

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

February 8th, 2006, Volume IV Issue 2

In This Issue

Dog Piece:
Calming Cap

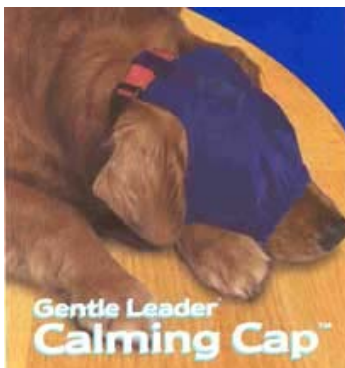
Cat Piece:
Dealing with Scaredy Cats

Our Piece:
TAG Teaching or Training the Trainer

What's New:
On the road again!

Dog Piece:
Calming Cap

Some behavior problems are rooted in, or at least influenced by, a dog's emotional arousal in response to certain



Dear Suzanne,

Happy Valentine's Day to all of our wonderful subscribers! Don't forget to remember your 4-legged Valentines next week, just not with chocolate!

Best,
Suzanne and Dan

- **Cat Piece:**
Dealing with Scaredy Cats



You step into your neighbor's house and her cat takes one look at you and runs from the room. Do you have bad breath? Are you badly dressed? Possibly. However, your neighbor tells you that her cat runs and hides from everyone. So it isn't just you. Why is it that some cats are so shy of people and other cats are so friendly? What can be done to prevent cats from becoming fearful?

events. The sight of other dogs, people walking by their territory, a new cat in the house, may all cause dogs to react quickly and intensely. When dogs react this way, it is difficult to modify their behavior because they give us very little chance to proactively elicit or reward alternative behaviors. If we could lower their reactivity – or said another way – raise their response threshold – we'd have a better chance of conditioning them to respond differently.

Attempts to prevent an unwanted behavior by restraining the dog, yelling at the dog or "correcting" him using physical means, often backfire. Instead, the dog becomes more emotionally aroused and more ill-behaved. Emotional arousal makes it more difficult for us to elicit calm, alternative behaviors.

We've been experimenting with a new behavior management aid that appears to decrease emotional arousal in some dogs. [The Calming Cap](#), developed by our friend and colleague Trish King from the Marin Humane Society, is a product of Premier Pet Products, the folks who bring us the Gentle Leader.

Trish initially developed the Calming Cap to help a dog that became agitated and barked at anything he saw when riding in the car. We've used Calming Caps on a dog that had attacked another dog in the family, a dog that was chasing the family cat, an "emotional car-dog" similar to Trish's and on our own Dalmatian Ashley.

When Ashley has her Calming Cap on, she displays less alarm barking in reaction to sights and sounds outside our home. With the Calming Cap, she was also surprisingly tolerant of other unfamiliar dogs she shared a house with over the holidays. The Cap also helped us re-introduce the fighting dogs and made the cat-chasing dog less reactive when wearing his Cap.

The Calming Cap filters dogs' vision,

One factor that influences fearfulness is the cat's genetic predisposition. We wrote about this in our [August '04 ezine](#). Some cats are predisposed to be shy and reticent while others are more likely to be bold and friendly. These predispositions don't doom the shy cats to be shy or ensure the bold cats will remain that way.

Early experiences also influence fearful behavior. Cats, like many other animals, have a sensitive period when learning to adjust to change and accept unfamiliarity is easiest. This sensitive periods seems to be from the 2nd to the 7th week of life.

If you want to have a friendly, confident cat, be sure you take the time during kittenhood to expose your kitten to a variety of people, environments and common events. Take your kitten on short car trips, create kitten socialization visits from friends and family (including children!), handle and touch your kitten frequently, and provide opportunities for friendly contacts with other cats and dogs. Cats that are exposed as kittens to new people, new situations and other animals are more likely as adults to be friendly and tolerant and less likely to be fearful. Make sure these socialization experiences are enjoyable for your kitten.

Traumatic or frightening experiences later in life can also cause fearfulness. A cat that is repeatedly chased by a dog is unlikely to be friendly to other dogs. So it's also important to manage your cat's environment so "bad things" don't happen. We see far too many situations where the family cat spends most of its time hiding, avoiding other pets in the family. This is a quality of life issue that needs immediately attention. It's not normal for hiding to be a cat's most common behavior.

What do you do if your cat is fearful? Don't force your cat to experience what she is afraid of. Try to lure her out with a tasty treat or with an exciting toy and gradually expose her to what's frightening her. If she becomes uncomfortable or fearful during the experience, let her move away. Fears are not easily overcome and owners need to be patient with their fearful cats.

similar to if they were looking through gauze. Dogs can still see clearly enough to navigate their environment (Ashley went on several hikes with hers) but looking through the stretchy, navy colored fabric is like trying to see clearly at dusk or dawn.

Surprisingly, the dogs we've worked with tolerate the Cap quite well, and have not tried to paw it off, as many dogs do initially with a Gentle Leader. When the dogs do not react as intensely to whatever problem stimulus we are trying to work with, it gives us a better behavioral starting point for a counter conditioning or desensitization program.

Because we've been so impressed with our results using the Cap, we've decided to offer you a [special introductory price of 10%](#) off the regular price. If you aren't sure whether, or how, a Calming Cap could benefit your dog, contact us and we'd be happy to set up a brief, advisory consultation with you.

~~~~~

## February Special

*Understand your feline friend better!*

**Save 15%**

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

Presentation CD

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

Presentation CD

[Cats Come Clean: 50 Tips About Cats and Litterboxes](#)

Booklet

discount will be calculated in cart

~~~~~

If you need help decreasing your cat's fearfulness, call us for a [consultation](#).

To help you create a quality environment for your cat, we are offering a special pricing this month on our Presentation CD's - [Helping Cats Co-Exist](#) and [What Cats Want](#), and our booklet [Cats Come Clean: What Your Cat Wants You to Know About Litterboxes](#). Details follow in our February Special section.

- **Our Piece: TAGTeaching or Training the Trainer**

We recently traveled to Tucson, Arizona to attend a Clicker Expo, a conference and trade show devoted to clicker training. It was interesting to see how this technology can be applied to such a wide range of human and animal training. For those of you who aren't familiar with clicker training, it is operant conditioning, often making use of a technique called shaping, using a small hand-held clicker. The sound of the click allows the trainer to precisely mark the behavior to be reinforced. To psychologists, the "click" becomes a conditioned reinforcer or a bridging stimulus. It's a bridge because it goes between the response and the reinforcer. Clicker training is quite popular for dog training, but is also used with other species including marine mammals, birds, cats, and fish. We even saw a clicker trained rabbit!



An exciting new application of clicker training is its use with training people. This application is called TAGteaching (Teaching with Acoustical Guidance). It has been used to help athletes such as gymnasts, dancers and Special Olympians. It has also been used to help people with special needs such as those with autism. It can be used anywhere people want to perfect physical skills.

A movement or posture is broken into small elements and the student practices to perfect just one element at a time. The teacher or coach "clicks" every time the student performs

Quick Links...

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

the element correctly and withholds the click for "mistakes". After one element has been perfected, the focus changes to another. TAG practitioners believe the students they've trained learn faster with a click than with verbal feedback. It also forces the coach to more clearly describe the criteria for a correct performance.

It occurred to us that TAGteaching could be used to help pet owners learn how to train their pets more efficiently. Owners often have trouble with timing and consistency when reinforcing their pets. They sometimes have trouble recognizing subtle changes in their pet's body language or using equipment correctly, such as tightening leashes when they shouldn't.

Trainers using the TAG approach could use the "click" to help their students sharpen their timing and observation skills, and perhaps overcome their frustration and awkwardness in the beginning stages of training. You can learn more about TAGteaching at their website www.tagteach.com. Clicker Expos are offered several times a year around the country. You can learn more about their offerings and Clicker Training in general at www.clickertraining.com.

- **What's New:**
On the road again!

This has been a busy month for us. As we mentioned in "Our Piece", we attended the Clicker Expo in Tucson Arizona, which was a first for us. Dan



traveled to Chicago to speak at another National Animal Control Association's Level I Academy. Today (Wednesday) Suzanne conducted one of our regular classes on Introducing Your Dog to Your New Baby at Littleton Adventist Hospital. On Friday, Suzanne travels to Pasadena to speak at the California Animal Care Conference, and to lecture to veterinary students at Western University. Last weekend, Suzanne attended the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association's Leadership conference here in Denver. She is also 1 month into her steel pan drum lessons

and finally, after endless repetitions of scales to learn the location of the notes in the drums, has actually learned several songs! Coral Reefers here she comes!

:: ezine@animalbehaviorassociates.com

::

<http://www.AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com>

:: 303-932-9095

Look for an email postcard from us in the near future, announcing our new site devoted to barking dog problems and our new schedule of Telecourses. Stay tuned!