

Small Animal Behavior Handout

Behavioral issues can severely impair the human animal bond and are cited as the number one reason in dogs and second most common reason in cats for relinquishment (surrender and/or euthanasia) from their homes. **It is imperative to treat serious behavior issues just as a serious medical condition would be.**¹ **Behavior problems are medical problems** like arthritis, diabetes and dental disease. **They are mental health issues.** There are no magic treatments for behavior problems; they require long term treatment regimes.² However, behavior problems respond to medical treatment because they are medical problems.³

Generally, pet behavior has only received attention when it becomes a problem, such as aggression, anxiety leading to owner property destruction or house soiling. Mental health issues affect the welfare and quality of life of animals affected by these conditions, along with the owners of these pets and other pets in the household. These issues can be managed so that ones pet can have an excellent quality of life.

Behavior problems are not due to a lack of training or inappropriate training or owners not being assertive enough. They are due to neurochemical problems in the brain and training will not solve the problem. Obedient dogs can have behavior problems and not be enjoying life. Your pet's behavior is determined by: genetic disposition (genes got from its parents), learning from previous experiences and the environment at that time. None of these factors act in isolation, so all need to be taken into consideration.⁴

Many of the behavior problems commonly presented in the domestic cat are due to two main factors: First, the result of the constraints of domestic life on animals that are not truly domesticated. Second, a result of human misinterpretations of natural feline behaviors.⁵

¹ Moffat K. *Behavior Medicine in General Practice*. Western Veterinary Conference 2011

² Bowen J, Heath S. *Behaviour Problems in Small Animals: Practical Advice for the Veterinary Team*. Edinburgh:Elsevier Limited. 2005:13

³ Seksel K. *Understanding Learning Theory and Behaviour Modification: Changing Anxious Behaviours in Dogs*. Clinical Behavior Medicine: NAVC Institute 2012.

⁴ Seksel K. *Understanding Learning Theory and Behaviour Modification: Changing Anxious Behaviours in Dogs*. Clinical Behavior Medicine: NAVC Institute 2012.

⁵ Bowen J, Heath S. *Behaviour Problems in Small Animals: Practical Advice for the Veterinary Team*. Edinburgh:Elsevier Limited. 2005:29

As a pet owner, don't expect any behavior professional to be able to give you an accurate assessment or predict an outcome in a brief phone call or conversation.¹ **You were given this handout today because I feel that your pet has a behavioral issue that needs addressing.** The following recommendations for your pet are:

 **Read Handouts Provided**

- _____

 **Adaptil/Feliway Product**

- _____

 **Behaviour Consult**

- This involves completing an extensive questionnaire, video taping a day in the life of your pet and booking a 1.5- 2 hr appointment. During the appointment we will review the questionnaire, discuss what is going on with your pet and treatment plan. A package with discharge notes, handouts and any medication your pet will be on will be prepared within 5-7 days. If your pet needs prescription medication they will need a complete blood profile done before we can start the medication.

Body Language of Fear in Dogs



Slight Cowering



Major Cowering

More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety



Licking Lips
when no food nearby



Panting
when not hot or thirsty



Brows Furrowed, Ears to Side



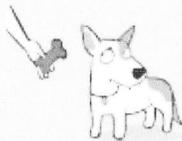
Moving in Slow Motion
walking slow on floor



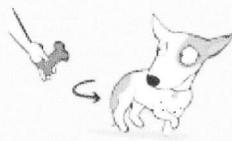
Acting Sleepy or Yawning
when they shouldn't be tired



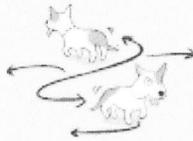
Hypervigilant
looking in many directions



Suddenly Won't Eat
but was hungry earlier



Moving Away



Pacing

© 2011 Dr. Sophia Yin, DVM, MS

Dr. Sophia Yin, DVM, MS

The Art and Science of Animal Behavior

For additional free dog bite prevention resources and more dog safety and products, visit www.dr.sophiayin.com

