

Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors

Promoting the Best in Pet Behaviour

ABTC
ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR & TRAINING COUNCIL
Member Organisation



News Spring 2018

Founded in 1989, the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors is an international network of experienced and qualified clinical animal behaviourists who work on referral from veterinary surgeons to treat behaviour problems in dogs, cats, birds, rabbits, horses and other pets.

Electronic Shock Collars

The APBC is delighted at the news that the government plans to ban electric shock collars in England. The ban is already in place in Wales and recently Scotland has also made this decision so bringing this to England is great news. There is no place for this sort of dog training equipment in Britain in 2018. Consigning these shock collars to history is a huge step forward for dogs and their owners in this country.

Cat Boxes

There's no doubt, many cats will be found in a box. APBC member and cat expert Trudi Atkinson has the following top tips for optimising the feline



experience. "Cardboard boxes are best placed either on their side with the opening to the front (ideal on high shelves etc.) or large boxes can simply be placed upright so that cats can easily jump in and out. In households with other pets, dogs or other cats, avoid boxes or other enclosed small spaces that only have one small entrance/exit, these can allow a dog or other cat to 'trap' another inside the box or ambush it as it attempts to leave."



Art by Lili Chin

The Art and Science of Play!

Play! It's usually fun, for us and our pets. Play builds strong bonds, between pets, and between dogs and their owners. It's also a natural and meaningful way to use up energy and find outlets for hunting and



herding behaviours that some dogs are highly driven to do. But some play can end up in tears, we need to know how to play appropriately with dogs and help them play appropriately with us and other dogs that we meet.

This spring our members are looking forward to our annual conference, dedicated to the Art and Science of Play, examining the emotional and physiological effects of play, how to strengthen the dog-owner bond, and how to reduce problem behaviour, as well as how to play with dogs that have sensory impairments such as like of sight and/or hearing.

This event is also open to non-members, please see www.apbc.org.uk/events

Recognise when your dog is suffering from stress:

- Lip licking & yawning
- Wide eyes
- Looking & turning away
- Panting
- Crouched and/or low tail

"Please let me move away"

Find your nearest APBC members: www.apbc.org.uk or 01269 831144 (leave a message) We will work with you and your veterinary practice, ensuring you and your pet receive the best behaviour advice possible. In doing so we will also do our best to all aspects of daily life for you and your pet are incorporated in our advice and recommendations in improving any behaviour problems.

Sheep, Your Dog and You!

Walkers and dogs share the countryside with the farm animals and wildlife that live there. We all want to enjoy it. Yet science shows that any new arrival causes stress to livestock; a dog is the most frightening stimulus you can present to sheep. Just taking any dog into a field of sheep is likely to cause stress to the sheep, regardless of how you and your dog behave after that. Stress can cause illness and injury; serious consequences for the welfare of livestock and the farmer's livelihood. Dog owners and walkers have responsibilities under the law and, under some circumstances, farmers are legally entitled to shoot dogs endangering their sheep.

Dogs inherit some behavioural tendencies and acquire others. The domestic dog is a predator, with hunting behaviours altered but not eliminated through breeding. A dog's desire to engage in hunting behaviours varies between breeds and individuals. Most dogs learn early on to enjoy chasing things.

In dog development terms, the "socialisation period" between 3 and 15 weeks of age is a window of opportunity where experience of sheep might set them up for friendly, calm interactions. However all socialisation is a lifelong exercise of skilled, positive handling and knowledge of both species to maintain good behaviour between dog and sheep. If your dog has not encountered sheep before or will not encounter sheep on a daily basis, then you are well advised not to invoke interest in sheep at all. Otherwise, you may 'awake' in your dog exactly the predatory chasing behaviour you are trying to avoid; much harder to stop than to prevent in the first place. Instead, please manage your dog on a lead and at a distance which will not disturb the sheep.

If your dog is already over-interested in sheep, the first thing to do is to keep your dog away from sheep. Alarming, a significant proportion of livestock worrying happens without the dog owner's knowledge. If your dog has free run of



your garden, make sure it's very secure! The second is to find a specialist, qualified behaviour counsellor and commit to a management plan and realistic goals. Whoever provides this should be expert in the behaviour of the particular livestock species, and able to recognise and respond to any sign of distress in livestock as well as in people and dogs. Inappropriate advice and methods may worsen your dog's behaviour and can result in welfare problems for livestock and dogs. Registered clinical animal behaviourists, such as APBC Members, have achieved the highest academic and practical standards in the field of animal behaviour: they can help dog owners to use positive reinforcement techniques, away from livestock, to teach your dog to walk calmly on a short, loose lead and to focus their attention on you regardless of distractions.

If your dog hasn't seen livestock before, and there is no need for it to see livestock, consider keeping it away. Where possible, avoid walking your dog in fields containing livestock. If you can't, give the livestock plenty of space. Keep your dog on a short lead and focussed on you. You'll be doing the livestock a favour and possibly prevent a behaviour problem in your dog.

Bryony Francis is an Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC) Registered Clinical Animal Behaviourist and Full Member of the APBC. She runs her behaviour practice in South Wales and the Marches and lives in farming country near the Black Mountains with her husband and a Jack Russell Terrier.