

You are receiving this email from Animal Behavior Associates because you subscribed on our website or asked us to add you to our list. To ensure that you continue to receive emails from us, add ezine@AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com to your address book today. If you haven't done so already, click to [confirm](#) your interest in receiving email campaigns from us. To no longer receive our emails, click to [unsubscribe](#).



For Pet Parents and Pet Professionals

Animal Behavior Associates Newsletter

March 9th, 2005, Volume III Issue 3

In This Issue

Dog Piece: Puppy Vaccinations and Early Socialization

Our Piece: Modifying Emotional Behaviors

Cat Piece: Negotiating The Peace In Cat Wars

What's New At ABA

Dear Suzanne,

Coral wishes you all a Happy St. Patrick's Day. She'll be participating in the parade here in Denver, along with other members of the Irish Setter Club of Colorado. It's always fun to have a Setter in the house, but especially on St. Patrick's day!

- Our Piece: Modifying Emotional Behaviors**

Dog Piece: Puppy Vaccinations and Early Socialization



Since the 1950s, behaviorists have known that exposing puppies to good experiences with other dogs, people and even other animal species can help them be better adjusted pets as adults. Dogs that receive such early socialization are better able

to form attachments to people and other dogs, and be less aggressive and fearful than dogs that do not have such experiences. Research by Drs. John Paul Scott and John Fuller found that this "sensitive period", when it is easiest for dogs to respond to these experiences, is between 3 and 12 weeks of age.

The risk of disease during this early age has created



Many behavior problems in dogs and cats, including

wars between cats we discussed in another article in this issue, involve emotional arousal. It is well known that emotions drive behaviors. If you are afraid of insects for example (Suzanne is a real 'bug-a-phobe!'), you would have a difficult time holding still and being quiet if someone asked you to hold a spider in your hand. This would be virtually impossible for you if

problems for puppy owners and their veterinarians.

Puppies at these young ages are at risk for certain communicable diseases such as distemper and parvovirus. The conventional veterinary wisdom was that to avoid possible exposure to these very serious diseases, owners should keep their puppies away from other dogs or places where other dogs have been at least until the puppy has had his third series of vaccinations which could be between the ages of 16 and 20 weeks of age.

Waiting to provide socialization experiences until these later ages misses the peak of the sensitive period and makes it more difficult for socialization to occur. The sensitive period is limited by the puppy's increasing fear of anything unfamiliar which makes it more difficult for puppies to accept new events.

For years, veterinary behaviorist Dr. R.K. Anderson has argued that puppies should be given these socialization experiences during the sensitive period and that if they occur in environments where the risk of disease transmission is low, the benefits outweigh the risks. He likes to point out that the risk of death due to behavior problems as a result of poor socialization is far greater for most dogs than the risk of these communicable diseases. As Dr. Anderson puts it, vaccination and socialization go together.

Dr. Anderson has reports from thousands of puppies that have attended his puppy classes as well as those of several other behaviorists that show that puppies as young as 8 - 12 weeks of age can attend socialization classes with very little risk of disease, if proper care is taken. In 10 years or so, Dr. Anderson has not had a single puppy develop distemper or parvo as a result of attending his socialization classes at a humane society in Minneapolis. These results are consistent with other reports as well.

Dr. Anderson urges that puppies should receive their first vaccinations before attending class. The areas where the puppy is socialized should be clean, and sick dogs shouldn't be allowed in areas where puppies are or where puppies will likely be. Clearly, early socialization shouldn't occur in areas where these communicable diseases are found.

This is good news for puppies and puppy owners. Puppies can reap the benefits of earlier socialization experiences, and puppy parents should worry less about their puppies contracting serious communicable diseases if Dr. Anderson's guidelines are followed.

your fear is intense enough.

The same is true for our pets. If your dog is uncomfortable around children, asking him to 'sit' while a child pets him isn't going to work well. If your cat is afraid of the dog, holding the cat while the dog approaches so she can learn there's nothing to be afraid of may make things worse.

Fears are not rational. As a zoologist, Suzanne clearly knows a little house spider won't hurt her, but this doesn't help her feel better about holding a spider in her hand. This rational component may not even be present with our pets. The dog may be convinced that the child is indeed going to hurt him, and the cat may believe her survival depends on avoiding the dog.

Emotions aren't affected by reinforcement and punishment in the same way voluntary behaviors are. Fears don't lessen if someone attempts to punish them, nor do they become worse if we attempt to reward them. Dan can't make Suzanne less afraid of spiders by yelling at her, nor can he make her more afraid by hugging her when she sees a spider. In fact, just the opposite may happen.

Aversive events tend to increase emotional arousal. So Dan yelling at Suzanne if she acts afraid when a spider crawls up her leg may actually increase her fear. Now not only does she have her spider-fear to deal with, but the unpleasantness of being yelled at by her husband as well.

On the other hand, if Dan hugs Suzanne and talks soothingly to her, she may calm down and

Puppy parents should always talk with their veterinarian before starting a puppy socialization class, to be sure there have not been outbreaks of diseases recently in the area, and to obtain a recommendation to a quality puppy class.

See our book [Raising A Behaviorally Healthy Puppy](#) for more detailed information about how to socialize your puppy, and other puppy rearing procedures.

If you have data relating to puppy classes and disease frequency, email Dr. Anderson at ander160@tc.umn.edu. Dr. Anderson is traveling for the next several weeks, so be patient in expecting a reply.

***** *



"Interviews With Experts"

Starts this Thursday

March 10th

Hurry and sign up.

Time is short and Space in the live call is running out!

[Roles, Rules and Relationships: Re- Interpreting "Dominance Theory"](#)

Dr. John Wright, March 10th

[Rehabilitating the Canine Contender: Helping Dogs Get Along Better With Other Dogs](#)

Ms. Pia Silvani, CPDT, March 17th

[Laws, Liability and Dog Bites](#)

Dr. Randy Lockwood, March 24th

***** *

Special Saving This Month!

[What Cats Want: Creating a Cat Friendly Environment](#)

[Helping Cats Co-Exist: Creating Feline Friendships](#)

have less of a reaction to the spider. This may seem opposite to what you've probably read in popular literature, which says you should never reassure an animal when he is afraid, as this will only reward the fear.

Can you see from Suzanne's spider example why this isn't true? People generally have a difficult time with these concepts until they try them. For example, during the initial stages of a consultation, we often have dogs bark and growl at us. Our reaction is to use the appropriate body postures to make ourselves appear non-threatening (see our Canine Body Posture video), and toss treats to the dog. If this were rewarding threatening behavior, causing it to escalate, after 20 years of doing so, we would likely have been severely injured by these dogs by now!!

Instead, just the opposite happens. The dogs calm down, often switch to friendly displays, and want more treats. This is an example of classical counter conditioning at work. This type of conditioning can be a powerful way to change behaviors associated with emotional arousal.

To learn more, purchase the 4CD set (with class notes) of our [Fundamentals of Animal Learning telecourse](#).

• **Cat Piece: Negotiating The Peace In Cat Wars**

Our friend Sandy has problems with her two



younger cats, Sam and James stalking and attacking her 10

Purchase one or both of these audio or Presentation CDs and receive **15%** off the regular price.

Good through March only.
discount will be calculated in the shopping cart.

*

Quick Links...

- [Our Website](#)
- [Products](#)
- [Services](#)
- [More About Us](#)
- [Archives](#)

year old cat, Fluffy, who has now become afraid of the younger cats. This is creating stress for the whole family. How do you deal with a cat war that has erupted in your home?

There is no one best solution, but instead depends on the specifics of the fighting behavior and on the family's willingness and abilities to work with the problem.

In Sandy's case, Sam and James initially got along with Fluffy until Sam began to attack her. At first, the behavior seemed playful, but soon escalated to Fluffy running away and Sam and James chasing and attacking her. Although no injuries have resulted, Fluffy won't come out of the basement most of the time and is very afraid of the other cats.

The first step for Sandy is to prevent the opportunities for Sam and James to chase Fluffy. This prevents injuries, as well as stopping the cats from practicing the antagonistic behavior. It's hard to get the cats to learn different ways to relate to each other if they still have the opportunities to threaten each other.

Many times the cats will have to be physically separated, as often just the sight of the other cat is enough to produce threats or fear. In order to improve the cats' relationship, Sandy must find a way to have the cats together so that all three can be calmed, relaxed and friendly. This will require taking 'baby steps', perhaps with the cats a distance away from one another, and staging "kitty parties" where Fluffy associates food or gentle massage with Sam and James'

presence, a technique called counter conditioning.

The goal is to change the cats' attitudes about each other. This will require many small steps, which are executed slowly, carefully in what is known as a desensitization program. Sandy required our help to guide her efforts in a systematic way. Sandy's 'kitten parties' involve having Fluffy sit on her lap, receiving tuna treats, while Sam is across the room getting the same treatment from Sandy's husband.

It may take months for Sandy's cats to learn to be together without fear or threats. Sometimes, veterinarians may prescribe anti-anxiety medications for one or both cats in order to reduce fearfulness and anxiety.

Unfortunately, not all cat fighting problems can be resolved, and in some cases it's best to find another home for one of the cats so that the quality of life for all cats can be maximized.

It's better to prevent these problems from developing, if possible. Our narrated slide presentation "[Helping Cats Co-exist: Creating Feline Friendships](#)" (also available in audio format) gives useful tips to help owners create good relationships among their cats. See our special offer this month.

- **What's New At ABA**

February and March are busy travel months for us. Suzanne gave 2 days of presentations at



:: ezine@animalbehaviorassociates.com
:: <http://www.AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com>

:: 303-932-9095

the Ohio Veterinary Medical Association, while Dan participated in National Animal Control Association Academies in Phoenix and Portland, and will soon be in Houston and Minneapolis. In addition, we just returned from the Interdisciplinary Forum in Applied Animal Behavior in Phoenix, a meeting we co-founded 9 years ago.

We also taught two classes on Introducing Your Dog to Your New Baby at hospitals in the Denver area. Because we are taking a much-anticipated cruise to the Caribbean in April, we will not have any new **Fundamentals** courses, **Just Behave** or **What Your Cat Wants You to Know** until we return.

Don't forget our free [Managing Chaos at the Door](#) on March 31st and of course the [Interviews with the Expert](#) Series that begins tomorrow, March 10th. We are so excited about working with our friends and colleagues Drs. Wright and Lockwood and Ms. Pia Silvani. We will be bringing you more Expert Interviews in the future so check the website!