

Handling Protocols for Dogs and Puppies Visiting the Clinic

We will begin by looking at behavioral handling protocols for dogs visiting the veterinary clinic. Knowing how to handle a variety of dogs in the clinic is very important if we are to be a positive force in the proper behavioral development of our canine friends.

It is important to keep in mind the stress and anxiety that a dog may be under during his visit. Implementing some easy and safe interactive activities is essential to conditioning the dog to the clinic and preparing him for future visits. Making keen observations of a dog's behavior while in the clinic will also help the veterinarian with the implementation of a behavioral wellness program.

The Reception Area

Just as a positive first impression is important with clients, it is especially important with their pets. After greeting a client, ask the owners permission to offer their dog small treats. Explain that these treats will help to make this a wonderful visit for their dog. Break the treats up into small pieces as they should be offered frequently throughout the visit. A non-threatening approach should be used, which means avoiding eye contact, avoiding a frontal approach and avoiding reaching for or leaning over the dog. An erect posture should be maintained while either standing up, bending at the knees or sitting on the floor. Similar greetings from other staff members may help the dog to relax even more.

If the dog avoids the staff member, displays fearful body postures, or displays threatening behaviors, then the treat should be dropped on the floor near the dog with no other attempts of interaction at that time.

A slightly more assertive approach can be used for dogs who are unruly or excited. The dog should be asked to sit, or perform any trick he or she knows before receiving a treat. The treat can be used to lure the unruly dog into a sit or down position if necessary. Good behavior is rewarded with a small but tasty treat. Any undesirable behavior should be ignored by turning away from the dog, moving out of his reach or breaking eye contact. Attempting to push the dog away or physically helping him to the desired position is usually not recommended. If the dog jumps up – it is also not appropriate to step on his feet, squeeze his paws or knee him in the chest. Using positive techniques also models good dog handling and training to the owner. Dogs who refuse to eat the treats are probably highly stressed or anxious. You may want to try a more tempting treat or try to make the situation less stressful.

Dogs who are very fearful, highly reactive, agitated or who are aggressive, may be helped by getting them into an exam room as soon as possible, and away from other people and animals. Using structural barriers or furnishings, such as plants, to block animals' views of one another, or placing rows of chairs back to back rather than facing each other, may also be used to create a sense of

CANINE BEHAVIOR

Body Postures

What do you think the intentions of this dog are? Is he likely to bite you? Is he bluffing? Or is he just playing? How can you best interact with this dog in a safe, efficient and humane way? Every day hundreds of people are bitten by dogs and every day hundreds of dogs are mistreated, in part because people do not understand what dogs are communicating, or trying to tell them. The science of animal behavior can help you to understand the motivations of dogs and to predict their behavior. This videotape will introduce you to the communication system of dogs and show you how you can use this knowledge to understand and be better at predicting the behavior of dogs in a variety of situations that you may be faced with.

How Dogs Communicate

Dogs communicate through vocalizations with body through direct contact and with scents or smells. Communication often involves more than one signal—in addition to barking, this dog is also communicating through body postures such as. Multiple signals reduce the possibility of misunderstandings. Barking has many different meanings, but because of this dog's body posture, its clear the dog is being. These communication signals provide information about the dog's emotional state or motivation. When you know the dog's motivation, you are better able to predict what he is likely to do next.

What to Observe

As you can see, when you observe a dog, there are many things you must pay attention to. It means you must train yourself to be aware of such things as ear and tail positions, where the dog is looking, how the dog holds himself, if he is showing his teeth, and if so how, and what kinds of vocalizations he is making. Keep in mind that there is no one feature that will always give you reliable predictions about a dog's behavior. This is because different dogs don't always use these features in the same way or some features aren't always present. Not all dogs have tails, for example. Also, different features can have different meanings in different situations or when combined with other features. For example, a growl isn't always a threat by a dog. Sometimes dogs growl when playing. You will need to look at the context or situation and the other features of the dog to help you figure out the intentions of the dog.