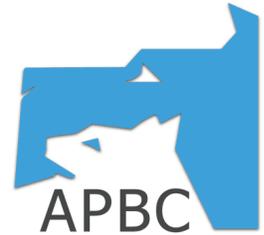


Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors

Promoting the Best in Pet Behaviour



APBC Veterinary Newsletter – February 2012

Introduction

Clare Wilson

Welcome to my first edition of the APBC Veterinary News-letter.

My name is Clare Wilson and I am currently the veterinary representative on the APBC committee. My role is to help link the APBC and the veterinary profession and one of those ways is through writing this newsletter.

Emotional welfare is just as important as any other health issue and I am really keen to help vets and vet nurses to be more proactive in identifying behavioural problems, giving first-aid and preventative advice and referring cases on to an appropriately qualified behaviourist when required. If you have any requests about topics you would like to be covered in future editions please do email me:

behaviourvet@googlemail.com

Vaccination and Socialisation

Many of the dogs that APBC members see for behavioural consultations are experiencing problems that have been influenced by the type and level of experience of puppies when they are very young.

Many of these problems could therefore have been prevented from developing with appropriate early advice to clients. This is a role in which your

How to find your local member



Please follow this link if you have a case you would like to discuss with or refer to your local APBC member www.apbc.org.uk/help/regions. As the behaviour profession is still currently unregulated it is absolutely vital, as with all other referrals, that you seek appropriately qualified, educated, experienced and recognised behaviourists. The APBC has rigorous selection criteria for its full members and you can be assured that full members will work to the APBC code of practice and are up to date in using modern, welfare-friendly methods.

veterinary practice can play a major part. Prevention is always better than cure.

1. 3-5 weeks of age is a crucial time for puppies to develop positive associations with novelty.

If you have breeders in your practice they should be encouraged to actively educate their puppies at

this crucial stage of development. Simple measures such as introducing new toys, sounds, unfamiliar people and new scents can all help puppies develop into well adjusted adult dogs. Please see the following article by Gwen Bailey for more detailed information about socialising a litter. http://www.apbc.org.uk/articles/socialising_a_litter

2. Up to 10-14 weeks of age is the most important time for continuing to socialise puppies and get them used to domestic life. This means it is absolutely crucial that the socialization -habituation process begins before the vaccination course is complete.

Please use the following link for some copies of a client information leaflet and waiting room poster about balancing the risks of vaccination status with appropriate early socialisation. You can contact Merial for hard copies to provide to clients who attend your surgery.

http://uk.merial.com/pet_owners/dogs/pdf/puppy_guide/120103_Merial_Puppy_leaflet_final.pdf

3. Adolescence continues to be a very important time for puppies developing appropriate behaviour and active socialisation should continue up to about 2 years of age.

4. REFER EARLY. It is never too early to seek advice from a behaviourist. Some problems may be easily resolved with simple advice without the need for a consultation. Other more serious issues which do require a consultation will be far easier to treat and resolve the sooner they are seen.

Every time a dog behaves inappropriately, for example barking at unfamiliar people or stealing

household items to chew, the inappropriate behaviour is accidentally reinforced. The more times the behaviour occurs, the more difficult it is to reverse this learning. Always seek advice at the earliest opportunity for the best outcome for the dog and the client.



The Ladder of Aggression

The Ladder of Aggression is a depiction of the gestures that any dog will give in response to an escalation of perceived stress and threat, from very mild social interaction and pressure, to which blinking and nose licking are appropriate responses, to severe, when overt aggression may well be selected. The purpose of such behaviour is to deflect threat and restore harmony and the presence of appeasing and threat-averting behaviour in the domestic dog's repertoire is essential to avoid the need for potentially damaging aggression. The dog is a social animal for whom successful appeasement behaviour is highly adaptive and it is used continually and routinely in every-day life.

It is most important to realise that these gestures are simply a context and response-dependant sequence which will culminate in threatened or overt aggression, only if all else fails. Contrary to persistent misinformation, the gestures identified are nothing to do with a purported dominant or submissive state relative to companions. In all dogs, inappropriate social responses to appeasement behaviour will result in its devaluing and the necessity, from a dog's perspective, to move up the ladder. Aggression is therefore created in any situation where appeasement behaviour is chronically misunderstood and not effective in obtaining the socially expected outcome. Dogs may progress to overt aggression within seconds during a single episode if the perceived threat occurs quickly and at close quarters, or learn to dispense with lower rungs on the ladder over time, if repeated efforts to appease are misunderstood and responded to in-appropriately.

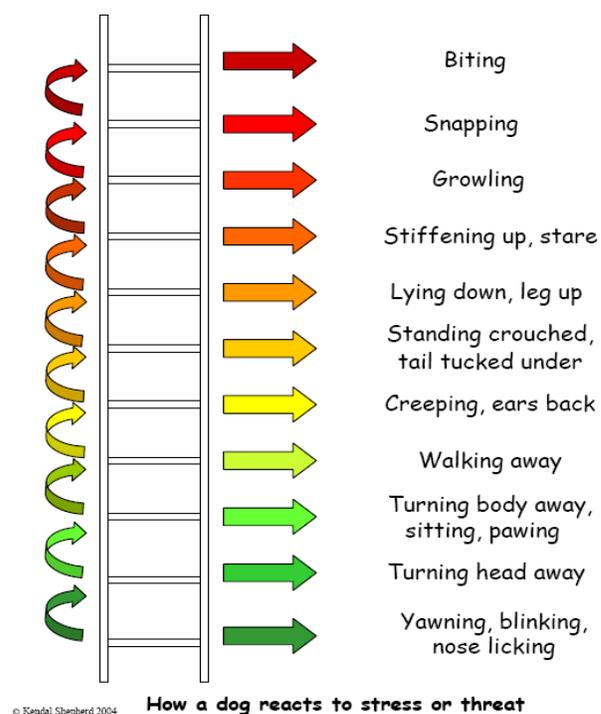
As a consequence, a so-called 'un-predictable' aggressive response, without any obvious

Minimising stress in multicat households when one member has to go to the veterinary practice

*Sarah Heath BVSc DipECAWBM CCAB
MRCVS*

Feline relationships can be fragile at the best of times and when an individual from a multi-cat household has been on a visit to the veterinary practice the process of reintegration with their feline housemates can be something of a challenge. It is important for veterinary practices to consider this and to offer practical pre-emptive

The Canine 'Ladder of Aggression'



preamble, may occur in any context which predicts inescapable threat to the dog, when in reality it was entirely predictable. (Shepherd. K 2009. *BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Behaviour*, 2 edition, pages 13- 16. Editors Debra F. Horwitz and Daniel S. Mills).

advice to owners in order to minimise the potential for relationship breakdowns. Advice should be tailored for each household and will depend on whether the feline household consists of one or more social groups. It will also depend on the duration of stay at the veterinary hospital and the health status of the cat concerned. Every

case needs to be treated as an individual but these five top tips for owners may be of help in easing the reintegration of cats when they return home:

1. Where possible arrange for cats in multicat households to attend routine veterinary appointments together (e.g. booster appointments). If different cats in the same household are due for elective surgery, such as neutering or dental work, try to arrange for this to be done on the same day.
2. If a cat comes from a compatible multicat household and has to be hospitalized, ask the owner to bring an item from home such as a blanket or piece of bedding which has the scent of the other household cats on it.
3. If a cat has to be hospitalised for a significant duration of time (not just as a day case) ask the owners to install a Feliway diffuser at home while the cat is in hospital. This will be beneficial for the cat(s) that remain at home and also will help during the reintegration when the patient is ready to return.
4. When the patient returns home keep them in a separate room for a while before reintroducing to housemates. The duration of separation will

depend on a number of factors such as the reason for the veterinary visit, the health status of the patient and the use of medication during the veterinary visit, such as anaesthetics or sedatives. It will be helpful if the returning cat is carrying as little in the way of challenging scent as possible when it meets the other cats.

5. Remind the owners that feline friendships are fragile and ask them to be as passive as possible in the reintroduction process. In cases of medium to long term hospitalisation owners will be delighted to have their cat home and will want the other cats in the household to welcome their housemate home with equal enthusiasm.

It is important to set realistic expectations and to explain to owners that the other cats may be disinterested or even displeased to see their housemate back home.

Owners should allow re-introductions to be as low key as possible and should resist the temptation to get actively involved. Trying to make cats do anything is usually counterproductive and insisting that they are welcoming to their house-mate is likely to backfire.

Five Top tips for keeping dogs at ease in the surgery



1. **Avoid direct eye contact** with a dog – this can be perceived as threatening and may cause the dog to become anxious or show defensive aggression.
2. **Approach your patient from the side** – head-on approaches are only used in situations of conflict between dogs. It is also important not to lean over a dog as this can be perceived as a threat. See photos below.
3. **Respect** signs that your patient is becoming stressed or anxious – refer to Kendal Shepherd's ladder of escalating stress signals above as published in the BSAVA Manual of Canine and Feline Behaviour.
4. If the dog is worried in the consulting room, ignore him to start with and have a **chat with the client before attempting to interact with the dog**. This gives the dog some time to adapt and relax to the situation.
5. If the dog is relaxed enough to enjoy a food treat, make examination and treatment a pleasurable experience rather than a tolerable one!



Left image: Note side approach and bending down results in a more relaxed dog – loose tail, relaxed leg and body muscles and normal head position. He's still slightly concerned noted by his ear position and slightly tense forehead.

Right image: Note head on approach and leaning over results in a tense dog – tucked in tail, lowered head, tense forelegs, shifting body weight backwards (away from vet), ears back and down.

Recent new full APBC members include

- Sara Davies – Brixham
- Adam Beral – Lincolnshire
- Dr Emily Blackwell – Bristol
- Karen Ingram – Frodsham, Cheshire
- Caroline Clark – Malton, N Yorks
- Claire Stallard – Burford
- Elaine Henley – N Ayreshire

Some interesting recent articles related to behaviour

- **Journal of Veterinary Behaviour (Jan 2012), volume 7, issue 1 p21-26.** Effects of prescription diet on dealing with stressful situations and performance of anxiety-related behaviors in privately owned anxious dogs
- **Journal of Veterinary Behaviour (2011) 6, p321-327.** Possible behaviour effects of exogenous corticosteroids on dog behaviour: a preliminary investigation.
- CAWC report on rehoming companion animals:
www.cawc.org.uk/sites/default/files/Rescue%20and%20Rehoming%20Final%2016.6.2011_0.pdf
- **VN Times volume 11, number 10, October 2011.** Evolution entwined: how past lives matter for today's felines.
- **Vet Record volume 169, number 15, 8th October 2011, p386-7.** Reducing stress in shelter dogs.

Useful sources of information

- **APBC articles on website:**
<http://www.apbc.org.uk/articles>
- **APBC handouts** for downloading and printing out for clients.
http://www.apbc.org.uk/info/APBC_Behaviour_Advice_Information_Sheets
- **Feline advisory bureau behaviour information.**

There are several excellent behaviour articles on this website but this link below is especially useful and has information about handling and hospitalising cats to make them feel more

relaxed and secure.

<http://www.isfm.net/catfriendlypractice/catfriendly1.pdf>

- **2012 APBC Vet CPD Series 'Make your practice behaviourally aware'**
<http://www.apbc.org.uk/events>