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For Pet Parents and Pet Professionals

Animal Behavior Associates Newsletter

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Dear Suzanne,

February was a busy month for us and for Animal Behavior Associates. Suzanne celebrated a birthday, and we celebrated our 15th anniversary. When this is delivered to you on March 8th, we will be attending a Forum sponsored by the Coalition for Living Safely with Dogs. We'll report on this next month. Be sure and read about our Call For Videos!

Best,
Suzanne and Dan

Dog Piece: **Help For Barkers**



Because of our work with the National Animal Control Association, we know that responding to barking complaints is the number one activity for most animal control agencies. Dogs that bark excessively create problems for their owners, for the community, and for

• **Cat Piece:** **Pheromones and Behavior Problems**



A few days ago, after having her cat thoroughly checked by her veterinarian, Jenny called to ask our help with her cat Scooter's soiling problem. After an in-home visit, complete with a behavioral history and seeing Scooter's handy work first hand, it was clear the cat was urine marking. Scooter would back up against cabinets, drapes and stereo speakers and squirt small amounts of urine on them.

themselves. Excessive barking is often stressful for the dog and can be a symptom that the dog's behavioral needs are not being met.

There are essentially three choices when dealing with barking problems – change the dog's reaction to the things he barks at, manage his environment so he isn't exposed to what triggers the barking, and/or create an enriched environment that provides increased opportunities for behaviors other than barking.

Individual and breed differences in the threshold for barking definitely exist. Our Irish setter Coral rarely barks at the doorbell or at other things she hears outside, while our Dalmatian Ashley has an extremely low threshold for this so-called alarm barking.

We feel Ashley's world is already fairly enriched, so we've concentrated on changing her reaction to her barking triggers as well as isolating her from them. For example, we rarely leave her in the back yard unless we are home, because we know she will bark excessively at the squirrels, car doors slamming, neighbor-noises from adjacent yards, other dogs barking nearby and a host of other stimuli.

We've also worked to teach Ashley to come to us and sit for a treat rather than engaging in an extended barking bout. Finally, in certain situations, we've chosen to resort to an anti-bark collar to suppress Ashley's barking. One situation is in nice weather when we give the dogs access to the yard in order to allow 'potty breaks' when we are gone for more than 4 hours or so. We know that if Ashley is outside for this long without her bark collar, she will bark frequently and annoy our neighbors.

To help others deal with barking problems, we've created a new website – www.BarkingHelp.com. On this site, you'll find our updated and revised "[Help! I'm Barking and I Can't Be Quiet](#)" book - now available in e-book format - as well as a number of our other products that

In addition to our behavior modification program, Jenny asked about using pheromones to resolve the problem. The use of pheromones to treat companion animal behavior problems is fairly new – only the last few years. A French company has produced two products, one for cats called Feliway™ and another for dogs called Dog Appeasement Pheromone™ (DAP). The claim is that both can reduce anxiety in animals and in the case of cats, stop urine marking.

First discovered by insect behaviorists over 50 years ago, pheromones are chemicals that are released by animals that can have profound and immediate effects on the behavior of others. For example, when an ant is injured, she releases an alarm pheromone that causes other ants to become defensive and try to protect each other.

Such chemicals have been found in mammals as well, but they don't produce the automatic, rigid responses seen in insects. For example, when one female mouse comes into heat, she releases pheromones that attract males and can also alter the heat cycles of other female mice.

French researchers identified natural pheromones produced by glands on the heads of cats and were able to synthesize them to produce a product called Feliway™. When sprayed for 30 days on surfaces urine marked by cats, Feliway™ was found to inhibit urine marking and reduce arousal in 96% of the cats studied.

Another study in the U.S. claimed about 60% of the cats stopped or reduced their urine marking. Among our clients, only about 25% report any change in the behavior of their cats when using Feliway™. It's not clear why there is such variation in effectiveness. Perhaps some cats are just more responsive to the pheromones than others. Effectiveness may also vary with the reason for the spraying or urine marking.

One advantage of Feliway™ is that because it is sprayed on objects, it doesn't have the

can be helpful in reducing excessive barking.

You'll also find two new information sheets - "[What To Do About Your Dog's Barking Before Trying an Anti-Bark Collar](#)", and "[Is An Anti-Bark Collar Right for Your Dog?](#)" we developed in cooperation with PetSafe™.

Finally, in addition to our educational products, we've decided to offer several types of anti-bark products on this site. We feel our site - better than most all others - helps people decide if a bark collar or other device is right for their dog. Anti-bark collars can be useful if used properly. They are not indicated for barking due to fears or phobias, separation anxiety, aggression or compulsive disorders

We know the use of anti-bark devices is controversial in some circles. One of our goals is to provide people with helpful information about whether an anti-bark device is right for their dog, and if it is, how to use it properly as one part of a behavior modification plan that includes techniques to elicit and reinforce alternative behaviors, manage the environment, and meet the dog's behavioral needs. For more information, see our article on Punishment in this issue.



March Special

Save 10% on any products from our new barking site

BarkingHelp.com

discount will be taken in shopping cart.



Our popular telecourses are set to start again in April.

potential side effects that drugs might have in treating the spraying problem. Because it isn't a controlled substance it is available without prescription at veterinary hospitals and some pet stores.

Feliway™ alone is unlikely to resolve Scooter's or any cat's marking problem. But in some cases it may be a helpful addition to behavior modification.

• **Our Piece: Punishment**

In our years of working with pet parents and pet professionals, we've discovered that punishment is often not only a taboo topic but a misunderstood one. You may know that there are two kinds of punishment - positive punishment and negative



punishment. Negative punishment involves taking away something an individual wants, while positive punishment means adding an unpleasant or aversive event. Punishment in a scientific sense is defined by its effect on behavior. Both types of punishment should, by definition, decrease the frequency of the behaviors they follow.

An example of positive punishment might be squirting your cat with water as soon as she jumps on the kitchen counter. A negative punisher might be taking a toy away from two dogs that are becoming grumpy with each other over who is going to control the toy.

To use negative punishment effectively, one must know what the pet is trying to obtain by displaying a particular behavior, and be able to control the pet's access to it. One recommendation for controlling excessive barking using negative punishment is to ignore the dog's barking. This will be effective if and only if the dog is barking to get the person's attention. If your dog is barking because he is anxious or excited, or is barking at something (say, a squirrel), he isn't going to care whether you ignore him

Don't forget that both our Fundamentals classes, and The Becoming a Great Dog Training Instructor class qualify for CEUs!

[Fundamentals of Animal Learning](#)

Monday, April 3, 10, 24, and May 1

[Fundamentals of Canine Behavior](#)

Thursday, April 6, 13, 20, and 27

[Becoming a Great Dog Training Instructor](#)

Wednesday, April 5, 12, 19, and 26

[Managing Chaos at the Door](#)

Tuesday, April 18

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**Suzanne was recently contacted by a national TV show to provide videos of dogs behaving badly (including funny, annoying or unusual) when left alone. If you have, or can easily acquire, a short video of interesting left-alone behaviors, please send to us ASAP, preferably in digital format. If you are planning on sending a video, please email us right away at [ezine@AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com](mailto:ezine@AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com) with your complete contact information, including address, telephone and email and a brief description of the video. You could end up on TV!!**

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or not.

With both types of punishment, other criteria must be met for either to be effective. Two of the most important are immediacy and consistency. Punishment of any kind must be delivered consistently. If you are only able to squirt your cat with water half of the time she jumps on the counter, counter surfing will continue because she has an equal chance of not being punished.

Any kind of punishment must immediately follow the unwanted behavior. This is where the phrase 'catch him in the act' comes from. Delays of as little as 3 seconds can significantly decrease punishment's effectiveness. Because these two criteria are extremely difficult to meet with owner delivered punishment, remote punishment is often more effective. Anti-bark collars – when operated correctly – meet these two criteria quite well, as do "booby-trap" devices such as Snappy Trainers™.

A third important factor is the intensity of the punisher. Because no one wants their pet to experience unpleasantness over and over again, when choosing and using a punisher, it is better to use one that significantly decreases the behavior after just a few experiences. If you have to yell "NO" over and over, repeatedly squirt your dog with water to stop him from barking with little effect, or put your cat in "time out" time and again, this amounts to harassment.

If a dog experiences a spray of citronella or lemon oil, or even a mild shock only two or three times, that effectively stops excess barking, this may be preferable to unpleasant consequences repeated over and over again that do not suppress behavior. Of course any punishment should be accompanied by generous reinforcements for good behavior.

An important consideration is whether punishment of any kind is the "right tool for the job" for a specific problem, and a specific pet in a particular situation. For help with this kind of decision, we

recommend [Delta Society's](#) Professional Standards for Dog Trainers" Effective, Humane Principles.

- **What's New:  
IFAAB, NACA, and More!**

Last week, Dan and Suzanne attended the 10th Annual Meeting of the Interdisciplinary Forum on Applied Animal Behavior in Las Vegas. This group of veterinarians, certified animal and veterinary behaviorists, animal behavior consultants and trainers get together once a year to share ideas and information on how to deal with companion animal behavior problems.



Today, March 8th, Dan and Suzanne also attended a meeting of the Coalition for Living Safely with Dogs. The Coalition is an interdisciplinary group that hopes to educate government agencies and the public about the causes of dog bite injuries to people and how they can be prevented.

Our Fundamentals of Animal Learning, Fundamentals of Canine Behavior, and Becoming a Great Dog Training Instructor telecourses start the beginning of April. Attendance is limited so sign up early.

For local folks, our class on Introducing Your Dog to Your New Baby is scheduled for April 4th at 7:00 PM at Littleton Adventist Hospital. Call (303) 777- 6877 to register. The seats for this popular class also go fast so early registration is also recommended.

Dan just returned from Albuquerque, NM early where he lectured about animal behavior at the National Animal Control Association's Training Academy for animal control and shelter personnel. Later in the month we will be lecturing to a group of veterinary technicians at a specialty veterinary practice here in the Denver area.

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Don't forget to read about our request for home- alone videos!

