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Behavior Education for Pet Parents and Pet Professionals

Animal Behavior Associates Newsletter

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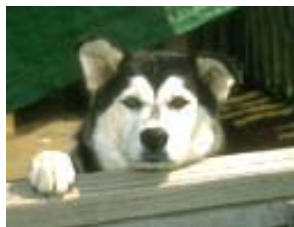
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Dog Piece:

[The Home Alone Dog: Are Their Problems Always Separation Anxiety?](#)

We received a call a few weeks back from Alyse who needed our help because Scotty (her Scottish Terrier) was



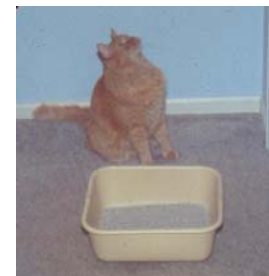
Dear Suzanne,

We hope your New Year is getting off to a great start. We hit the ground running after our holiday vacation (see the link to pictures in the What's New column). Don't miss our special inventory sale and be sure and register for our January telecourses before they fill up! Best wishes, Suzanne and Dan

• **Cat Piece:**

[Laundry vs. Litterbox, Helping Buffett Make the Right Choice](#)

One early morning this week while we were on the floor of our bedroom, stretching out prior to going to the gym, Suzanne noticed Buffett (for you new readers Buffett is our 15 year old neutered male orange cat who runs the house) going into Dan's closet. This was followed by suspicious noises, causing her to peek in to see what Buffett was up to. Suzanne observed Buffett urinating on a pile of clothes on the floor in the closet that we were collecting to take to the cleaners.



Buffett had done this a few times in the past

destroying things in the back yard when Abby and her husband were at work. Scotty had developed a taste for the underground sprinkler heads and was digging holes in a number of places. Abby was convinced that Scotty had separation anxiety and she wanted us to help him "get over it."

We went to her house, took a look at his handy work in the yard, and then obtained a behavioral history of what he had been doing, when and where. Alyse was shocked when we told her that we didn't think it was separation anxiety, but that Scotty was instead, "bored".

Our investigation revealed that Scotty wasn't showing any of the typical signs of separation anxiety - no signs of distress when his owners left, he wasn't overly excited when they got home, his destructiveness wasn't consistent (it happened sometimes when they were gone and not others), and the things he was destroying weren't typical of a dog with separation anxiety. Digging holes randomly in the yard and chewing on the sprinkler system were more typical of investigatory or play behavior.

We also found that Alyse and Roy weren't leaving Scotty with anything to keep him busy when they were gone. All he had in the back yard was his dog house, his blanket and a water dish. When he was in the house in the evenings, Alyse and Roy gave him chew bones and squeak toys to keep him out of mischief but they didn't think it was necessary to give him things in the yard. They just assumed he would occupy himself by watching the birds and squirrels.

Many people are quick to assume that most problems arising when

and we were suspicious it had happened overnight when he hadn't had access to his litterbox. Normally Buffett wakes us up when he wants out of the bedroom, but perhaps he thought it was just easier to find a convenient place to relieve himself

We placed a box in the unused shower stall in the bathroom that connects to our bedroom and this seemed to solve the problem. Tests of Buffett's blood and urine at the time indicated his kidneys were functioning normally, despite his age.

So - what might have prompted this behavior? One possibility is that Buffett is experiencing increased discomfort in an arthritic hip (despite kitty glucosamine) and is more reluctant to make the trip downstairs to his litterboxes. One litterbox still resides in the shower stall, but upon inspection that morning it's possible the folding gate we use to keep the dogs out might have been stretched a bit too far, making it more difficult for Buffett to get to the box. So, again he chose the path of least resistance - the closet. Buffett also prefers to relieve himself in the backyard (he can't jump the fence because of his hip) but with our recent snows this hasn't been possible.

So what's our plan of action? First, because it's been several months since Buffett's blood and urine were evaluated, a trip to the veterinarian is scheduled next week. Kidney problems in older cats are far too common and if Buffett's kidneys aren't functioning as they should we want to know sooner rather than later.

Dan may (see below) be keeping his closet doors closed more consistently and, to remove temptation, the clothes destined for the cleaners need to be stored somewhere else. Next, we will be more diligent about making sure Buffett has easy access to his boxes. We are considering adding a second box upstairs (perhaps where the clothes pile was) and have decided to permanently leave a light on in the basement room where Buffett's other two boxes have resided for years. Given his age, we don't know if his eyesight/night vision isn't what it used to be.

Most importantly, neither one of us made any

dogs are left home alone are due to separation anxiety. Separation anxiety occurs when a dog separated from people he is attached to has an anxiety or panic attack, and barks and howls, destroys things and/or house soils.

Dogs can get into trouble for other reasons when home alone. Boredom, noise phobias, fears of sounds, sexual interest among intact dogs, out of control play, aggression to other dogs or people or even pain or discomfort can all be motivations for vocalizations, destructiveness, or elimination.

Because the solutions for the different causes are so quite varied, it's important owners know what's causing the behavior. For a male dog digging out of the yard to court females in the neighborhood, neutering should be a significant help. For a dog with separation anxiety, behavior modification designed to reduce the anxiety usually works best. For the bored Scotty, leaving him with plenty of toys to keep him busy such as Tug-A-Jug filled with dry food helped a lot.

Alyse and Roy also arranged play dates for him on some days where he could stay over with the neighbor's dogs. Separation anxiety behavior modification wouldn't have helped Scotty, and a Tug-A- Jug without behavior modification wouldn't help a dog with separation anxiety.

We're producing a DVD for pet parents to help them understand the home alone dog and how to deal with their problems. This should be available the first of February. We're also offering a telecourse/webinar - ["Managing the Home Alone Dog"](#) on January 23rd and 30th especially for pet professionals and interested pet

attempt to punish Buffett but instead merely gently removed him from the closet. Buffett has reliably used his litterboxes for 15 years, so believing we need to punish him to teach him his behavior was "wrong" would be incredibly stupid on our part. Our job is to figure out what's going on with our aging friend, and provide litterboxes that meet his changing needs.

If you need information about providing cat friendly litterboxes for your cats, we recommend ["Cats Come Clean: What Your Cat Wants You to Know About Litterboxes"](#) (Buffett helped us write it!) and our new DVD ["Helping Kitty Be Good By Designing a Cat Friendly Home"](#).

• **Our Piece:** **Pointers for Critically Reading the Animal Behavior Literature**

Anyone who strives to advance their knowledge about animal behavior by reading scientific articles, as well as those in lay publications, should keep their critical thinking skills turned on, even when reading what one assumes, because of where they are published, would be high quality articles.



We'd like to give you several factors to consider when reading articles of any sort that will help you be critical consumers of the information. Don't assume just because it's in print that it's true.

It is easy to make certain assumptions when reading articles. One is that when a statement is followed by a citation to support it that the referenced article actually pertains to the subject matter being discussed. Unfortunately, citations are not always accurate. For example, not too long ago one of our articles - "Behavior Wellness Concepts for General Veterinary Practice" was referenced in another article - "Feline Behavior Guidelines from the American Association of Feline Practitioners". The statement our article was used to support was "Most pets surrendered to shelters were

parents. This course reviews the causes of home alone problems, how to identify, treat, and prevent them. Click on the title above to learn more about the course and to register. Space is limited so sign up soon. The course is approved for 2.5 CEUs by CCPDT. [Watch our Tug-a-Jug and Bouncy Bone video](#) and see how these great toys can keep dogs occupied and enriched

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Well it's inventory time again and like any business, we want to reduce ours! So, if you buy 2 books - [Raising a Behaviorally Healthy Puppy](#) OR [Help! I'm Barking and I Can't Be Quiet](#), we'll give you one FREE. You can buy 2 of the same title or one of each, and receive a FREE copy of either. Or buy 4 and get 2 free! For larger quantities, check out our [quantity discount pricing options](#). You MUST MUST specify in the Special Instructions Box in our shopping cart which title(s) you want for FREE or we can't ship them!!! This offer good through the month of January.

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evaluated by a veterinarian in the year prior to relinquishment". In fact, our article contained no information related to this statement. If you hadn't read our original article, you might assume we reported or at least reviewed such data.

Another factor to pay attention to is what kinds of articles are used to reference statements. For example, if an article is referencing the definition of a basic concept, idea, or principle such as "social dominance" a good citation would be an early writing from a source who had conducted some of the initial research on the topic.

Social dominance and social relationships have been studied for years and there are a plethora of well written scientific articles defining these terms. We would expect a good reference used to support a definition of "social dominance" to have a date anywhere from 1940 to 1970, but certainly not 2007! This unfortunately was the case in a recent article we read. The 2007 study that was cited, reported no original data that helped to define the concept.

This brings up the difference between primary and secondary literature. Primary literature reports the results of original scientific research. An example would be a research article that appeared in journals such as *Animal Behaviour*, *Applied Animal Behavior Science* or the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*. Secondary literature summarizes or makes reference to primary literature. An example would be a review article or theoretical article that might appear in these same journals. But in these journals, review articles and theoretical articles are clearly labeled as such and differentiated from research articles. Tertiary literature references secondary literature. An example might be a text book that draws information from a number of review articles. The farther one gets away from primary literature the greater the chance for inadvertent misrepresentation or misinterpretation of the original research. We always look for citations of some primary literature in a good article, and not just secondary sources.

Finally, watch out for the unnecessary, fortuitous or inappropriate use of jargon. Scientific articles inherently use technical words because certain terms have very precise meanings. However, don't let the use of complicated wording fool you into thinking this implies a quality article. Too often we've encountered "word salad", in which complex terms were strung together in nonsensical ways. Always ask yourself "Does this make sense?"

Critically evaluating the scientific - as well as the popular literature - is something the student or professional in any field should do throughout their careers.

- **What's New:**
Upcoming Telecourses, Affiliate Program and BEN Update

We are back from a fabulous almost two weeks in the Caribbean. We spent 3 days on Culebra, a very small island off the coast of Puerto Rico, followed by a week's cruise to 5 island ports of call (St. Thomas, Dominica, Barbados, St. Lucia and Antigua), and ending with a day in San Juan touring the old city and spending time on the beach. For those of you who are interested, we've [posted a few pictures on our website](#) so you can take a look at some of our adventures.

You have about two weeks to register for our January telecourses - our NEW "[Managing the Home Alone Dog](#)" on January 23rd and 30th. We have just received word that CCPDT has approved the Home Alone telecourse for 2.5 hours of continuing education credit. Pia Silvani's ever popular "[Becoming a Great Dog Training Instructor](#)" begins January 17th. But don't wait until the last minute as Pia's class usually fills and we expect our new course on separation anxiety and other home alone problems to sell out quickly.

Now that we are back at work (and recovering from colds we picked up towards the end of our trip) we are concentrating on developing our new [BehaviorEducationNetwork.com \(BEN\) membership site](#). BEN member benefits will include discounts on many of our products, telecourses and webinars, as well as Members ONLY courses and materials and much more. We apologize for the delay in getting this site

:: ezine@animalbehaviorassociates.com

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<http://www.AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com>

:: 303-932-9095

fully developed, but there was a bigger learning curve with the software and technical end of things than we had anticipated. You can visit a temporary home page at BehaviorEducationNetwork.com.

We will also be launching an affiliate program that will give all of our pet professional readers the capability of earning revenue by making quality materials - such as our [Helping Fido Welcome Your Baby, Helping Kitties Co-Exist, Helping Kitty Be Good](#) and MORE - available to your clients WITHOUT having to carry inventory or having the ability to do online sales. We are really excited about this program and are working feverishly to put the pieces in place. Be sure to watch your emails for further updates AND to be sure you receive them make sure you have ezine@AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com white-listed with your email provider. AOL and MSN are notoriously bad for automatically placing messages in SPAM boxes, so check there if you aren't sure all our emails are getting through.

Look for continued updates about BEN and our affiliate program in the coming weeks. In the meantime we have temporary home pages for HelpingFido.com and HelpingKitty.com where our products for pet owners will ultimately reside.