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For Pet Parents and Pet Professionals

Animal Behavior Associates Newsletter

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Dear Suzanne,

We are recovering from our first snowstorm of the season. Coral loves frolicking in the white stuff, while Ashley and Buffett would rather be inside. We are singing, as Jimmy Buffett would - "We want to go where it's warm!"

Best,
Suzanne and Dan

- **Cat Piece:**
Preventing Destructive Cat Scratching

Dog Piece:

Deal'n With Steal'n

Whether it's the socks in the dirty laundry, food off the kitchen table, the children's toys or trash from the garbage can, at one time or another



Cats scratch objects with their front claws to leave both a visual and olfactory mark to communicate with other cats or people. We don't always know what cats are trying to communicate with these marks. It may be a

territorial message that says "keep out", or just a flag that lets other cats know that Fluffy is alive, well and living in that particular place. When such scratching is done indoors on wood moldings, furniture or carpeted areas it can result



dogs often take things they shouldn't. How can we deal with such problems? Obviously, preventing "stealing" behavior is much easier than trying to stop the behavior once it's become a habit. "Doggie proofing" the areas where Rover is kept is a great help. Keep food, dirty clothes, toys and garbage out of the reach of your dog. This is particularly important with a puppy or an adult dog new to the home who may not yet know what items are off-limits.

Once Rover has gotten into the habit of taking things, you must first determine why he's doing so. Is he stealing food from the counter (a favorite of Ashley's) or raiding the garbage for between meal snacks? Is he taking the kids toys to chew or to play with? Is he grabbing your socks because he knows you will chase him around the house to get them back?

If the stealing seems food-motivated, then you may need to re-evaluate how much and when you are feeding your dog. Your veterinarian can help you determine if you should change the feeding schedule or the amount you are feeding him. Some "chow hounds" will continue to try to steal and eat food no matter how much they are fed. Keeping food and garbage away from them maybe the only reasonable answer. Consider Snappy Trainers or other "booby- trap" devices (see below).

If your dog isn't eating the objects but just chewing on them, you may want to give him chew toys of his own. Some dogs get bored with the same old chew objects so providing something new can help. Examples of [toys that will keep your dog occupied](#) can be found on our website.

Some dogs steal things as an attention-getting behavior. When Rover grabs your newspaper and takes off with it, with you in hot pursuit, he has just created a rousing game of chase. Even if you yell at him when

in considerable damage, and owner frustration which in turn results in some cats losing their homes.

As with many behavioral problems it is better to prevent cats from scratching household items than to try to stop them after the behavior has become an established habit. Because scratching is a normal, unlearned act, it cannot, and should not be prevented. Instead, the the goal is to encourage the cat to prefer to scratch on a scratching post and not the arm of your sofa.

Some pointers for establishing good scratching habits in kittens:

1. Put out 2 or 3 scratching posts in areas where the kitten likely to want to scratch - near sleeping places, and the places the kitten most likes to sit and to play.
2. You can make your own posts rather than purchasing them, but be sure the scratching surface is one that is easy for the kitten to shred, like loose- weave fabrics.
3. Don't put the kitten's paws on the post and force her to scratch. Kittens are born knowing how to scratch and dragging the kitten's paws over the post may only cause fear of the post.
4. Do encourage scratching on the post by playing with dangle-toys on or near the post, using praise and food rewards for scratching the post or even scratching the post yourself to stimulate the kitten to scratch it.

For older cats who have an established scratching problem:

1. Make the damaged scratching area unavailable or cover it with thick plastic so that it feels different and less appealing.
2. Put the scratching post next to the damaged area and be sure it is covered with a surface that is appealing. The texture can resemble the material being damaged or be a loose-weave fabric. Many cats don't like the carpeting or sisal that comes on most purchased scratching posts.
3. Many cats like to scratch in prominent

you catch him and retrieve the paper, the stealing was rewarded by the chase. Once Rover has taken the paper, you can ignore him and not chase him, which will take a lot of the fun out of the game, or you can calmly call Rover to you and ask him to drop the paper. Rewarding him for giving up the paper won't reward the stealing - by then it's too late to either punish or reward that behavior. Teaching your dog to fetch and give up objects is a much better game than chase and may help to stop the stealing for attention.

Be very careful about trying to punishing stealing behavior. If you don't actually catch your dog in the act of grabbing the object, you shouldn't punish him at all. Punishing him after he has taken the object will either make him fearful of you, aggressive to you or very good at hiding his booty when you are around.

To make punishment work, you must consistently catch your dog in the act of stealing. This is hard for most of us to do. Using booby traps such as [Snappy Trainers](#) to startle your dog when he attempts to take things can be an effective alternative to interactive punishment.

>>>October Special<<<

Save Over 25% on selected Toys!

Limited Quantities. Hurry While Supply Lasts

Small Goodie Ship

..Regular \$6.95...Sale \$4.95

Large Goodie Ship

..Regular \$14.95...Sale \$10.95

The Waggle Small

..Regular \$7.99...Sale \$5.95

The Waggle Medium/Large

..Regular \$9.99...Sale \$6.95

The Groove Thing Small/Medium

..Regular \$8.99...Sale \$5.95

The Groove Thing Medium/Large

..Regular \$10.99...Sale \$7.95

For Ezine subscribers only:Discounts will be applied once toy is placed in shopping cart.

areas of their homes. If your cat has chosen such a location, you may need to tolerate the post in the same visible area. Your cat may not scratch a post located in the back corner of the basement.

Most cats can be taught or retrained to scratch a post or other object you provide, and not damage household items. If these ideas aren't working, consult an [animal behaviorist](#) for help. Or see our ["Creating a Cat Friendly Environment" CD](#) for additional suggestions.

• Our Piece: When Your Pet Lets You Down

John called us recently about his dog's aggressive behavior. Rufus had bitten him when John tried to take away a beef bone that Rufus had stolen from the trash. John was upset about the aggression and disappointed that Rufus "had let him down." He didn't understand how Rufus could be aggressive to him after John had adopted him from the shelter and given him a really good home.



We can empathize with John's disappointment in Rufus. It's upsetting when someone you love does something to hurt you. But should he expect his dog to not "let him down?" The feeling of being let down results from our expectations not being met by another. Is it reasonable for John to expect Rufus to recognize all John has done for him and not disappoint him? Do dogs have such moral understandings?

We have no evidence that dogs or other animals, have such moral understandings nor do we have any evidence that pets can feel gratitude days, months or years after an event such as being adopted from the shelter. Animals mostly live in the here-and-now and they are concerned about things that can provide immediate rewards. Giving a dog a tasty bone may result in happy behavior and a lick in the face at the time it is

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Hot off the Press!

Two brand new wellness guides to help you improve your business and increase your bottom line:

“Behavior wellness is more than the absence of behavior problems. It is the condition or state of normal and acceptable pet conduct that enhances the human-animal bond and the pet’s quality of life. Behavior wellness programs are integrated services that are designed to achieve this state.”

Incorporating Behavioral Wellness into your Grooming Business

and

Incorporating Behavioral Wellness into your Training Business

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[Canine Behavior Conference](#), Saturday, October 15 – Sunday, October 16, 2005. For veterinarians, technicians, owners, breeders, and trainers! Speakers: Gerrard Flannigan, DVM, MSc., Dipl. ACVB; Alice Moon-Fanelli, MA, PhD, CAAB; Nicole Cottam, Tufts Behavior Service Coordinator; Contact: Continuing Education Dept. 508-887-4723; susan.brogan@tufts.edu,

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given, but the dog won’t lick your face out of gratitude for a bone you gave him last year. A dog rescued from a shelter may be happy to be with you on a daily basis because of the "good things" you give him daily, but it is unrealistic to expect him to remember you rescued him and to be grateful for that every day.

This is another example of uncritical anthropomorphism – giving human characteristics to animals – and how it can hurt our relationships with our pets. John expected Rufus to be grateful and to honor John’s unspoken agreement, “I saved you, you don’t hurt me.” When Rufus doesn’t honor his end of the bargain and bites John, then John believes Rufus is mean-spirited and ungrateful. Because no one wants a mean spirited dog, John is more likely to euthanize Rufus or relinquish him. In fact, all Rufus was trying to do was to get a tasty bone, even though he showed unacceptable behavior to do so. When John tried to take the bone away, Rufus became fearful and possessive and bit John. When John understood that Rufus was just doing what worked for him and that he wasn’t an ungrateful wretch, he was more willing to work with Rufus’s aggression problem.

We’re all anthropomorphic about our pets – it’s a natural thing to do. But we need to be careful to not give attributes to them that they don’t have. It can cause problems for them and for us.

• **What's New: Busy, Busy, Busy!**

Dan and Suzanne have been doing a lot of traveling in the last month. We spoke at Barkleigh’s Groom Expo in Hershey, PA in the middle of September and at the Grand Valley Kennel Club Show in Grand Junction, CO in late September.



At Groom Expo we gave 10 hours of lectures on basic cat behavior, offering puppy and kitten classes, making behavior assessments, dealing with aggression at pet facilities, using the

internet and website to build your business, dominance myths, separation anxiety and barking problems. DVDs of these presentations will be available on our website and at the Barkleigh website very soon. Dan was in heaven at America's chocolate capitol. There was chocolate everywhere: In all the meeting rooms, the hotel rooms and of course, all the restaurants. It's hard to believe that chocolate can be offered in so many ways.

At the Grand Valley Show we lectured on how breeders, owners, veterinarians, trainers and other pet professionals can all contribute to helping puppies achieve their highest potential as companion animals.

Suzanne just returned from delivering 9 hours of lecture at the Wild West Veterinary Conference in Reno, NV. She spoke in the human-animal bond track on how veterinarians can incorporate behavior wellness services into the delivery of medical care.

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