



Behavior Education for Pet Parents and Pet Professionals

Animal Behavior Associates Newsletter

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In This Issue

Our Piece:
Position Statements About Pets

Cat Piece:
The CATalyst Council

Dog Piece:
Is Mason Mad?

What's New at ABA

Dear Suzanne,

In addition to 3 useful behavior articles, this issue is full of exciting announcements about products and services AND in fact more are coming in a special email in the near future. We're giving you something to look forward to, in case you are as bummed about the end of summer as Suzanne is (Dan on the other hand enjoys the return to cooler weather)!

Suzanne and Dan

Our Piece: Position Statements About Pets



In the last few years, a number of organizations interested in companion animal behavior have issued Position Statements about controversial and confusing issues.

We applaud their efforts. It is important for pet professionals and pet parents to become educated on these issues and to discuss them in the larger community.

The American Veterinary Society of

- **Cat Piece:**
The CATalyst Council

According to the 2007 U.S. Pet Ownership and Demographics Sourcebook, cats continue to outnumber dogs in terms of sheer numbers. As of a few years ago, more households owned dogs than cats, but because numbers of cats/household was greater than number of dogs, cats still outpaced dogs.



Despite this fact, feline veterinary visits have decreased. While 17% of this country's 71 million dogs did not see a veterinarian in 2006, 36% of the country's 81 million cats did not. Over 1/3 of

Animal Behavior (AVSAB), (a group comprised of veterinarians interested in behavior, and affiliate members with graduate degrees in behavior) have recently issued position statements on the use of punishment, the socialization of puppies and finding help for pet behavior problems (see www.avasbonline.org).

Few topics have generated so much confusion and misunderstanding in pet behavior as has punishment. People are confused not only by when and where it should be used but by the very definition. The AVSAB statement has gone a long way to help reduce this confusion and help people better understand the process.

Their statement on socializing puppies describes the importance of early experiences in the lives of dogs and encourages veterinarians, other pet professionals and pet parents to provide quality experiences for young animals to promote their behavioral health. The statements on behavior professionals and finding help for behavior problems describes the different pet professionals available to provide help, their training and how to locate them.

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT, see www.apdt.com) (a group of several thousand dog trainers dedicated to promoting caring relationships between people and dogs) have issued Position Statements about "Dog Friendly Training," surgical debarking, fireworks and other loud noises, breed specific legislation and one that proposes a model law for dangerous dogs.

APDT promotes "Dog Friendly" training and defines that as

owned cats are not receiving regular veterinary care.

[The CATalyst Council](#) was formed as a national initiative to champion cats, enhance their stature in society, improve health care for felines and enrich their lives. There are any number of reasons why cats are perceived differently than dogs

The most obvious reason is that cats ARE different from dogs. If dogs are held out to be the "gold standard" of what a pet, or companion animal, should be like, then it's not surprising cats are viewed as second class citizens. The domestication history of dogs and cats are quite different, as are their natural social behaviors. The group structure of dogs and wolves which includes cooperative raising of young and of food acquisition is much more similar to human social behavior than is that of the more solitary cat.

It's human nature to be frightened of whatever we don't understand well or are unfamiliar with, which is one reason cats have throughout most of their domestication history been unfairly burdened with the labels of untrustworthy and unpredictable. That, coupled with the cat's association with witchcraft and evil during the Middle Ages, has given our feline friends a distinct social disadvantage.

With regard to veterinary care, we would suspect that many owners are reluctant to make the trip to the veterinarian because it is a chore not only to get many cats into their crates, but to listen to the yowling and other vocalizations distressed cats make during the trip to the veterinary hospital

Once there, it's likely that more cats "freak out" during a veterinary visit than do dogs. They become defensive even more easily than dogs do, tend to stay aroused for longer time periods, and are in general more difficult to handle than most dogs, resulting in too many cat owners deciding preventive veterinary care is more stressful than it's worth.

"training that utilizes primarily positive reinforcement; secondarily negative punishment, and only occasionally, rarely, and/or as a last resort includes positive punishment and/or negative reinforcement." When used with the definitions for reinforcement and punishment given by the AVSAB position statement, this statement helps people understand what principles guide "Dog Friendly" trainers and behavior consultants.

The APDT statements on breed specific legislation and their model law for dangerous dogs reflects positions that are common among many pet professionals but are at odds with some government officials and legislators who have focused on restricting ownership of some breeds thought to be dangerous. What is needed is a more enlightened discussion about what causes dangerous behavior in dogs and how to prevent it. Surgical debarking is another issue that has generated controversy and is in need of greater discussion.

Position statements can help us focus on confusing or controversial issues, help us to understand them better and/or help us to debate them to come to a better community consensus. We'd like to see the prominent organizations in the field of pet behavior communicate better with one another to arrive at position statements supported by a coalition of organizations so the documents would have more "teeth" especially when used to influence public and professional policies.

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***CCPDT TESTING PREP PACKAGE*** *If you are preparing*

Unfortunately, proper socialization of cats is a neglected topic. Combine that with the fact that cats tend to be neophobic anyway (afraid of anything unfamiliar) and the result is an unfortunate assumption that it's "normal" for cats to be standoffish, aloof and afraid.

If your business caters to cats, and you'd like your cat owners to have information and education to counter-act these problems and stereotypes and help cats live higher quality lives, our DVD programs "[Helping Kitty Be Good By Creating a Cat Friendly Home](#)" and "[Helping Kitties Co-Exist](#)" are just the ticket. Contact us for quantity discount pricing and be sure to sign up for our free audio [Cat Behavior & Training Tips](#) from [HelpingKitty.com](#).

- **Dog Piece:**  
Is Mason Mad?



A friend remarked to us recently that every time she goes out of town and leaves her dog, Mason, with Sarah, a close friend, Mason always defecates overnight in one particular spot in

Sarah's house. Mason will occasionally do this at home, but not on a regular basis, and the dog is quite familiar with both Sarah and her home.

Our friend could not figure out any possible reason why Mason would be doing this, and therefore concluded that it had to be because Mason was mad at her for leaving him.

We've been discussing what's behind this common tendency to jump on anthropomorphic explanations as the very first or most likely reason for a pet's behavior. Perhaps it's because most pet owners believe they are the simplest explanation for their pets' behaviors. As behaviorists, we view them as just the opposite - as the most complex. Let's take a look at why.

If Mason was defecating in the house because he was mad about being left behind, his thought processes must have gone something

***for your October exam, or if you just want to learn more about behavior, take advantage of our 15% discount when you purchase of all three of the following titles; ["Fundamentals of Animal Learning"](#), ["Fundamentals of Canine Behavior"](#) (also known as [Shining the Light of Science on Canine Behavior](#)) and ["Canine Behavior: Observing and Interpreting Canine Body Postures"](#) Enter the coupon code, **FUTURE CPDT**, in the shopping cart, and remember you must purchase all three to qualify for the 15% discount. Discount expires October 10, 2008.***

The last session this year of the ever popular Becoming a Great Dog Training Instructor, taught by Pia Silvani begins Wednesday October 1st. Pia's classes always have a great turnout so claim your space by registering early.

***Just a reminder that you can now join our [affiliate program](#), which allows you to make our products available to your customers by adding a link to your website. Earn commission while putting good information about pet behavior in the hands of your customers! Current affiliates should look for an important update message from us soon.***

Time flies, and it's been nearly a year since Suzanne and Nancy Williams presented the workshop, ["Analyzing and Modifying Canine Aggressive Behavior"](#) This presentation was a favorite of ours, and attendees really loved it. Here's what just a few of

like this: "Left behind again huh? I am so mad at my mom for doing this to me! What can I do to let her know how upset I am? I know how much she thinks of Sarah, and I bet she would just DIE if I messed in her house. After all, my poop is pretty nasty smelling so I'm sure Sarah will NOT enjoy cleaning it up. Wait until Sarah tells my mom what I've done. That'll teach my mom that leaving me behind has consequences and she better not do it ever again!"

Now, we hope that sounds as ridiculous to you as it did to us when we wrote it! It should illustrate why attributing spite and revengeful motivations to animals are in actuality complicated explanations rather than simple ones.

What might be some simpler explanations for Mason's behavior? Mason's schedule might be different in Sarah's home, causing his patterns of elimination to shift. Sarah might not be in the habit of giving Mason a last potty break right before bed or perhaps Sarah is giving him more treats than he usually gets at home. Mason might be afraid to go outside at Sarah's place because of even one experience with a startling noise (anything from construction equipment to thunder). Mason might be a bit anxious away from mom, even though Sarah is familiar to him. Perhaps Mason doesn't like the texture of what is available for elimination in the yard. He may have only had access to a graveled dog run rather than the grass he may be accustomed to.

These are all more straightforward explanations than invoking the higher thought processes required for spite to be the motivation for Mason's defecation. A well established principle in the study of animal behavior is that of parsimony. Also known as Occum's Razor, it mandates choosing the simplest explanation for a behavior that accounts for the facts, even if more complicated options are available.

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them had to say,

*"Presented information I've not seen at other aggression seminars."*

*"The video clips were excellent teaching tools as were the actual dog demonstrations."*

*"I loved your enthusiasm (both of you). You both so clearly respect and have affection for animals and us as students."*

**BONUS OFFERING THIS MONTH ONLY**, purchase the 5 DVD program, "[Analyzing and Modifying Canine Aggressive Behavior](#)" and we'll give you our CD presentation "[Managing Chaos at the Door](#)" for only \$2! A savings of over \$10!. Use the coupon code ANNIVERSARY in the shopping cart.

***Did you know we now have online audio tips available from [www.HelpingKitty.com](http://www.HelpingKitty.com) and [www.HelpingFido.com](http://www.HelpingFido.com)? Every few weeks subscribers receive an email with a link to a 4 or 5 minute audio tip about cat or dog behavior. If you want to miss out on behavior information you can use, then don't visit the websites to sign up!!***

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of organizations so the documents would have more "teeth" especially when used to influence public and professional policies.

## • What's New at ABA

Just one more reminder that there is still time to register for our "[Behavior Wellness For Dogs and Cats](#)" weekend workshop at the San Francisco SPCA coming up September 26 and 27. If your business is limited to "obedience" training and problem solving, you are missing the boat on a variety of wellness services that can grow your business and make a real difference in the lives of pets and their people. Learn more about pet behavior health, find out what additional services you can provide, and come away with implementation strategies by the end of the weekend.

September and October will be busy months for us. They lead off with Dan in Albany NY on September 10 to give behavior lectures at the NACA Level I Training Academy, followed by Suzanne presenting two lectures at the [Colorado VMA](#) annual conference in Denver September 19th and 20th. Next is a trip on the 25th to Pittsburgh for Suzanne and the [PETsMART Rescue Waggin](#) Summit presented by Humane Strategies. The next day, we're both off to SFSPCA, and our September ends with an "Introducing Your Dog to Your Baby" class here in Denver.

If you haven't yet purchased "[Offering 'Introducing Your Dog to Your Baby' Classes: The Complete Teaching Package](#)" so you can be the first to teach these "baby classes" in your community, you should do it NOW before someone else beats you to it

Because many of our readers have remarked or asked questions about Suzanne's steel pan playing, we thought we'd share a few pictures and a short video of a little "gig" her group did at a local music store a few weeks ago. Check them out at [Steel Pan Gal](#) and listen to their version of one of Suzanne's favorite Jimmy Buffett tunes. Can you guess which one it is?

On another Buffett note, we are making a content exception, and wanted to let you know we have 2 extra tickets for Jimmy's October 21 concert in Mountain View (San Jose) CA. If you are interested in buying them, email us at [info@AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com](mailto:info@AnimalBehaviorAssociates.com) or call us at 303-932-9095.

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