to 'drag' the child up the driveway before being scared away by the mother.

The child sustained several large lacerations which required an operation to fix. This case fits into the level 5 bite scenario and also highlights the aspect of appropriate supervision of children although the mother was not to know that the neighbours gate had been left open.

The third interesting case that presented throughout the year long study, was that of an 18month old child who was left in the care of his grandmother. The family owned 2 pitbulls, a 7year old neutered male and a 2 year old rescued, spayed female Both animals were registered, vaccinated and muzzled in public. The male had shown signs of food aggression and the week prior to the incident the child had wandered into the bedroom where the dogs were fed and the male dog had bitten him on the cheek. This sounds like it was a warning bite telling the child to stay away

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from the dogs food.

The next week the grandmother was watching the child and the parents, concerned about the recent incident gave strict instructions to put the male dog in the laundry room when the child was around. The grandmother was carrying the child and tried to put the dog out. He refused to go so she got some food to encourage him into the laundry. She could not manage the food, dog and child so put the child on the ground while she coaxed the dog out. The child moved towards the dog as the grandmother placed the bowl of food down. The dog responded by biting the child in the face, this time with more force.

The size of the child and the size of the fully grown 7 year old pitbulls jaws meant that the extent of damage to the child's face was severe. The child sustained a single wound where the dogs teeth penetrated the skin just around the right eye and tore the skin down to the line of his jaw. The first ambulance on the scene sedated the child and intubated him to protect his airway and transferred him to Middlemore. The child had multiple operations to repair the damage and will require ongoing reconstructive surgeries as he grows. He remained in Intensive Care for 7 days and after 2 weeks in hospital was discharged. The family surrendered the dog for destruction.

What is interesting about this case is the fact that, after careful analysis and discussion, the bite only scores a 4 on the dog bite scale. The intent of the dog was not to do severe damage to the child (ie; he did not bite the child repeatedly with grievous intent) It appears that the dog was warning the child again about staying away from his food however the second warning was delivered with more force. This highlights the need for appropriate understanding of powerful breed dogs and the *immediate* behavioural correction of any concerning guarding/possessive characteristics, particularly when children are around.

This leads to the concept of supervision. After interviewing parents the common theme was that supervision meant having the child/dog in their line of sight. The concern is that there is nothing a parent can do then if the dog decides to bite the child. Supervision of the under 5 age group needs to be vigilant and 100% of the time a child is around a dog, family dog or otherwise. Appropriate supervision of an under 5 is within arms reach, I usually advocate for "1 hand on the dog and 1 hand on the child" in every toddler/dog interaction.

With the school-aged, over 5's, we can take a slightly different approach. I think it is reasonable

that, if the child has had adequate education about behaving around a dog then the supervision of the older child can be a couple of steps away. The responsibility of the parent/dog owner is to **actively** supervise the older child, with the ability to intercept/react should the dog or child act inappropriately.

Education of this older age group should include appropriate games to play with dogs, understanding of basic canine communication and signs of stress. Also they should be taught about energy and remaining calm around dogs, particularly strange dogs. The research quite clearly shows that a child being attacked or rushed upon by a strange dog occurs infrequently and so the focus should be on appropriate dog/child interactions where the child *knows* the dog.

It is quite clear that the actions of the child and lack of *appropriate* supervision from parents caused a majority of the bites seen in the research period. It is of great concern that many parents are unaware of the basics of dog behaviour and communication and are not appropriately teaching their children how to keep safe around dogs. It is vital then, as trainers and behaviourists that a critical part of any family assessment/training schedule involves an element of safety instruction for the parents and the children around the dog. Ideally every school or pre-school or kindergarten should provide dog safety sessions but it is the parents who need to reinforce the behaviour of their children. The government has stated that dog safety education is not a priority but do we need to wait for a child to be killed before someone sits up and takes notice of the types of people owning these powerful dogs and the lack of education being provided to the children?

Donelle Whiu

The APDTNZ Newsletter is now available in hard copy. If you would like to receive the next newsletter by post please let Jo Thorne our membership co-ordinator know by sending an e-mail to: membership@apdt.org.nz

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- There is a late fee of \$5 per week per item for overdue items. Please include the fee when you return overdue items.
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How to Use R+ to Reduce Undesired Behaviors

By Susan Smith

We've been through most of the learning principles that directly affect us as animal trainers. So - what's the point? Why do we care?

Well, I believe that if we understand the concepts, we actually have the most versatile toolbox available. Certainly, we hear criticism from trainers who still use primarily aversive training methods (choke, prong, and e-collars) that positive reinforcement trainers are limited in what they can do. I would strongly disagree with that statement! In fact, trainers who follow pack theory principles and/or aversive-based training methods are the ones that are limiting their toolboxes, in my opinion.

Now, having said that, if a trainer using primarily aversive methods understands learning concepts, they will also have a very versatile toolbox. Methodology is a philosophical choice – understanding learning and behavior is providing yourself with a fully stocked toolbox. Hopefully, once a trainer understands the concepts, they will tend toward more positive methods, because they understand how powerful they can be, but it is still a choice. We've talked about the humane hierarchy, and hopefully some day that concept will be widely understood and used by animal trainers. Nevertheless, methodology is a choice.

I've given examples throughout this series on how each principle can affect the animals we train, and how we respond to the animals' behavior, when we recognize the principle that is in play. In this installment, I'd like to give you some ideas on how you can use positive methods more effectively.

Probably the hardest problem we face as pet dog trainers, is reducing unwanted behaviors without using aversive methods. For those who are not well-versed in learning concepts, this is a very difficult procedure. However, there are ways to do it. Of course, we're not really reducing behavior, because that would be punishment. What we're doing is replacing the undesired behavior with an acceptable behavior.

The most effect way to replace a behavior is through the differential reinforcement schedules. The most commonly used in our job are differential reinforcement of an alternative behavior (DRA), differential reinforcement of an incompatible

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behavior (DRI), and differential reinforcement of an other behavior (DRO). Which differential schedule you use will depend on the behavior you are trying to reduce.

So, instead of focusing on the undesired behavior, we're focusing on what we want the dog to do instead of the undesired behavior – and that's how we're able to use positive reinforcement to reduce behavior! Our focus is actually on increasing a behavior, but by doing that we are also decreasing the undesired behavior because something else has taken its place.

There's no doubt that it is very easy to train a new behavior with positive methods. When we have an undesired behavior, we must first pinpoint what function that behavior serves. Here are some common examples (there may be other reasons for these behaviors, as well; I've chosen common functions):

Undesired Behavior	Function of Undesired Behavior	Replacement Behavior
Counter Surfing	Food gathering	Floor surfing
Watchdog Barking	Alerting others to presence of potential danger	Coming to owner, sitting and barking once
Pawing at Owner	Attention (of some kind – it can vary)	Coming to owner, sitting and touching owner with nose

These are all quite common behaviors, and they all have a real function for the animal. If we provide them with another way to fulfill that function and reinforce the new behavior, they will be satisfied.

Sometimes it isn't as easy to determine the function of a behavior as it is with these examples – and that's why we get paid the big bucks! It's our job to assess the behavior and come up with an alternative behavior that serves the same function. We must come up with that alternative – it is very difficult for the animal to simply leave a void where there used to be a functional behavior. In fact, when that happens, usually punishment has been involved.

There are some other concepts that will help when reducing undesired behavior, as well. One is called the matching law and another is called fair pairs.

In a nutshell, the matching law essentially means

that given two behaviors that are being reinforced, the animal will pick the behavior which has a richer reinforcement schedule. We can use this to get the animal to start doing an alternative behavior; the more he's reinforced for the alternative behavior, and the less he's reinforced for the undesired behavior, the more likely he'll opt for the reinforced behavior. So, if we extinguish the original behavior and put the alternate behavior on a variable reinforcement schedule, voila! We now have an animal that is more likely to do the alternate behavior.

Fair pairs is a concept that comes from working with children. The idea behind it is that if you take something away, you must replace it with something of equal or greater value. This way, the animal is not being punished by something being removed, but is being reinforced for allowing us to take that item away. We already do this to some extent when we do exchanges. However, we need to be a bit more creative (especially with our owners), and make sure that the animal is being reinforced for that behavior.

If the animal will work to avoid something, then it is an aversive. So, P-, P+ and R- are all aversives – and there is even some debate that extinction could qualify as an aversive. Of course, we use aversives all the time, but with just a little effort we can eliminate them from formal training, if we want.

Susan Smith's business, Raising Canine (www.raisingcanine.com), provides remote education opportunities for animal behavior consultants, as well as business and marketing products to help their businesses, including an intensive course for beginning dog trainers. Sue is the co-author of the book "Positive Gun Dogs: Clicker Training for Sporting Breeds." Sue is certified through CCPDT, IAABC and the San Francisco SPCA. She is an ex-Board member for the CCPDT, an active, professional member of the APDT, former Chair of the APDT Member Relations & Communications Committee, moderates the APDT list discussion group and was named APDT Member of the Year in 2004.

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A NEW THRESHOLD

By Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, CDBC

Aggression. It's a natural, normal dog behavior, but it's also a scary word that evokes images of maulings, and worse, dog-related fatalities. The term actually covers a long continuum of behaviors, some of them very appropriate and critically important to successful canine communication. This broad spectrum of behaviors is technically called "agonistic behavior" defined in ethology as:

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“pertaining to the range of activities associated with aggressive encounters between members of the same species or social group, including threat, attack, appeasement, or retreat.” So, while a growl-lunge-bite sequence would be easily recognized by most people as aggression, more subtle agonistic behaviors such as a freeze, a hard stare or even a lack of eye contact, may not.

Aggression is probably the most common behavioral problem in dogs seen by behavior professionals and the most dangerous one seen in companion dogs. While the number of dog-related fatalities (approximately 30 per year in the U.S.) pales in comparison to accidental death by other means, the number of annual reported bites is staggering. According to the “Dog Bite Law” website (www.dogbitelaw.com): “The most recent official survey, conducted more than a decade ago, determined there were 4.7 million dog bite victims annually in the USA. A more recent study showed that 1,000 Americans per day are treated in emergency rooms as a result of dog bites. Dog bite losses exceed \$1 billion per year, with over \$300 million paid by homeowners insurance.”

Our Culture and Aggression

Our culture has become over sensitized to dog bites. Once upon a time if Johnny was bitten by a neighbor’s dog, Mom asked Johnny what he doing to the dog that he shouldn’t. Today she reaches for the phone to call her attorney. Once upon a time if the family dog snapped at the baby, Mom learned to be more careful about letting the baby pull the dog’s ears. Today she’s dialing up a behavior professional, or worse, dropping the dog off at her local shelter. Sensationalized “dog mauls baby” headlines have turned us into a nation of aggression-phobes, where the smallest indication of discomfort on a dog’s part send humans screaming for their lawyers.

Behavior professionals mull over the causes of what looks to be a huge and growing problem. The population shift away from rural living and toward urban and suburban homes may have lessened our population’s understanding of animal behavior in general. This lack of understanding manifests as inappropriate human behavior toward dogs, which triggers more aggressive behavior as well as a lower tolerance for bites – even minor ones. A more responsible dog-owning population is keeping dogs at home rather than letting them wander, and as a result dogs may be less well-socialized – and more likely to bite. There has been an increase in popularity of dog breeds that contribute to our cultural sensitization – large, powerful breeds who can do serious damage if they bite, such as Pit Bulls and Rottweilers – as well as space sensitive breeds who have a lower tolerance

for inappropriate human behavior, such as Border Collies and Australian Shepherds. Finally, the appropriately diligent efforts of animal control authorities to quarantine dogs who bite (for rabies control purposes) and craft dangerous dog laws (for public safety purposes) have probably fueled the alarmist reactions to even minor dog bites.

I’m not saying aggression isn’t a serious behavior. But there’s aggression, and then there’s serious aggression. In a perfect world, all humans would recognize and take appropriate action at the lower levels of agonistic behavior. If that happened, we would rarely see serious aggression – in fact we’d rarely see any bites at all. Until that time, we can only work, one dog and one human at a time, to expand human understanding of canine aggression.

Stress

Across the board, with one tiny exception so rare it’s barely worth mentioning, aggression is caused by stress. Whatever “classification” of aggression an owner or behavior professional chooses to use, the underlying cause of the aggression is stress. There is usually a triggering stressor – when a dog bites a child it’s a good bet that child was a stressor for him – but there is also a background noise of other stressors that pushed the dog over his bite threshold with that child on that particular day. These are often stressors that we don’t even notice, and because cortisol, an important stress hormone that plays a role in aggression, can stay in the system for at least two days, they can be stressors that occurred yesterday, or even the day before!

Think of it as canine road rage. In the human world, road rage might look like this:

Stressor #1: Our subject jumps out of bed in the morning realizing that his alarm didn’t go off and he’s late for work.

Stressor #2: He dashes through a cold shower because his hot water’s on the blink.

Stressor #3: As he hurries out the door his eye falls on the foreclosure notice that arrived in yesterday’s mail because his mortgage payment is overdue.

Stressor #4: He jumps in his car, starts the engine and sees that his gas gauge is on “E”. He’s already late and now he has to stop to fill up his tank.

Stressor #5: As he pulls onto the freeway his cell phone dings to remind him of an important meeting in 15 minutes – and his commute is 25 minutes.

Stressor #6: He remembers that his boss warned him that if he’s late for one more important meeting he’ll be fired. If he speeds, maybe he can make it.

Stressor #7: Traffic is a little slow, but if he runs the commute lane, maybe he can make it. Just as he

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starts to pull into the left lane a car cuts him off and then pokes along in front of him below the speed limit. It's the last straw. Over threshold, he reaches under his seat pulls out his loaded .357 and...

In the dog world, canine road rage might look like this:

Stressor #1: Dog has a little isolation distress, usually mitigated by the presence of his canine sibling, but today his brother got dropped off at the vet hospital when his humans went off to work, so he's all alone.

Stressor #2: UPS delivery arrives, and dog has a "thing" about delivery people.

Stressor #3: Just before noon a thunderstorm passes through. Our dog is thunder sensitive, and owner didn't give him his thunder medication this morning.

Stressor #4: Pet walker is supposed to arrive at 1:00pm, but is late and doesn't get there until 2:30. Dog is stressed by change in routine and by urgency of a very full bladder by the time the walker arrives.

Stressor #5: Humans arrive home at their normal time but they are stressed because there are dinner guests due at 7:00pm and they have to get ready. Dog is stressed by his humans' stress, and the fact that they rush through his evening routine, feeding him hurriedly and skipping his walk to the dog park for exercise.

Stressor #6: Visitors arrive, and while the dog is fine with adult visitors, he is not especially fond of children, and there are four in this family. All throughout dinner, the dog listens the high-pitched

sounds of children's voices laughing and arguing, and occasionally sees them staring at him.

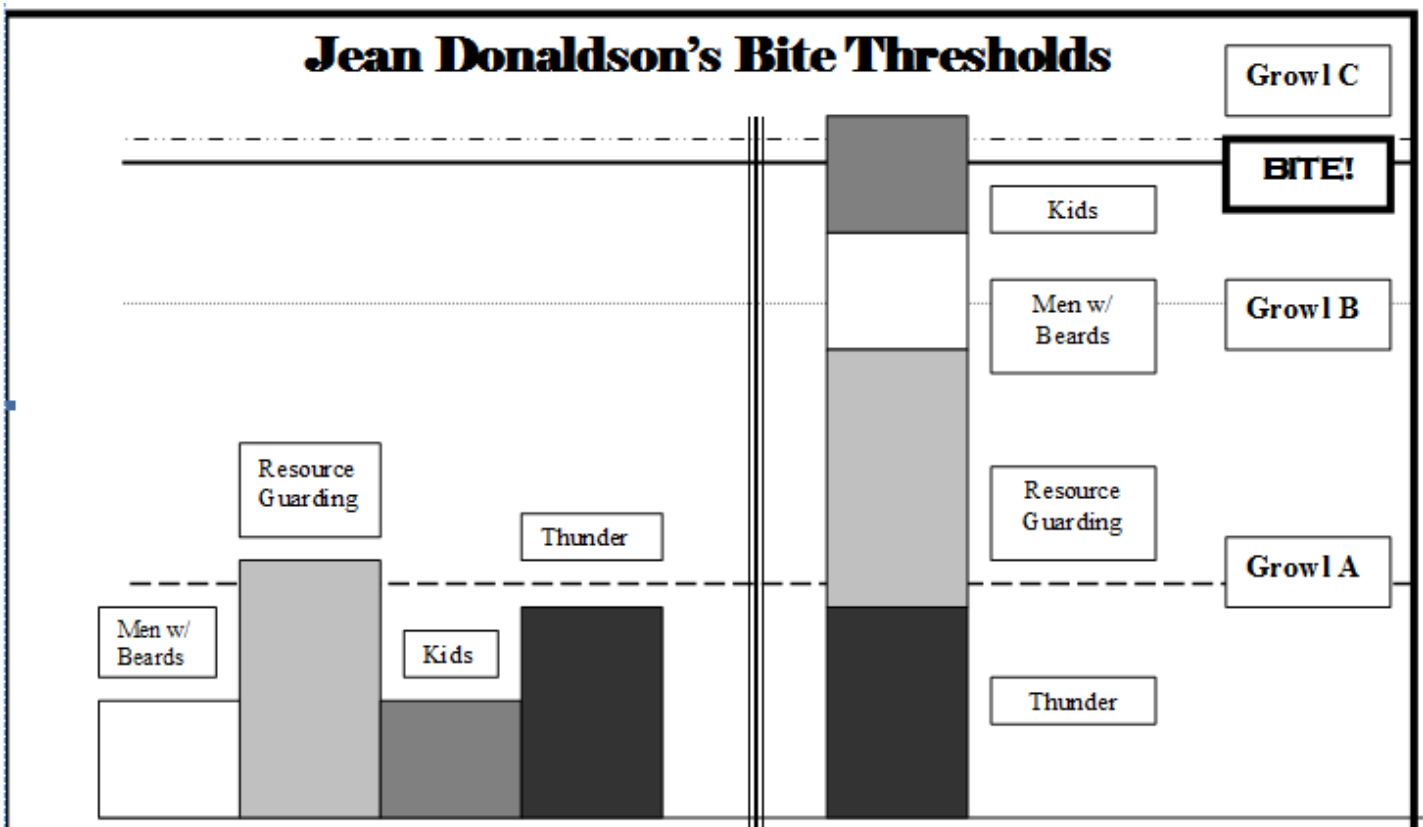
Stressor #7: After dinner the kids are running around the house. The dog tries to stay out of their way, but eventually one corners him in the kitchen. Over threshold, he pulls out his loaded mouth and...

Stress is an emotional and physiological response to a stimulus. The foundational underpinning of aggression is based on classical conditioning – your dog's emotional and physical response to a stimulus that causes him stress: fear, pain, anger and/or some other strong emotion. He can't help his emotional response, any more than you can, when faced with something that scares or hurts you. Aggression also has an operant piece – your dog learns that he can deliberately act to make scary stressors go away. When he growls, barks and lunges, perceived bad things tend to leave – so his aggressive behavior is negatively reinforced (dog's behavior makes a bad thing go away), and increases over time.

Aggression is Not Dominance

There's a widespread misconception held by many dog-owners, perpetuated by unfortunate television drama, that aggression is all about dominance, and that the appropriate response to any display of aggression is to force the dog into submission. This couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, a very mild, easily resolvable display of aggressive behavior can quickly become a significant behavior problem if the dog's human responds with aggres-

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sion.

The concept of dominance in a social group has been so widely misunderstood and distorted that many knowledgeable behavior professionals hesitate to even use the term. In fact, dominance has little to do with aggression, and a lot to do with access to desired resources: the concept of dominance strictly refers to an interaction or a series of interactions between two individuals in which there is an outcome in favor of one member of the pair. That outcome is largely determined by a submissive or yielding response from one of the individuals and not through overt conflict or escalated aggression. Someone who is truly higher ranking in social status doesn't need to resort to aggression to get what he wants. This holds true for social groups of all species, including humans. Violent behavior between group members is inappropriate and unacceptable in social interactions

Using violent behavior against a dog who is aggressive adds additional stress to his stress load. You may be able to suppress his aggressive behavior in that moment, but you have likely increased the probability for future, possibly more intense aggression to occur. There are far more appropriate and effective ways to manage and modify aggressive behavior than aggressing back. So what do you do when your dog exhibits aggressive behavior? Remember that stress, not any desire to take over the world, causes aggression to erupt. The first thing to do is educate yourself about dog body language so you can be aware of your dog's more subtle agonistic behaviors. (See Stress Signals, June 2006) Then be aware of your dog's stressors and stress levels, and avoid putting him in situations where he may be compelled to bite. When you do see stress signals, even subtle ones, remove him from the immediate proximity of the stressor to help him cope with the situation.

When you've identified something that appears to be a stressor for him, figure out how to remove it as a stressor in his life. If it's something you can get rid of, simply get rid of it. If you can manage it, by removing him from the environment when you

know the stressor will be present, do it. If it's too present in his world to get rid of or manage, take steps to change his opinion of that stressor through counter conditioning, or change his behavior in the presence of that stressor through operant conditioning. Finally, there will be some low level stressors that he'll just have to live with. As long as they aren't significant enough to put him near or over his bite threshold, he can live with some stressors. We all have some stress in our lives...

Here are some examples:

Get Rid of It: Anything aversive that causes unnecessary pain or stress, including shock collars, choke chains and prong collars, penny cans or throw chains. Even head halters, considered by many to be positive training tools, are aversive to some dogs.

Manage It: If your dog isn't fond of small children and there are none in your life and he doesn't encounter them regularly in your neighborhood, you can manage him (as I did) the one time each year your sister comes to visit with your young niece and nephew, by keeping him in another part of the house when the kids are awake and about.

Change His Association: Convince him that something that stresses him is actually very wonderful by pairing it consistently with something else wonderful. If your dog is stressed by men with beards, you can convince him that men with beards always make chicken happen, by having a bearded man appear, and feeding him bits of chicken, over and over and over again, until he wants furry-faced men to appear so he can have more chicken. The key to successful counter conditioning, as this process is called, is to always keep the dog below threshold; you want him a little aware of and worried about the aversive stimulus, but not quaking in fear or barking and lunging. (See Sidebar: Counter Conditioning)

Teach Him a New Behavior: Perhaps your dog becomes highly aroused by visitors coming to the door. He's not fearful or aggressive, but the high arousal is a stressor. You can teach him that the doorbell is his cue to run get in his crate, where he'll receive a stuffed Kong or other doggie delectable. Or you can teach him that visitors toss toys for him to chase if he sits politely when the door opens.

Live With It: So you're a little (or a lot!) stressed because your work isn't going well, or the school just notified you that your teen-age daughter has been skipping school. While I encourage you for your own well-being to take steps to reduce your own stress as much as possible, this is one your dog can live with, especially if you remember that when you are stressed, it pushes your dog a little closer to his own bite threshold.

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FOUNDING STATEMENT

The aim of the APDTNZ is to give credibility to affiliated members and confidence to the public for all dog related issues by encouraging and supporting the continuing education of members.

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When Aggression Happens

What if you misjudge a situation and something happens that puts your dog over threshold and causes him to display seriously aggressive behavior, perhaps even biting someone? First, don't panic. All dogs can bite, and the fact that yours has doesn't make him a Cujo. You will need to:

Move him away from the scene. Stash him in another room, stick him in your car for a moment, or hand his leash to someone he knows who is not at risk for being bitten and have them take him away.

Apologize. A good apology is, "Oh, I am so sorry you were bitten! (or your dog, or your child).

Examine the site of the bite. Take a couple of quick photos if you can. If the bite broke skin, offer first aid (if you have it). If the injuries are serious, call 111, or see that the victim has a way to access medical care.

If it's clear that your dog was the sole offender, you may want to offer to pay for medical or veterinary care. A pre-emptive discussion with your attorney about this possibility is a good idea, to prevent yourself from taking on more liability than is appropriate, while still doing the ethical and reasonable thing. If it's unclear who "started it," be wary of immediately accepting responsibility for the incident.

Prepare for a visit from animal control. These days, in most parts of the country, if a dog bite breaks human skin the dog must be quarantined for at least 10 days. Have your current rabies certificate handy – they will ask to see it – a rabies tag isn't enough. In many jurisdictions you may be able to quarantine your dog in your own home. If not, find out if your dog can be kept at a vet hospital for the required period – it's usually a safer, less stressful place than a shelter. If animal control insists on taking your dog away for quarantine, do not sign anything until you have read it carefully and are sure you understand it. Some dog owners have unknowingly and tragically signed their dogs over for euthanasia when they thought they were just agreeing to quarantine.

Prepare for dangerous dog proceedings. Depending on the laws in your area, your dog may be declared Potentially Dangerous for acting aggressive, or Dangerous for actually biting someone. It's good to read your local ordinance now, even if your dog never bites anyone, and for sure after a bite happens. If your dog is designated dangerous or you do get called to a hearing of some kind in relation to your dog's aggressive behavior, you'd be wise to involve your attorney.

Prevention

Basic training and early socialization can go a long way toward inoculating your dog against future aggression. Your observational skills and ability to mitigate stressful situations for your dog are excellent booster shots. At that point, however, when

you become aware that your dog's behaviors are inappropriate, travelling along that continuum of agonistic behavior verging on overt aggression, and are resistant to your efforts to manage and modify them, it's time to call for help.

Remember that a good behavior professional won't come riding in like a white knight, push your dog around a little and declare him cured. A good behavior modification protocol is not drama, but rather a slow, low-key program that will help your dog learn to cope with his world. Your behavior professional won't need to see the actual aggressive behavior – she will trust your description of your dog's reaction to the stressors in his world, and help you figure out how to keep him far below his bite threshold. Like most behaviors, aggression is far easier to modify sooner, before your dog has had time to practice and get good at it.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Educate yourself about dog body language so you can recognize subtle agonistic behaviors and signs of stress.

Protect your dog, always, by not putting him in situations where he may feel compelled to bite.

Seek the help of a qualified positive behavior professional the instant you realize your dog's aggressive or potentially aggressive behaviors are beyond your abilities to manage and modify.

Pat Miller is a Certified Dog and Horse Behavior Consultant and Certified Professional Dog Trainer. She offers classes, behavior modification services, training clinics and academies for trainers at her 80-acre Peaceable Paws training facility in Fairplay, Maryland (US), and presents seminars worldwide. She has authored "The Power of Positive Dog Training," "Positive Perspectives," "Positive Perspectives 2," "Play With Your Dog," and "Do-Over Dogs." Miller is training editor for The Whole Dog Journal, writes for Tuft's University's Your Dog, and several other publications. She shares her home with husband Paul, five dogs, three cats, five horses, a donkey and a potbellied pig. www.peaceablepaws.com

COUNTER CONDITIONING

Counter conditioning involves changing your dog's association with a scary or arousing stimulus from negative to positive. The easiest way to give most dogs a positive association is with very high-value, really yummy treats. I like to use chicken – canned, baked or boiled, since most dogs love chicken and it's a low fat, low calorie food.

Here's how the process works:

1. Determine the distance at which your dog can be in the presence of the stimulus and be alert or wary but not extremely fearful or aroused. This is called the threshold distance.

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2. With you holding your dog on leash, have a helper present the stimulus at threshold distance X. The instant your dog sees the stimulus, start feeding bits of chicken, non-stop.

3. After several seconds, have the helper remove the stimulus, and stop feeding chicken.

4. Keep repeating steps 1-3 until the presentation of the stimulus at that distance consistently causes your dog to look at you with a happy smile and a "Yay! Where's my chicken?" expression. This is a conditioned emotional response (CER) – your dog's association with the stimulus at threshold distance X is now positive instead of negative.

5. Now you need to increase the intensity of the stimulus. You can do that by decreasing distance to X minus Y; by increasing movement of the stimulus at distance X (a child walking, skipping, or swinging her arms); by increasing number of stimuli (two or three children, instead of one); increasing the visual "threat" (a tall man instead of a short one, or a man with a beard instead of a clean-shaven one); or by increasing volume (if it's a stimulus that makes noise, such as a vacuum cleaner). I'd suggest decreasing distance first in small increments by moving the dog closer to the location where the stimulus will appear, achieving your CER at each new distance, until your dog is happy to be very near to the non-moving stimulus, perhaps even sniffing or targeting to it.

6. Then return to distance X and add intensity of your stimulus (move the vacuum a little; have two children instead of one; have the man put on a hat, or a backpack), gradually decreasing distance and attaining CERs along the way, until your dog is delighted to have the moderately intense stimulus in close proximity.

7. Now, back to distance X, increase intensity again, by having your helper turn the vacuum on briefly, feed treats the instant it's on, then turn it off and stop the treats. (Or turn up the volume, or add more children, etc.)

8. Repeat until you have the CER, then gradually increase the length of time you have your dog in the presence of the increased-intensity stimulus, until he's happy (but not aroused) to have it present continuously.

9. Begin decreasing distance in small increments, moving the dog closer to the stimulus, obtaining your CER consistently at each new distance.

10. When your dog is happy to have the higher intensity stimulus close to him, you're ready for the final phase. Return to distance X and obtain your CER there, with a full intensity stimulus – a running, moving vacuum; multiple children laughing and playing; a tall man with a beard wearing a hat, sunglasses and a backpack.

Then gradually decrease distance until your dog is happy to be in the presence of your full-intensity stimulus. He now thinks the stimulus is a very

good thing, as a reliable predictor of very yummy treats. In the case of a human stimulus, you can gradually work up to actual interaction with the human(s) at this stage, by having the person(s) drop treats as they walk by, then letting him take treats from their fingers – without direct eye contact, and eventually working up to normal interaction.

The more complex the stimulus and the more intense the fear or arousal response, the more challenging the behavior is to modify. Anxieties and phobias generally require a greater commitment to a longer term and more in-depth modification program.

Free

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By special arrangement with dog*tec, we'll be offering one dog*tec business success web seminar to New Zealand APDT members every 3 months.

Check out all that dog*tec does to support trainers, including one-on-one consulting, business tools and services tailored to dog pros, and educational opportunities like this web seminar.

How To Watch

Just click on the link that you can find on www.apdt.org.nz to watch the seminar. Don't wait too long, as this class will only be available until the end of January!

For more info on Sarah Kalnajs, keynote speaker for the 2012 conference, please visit the website where you will find her Bio and a personal welcome!

The Business of Curriculum

By Veronica Boutelle

Frustrated at classes that end with fewer students than you started with? Disappointed that more clients don't sign up for the next round? All the more perplexed because your class evaluations are glowing, your rates competitive, your reputation strong, and your class schedule full of choices?

More often than not the problem is the curriculum.

The best classes focus on human decision making, not dog performance, and curriculum should be designed with this in mind. Concern over whether every dog in a class can do a five-minute 'down stay' by the end of the course misses the point: What a dog can and cannot do in the classroom is not important—he doesn't live in the classroom.

The key to reducing recidivism and increasing subsequent class sales is the real-life impact of your classes. No matter how much fun students have

had, no matter how much they like their instructor, now matter how successful their dog was in class—if they don't see useful change in their own lives with their dogs they're less likely to return.

What every trainer wants—for the sake of her clients and her business—is for the learning and the results to manifest outside the classroom. In other words, clients must learn to make decisions in real-life situations that will help them to a successful outcome with their dog in any particular moment.

Real-Life Success, Not Classroom Performance.
With a curriculum that focuses on the aforementioned five-minute 'down stay' in the classroom, that is precisely what the client gets (if, that is, she is very successful): A dog able to do a five-minute 'down stay' in the classroom. That isn't very useful. By contrast, if the client learns what motivates and distracts her dog, and how to accurately read a situation, she will be able to make decisions that set her dog up for success out in the world.

Say a student walks with her dog to a nearby café on a Sunday morning to get a bagel. She wants to eat her bagel on the café patio in the sunshine. A student taught decision making would look around for potential distractions and challenges for her dog in this environment. She would then decide a) whether it is realistic for her to sit and enjoy the sunshine, and b) if she thinks it is, where she should sit, what she needs to watch out for, and what she is asking her dog to do. Is it reasonable to ask her dog for a 'down stay' or will she accept a

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ASSOCIATION OF PET DOG TRAINERS NEW ZEALAND Inc

2012 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

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Keynote speaker: Sarah Kalnajs

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'sit'? She would also decide what she is going to reinforce the dog for and at which frequency, what it is reasonable for her to expect from her dog if a distraction enters the environment, and how she will react. Are there circumstances under which she will get up and leave—that is, before a problem arises or she asks too much of her dog?

Rather than insisting on a five-minute 'down stay' at the café, this client is making a realistic assessment of what her dog can do in a specific environment so her dog can be reinforced for that. She has learned to assess her dog's level and work within it so she can expand it, rather than constantly insisting her dog perform an arbitrarily determined behavior based on what was done in class.

To be able to do this, our student had to learn the following: Situational awareness, real-life problem solving, and to work at her dog's level (criteria setting, essentially).

To teach clients these skills, all curriculum design should be based on two precepts:

Contextual learning. Meaning, don't teach behavior just to teach behavior. Every classroom exercise should be built around a real-life purpose; no more behaviors taught in a vacuum.

A focus on teaching clients real-world decision making and problem solving. If a client cannot apply what she is learning in class to her life outside the classroom, the class has failed her. From a business perspective, so has the trainer or manager giving the class: When learning has no impact out in the world, people often fail to finish the full course and far fewer come back for another.

Process, Or Fading The Prompt...

Whole books could be written about the process of teaching this type of class. Briefly, here are two keys to success:

A scaffolded approach. A good dog training analogy for scaffolding is fading the prompt. Initially the teacher tells the students what to do. As they pick up the foundational learning, the trainer begins to create opportunities for them to apply their knowledge to new situations, keeping it simple and easy at first. Say the students have just learned how to use a lure to teach their dogs to sit. The instructor might then ask them to consider how they would apply the same technique to train 'down.'

Or imagine the teacher has explained the principle of 'nothing for free.' Instead of giving the clients every example she herself can think of, she gives

only a couple and then asks students to find examples each from their own lives.

Gradually, the challenges become larger and more complex, and in the process become increasingly entwined with real-life situations until eventually, the trainer might place the clients in an actual or pretend situation such as a café (or a trip to a pet store or vet office, a mock living room with a ringing doorbell, etc.) and ask them to make the decisions faced by the woman in our opening example. By the end of class, the trainer should not have to tell a client whose dog is easily distracted by other dogs where to sit in this café scenario to create the distance that will allow her dog to be successful. At that point the trainer has faded the prompt and the student is able to do it herself. Failing to fade the prompt greatly decreases the likelihood the client will make good decisions out in the world.

Self-Contained Lessons. One of the biggest challenges facing any teacher, whether they instruct kindergarteners, high schoolers, grad students, or people with their dogs, is handling the widely varied skill and knowledge levels of their students. Do you teach to the middle? Reward the more advanced students with extra time so they don't get bored? Give the struggling students more of your attention? These questions often spark lively debate, but it's a false dilemma, because a well-designed curriculum does away with the need to choose.

If we don't require that all dogs attain the five-minute 'down stay,' bell curve grading can be put to rest. Lessons and activities can be designed to allow everyone—humans and dogs—to succeed and improve, regardless of where they currently are. For example, an alternative stay lesson might consist of a particular distraction set up in an area of the classroom. (Perhaps a guest dog working with an assistant, the instructor bouncing a tennis ball, a student's teenager rolling a skateboard.) Students are told to practice stays in the midst of the distraction. The challenge? The students have to decide where in the room to practice. They have to read their dog, judge how he's likely to react to the distraction, think about how well his stay is coming along, and then decide: Should I get up close and go for short duration? Give myself ten feet? Work in the farthest corner (or even the hallway)? If their decision is wrong in either direction, they'll soon know. Early on in the course the instructor might prompt an adjustment: "Fido seems particularly entranced by the skateboard. What might make this easier for him?" This instruction will help the student learn to take action as needed. Again, if we make the mistake of telling the client what to do ("You might want to move far-

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ther away from the distraction”) instead of cultivating their own problem solving, the learning is less likely to transfer outside of the classroom.

This lesson allows people and dogs at all levels to participate successfully because success is defined individually. And when I work at my dog’s level he’s able to get it right, which means I can reinforce him, which means he’s going to get it right more often.

The Bottom Line

We often talk about training really being about teaching humans, not dogs. But few training classes realize this conviction. Too often class curriculum is treated as merely a list of behaviors to teach; which keeps the focus on dog performance, not human learning. It’s also not curriculum—it’s a list of behaviors. Curriculum focused on the human learners, by contrast, is built around problem solving and decision making applied to real-life contexts.

We tend to judge the success of our classes based on 1) whether people enjoyed themselves and 2) whether the dogs were able to perform the prescribed behaviors. But a much better yardstick would be how our classes make people’s lives with their dogs better or easier in some way—because that’s what will get them to come back. And that’s good for them, their dogs, and for business.

A Few Additional Tips for Selling Subsequent Classes:

Don’t wait until graduation to tell students about the next class they should take. Instead, talk about upcoming classes and next steps in the penultimate class. This gives students time to think ahead and not feel rushed into a decision. They’re more likely to remember to bring their checkbook or credit card and to be ready to pull the trigger. For an added personal touch, give each student a branded postcard with your personal recommendations for which class or classes would be a great next step for their dog.

Give a discount for registering for a next class at graduation.

Focus on the benefits of taking the classes. Talking about what will be covered is fine, but telling people how it will help them—that’s the key. Will the class make life at home calmer? Help them enjoy taking their dog out into the world? Make them feel more in control? Give them an enjoyable way to spend an evening out at half the price of dinner and a movie?

Veronica Boutelle is the founder of dog*tec, the author of *How To Run a Dog Business: Putting Your Career Where Your Heart Is*, and co-author of *Minding Your Dog Business: A Practical Guide To Business Success For Dog Professionals*. Veronica holds a Masters in Education and taught graduate courses in curriculum development before working with dogs. dog*tec provides ready-made R+ curriculum packages for dog training classes and one-on-one business success consulting. Learn more at www.dogtec.org. And don’t miss the free dog*tec Building A Successful Puppy Class Program web seminar link in this newsletter.

The APDTNZ Newsletter, a great read



D’For Dog Case Study - Chloe

Breed: Cavoodle

Sex: Spayed Female

Age: 8 months

Issues

Growling at the family, particularly the children

Background

Although Chloe’s owners were getting desperate to help their well loved family pet, they were reluctant to book with us at first, having had no success from a session with a previous trainer. As it transpired, the family had not tried any of the previous trainers suggested changes to resolve Chloe’s issues. From the outset, this case was as much about owner compliance as dog behaviour.

During our initial contact, Chloe’s owner described her as aggressive in certain situations, particularly towards the children (aged 11 and 14) and when she ‘didn’t agree with something’. Chloe growled at the family on a daily basis for things like approaching her on her bed, picking her up, attempting to put her in her crate at night and when she had a forbidden object that they were trying to get off her. She had bitten the father once, drawing blood, when he attempted to pull her out from under a bed. She was portrayed as naughty, using her ‘aggression’ to get her own way in the family group. Her reactions to the children were becoming progressively worse and the owners could see no particular reason for her outbursts. The family was quickly ‘losing patience’ with Chloe, to the point they had considered re-homing her.

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Prior to our visit the family had been reprimanding Chloe for her growling. They didn't feel like this was working as Chloe would then "roll on her back wanting a tummy rub and try to smooch up to you". The family did not let Chloe off-lead as they didn't trust her recall, but she was being walked daily. Chloe had free access to food, was left alone for around seven hours each day and slept in a crate at night.

Observations

Chloe was very weary of us when we arrived and did not approach us, even with the promise of tasty treats, until the very end of the first session. She would startle at any sudden movements, including when family members stood up and moved around and we witnessed her growling at the young girl in the family. Chloe had taken a toy to a corner and the 11yr old girl approached her and blew in her face. Chloe growled and was then reprimanded for doing so.

As one of Chloe's issues was being put to bed, we asked the family to show us how this would normally happen. As soon as Chloe was asked to move she adopted a very low body and head position, began lip-licking and avoided being approached by the family members.

Treatment

There was a lot of stress and conflict between dog and family so we started with a few management tools to reduce the frequency of Chloe practicing her unwanted behaviour. We set up a 'safety zone' for Chloe - a place where she could go and not be disturbed by the family. We also taught the family to respect Chloe's personal space and how to recognise when Chloe was starting to feel uncomfortable and back-off a little.

Along with teaching the family to understand what Chloe was saying to them, we introduced a programme that aimed to change Chloe's response to physical contact with her family. This was conducted over a three week period, starting with mini-

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APDT NZ Vision statement:

All dogs are effectively trained through dog-friendly techniques and therefore are lifelong companions in a relationship based on mutual respect and trust.

APDT NZ Mission statement:

To promote human-dog relationships of understanding and trust by offering education in canine behaviour and effective, up to date, dog friendly training methods and skills.

Code of Ethics for Association of Pet Dog Trainers New Zealand

As a member of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers New Zealand I will:

- Make the long term welfare of the dog of primary importance bearing in mind the needs of society.
- Employ only humane, dog-friendly techniques in the training of dogs and I shall develop and apply training programs in line with the APDTNZ's mission of advocating dog-friendly training. Refer to Appendix 1 (Source APDT UK Code of Ethics).
- Please also refer to Appendix 2 AVSAB Position Statement: http://www.avsonline.org/avsonline/images/stories/Position_Statements/Combined_Punishment_Statements.pdf and Appendix 3 Delta Professional Standards for Dog Trainers <http://www.deltasociety.org/Document.Doc?id=374>
- Promote conscientious dog ownership and incorporate what it means to be a socially responsible dog owner into training programs.
- Promote a nurturing human/canine relationship between owner and dog.
- Treat all dogs and clients with respect, taking into account their physical and emotional well-being and respecting clients' wishes regarding the training of their dogs.
- Continue professional development by reading relevant material, attending conferences, workshops and seminars, and pursuing other education opportunities in order to provide a service based upon sound scientific principles and current best practice.
- Be honest and trustworthy in my dealings with clients.
- Refrain from giving guarantees regarding the outcome of training, because there is no sure way to guarantee the cooperation and performance of all parties involved and because the knowledge of animal behaviour is incomplete. This should not be confused with a desire to guarantee client satisfaction with professional services.
- Represent accurately the source of any information and disseminate to clients and members of the public.
- Respect the confidentiality and privacy of clients.
- Be respectful of colleagues and other professionals and not falsely condemn the character of their professional acts.
- Not advertise myself as a member of the APDTNZ Inc or use the logo of the APDTNZ without prior approval of the Association.
- Not represent myself as a spokesperson for APDTNZ Inc without prior approval of the Association.
- Refer any and all suspected medical problems to a veterinarian before beginning or continuing a relationship. The relationship between dog trainers and vets must be cooperative for the benefit of dogs and their people.
- Perform services to the best of my ability within the guidelines of this code of ethics.

Appendix 1

There can never be a definitive list of equipment and techniques that the APDTNZ does not endorse. The following list gives examples of some of the equipment and training methods which are covered by the Code of Ethics not to be used as training tools in a dog training class:

- Pet corrector – emits a hiss of cold air
 - Dog stop – emits a high pitched sound
 - Remote controlled spray collars
 - Automatically triggered spray collars
 - Antibark collar – emits spray directed onto dog's skin (including new product jet master)
 - Training discs
 - Liquid sprays
 - Loud noises – inc. rattle cans/bottles/chains/keys
 - Throw stick/chain
 - Strong smelling substances – inc. smelling salts/bite back
 - Any electronic training collar
 - Any check/choke chains, prong or spike collar
- Punitive methods not to be used in a dog training class:
- Pinching – ears/feet/toes
 - Hitting
 - Biting (of dog)
 - Alpha roll
 - Any manhandling that causes pain or discomfort.

Alteration

This code may be altered by the committee of the Association provided that the proposed alteration is notified to all members and their comments requested and duly considered by the committee.

Terms and Conditions for the Use of the APDTNZ Logo by Full Members

The APDTNZ logo is the sole and exclusive property of APDTNZ. This logo may be used only by APDTNZ members in good standing. Any failure by a user to comply with the terms and conditions contained herein may result in immediate revocation of the use of the logo, in addition to any other sanctions imposed by APDTNZ. The interpretation and enforcement (or lack thereof) of these terms and conditions, and compliance therewith, shall be made by APDTNZ in its sole discretion.

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If a member changes their membership level to associate, they must immediately discontinue use of the logo. The logo can be displayed on the front page of a full members website with the following text beside it: *Are you up to date? Heard of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers New Zealand? Check the link.*

Permission to use the APDTNZ logo is given to individual full members only, and not to a business or club. If the business or club has a number of staff/volunteers, the logo can only be displayed in connection to the full member, i.e. in the 'about us' section of the website.

Use of the logo shall create no rights for users beyond these terms and conditions. The logo shall remain at all times the sole and exclusive intellectual property of APDTNZ. APDTNZ shall have the right, from time to time, to request samples of use of the logos from which it may determine compliance with these terms and conditions. Without further notice, APDTNZ reserves the right to prohibit use of the logos if it determines, in its sole discretion, that a user's logo usage, whether wilful or negligent, is not in strict accordance with the terms and conditions, or otherwise could discredit APDTNZ or tarnish its reputation and goodwill, or the user is not an APDTNZ member in good standing.

Any questions concerning the use of the logo or the terms and conditions should be directed to the president@apdt.org.nz

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mal physical contact and slowly building up to more intense contact, such as being held and picked up. We used treats to develop a positive association with physical contact from her family. We made a few lifestyle changes for Chloe, including off-lead walks and monitored play with other dogs, increased mental stimulation (food delivery toys, learning to earn and so on), hand-feeding by the family and increasing Chloe's general training. All of these aspects were designed to improve the relationship between Chloe and her family and also to give Chloe plenty of daily activity.

Result

Although we struggled to get the family to implement all of our suggestions, those that they did carry out worked and Chloe's behaviour steadily improved. She is currently top in her beginner's training class and her main handler is the young family member that a lot of her growling was originally directed at. They have developed a strong bond and through training have started to communicate effectively. The incidents of growling have almost completely gone and Chloe appears to be a much happier dog. She is still a little nervous when first approached, but gains confidence quickly and she is now taking her cues from her family. Chloe also loves her off-lead runs at the beach!

Written by Jo Thorne from D' For Dogs

Deadline for contributions to be included in
Issue 11, Jan/Feb/March 2012
1st February 2012

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