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For Pet Parents and Pet Professionals

Animal Behavior Associates Newsletter

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Dear Suzanne,

We can't believe ezine time has rolled around again so quickly. Enjoy your Memorial Day holiday and congratulations to all those graduates out there!

Best,
Suzanne and Dan

• **Cat Piece:** **Learning to Speak Cat**

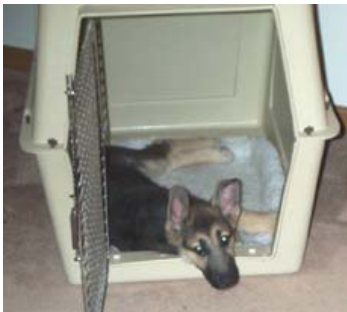
Part 1

Cats have a reputation for being mysterious and difficult to understand. Why do they bite us when we pet them? Do they pee on our stuff to tell us something? How do we know when they are being friendly or threatening? We don't have easy answers for these questions. Animal behaviorists are still trying to understand the various communication signals of cats. Our knowledge of cats still lags way behind our knowledge of dog behavior.



Cats can use their body postures and

Dog Piece: **Crating: Kind or Cruel?**



As you may know, we are in the middle of Be Kind To Animals Week. We thought this might be an appropriate

time to discuss a common practice – that of crating dogs – and evaluate it in light of promoting kindness to animals. Can we answer the question

is crating a kind practice? Like many things in life there may not be a definitive "Yes" or "No" answer, but rather, "it depends".

It's important to first understand that despite all the claims in the popular literature, crates are not analogous to dens used by wild canids. Infant wild canids are born in dens, but many dogs are not exposed to crates until adulthood. Dens are not socially isolating – rarely if ever is a pup alone in a den. Conversely, for dogs, being crated is often synonymous with being left alone. Finally, wild canids can come and go from dens as they please. While this is sometimes true for dogs and crates, crates are often used to confine dogs, sometimes for as long as 10 hours.

Given these differences, it should not be surprising that dogs do not automatically accept or enjoy the experience of being crated. Yet many novice dog owners do not take much time to acclimate their dogs to the crate. They may show the dog the crate a few times, let him wander in and out, and then confine the dog for hours without gradually acclimating the dog to this experience over a period of days or weeks.

Our most frustrating pet peeve is the recommendation sometimes given to dog owners, that if the dog is soiling the crate, it must be because the crate is too big. The story goes that the dog has too much room, and can use one end of the crate to relieve herself and the other to rest in.

Anybody we've ever talked to whose dog was soiling the crate tells us that the dog was not tidily avoiding its pee or poop. Instead, people come home to a stinky dog who must be bathed.

If a dog is soiling its crate, it is a clear sign something is wrong. The dog is either being confined for longer than it can control its bladder or bowels, more likely it is fearful or anxious while

movements to give visual signals to others, can make a variety of sounds and can produce different scents to communicate with others. We know very little about the chemical (scent) communication that cats engage in, a little more about the sounds they make and the most about their postures and movements.

By focusing on a few postural elements, we can usually interpret the intentions and motivations of cats. Those elements are the **general stance** of the cat (standing up, crouching down, rolled over on her back), the **tail posture** (straight up, curled underneath the body, stationary or moving quickly or slowly), the **position of the ears** (facing forward, out to the side or laid back against the head), the **cat's gaze** (staring, glancing around, blinking, dilated eyes), and the **position of the mouth** (showing the teeth or closed). For example, a cat that is afraid will tend to make itself smaller by crouching or lying down, curl its tail underneath its body, pull its ears back against the head, look away from what she is afraid of, and not show her teeth. A friendly cat will have a very relaxed posture, will hold her ears up and forward, hold her tail up or slightly down, may look but not unwaveringly stare at the other individual, and may blink frequently. Friendly cats will often meow and/or purr. Interestingly, adult cats often meow at people but rarely meow at other adult cats.

Cats rarely direct offensive threats, such as territorial aggression, to people. More often, they show defensive threats because they are afraid. A defensively threatening cat will show some of the same postures as a fearful cat, combined with elements of threatening behavior. These include standing up with an arched back like a "Halloween cat", flicking the tail sharply, growling, opening the mouth to hiss or spit, and may stare with dilated eyes at its opponent.

If you see or hear fearful or defensive postures and sounds, beware! This is not a happy cat and she may hurt you. Leave her alone. Defensive cats won't usually chase you, they just want you to stop or go away. If we pay attention to cat body postures, we are less likely to get hurt.

crated, or perhaps it did not have a chance to fully relieve itself before being crated. In no case is the answer to make the crate smaller.

In comparing the standards in the Animal Welfare Act for laboratory dogs, we found that its requirements for cage size and exercise often exceed the conditions under which some companion dogs live.

We contend that routinely confining a dog in a crate that is barely big enough for the dog to turn around for most of the day is not a kind practice. We believe that crating can be a wonderful management and training tool for housetraining puppies, preventing certain types of destructive behavior, and providing a safe resting place if the dog is appropriately acclimated to the crate. For complete and detailed crate training procedures, we recommend the video we helped create for PETsMART called "Crate Training the Right Way".



Many of you have asked us about Cesar Millan. We do not support his techniques. Read news reports about lawsuits against him for breach of contract and for cruelty to animals



**New Telecourse Dates:
Fundamentals of Animal Learning June 7 - 28,
Chaos at the Door - June 8th. Registration links on our website will be**

Next time we'll talk about how knowing about cat signals can help you to communicate with your cat in a language she can understand.

• **Our Piece:
Get Real!**

A study conducted almost 10 years ago by our friend and colleague, veterinary epidemiologist Dr. Gary Patronek, revealed that people who found pets to be more work than expected were more likely to surrender their animal to a shelter than those with more realistic expectations. Another friend and colleague, Dr. Randy Lockwood, often quotes a study that found pet owners are more tolerant of chaos and untidiness than non-pet owners.



Because we know most of you are pet owners, and many of you work in an animal related profession, we thought it might be helpful to create a short list of realistic expectations and helpful training tips to help prepare people for what to expect from sharing their lives with a pet.

1. Expect to lose something of value (sentimental, monetary or both) when your pet chews it, scratches it, pees on it, poops on it, throws up on it, or buries it.
2. On any given day, any pet can turn anything into a chew toy. Even if your pets have never chewed the couch, clawed the drapes, or gotten into your briefcase or backpack that's been lying on the floor for weeks, one day, for reasons known only to your pets, they will.
3. Your pet cannot learn right from wrong, or moral rules for behavior, in the same sense that people can. Stop believing that your pet "knows he shouldn't, but does it anyway" or that pets misbehave because they are mad at you. Pets do what works - to cope with their world, relieve frustration or anxiety, to find something fun to do, or to meet other behavioral or physical needs. Your pet doesn't learn "getting in the trash is wrong", but

active by Friday, May 12.

instead engages in this enjoyable pastime only when you aren't around to correct her.

4. Pets need to be included into daily family activities. Dogs are not adapted to, and cats are not best served by, spending the majority of their time outside. If your pet isn't going to be allowed in your house, then the best decision is to not acquire a pet.

5. Treat your dog as a member of your family, not a member of a pack. "Being alpha" should not be the guiding principle in your relationship with your dog. Mutually enjoyable relationships with dogs are built on trust, consistency and fairness, not on "dominance".

6. It's just as important to socialize your cat as it is your dog. Cats who spend much of their time hiding from other pets, visitors, family members, or anything new, need help.

7. The foundation for creating well-behaved pets is to encourage and reward good behavior rather than focusing on "how can I get him to stop" misbehaving. Find 10 good behaviors to reward your pet for every day.

8. Expect your pet to do things that frustrate and annoy you. No family relationship is without its ups and downs. Be prepared to hang in there with your pet through good times and bad and when it's not convenient to make sure your pet is properly cared for.

9. If pet hair on your clothes, on your furniture, and in your food is not acceptable, you are better off without a pet.

10. Pets cost money. There is no such thing as a "free" pet. Some estimates range as high as \$1000/year for basic pet care. Make sure that a pet fits your budget, including those unexpected expenses for veterinary care should your pet become seriously ill or injured.

In return, you'll be rewarded with a four-legged family member that is always glad to see you, forgives you over and over again, makes you laugh, doesn't hold a grudge, and loves you regardless of how you look or how successful you are.

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• What's New:

Coral takes the spotlight



Suzanne and Coral appeared on "What's Your Story", a TV show based in Louisville Colorado. They talked with viewers about puppy behavior. Even though Coral is almost 2, she was still willing to demonstrate some classic puppy moves! Thanks to host Susie Mottashed for the invitation and sponsor, the [Colorado Association of Independent Publishers](#).

Miss Coral will celebrate her 2nd birthday on May 27th. A trip to the DQ is planned. It seems like just yesterday we brought her home as a tiny 7 week old puppy. Suzanne participated in her first steel pan jam session and will have her first recital on May 30th, one day after she and Dan run the Bolder Boulder, a 10K road race.

In April, Dan lectured to the Veterinary Technician Program at Front Range Community College in Fort Collins, CO on how to make the veterinary hospital visit pleasant and safe for our pets.

Later this month, Dan and Suzanne will lecture on animal behavior to the National Animal Control Training Academy being held in Denver.

Dan will lecture to another National Animal Control Training Academy in Hartford, Connecticut in early June. He was the dinner speaker at the annual meeting of the Colorado Association of Animal Control Officers. His topic was "Animal Control Officers as Educators."

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