

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 [info@AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com](mailto:info@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.

You may [unsubscribe](#) if you no longer wish to receive our emails.



## Behavior Education for Pet Parents and Pet Professionals

Animal Behavior Associates Newsletter

April 8, 2008, Volume VI Issue 4

### In This Issue

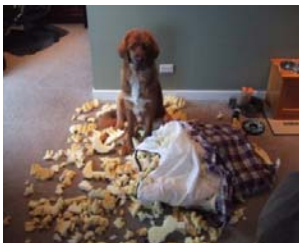
**Dog Piece:**  
**Is Separation Anxiety Really Caused By An Over-Attachment Problem?**

**Cat Piece:**  
**Appreciating Cats**

**Our Piece:**  
**Can Behavior Modification Be A Treatment For Medical Conditions?**

**What's New:**  
**We Need Your Help!**

### **Dog Piece:** Is Separation Anxiety Really Caused By An Over- Attachment Problem?



Separation anxiety, defined as a fearful response when a dog is separated from someone

it is attached to, is a common

Dear Suzanne,

We need your help!! Check out the What's New Section to see how you can win a month's membership in BEN by helping us find pictures for the new home page.

Also, last chance to register for our Counter Conditioning and Desensitization tele- webcast that begins TOMORROW, Wednesday.

Hope it's warm where you are - we are still fighting snow showers!

Happy Spring!,  
Suzanne and Dan

### • **Cat Piece:** **Appreciating Cats**

Data on pet ownership have revealed that cats now outnumber dogs as the most popular pet. Despite this increase in numbers, veterinary visits for cats are declining. No one has an explanation for this trend, but experts speculate that part of the answer is that cat owners often have significant gaps in their understanding about the true nature of cats and their behavior.



**behavior problem in dogs but is rarely seen in cats. The most common complaints from owners of dogs with separation anxiety are destructiveness, house soiling, escape attempts from the house or yard and/or excessive vocalizations when the dog is left alone.**

**It has long been assumed by some experts that separation anxiety is the result of a hyper-attachment of the dog to the person. In support of this hypothesis is the observation that many of these dogs follow their owners around and are reluctant to let them out of their sight. Someone once referred to these dogs as "Velcro® dogs."**

**Recent data call this hypothesis into question. Researchers at the University of Georgia compared dogs with separation anxiety and those without in a standardized attachment test when at home but separated from their owners\*. The attachment test looked at the behavior of the dog when the owner comes and goes from an unfamiliar room and when strangers come and go from the room.**

**The study found no differences between dogs with separation anxiety and those without the problem, either in the attachment test or in their behavior after the owners were gone from home. The separation anxiety dogs showed no more attachment than did the normal dogs. They didn't spend any more time near their owners in the strange room, and didn't show distress behaviors when the owners left the room. When observed home alone they showed no more time near the door the owner left from than dogs without separation anxiety.**

**It's always difficult to interpret studies that find no differences**

Cats are still perceived as independent, self-sufficient, and somewhat mysterious. Cats are sometimes better about masking signs of illness than are dogs. Suzanne remembers from her days as a medical technologist at the Veterinary Teaching Hospital at CSU that sick cats would come in with red blood cell counts so low it was surprising they were still alive, yet they behaved as though they weren't even ill!

Cats are different from dogs in many other ways as well. Cats do not form the same types of social hierarchies dogs do, have no ritualized play behaviors comparable to the play bow of dogs, have no equivalent to canid submissive behaviors, and rely on olfactory communication even more than do dogs.

In our experience, people, agencies and organizations that don't know much about cats tend to fall back on what they know about dogs and apply that knowledge directly to cats. This doesn't work very well. Cats are not small versions of dogs.

Animal shelters, boarding facilities and even cat owners often struggle to provide a quality environment for cats. For health and safety reasons, cat owners have long been encouraged to keep their cats indoors, but more and more experts are recognizing that this has probably contributed to cats becoming obese, and can also contribute to behavior problems. While we aren't recommending that cats be allowed to roam freely, we also believe that cats need a physically and mentally stimulating and enriched environment that living indoors doesn't automatically provide.

It's surprising how many people don't like cats. This may be due in part to the persistent association of the cat with evil and witchcraft, a hold-over from the middle ages. Because cats aren't predisposed to form the "leader-follower" type of relationship with people we expect from dogs, the "control freaks" among us may not appreciate the reluctance of cats to bend to our wills. And, because we simply know less about cat behavior, it's human nature to fear what we don't

between groups, but the data suggest that the problem may not be an over-attachment problem. It's important to know whether over-attachment causes separation anxiety because this can influence the way the problem is treated.

If separation anxiety is due to over-attachment, some experts have recommended that owners ignore their dogs for long periods of time and never respond to the dog's requests for attention or interaction. Our experience with clients that follow this advice is that it just makes the anxious dog even more anxious. This would make sense if the problem isn't due to over-attachment but instead has some other cause. In addition, removing a dog's means of communicating with his owners and to ask for what he wants decreases his control over his environment and can lead to more anxiety and stress.

How we conceptualize a behavior problem and what we think causes it can greatly influence how we try to resolve it. This study points out how important it is to remember that, in the absence of data, what we think is the cause of a problem is merely a working hypothesis that is always subject to change.

*\*Parthasarathy and Crowell-Davis, 2006. J. of Veterinary Behavior 1: 109-120.*

~~~~~

***IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT***  
***- CCPDT has notified us that they will award CEUs for listening to replays of our telecourses, provided we can provide evidence you indeed listened to the programs. We will be asking 2 -4 questions during the class that you must email us the answers to so we***

understand.

There are far fewer resources for cat owners as compared to dog owners. To do our part to fill that gap, we've created DVD and audio programs on [Helping Kitty Be Good](#) and [Helping Kitties Co-Exist](#). Now we've taken the next step and created the first two in a series of tele-webcasts on cat behavior. The first class "[The Nature of Cats](#)" takes place April 23rd, followed by "[Environmental Enrichment for Cats](#)" on April 30th. Learn more about these events on our website and in another section of this ezine.

In an attempt to improve the medical and behavioral health of cats, the AVMA, the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and AAFP (American Association of Feline Practitioners) have also announced an initiative to develop guidelines for cat care for both cat owners and veterinarians.

- **Our Piece:**  
**Can Behavior Modification Be A Treatment For Medical Conditions?**

Many non-veterinary behavior consultants (and perhaps some veterinarians) are taught to think about problems as being either "medical" or "behavioral." We always urge clients to consult with their veterinarians first when they have a behavioral problem with their pet, because we know that some behavior problems can have medical causes.



But if we think about it carefully, we can see the dichotomy (separation) between medical and behavioral problems is sometimes false. Most behavioral and medical problems have multiple and complex causes that include both internal (physiological) and external (environmental) causes.

Behavior is the result of physiological and environmental factors. How we try to resolve a problem depends on how easy it is to identify,

***know you listened to the replay. Replays of classes will be available for 4 DAYS after the last session.***

***Time is running out for you to participate in our much requested ["Using Counter Conditioning and Desensitization Techniques Effectively"](#) 2 session tele-webcast. The class begins TOMORROW, April 9th at 6pm mountain time. Grab your "seat" in class and earn 2.5 CEUs for attending or listening to the replay and answering the embedded questions.***

***Take advantage of our series on Cat Behavior with ["The Nature of Cats"](#) and ["Environmental Enrichment for Cats"](#) coming up April 23rd and 30th. Save 10% if you take both classes.***

***We invite you to participate in these continuing education events. Whether you are a cat owner who is appreciative that finally we are talking about YOUR chosen species of pet, or a pet professional who can benefit from broadening your understanding of cat behavior, we hope to hear you in class later this month.***

~~~~~

***Just a reminder about our friend and colleague, Ms. Nancy Williams, MA, ACAAB and her [seminar at St. Hubert's Animal Welfare Center](#) in Madison New Jersey on April 27th. Similar presentations were part of our ["Understanding and Modifying](#)***

control and/or manipulate the various causes. Sometimes when we are faced with a behavioral problem, the best way to resolve it is through a physiological treatment.

We've seen several cases of serious aggression in dogs that were related to epileptic seizures. When the veterinarians prescribed medication that controlled the seizures, the aggressive episodes greatly decreased.

Alternatively, with some medical problems, the best way to attack them is through environmental intervention. A good example is presented in a recent paper in the Journal of Veterinary Behavior. The authors discussed a case of feline idiopathic cystitis (FIC) in which behavior modification was used to help resolve it.

FIC involves inflammation of the bladder, pain and inappropriate urination. One hypothesis about the cause of the disease is that it can be triggered, at least in part, by environmental or social stresses. The paper described a cat that suffered from episodes of FIC, was not getting along well with other cats in the house, and was antagonized by outside cats.

The cat's outbreaks of the disease corresponded with conflicts with other cats. Treatment for the cat included medical management of the pain and inflammation as well as modifications to the home environment to reduce the likelihood of conflicts among the cats. When the owners prevented the conflicts, the FIC incidents stopped.

It's well known that stress can affect many diseases through actions on the central and sympathetic nervous systems, the endocrine system and the immune system. Reducing distress by changing the environment or changing the way the animal responds to stressors can not only help resolve some illnesses as illustrated in this example, but may be able to even prevent some illnesses.

With more research, we may find it's not an exaggeration to think that a good puppy or kitten class, that helps produce well socialized pets that are acclimated to a variety of environmental and social conditions, can have a protective effect against stress related

**Aggression" joint seminar we did in Denver in September 2007. If you can't make it to Madison, the DVDs of our September workshop are still available.**

diseases and improve the animals' overall physical health and well-being.

*References Seawright, A. et.al. 2008. A case of recurrent feline idiopathic cystitis: The control of clinical signs with behavior therapy.*

*Journal of Veterinary Behavior, 3, 32-38.*

*McMillan, F.D. 1999. Influence of mental states on somatic health in animals.*

*Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association, 214, 1221-1225.*

*Broom, D.M. & Johnson, K.G. 1993. Stress and Animal Welfare. New York: Chapman and Hall.*

## Quick Links...

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

## • **What's New:**

### **We Need Your Help!**

**As the development of the BehaviorEducationNetwork.com enters its final stages, we are looking for pictures of pet professionals working with animals. Whether you are a veterinarian, dog trainer, groomer, pet sitter, shelter staff, have a day care or other pet related business we'd LOVE to have you send us pictures doing what you do. We want to make a collage of these pictures for our home page.**

**You'll receive a month's F\*R\*E\*E membership in BEN if we select your picture.**

**Deadline for submitting is April 26th. Please email your high resolution image file to [info@AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com](mailto:info@AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com).**

**We are still busy putting the finishing touches on our affiliate program and BehaviorEducationNetwork.com. Our webmaster is on vacation until the end of April and we are holding off launching anything until her return, as we need access to her in the event of unforeseen issues.**

**We are looking forward to our booth and lectures at Pet Expo here in Denver on April 19th and 20th. If you will be there, stop and say hello.**

:: [info@animalbehaviorassociates.com](mailto:info@animalbehaviorassociates.com)

::

<http://www.AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com>

:: 303-932-9095