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## Behavior Education for Pet Parents and Pet Professionals

Animal Behavior Associates Newsletter

February 12, 2008, Volume VI Issue 2

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### **Dog Piece:** **Patience and Protection, Dealing** **with Fractious Animals**



*We recently ran across an advertisement in a pet related magazine for a product called "Bitebuster Bite and Scratch Mitt". You can read about it at [www.bitebuster.com](http://www.bitebuster.com). It's a Kevlar mitt to protect one's hand*

**Dear Suzanne,**

Happy Valentine's day to everyone! We hope you have a special evening planned that includes both your two legged and four legged Valentines.

Our Valentine's gifts to you are a sale on audio products AND 5 yes 5 telecourses starting this month through April. Two are completely new, offered for the first time. Check them out in our What's New and Special Offer sections

Best wishes,  
Suzanne and Dan

### • **Cat Piece:** **Helping Kitty Enjoy the Cat Carrier, Car** **Rides and Veterinary Visits**

For most cats, a trip to the veterinary hospital is not a pleasant event. Some sort of discomfort or stress is inherent - a blood draw, vaccination, unusual smells, sights and sounds, being handled by unfamiliar people, and even being in a carrier and riding in the car. We've talked before about acclimating your cat to veterinary visits. Talk to your veterinary staff about "drop in" visits that don't involve a real examination or treatment. Bring your cat into the hospital



*from being bitten when handling dogs, cats and other animals. There will always be times when animals must be restrained quickly regardless of whether they are fearful, angry or uncomfortable with the restraint. This mitt seems to be a useful product for those times.*

*What's concerning about the bite mitt is it being positioned as useful for "training and scruffing animals, and playing with or greeting overly anxious pets". To the company's credit, they do provide a very basic handout on their website that says more restraint causes more fear (although it's not clear whether they are referring to people, animals or both becoming afraid!).*

*There seems to be an underlying assumption that having an animal become so upset by being handled that he is biting and struggling is just par for the course. This cavalier attitude toward the effects of handling and restraint on pets is certainly not limited to this advertisement. It's common to hear of it taking 5 people to restrain a dog or cat for a nail trim. We've heard of veterinarians having to use a catch pole on a dog to give a pre-surgical injection and groomers practically having to "suit up" in protective gear to give a cat a bath. And pet owners sometimes don't seem to care, or maybe just don't realize the consequences of telling a groomer or veterinarian to "just trim his nails, I don't care what it takes".*

*It is a pet owner's duty to accustom their pet to being handled. Veterinarians, groomers, and other pet professionals deserve to be presented with animals that will tolerate the handling required for routine examinations or grooming sessions. These folks should not have to risk bodily injury to deliver routine care.*

*By the same token, pet professionals must have the skills and willingness to take extra time with fearful animals, know how to interact with them in a*

to visit with the staff and become familiar with the place. Offering high value tidbits (tuna?) before and after arriving at the hospital can improve your cat's "attitude". Start with very short (five minutes or less) and simple visits, just into the waiting area to sit and receive treats and some pleasant words and a pat from the staff.

Come back often and gradually make the visits more like a real examination with weighing, a trip into the exam room and even gentle handling by the staff. Watch your cat's reaction and if she becomes fearful or agitated, ease up a bit and allow her to calm down. These acclimation visits will backfire if you try to do too much and your cat becomes more agitated, rather than less.

Most veterinary hospitals will be glad to work with you to help your cat be less fearful and more relaxed. It makes the staff's jobs easier and more rewarding when their patients are calm, relaxed and friendly. Be sure to pre-arrange these visits when the hospital isn't so busy so your cat can have the best experience. The very best time to start these visits is when your cat is a kitten, when she's most open to new experiences.

These suggestions apply to any pet, but for cats, they are especially important because cats seem to be more easily frightened by veterinary visits and anything else unfamiliar. It's not that cats are inherently more fearful than dogs, but rather that cats just don't get out as much as dogs do. They typically don't leave home unless it is to an unpleasant destination.

For most cats, the fear of the trip to the veterinarian starts when the owners bring out the cat carrier. The procedures for acclimating a cat to the cat carrier and riding in the car are basically the same as acclimating her to the veterinary hospital. Start with luring your cat into the cat carrier for a tasty treat, then maybe do nothing more than carry her around the house, or to the car to just sit, or take a short ride around the block. Take "baby steps", progressing gradually to a ride to the veterinary hospital for a socialization visit.

Once your cat is used to riding in the car,

*non-threatening manner, use restraint tools and methods that minimize rather than add to stress, realize that "being dominant" is not the answer, and not let anger, impatience and being pressed for time drive their actions. One bad experience can undo all the acclimation work a responsible pet owner has done.*

*Pet parents and pet professionals have a great opportunity to work together to create training and socialization programs that result in safer and less stressful encounters for both. Many pet owners want to work on handling issues, but don't really know what to do. Pet professionals may not think it's their responsibility but who else are pet owners to turn to? There is fertile ground here for trainers, groomers, and veterinarians to work with one another on what are really both pet welfare and workplace safety issues.*

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We have a special offer this month on 3 of our audio products. Take 20% off the audio versions of [Helping Kitty Be Good](#), [Helping Kitties Co-Exist](#), and [Helping Fido Welcome Your Baby](#). These products offer the same information as our DVDs only in an audio format. They are ideal for listening in your car or on your MP3 player as you are doing other things. Offer good until March 1.

We also have a special offer for you for the telecourses we are offering in the next three months

continue to take her out for an occasional short ride to your favorite drive-through restaurant or coffee shop. You don't want all car rides to end up at the veterinary hospital. More often than not, car rides should have neutral destinations. There aren't as many fun destinations for cats as there are for dogs, but a trip to the park where your cat can watch birds and squirrels from the car could be pleasant.

Investing the extra time it takes to acclimate your cat to these experiences will be worth the time and effort. Your cat can receive better medical care, and will be less distressed by the whole experience.

### • **Our Piece:** **Wide Spectrum of "Standards" in Animal Care**

The standard of care for how animals are treated in our society is a multi-faceted and continually evolving subject.



Articles in professional journals acknowledge the veterinary community is taking a second look at many of their position statements on both companion and food animal issues. The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior has just released position statements about the use of punishment, we suspect partially in reaction to a certain popular dog trainer who promotes antiquated methods not any different from the "jerk and pull" and "pack leader is everything" methods Suzanne was introduced to 30 years ago as a fledgling dog trainer. The APDT and other dog training organizations have position statements on a number of issues.

The subjective, inconsistent and unscientific way we humans sometimes attempt to address these thorny and difficult issues regarding humane treatment and use of animals surfaced recently with two occurrences in Denver. An article in the paper outlined how the Denver Zoo would not support summer music concerts in adjacent City Park because of concern about the impact of the noise on the animals. The concerts were moved to another venue.

In the very same issue was an article about the

(read more about them in the [What's New Section](#)). We want to make it easy for you to take as many of our telecourses as possible **SOO-** if you register for any **TWO** we'll give you 10% off both. Take **THREE** or **MORE** and we'll give you 15% off each one. This offer applies only to these five telecourses and may not be repeated again, so register early! You must register/buy the telecourses all at one time to be eligible for the discount. Offer good for **ONE** participant for **ALL** the classes you purchase, no sharing.

Your savings will **NOT** show in our shopping cart when you register, but we'll process your discount and send you a credit notice within a day or two.

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videotaped use of 4,500 volt cattle prods on the necks and flanks of saddle broncs at the National Western Stock show just prior to their release from their chutes for competition. Officials determined the horses did not suffer from their use and that the cattle prods were used within the guidelines of the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association which states they are only to be used to move a horse that stalls in the chute.

Wow. We hardly know what to say. The contrast is stark. Both decisions were made subjectively, with no behavioral, medical, or physiological evidence or data (that we know of) to support them and were based instead on the opinions of the people involved. What this serves to point out is that factors such as long standing traditions, whether a species is wild or domestic, has a utilitarian use or not, is "politically connected" or not, and how cruelty and animal care statutes are written and interpreted all influence what kinds of decisions will be made regarding animal welfare.

As animal behavior scientists, we recognize that determining the state of an animal's welfare is not always an easy undertaking. Objective research and discussions about the treatment of animals are often impeded by the highly charged, emotional nature of the topic. Opinions about declawing of cats, surgical debarking of dogs, and the use of electronic collars are prime examples of that.

We wrote this column not because we have the answers but because we wanted to point out the existence of the questions and encourage the continuing dialog about what is best for animals. And even though we always appreciate your feedback, please don't write us condemning or supporting the Zoo or the cowboys, as we have no influence or connections with either group! And we have trouble keeping us with our email as it is!

## • **What's New:** **Telecourses, YOU asked for it, YOU got it!**

There are some very exciting changes at Animal Behavior Associates in the coming months. The membership portion of [BehaviorEducationNetwork.com](http://BehaviorEducationNetwork.com) for pet professionals, will be launched no later than April 1. We know we kept saying "coming soon", but we've encountered some real programming challenges. You'll be hearing more from us soon as those are close to resolution!

We're also continuing work on our Affiliate Program for Pet Professionals. This will allow you to offer helpful behavior products from us for pet parents on your website without having to stock them at your facility. Watch for emails announcing the activation of this program in the coming days. We want to make this program a "no-brainer" for you to implement so we are spending more time setting it up. It will even come with a very affordable package to create a website, if you don't have one.

Because you asked for them, we are offering three of our most popular telecourses as well as exciting new ones in the coming months. Starting THIS SUNDAY, February 17th, we will begin an expanded 5 week version of [Shining the Light of Science on Canine Behavior](#) and starting February 19th an expanded 5 week [Fundamentals of Animal Learning](#). The fifth week of both courses will be a discussion and Q&A session about the material, something we've had a hard time squeezing in in the past. The fifth week Discussion Session of both courses is open as a [separate course](#) to those who have previously taken these classes (or purchased the CDs). Our popular and much requested [Using Counter Conditioning and Desensitization Effectively to Modify Behavior](#) starts on April 19th. All are approved for CEU credit from CCPDT and CACVT.

Coming in March are two new one-session classes. The first on March 13th is "[How You Can Start an 'Introducing Your Dog to Your New Baby,' Class in Your City](#)". We'll tell you all about the process we used to start classes at two Denver hospitals and keep them going for over 5 years and resulted in our DVD "Helping Fido Welcome Your Baby".

The second on March 20th will be "[Helping Kids and Dogs Get Along Together](#)", offered by award winning author and trainer Ms. Pia Silvani. Pia will give you tips, tricks and tools to use with your clients who need help with this extremely important topic, and how you can be more effective at getting parents to listen to you. These two classes are GREAT together - we recommend them as a package.

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