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For Pet Parents and Pet Professionals

Animal Behavior Associates Newsletter

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Dog Piece: Introducing Your Dog to Your New Baby



Yesterday, (Tuesday), we (Dan and Suzanne) each taught classes at two different area hospitals on [Introducing Your Dog to Your Baby](#). We've been doing this for a few years now, and feel very fortunate to have the opportunity to help pet parents make babyhood as enjoyable as possible for their pets. Suzanne also appeared on Denver's ABC TV affiliate,

Dear Suzanne,

February brings us Valentine's Day, an opportunity to express our affection for the ones that are important in our life. We hope you take the opportunity to show your love to your companion animals - just don't do it with chocolate! In this issue we take a look at pet misbehavior and how it can affect our feelings towards our animals. Be sure to look for our new telecourse - Interviews with the Experts coming soon to a telephone near you.

• **Our Piece: Pets That Just Love to Be Bad**

Do our pets set out to be bad? Do they do things that annoy us even though they know they shouldn't?

Recently, a client of ours complained that her cat, Mr. Boots, had started climbing into their baby's crib to sleep and going into the crawl space under the house to



talking about these classes.

Although it's rare for dogs or cats to show threats or aggression toward infants, it can be difficult for pets to adjust to the new routines that inevitably result from a new baby in the house. Not only do pets now have to share mom and dad's attention, but must also adapt to new odors, noises, and likely a stream of visitors coming and going.

In the class, we start off with a true/false quiz, to help make couples aware of some of the myths and misconceptions surrounding pets and babies. Not everyone knows that they can't expect their pets to automatically accept the baby as part of the family, or that pets will not misbehave because they are "acting out" or because they are mad that the baby arrived.

It's important for expectant parents to start preparing their pets for the baby's arrival as early as possible in the pregnancy. Out of control dogs may need training, dogs who aren't good with visitors need to become less territorial or defensive, and pets will need to become acclimated to odors, noises, and baby paraphernalia.

We recommend pet parents practice with a life-like doll and recorded noises of baby sounds. Pairing baby noises with treats and petting can ease the anxiety noise-sensitive pets may display.

Pets must also become accustomed to listening to mom and dad talk the same baby talk to the baby, that used to be directed to them, without reacting with attention-getting behaviors. Toys that can be filled with goodies provide great ways to keep dogs occupied while parents are busy with the baby.

Parents also need to consider how their dogs will now share space in the car with the baby carrier, and whether pets will still be allowed on the bed and on the furniture. A pet who is accustomed to jumping at will into dad's lap on the couch can present a hazard to a newborn who now occupies that position. Pets don't necessarily have to be banned from the couch or furniture, but may be required to wait for an invitation to come up.

Parents may need ongoing assistance to foster good relationships between their children and their pets, because things change so fast. Just about the time the pet may have gotten quite comfortable with the infant, the baby learns to crawl. This presents a whole new set of circumstance for dogs, who now must tolerate a small creature clumsily invading his personal space,

poop because he "enjoyed being a pain". Sarah's interpretation of her cat's behavior is an example of uncritical anthropomorphism - attributing human motivations to Mr. Boots' behavior without looking critically at what might be causing the behavior.

This uncritical anthropomorphism is wrong for a couple of reasons. First, we have no evidence that cats, dogs, horses or parrots have a moral sense of right and wrong and that they know good from bad. It is we who decide that sleeping in the baby's crib and pooping in the crawl space are bad behaviors. Our cats don't know these things are wrong. What our pets can learn is that certain behaviors make us angry and get them punished.

Second, we have no evidence that our pets intentionally set out "to be a pain" or to make us mad or to be spiteful. This would imply that they know what would hurt us and that they calculate and plan their behavior to achieve this end. In fact, there are often simpler explanations for why our pets do what they do.

Animals usually do what works for them; that is they engage in behaviors that get them rewards or that are inherently rewarding or that allow them to avoid unpleasant outcomes. If Sarah would try to see Mr. Boots behavior from his perspective - what's called critical anthropomorphism - she would have a different interpretation of why he does what he does.

Many cats enjoy sleeping in beds and on blankets and comforters. The baby's crib is probably warm, soft and comfortable. Maybe it is more comfortable than the other places he is allowed to sleep. Mr. Boots may also be drawn by the smell of milk on the baby and on

right at his level.

To be able to help more pet parents, we created a CD based on our hospital classes. This narrated slide presentation - [Introducing Your Dog to Your Baby](#) covers these issues and more, and contains over 15 handouts and worksheets as well.

If you are a trainer, shelter, or veterinarian you will find this CD a valuable resource, either as a model to develop your own presentation, or a resource to resell directly to your clients. Visit our new Baby Pages.

Newsletter subscribers can take an extra 5% off through February 23. Email us for quantity wholesale prices.

TELECOURSE - TELL A FRIEND!



Sign two friends up for one of our Fundamentals Telecourses or Becoming a Great Dog Training Instructor and yours is free! Remember, these classes count for CPDT and CVT CEU Credits. Offer good for February/March Classes Only

[The Fundamentals of Canine Behavior](#)
[The Fundamentals of Animal Learning](#)
[Becoming A Great Dog Training Instructor](#)

**Coming This Spring
 "Ask The Experts"**



This is a new telecourse series that will feature

the sheets and blankets.

Mr. Boots probably goes to the crawl space to poop because the dirt floor is more attractive to him than the current litterbox. Cats frequently eliminate outside the litterbox when it is no longer attractive, because it isn't as clean as it was before or because the litter itself is no longer attractive.

He continues to do these things despite Sarah's scoldings because they continue to be rewarding to him and because the scoldings aren't punishing enough to discourage these behaviors. He's not doing it because he knows it will make Sarah mad.

Uncritical anthropomorphism can have undesirable effects on our pets and our relationships with them. Thinking that Mr. Boots does these things just to be bad blinds Sarah to looking for other causes for the behavior and then taking the right steps to change the behavior. It also hurts Sarah's relationship with Mr. Boots. No one wants a pet that they think is mean spirited and purposefully vindictive, so Sarah pulls away from Mr. Boots and may be more likely to give him up to another home or to a shelter or even to euthanize him.

The message for all of us is to be wary of jumping to conclusions about why our pets do things and to try to look at things from their point of view. Learning more about the behavior of our pets will help us to do this. The benefits of this are a better

• Cat Piece: Crate Training for Cats

We all know that if used properly, a crate can be



the leading minds in animal behavior. Our first series will focus on Canine Social Conflict. Dr. John Wright, certified applied animal behaviorist will talk on "Roles, Rules, and Relationships: Re-interpreting dominance concepts. Ms. Pia Silvani, CPDT will talk on "Feisty Fido Classes: What they are, how they work, are they for you?" The third in this series will feature Mr. Ken Williams, an attorney who will discuss "Law and Liability Associated with Canine Aggression". The series will run March 9-23. Cost and registration information will arrive in your inbox soon.

Our sympathies go out to our web-assistant Barb, and her husband George. They lost their Giant Schnauzer, Hank this week, after a long battle with lymphoma. Hank was a lucky boy to have had such loving pet parents. We know Hank's at the Rainbow Bridge, meeting and greeting all the cherished pets who wait there for us. If you'd like to drop Barb and George a brief note, you can email them at Barb@AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com.



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a useful behavior management tool for dogs. But few people consider it important to crate train cats. To us, this is an unfortunate oversight. At the very least, most cats are transported to the veterinarian, groomer, and/or boarding kennel in a crate or similar carrier. Because this is the only time most cats are crated, the crate rapidly develops an unpleasant association.

Few cats are trained to tolerate a crate gradually. Most are just stuffed in there and loaded in the car. We've even been guilty of this with our cat Buffett. Buffett, being an easy-going guy, doesn't mind his crate, but we never took the time to acclimate him to it the way we did our dogs.

Other cats actively resist being put in a crate, either because they dislike the confinement, and/or because they know that a crate means a bad experience follows. By the time the cat arrives at the veterinary clinic or other location, he's already anxious and aroused, making him more difficult to handle. So one advantage of crate training is to make your cat's trips to these care providers less stressful.

There are other reasons to crate train cats. What about using a crate as a "calm-down" location for an overly excitable kitten? How about as a transition step in a cat-to-cat introduction? As a "time-out" location when one cat is attacking another cat in the family? Cats that are crate trained can even accompany their families on car-outings, and if leash trained can enjoy a Sunday picnic in the park. You can even use a large crate that could be put on your deck or backyard to give your cat some fresh-air time while keeping him safe.

Crate training procedures for cats are not much different than for dogs. However, if your cat already hides when the crate comes out, it will be a longer process because you must overcome the cat's existing crate aversion. You may need to start by just leaving the crate sitting out for a while - make it a part of the furniture in your den. This will allow your cat to disassociate the crate with a trip to someplace he doesn't want to go.

Next, make it worth it to your cat to enter the crate. If your cat likes catnip, put a catnip toy in the crate. Leave the door open so your cat can retrieve the toy and come out. Place irresistible tidbits in the crate several times a day to encourage your cat to enter. Because cats like hidey-holes (it's why they like to crawl into boxes and bags), you may find your cat using the crate as a private resting spot.

Once your cat is no longer reluctant to enter the crate, place him in the crate with a tidbit and close the door for a minute or two. Practice carrying the crate around the house, and even putting it in the car and immediately bringing it back inside. Perfect your crate-carrying technique. Avoid swinging the crate or bumping it against your leg if possible. You want to give your cat a smooth ride, not one filled with pot-holes! Of course the next step would be to take your cat on car rides that don't end at unpleasant destinations.

Because kittens are so curious and not afraid of new things, it's likely easier to crate train a kitten as compared to an adult cat. But it's never too late. Even if your cat never learns to love his crate, by using these procedures you can at least decrease his anxiety so that he can tolerate crating better.

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● **What's New: Lakewood Office**



New Lakewood Office Open

Animal Behavior

Associates has expended to offer one more consultation option. We now have an office located inside the new doggy daycare called "[The Den](#)". They are located at 8700 W. 14th Ave in Lakewood.

Along with offering us space to use for consultations, The Den offers high quality doggy daycare in a loving family environment. Andrew and Joy are a brother and sister team dedicated to making sure your dog has a fun and safe time. Joy is also a certified Veterinary Technician. They are now accepting new dogs for their day time program, call 303-237-4979

Also available at The Den are puppy classes and puppy daycare. The puppy school is called "Pup- e-ssori, Puppy Preschool". Christine Shedron, Joy Hansen and Dr. Christine Horst, DVM are all involved with the puppy classes. Give Christine a call for help with your new pup! 303-233-6520. The "Den" also has a special daycare for puppies. They will accept pups from 9 weeks to 6 months.

- **Warning! Some cat and dogs toys can be dangerous!**



We mentioned a variety of cat toys

in an article last month. A reader told us about her cat getting her leg caught in the elastic cord of a dangle toy. Almost any toy can present some degree of danger to your pet, so in addition to strings watch out for any toy with small parts that can be torn off and swallowed. Take reasonable care with all pet toys, and if you have any concerns, allow your pet to play with them only under supervision.