



For Pet Parents and Pet Professionals

Animal Behavior Associates Newsletter

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Dear Suzanne,

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We hope you like the new format of our newsletter. Even though it looks a bit different, you'll find it still contains the great content you've come to expect from us.

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Our Piece: Certification for Animal Professionals

You've probably noticed that in the last ten years or so a number of dog trainers and animal behaviorists are identifying themselves as "Certified". What is certification and what does it mean to consumers? Certification is a way for consumers to discriminate among all of the people offering those services.

To be certified means that an organization has recognized a person has met specific requirements for training and/or experience. Based on these criteria, consumers can then decide if those certificants may be better able to provide the quality of

Redirected aggression problems between cats who have previously lived together amicably is a problem we see fairly often. We received an email about two female littermates who had been best friends and playmates for 2 ½ years. Subsequent to a visit to the veterinarian, both cats began hissing and growling at one another, with one cat also chasing the other. The owners separated the cats for two days, but the same thing happened when they tried to re-introduce them.



These pet parents were stumped as to why their cats - who had gotten along well together virtually all their lives - were now suddenly angry and upset with each other.

While both cats supposedly tolerated the veterinary exam, our guess is that both cats were somewhat agitated by the whole experience. In addition to being poked and prodded, they were bombarded by sights, smells, and odors of other animals.

Cats are particularly sensitive to odors. We've

services they want. In general, credible certification is a good thing in any profession because it improves the overall quality of the services offered.

It is important to evaluate the certifying organizations and the specific requirements for certification. Any group of people can start a certifying organization and make up any requirements they want for certification.

Quite a few new "certification" groups have appeared in the last few years, many of which are merely "certifying" graduates of their own training programs or schools. You should be skeptical of these kinds of certification programs because of the inherent conflict of interest. The group providing the training or experience cannot provide an unbiased evaluation of the individuals applying for certification. It is to the school's benefit to "certify" their graduates.

This type of certification is not representative of a true professional certification. If someone says they are "certified," you should ask: a) What group or organization provides the certification? Credible certification programs are administered by independent professional organizations without ties to any specific training program or school. b) What are the criteria for certification? Credible certification programs should not require individuals to be graduates of any specific training program or school, but clearly describe what is required to meet certification. Look for educational, experiential and ethical criteria, as well as required letters of recommendation, testing, and/or professional review of the individual's work. c) Is the certifying group associated with a training school or program? Credible certification programs are not associated with the program that trains the certificants.

Academically trained behavior consultants are currently certified by

had cases where cats have been to the veterinarian, kennel, or groomer and later been attacked by another resident cat, apparently because of the unfamiliar odors clinging to their fur.

These are classic cases of redirected aggression. Redirected behavior happens when a cat's aggression is triggered by one event or individual, but the aggressive behavior is let loose on a third party. Viewing outdoor cats through a door or window is another common trigger for redirected aggression between resident indoor cats. We sometimes hear the incorrect term displaced aggression used to describe this phenomenon. We discussed displacement behaviors in [last month's ezine](#).

Dogs also display redirected aggression, but it seems to have a somewhat different pattern. Redirected behaviors in cats seem to more often result in long-term relationship problems, while in dogs the behavior can be very short-lived.

When we would walk our Dalmatians, Ashley and Mocha, past yards where dogs would be barking and charging the fence, Mocha would often turn and snap toward Ashley and she'd snap back. Because he couldn't snap at the dogs that were provoking him, Mocha redirected the behavior toward Ashley. Ashley responded with a threat of her own.

Neither Mocha or Ashley ever touched each other with their teeth, and this redirected response never caused any problems in their relationship. It often isn't this simple with cats. Cats don't seem to have as much ability to repair relationships as dogs do. With the Siamese in question, and with other cat cases we see, one bout of redirected behavior can result in long-term social conflicts between cats.

The Siamese owners reacted correctly by immediately separating their cats. The more the cats "practice" these hissing/growling behaviors, the more ingrained they become. So the first step in working with redirected cases is to prevent any more social conflicts from occurring.

the [Animal Behavior Society](#) (ABS) or the [American College of Veterinary Behaviorists](#) (AVCB). [The ABS](#) requires a graduate degree in a behavioral science, or a DVM and post-graduate training. The [ACVB](#) only certifies veterinarians. The requirements for certification and a list of certified people can be found at the ABS and ACVB websites.

The Certification Council for Pet Dog Trainers (CCPDT) is one organization that certifies dog trainers. The CCPDT works with an independent testing agency to administer a qualifying examination. The requirements for certification and a list of certified trainers can be found at the CCPDT's website, which is www.ccpdt.org.

If you are a careful consumer of animal services, you should be able to pick the service providers that can best help you with your needs. Watch for other animal professions such as groomers, pet sitters, day care and kennel operators adding certification programs in the future.

[Confused about what educational course to pursue? See our list of FAQ's or sign up for a career counseling appointment.](#)

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From there, counter conditioning and desensitization techniques need to be implemented to help the cats re-learn their friendly responses toward one another. Occasionally, in addition to behavior modification, anti-anxiety medication prescribed by a veterinarian may be needed.

It's not uncommon for complete resolution of these problems to require several months of management and behavior modification until the cats can get along together again. Redirected problems in cats that previously have a good social history with one another usually have a good outcome.

If you are encountered redirected or other types of aggression problems with you cats, [schedule a behavior consulting appointment with us](#). Chances are we can help your cats live peaceably together.

[Learn more about cat-to-cat aggression](#)

• **[Dog Piece: An Unusual Case of Chasing Behavior](#)**

While in Telluride recently, we rode the gondola up to the top of the mountain where we watched a small terrier mix dog chasing a most unusual object. He would stand at the base of the gondola station and bark until a gondola car appeared overhead. He would then chase the car for about 200 yards until he reached a fence then he would turn around and trot back to the station to wait for the next car. What we would have given for our video camera!



Dogs are well known for chasing moving objects - balls, rabbits, squirrels, bicycles, joggers and cars. We once had a client whose dog chased railroad trains. Why do dogs chase moving objects? Chasing birds, squirrels and rabbits seems like natural behavior, but why chase trains and gondola cars?

No one has researched the question, but the answer probably lies in the heritage of dogs, what they have been bred to do and what they have been rewarded for doing. Through domestication, we have taken advantage of

the predispositions of wolves to capture their prey by chasing them down. We've selected some dogs, such as greyhounds, to hunt for us and to chase even more kinds of animals. Herding dogs, like border collies, have been selected to herd (a modified form of chasing) sheep and cattle.

We haven't directly selected dogs to chase gondola cars, but the interest some dogs have in chasing almost anything that moves is probably an unintended consequence of our selection procedures. There are enormous differences between dogs in their interest in chasing things. Some dogs just aren't interested in chasing moving objects of any kind. If you throw a ball or a cat runs by, the dog just sits there and watches it.

Learning and experience also play a role. For some dogs, chasing seems to be its own reward ("I chase the bicycle that I don't like and it goes away"). For others, the behavior needs to be reinforced with some external reward like food or being able to capture and hold the object they are chasing.

Encouraging and rewarding chasing behavior can be both a blessing and a curse. Teaching a dog to fetch a ball can be very rewarding for the dog and the people playing with her. It's great exercise and can help strengthen the bond between the dog and the person.

On the other hand, encouraging a dog to chase a bicycle, a jogger, a train or a gondola car can lead to injury to people or the dog. Some people think that such chasing looks cute or perhaps they allow it because they unfortunately want to encourage their dogs' territorial or predatory behavior.

Monitor your dog's chase tendencies, and discourage any chasing of people, animals or moving objects that present potential dangers.

[If your dog has a chasing problem - schedule an appointment with us](#)

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- **What's New at ABA**
Firefly's Coral Lady Joins Our Family. As you can see from the picture, our 7-week



old Irish setter puppy, Coral, is sleeping in her exercise pen. Coral is a field-type Irish setter and will be much smaller than the typical show-type Irish. Suzanne fell in love with Irish setters because of Blaze, the setter she found as a stray, who she developed a special bond with.

We always knew we would have another setter in our lives. Yesterday was spent acquiring puppy paraphernalia, planning out new puppy routines, and taking the first steps in introducing Coral to Ashley and Buffett. We are documenting everything, with pictures, video and a journal in hopes of turning our experiences into a 'survival guide' for new puppy parents.

We'll keep you posted in future issues as to how things are going, and give all our puppy parent subscribers helpful puppy raising tips. As we fall in love with Coral, we think Mocha would approve.

If you are a new puppy parent, our [Just Behave telecourse](#) or [Puppy Behavior Wellness Manual](#) are just what you need to help you through the trials of puppyhood.

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- **Barking Dog Book Update**

Barking Dog Book WHERE ARE YOU? To all

of you who have ordered our new [Help I'm Barking and I Can't Be Quiet book](#), our sincere apologies for the delay in getting your book to you. We started out just revising the barking dog manual, but the further we got into the project, it changed into a completely new book. It went to our designer several weeks ago, and we were on our way to publication when her computer crashed - completely crashed. We don't yet know if our designed and formatted book files were salvaged. We are keeping our fingers crossed. Rest assured that we have all your orders and will be shipping your books the very day we get them back from the printer. We are still hoping for an end of July, first of August shipping date. We'll include a free bonus gift with orders received before July 14 by way of apology.

[Place a pre-publication order, and we'll pay the shipping](#)