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For Pet Parents and Pet Professionals

Animal Behavior Associates Newsletter

January 6th, 2006, Volume IV Issue 1

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Dear Suzanne,

You are receiving the January issue of our newsletter a few days early because we wanted to give everyone a chance to take advantage of our special offer for our telecourses that begin next week. Read on to see how you can learn more about pet behavior and earn CCPDT or CACVT CEU's from the comfort of your home. We hope to "see" you in class!

Best,
Suzanne and Dan

- **Cat Piece:
[Preventing Elimination Problems in
New Cats](#)**

Dog Piece: **Puppy Biting**

We spent New Years weekend with friends who had just rescued a 4 month



Our friend Tracy has been caring for a stray cat that has "adopted" her. Sam has been staying in her barn, but Tracy would like to bring Sam into the house and integrate him into the family with her

other two cats. Tracy has brought him inside a few times and he has gotten along with her other cats and is friendly with people, but he has urinated in her house more than once. A discussion with Tracy revealed that Sam had two problems. He was spraying (urine marking) in some places and when he used the litterbox, his urine would go over the



old puppy from an abusive situation. Although her heritage is unknown, Pi is likely a pit-bull type mix of some sort. She is a sweet and friendly pup, both with people and other dogs, but like any 4 month old puppy she has her moments of craziness. After a full day of walks in the snow and play with our dogs, on New Years Eve, while playing, Pi seemed to turn into all teeth. She was chasing and snapping at the other dogs and bit at her owner's hand as he gently held her and tried to calm her down. Given her questionable genetic and environmental background, her owners were understandably worried that Pi's outburst might be a sign of aggressive problems to come.

Over the years, many new puppy owners have contacted us with similar concerns. As our young Irish setter Coral is only 18 months old, the power of puppy teeth is still fresh in our minds. Coral's crazy antics as a puppy earned her the nickname "Bacchanal Lady", after one of Suzanne's favorite songs.

Having spent several days with Pi, we are fairly certain that even her whirling dervish episode on New Years Eve was not something out of the ordinary. When puppies become overly stimulated and overly tired but still want to keep going and going they seem to lose what little self-control their young minds and bodies have been able to develop. As soon as we put Pi in the car, she immediately fell asleep, evidence of how tired she was. New puppy parents need to learn to recognize when their puppies are overwhelmed, and need some private, quiet time to nap and rest. This is especially important when puppies are growing up in families with children.

With regard to puppy nipping and biting in general, we agree with a comment our friend and colleague Dr. Amy Marder made years ago – most of this normal puppy behavior just goes away, regardless of how much or how

sides. Sam was only half-squatting when he relieved himself in the box.

Tracy wanted to know how to prevent the soiling problems and keep Sam inside, as part of the household. Many people who adopt an adult cat have similar concerns and need to know how to prevent litterbox and marking problems.

Sam has no problem going to the litterbox, but his posture causes the urine to go outside the box. Tracy can deal with this by giving Sam a litterbox with high sides that will keep the urine in the box. One way to do this is to use a tall plastic tote container with a hole in one side that will allow Sam to easily go in and out.

When introducing a new cat to your household, it's a good idea to isolate the newcomer in his own room with water, food and a litterbox for a few days. This is what we recommended to Tracy. At first, Sam can come out to visit only when he has a chaperone until he seems comfortable with his new home and demonstrates he isn't going to spray or eliminate outside the box. This gradual introduction helps him to acclimate to his new home with minimal stress and to show that he will use the litterbox provided for him.

During the short forays out from his room, Tracy should make the experiences fun and pleasant for Sam by pairing his visits with the other cats and people with play and/or food treats. Sam's exploration of other rooms in the house should also be pleasant and calm, so he doesn't associate the new places with fear or excitement. Antagonistic interactions with other cats or highly excitable experiences may lead to spraying.

Since Tracy has seen Sam spray in her house, we recommended that she talk to her veterinarian about a prescription of short-term anti-anxiety medication for him. This may inhibit the spraying and facilitate Sam's integration into the household. We also recommended that Sam not be allowed to go outside without direct supervision, since he has been known to fight with other cats outside. Such antagonistic interactions outside can trigger marking behavior inside.

While there are no guaranteed ways to prevent elimination problems with cats, if their behavioral needs are met, most cats will use a litterbox reliably.

little puppy parents do to stop it. Puppies are teething, and also using their mouths to explore their world so their "orally focused" behavior is to be expected.

In our experience, the two best techniques for reacting to puppy nipping are: 1. When petting a puppy, make it a point to give the puppy something to chew on other than your hand. As you pet with one hand, offer a chewie in the other. 2. When puppy does bite, make a high pitched "Yipping" sound, just like another puppy would, walk away and ignore your puppy for a few minutes. Return, and try petting or playing with her again. She must learn that not biting causes you to stay and play with her, biting makes you go away.

Avoid physical, confrontational techniques such as scruff shakes, pinning the puppy, slapping its nose, or putting fingers down the puppy's throat. These reactions are ill-advised and often cause much more serious problems. Puppy nipping has nothing to do with "dominance" which is the justification for most of these harsh techniques.

Because puppies' teeth are so sharp, it's understandable why we puppy parents can't wait for puppies to outgrow this stage, but patience is the order of the day. Getting frustrated and then getting physical will backfire. Our three "do's" are all most puppy owners need – recognize when puppy is tired and give her a quiet place to rest, give puppy a chewie whenever she's touched, and walk away if she bites.

SAVE 10%

Take all 3 of our Telecourses and save!

[Fundamentals of Animal Behavior](#)

[Fundamentals of Canine Learning](#)

- **Our Piece:
Full House**



As we mentioned in our "Dog Piece" article, we spent New Years with several friends, all of whom had multiple pets. We invaded our host's house in Gunnison Colorado with our two dogs, and our other friends brought their three. Needless to say, our host's six cats were less than pleased. Having to share their home for three days with 5 dogs was not their idea of a good start to the new year. While we had a few minor skirmishes, for the most part everyone got along fairly well. We thought it would be helpful to share with you a few of the precautions we took to minimize all the animals' stress and prevent any fighting. Our precautions can be useful to anyone introducing new pets to the family, managing ongoing conflicts between family pets, or as with us, when pets unfamiliar to one another are forced to quickly learn to co-exist for a short time.

1. Feeding times were private. Before any of us began to prepare our pets' meals, we separated each family of pets. Pets know that the clink of dishes, or the sound of a can opener mean feeding time is imminent, and may launch into guarding behavior before the food actually appears. Don't wait to separate until feeding preparations have already begun. Everyone was kept separated until all dog food bowls were picked up and put away. The cats had their own private room with food and litterboxes that no dogs were allowed into.

2. Dogs were not allowed to stare at cats. One dog in our group had never lived with cats and at times he would stand and stare at several who were napping in a chair. We felt his prolonged staring indicated he was just becoming too focused on the cats. While it's possible this behavior would never escalate into a predatory attack, we didn't want to take the chance. We interrupted all staring by giving

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Addressing Canine Behavior Challenges:

Solutions for the Real World

Friday, April 7 – Saturday, April 8, 2006 in

Boston, MA. For all members of the behavior
team, veterinarians, technicians, behaviorists,
trainers and owners! Speakers: Dr. Nicholas H
Dodman, Mr. Brian Kilcommons, Dr. Alice Moon-
Fanelli; Contact: Continuing Education Dept.
508-887-4723; susan.brogan@tufts.edu, web
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the dog something else to do.

3. Because the cats needed a way to escape from and avoid the dogs, they had plenty of hiding spaces. One cat preferred to be in a bedroom most of the time, and others were able to get under couches and chairs, on the mantle of the fireplace, on top of the TV, and in a room barricaded with a baby gate. Cats were also allowed to swat and hiss at dogs as needed.

4. No chew toys were allowed. While the dogs had fuzzy, squeaky toys and balls to play with, no one was given rawhides, pigs' ears, or other high value chewies. All crunchy treats had to be consumed immediately, and every dog was required to sit and stay while eating one.

5. When one family of dogs re-entered the house after a walk, the other dog-family was kept away from the door. Re-entry into a room can be a high arousal situation that often takes place in a small, confined space. We didn't want the returning dogs to be jostled, jumped on or threatened by those in the house. The dogs were closely monitored for a few minutes after re-entry, with lots of "jolly talk" by everyone.

6. One dog wore a basket-type muzzle when in the house and all animals were loose together. We just didn't trust this dog to be reliably friendly with either the other dogs or the cats, so the muzzle protected everyone. She tolerated it well, both because she had previously been accustomed to wearing it, and because it was well fitting and comfortable. We recommend www.morrco.com as a great source for well designed muzzles. Interestingly, her behavior toward the other animals was much better than we would have predicted.

7. The dogs had lots of exercise. Being confined in a relatively small space with individuals you don't know is stressful. We took the dogs on many short walks, and we took ours on a longer snow-shoe hike. Tired, sleeping dogs are obviously less likely to have a conflict than those restlessly pacing with pent-up energy. This also allowed the cats to have some quiet, peaceful time as well.

We hope you find these precautions useful. Our new year celebration was quite enjoyable, spent with good friends (human and animal!) and good food and drink in a beautiful (although cold and snowy)

setting. We hope yours was as good!

- **What's New:**
Telecourses are back!

This month our popular telecourses are back. The [Fundamentals of Canine Behavior](#) starts January 9, [Fundamentals of Learning](#) begins January 11, and [Becoming a Great Dog Training Instructor](#) starts January 12th. [Don't forget these courses have been approved by CCPDT and CACVT for four hours of CE credits.](#)



[Chaos at the Door](#) starts February 6. You can learn more about them and sign up at our website. The Chaos at the door class is free, but you must sign up for it.

We're also teaching our very popular Introducing Your Dog to Your New Baby class on February 8th at Littleton Adventist Hospital. "Locals" can sign up by calling the Littleton/Porter Health Advisor at (303) 777-6877. You can also view the lecture in the comfort of your own home through our Narrated Slide Presentation. The CD ROM is played on your computer and also includes over 10 downloadable handouts and quizzes to help prepare your dog for that new arrival. The CD is available at [our website](#).

Dan and Suzanne will attend the Clicker Expo in Tucson, AZ in late January to learn the latest applications of this teaching technique. You can learn more about the Clicker Expo at www.clickertraining.com/clickerexpo.

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Suzanne starts steel pan drum lessons on January 10th. She can't wait.