



Tools for Enhancing the Bond With Your Pet



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Your New Dog

We are so excited that you decided to adopt your new dog! We want this to be a positive experience so that you and your new dog can live happily together for a long time. Here are some tips for starting your new relationship off on the right “paw.”

First Day Home

We know you have just committed to a new family member, and this can be stressful and exciting for all involved, including your new dog. When bringing your dog home for the first time, keep in mind that he or she has probably been through a lot in the past few days. He may have been lost on the streets for a period of time before coming to the shelter or given up by his previous owner. Being adopted into a new family can be very overwhelming for a dog. Here are some tips on introducing your new furry friend to your home.

What to Do

Establishing a routine will ensure there are no surprises and help your new dog adjust more quickly. Try to work the adoption into your schedule so you have a few days to be at home with your new dog and help him adjust while you get to know him. Your first day with your new dog should be spent allowing him to get used to his new home. Everything he encounters will be new and possibly stressful for him, so it is important to allow him to adjust at his own pace. It could take two days for him to be his normal self or it could take two months. There is no set time limit on this adjustment period because every dog is different.

It is best to give your new pup some time to adjust to you and your family before taking him to new places. As much fun as it is to pick out toys and supplies with your new pup, it can be very overwhelming for him to be in a busy store with so many new people and smells.

Introductions

If you have other pets at home, take your time introducing your new dog to them. It is always a good idea to bring your resident dog(s) into the shelter for a dog visit before adopting to ensure they will get along with your new dog. See our handout “Introducing Your New Dog to Your Resident Dog.” Other animals, like cats, take a little bit longer to get used to having a new dog in their home. See our handout “Introducing Your New Cat to Your Other Pets.”

Training

Training is an important thing that should begin early, no matter what age your new dog is. Socializing puppies is crucial to their development and will help you have a well-rounded pup as an adult. For all dogs, we recommend clicker training. This is a great form of positive-reinforcement training that can help teach your dog manners, help a fearful dog become more confident, and is also a great stress reliever.

Resources

If you have any questions regarding your new dog’s behavior, please call the Shelter and speak with our Trainer at (970) 626-2273.

Introducing Your New Dog to Your Resident Dog

Animals that live in groups, like dogs, establish relationships, through which the individuals involved interact and live together. The roles that the individuals play within the relationship can change with each new day or situation. These relationships also take time to build, so proper introductions are important to help the dogs adjust to one another and start to build on their relationship.

Introduction Techniques

Choose a Neutral Location: Introduce the dogs in a neutral location so that your resident dog is less likely to view the newcomer as an intruder. Each dog should be handled by a separate person. With both dogs on a leash, take them to an area with which neither is familiar, such as a park or neighbor's yard, or you can go for a walk together. If adopting a new dog from a shelter, we recommend bringing your resident dog with you to the shelter and introducing the dogs before adopting.

If you have more than one resident dog in your household, it is best to introduce the resident dogs to the new dog one at a time. Two or more resident dogs may have a tendency to "gang up" on the newcomer.

Use Positive Reinforcement: From the first meeting, you want both dogs to expect "good things" to happen when they're in each other's presence. While keeping the leashes loose, let them sniff each other, which is a normal canine greeting behavior. As they do, talk to them in a happy, friendly tone of voice – never use a threatening tone of voice. After a short time, get both dogs' attention, and give each dog a treat in return for obeying a simple command, such as "sit" or "stay." Take the dogs for a walk and let them sniff and investigate each other at intervals. Continue with the "happy talk," food rewards, and simple commands.

Be Aware of Body Postures: One body posture that indicates things are going well is a "play-bow." One dog will crouch with her front legs on the ground and her hind end in the air. This is an invitation to play that usually elicits friendly behavior from the other dog. Watch carefully for body postures that indicate an escalation in response, including hair standing up on the other dog's back, teeth-baring, deep growls, a stiff legged gait, or a prolonged stare. If you see such postures, interrupt the interaction immediately by calmly and positively getting each dog interested in something else. For example, both handlers can call their dogs to them, have them sit or lie down, and reward each with a treat. The dogs will become interested in the treats which will prevent the situation from escalating into aggression. Try letting the dogs interact again, but this time for a shorter time period and/or at a greater distance from each other.

Taking the Dogs Home: When the dogs seem to be tolerating each other without fearful or aggressive responses and the investigative greeting behaviors have tapered off, you can take them home. Whether you choose to take them in the same or different vehicles will depend on a few things; like their size, how well they ride in the car, how trouble-free the initial introduction has been and how many dogs are involved.

Once home: Do not leave the dogs alone, until you are confident they are getting along.

Introducing Puppies to Adult Dogs: Puppies usually pester adult dogs unmercifully. Before the age of four months, puppies may not recognize subtle body postures from adult dogs signaling that they've had enough. Well-socialized adult dogs with good temperaments may set limits with puppies with a growl or snarl. These behaviors are normal and should be allowed. Adult dogs that aren't well socialized, or that have a history of fighting with other dogs, may attempt to set limits with more aggressive behaviors, such as biting, which could harm the puppy. For this reason, a puppy shouldn't be left alone with an adult dog until you're confident the puppy isn't in any danger. Be sure to give the adult dog some quiet time away from the puppy, and perhaps some individual attention.

When to Get Help: If the introduction of a new dog to a household doesn't go smoothly, contact a professional animal behaviorist immediately. Dogs can be severely injured in fights, and the longer the problem continues, the harder it can be to resolve. Conflicts between dogs in the same family can often be resolved with professional help. Punishment won't work and could make things worse.

Dog Toys and How to Use Them

Many behavior problems in dogs are the result of boredom or excess energy. Toys offer mental and physical stimulation and enrichment. Directing your dog's energy into play with toys can prevent or help resolve such problems as digging and chewing on furniture, shoes or shrubbery.

Toys We Recommend

Interactive Toys: These are toys that require your participation:

- **Fetch toys** - many dogs enjoy chasing balls and Frisbees®. Oddly shaped rubber toys (such as Kongs®) bounce erratically and make the game more fun. Flying disks come in many shapes and sizes, including soft versions that are easier on the dog's mouth. And devices for throwing the ball increase the distance the dog must run to get the toy.
- **Rope toys** - such as Tire Biter® toys, are good for tugging. See note below on playing tug-of-war with your dog.

Distraction Toys: These are toys that keep your dog busy when you don't have the time to play:

- **Food Delivery Toys** - Designed to be used with kibble or small treats, the dog must manipulate the toy with his mouth and/or paws to get the food to fall out. Some examples are: Buster Cube®, TreatStik®, Tug-a-Jug®, Kibble Nibble® and Everlasting Fun Ball®.
- **Chew Toys** -
 - Hard rubber toys that are hollow with holes at both ends, such as Kongs, are good chew toys. To make these toys more attractive, they can be filled with kibble or treats. You can also encourage chewing by putting a small amount of peanut butter or cream cheese inside the toy.
 - Dental chew toys are hard toys that the dog can gnaw on and safely ingest small particles. Examples include: Greenies®, bullie sticks, and Petrodex® dental chews. You should watch your dog to make sure he does not break off and ingest large pieces of these toys.
 - Chew challenge toys are toys that make an edible chewy more challenging for the dog to consume. Examples include Funny Bones®, the Kong Goodie Bone®, and the Everlasting Treat Ball®.
- **Puzzle Toys:**
 - Food puzzle toys require the dog to solve a puzzle in order to get treats. Examples are the Nina Ottoson® line of dog toys including the Dog Spinny® and the Dog Brick®.
 - Toy puzzle toys require the dog to solve a puzzle to get to a toy. Examples are the Kygen® line of toys, including the IQube®, Intellibone®, and Hide-a-Bee®.
- **Comfort Toys:**
 - Soft stuffed toys are good for several purposes but are not appropriate for all dogs. For some dogs, the stuffed toy should be small enough to carry around. For dogs that want to shake or "kill" the toy, it should be the size that "prey" would be for that size dog (mouse-size, rabbit-size or duck-size).
 - Dirty laundry, like an old t-shirt, pillowcase, towel or blanket, can be very comforting to a dog, especially if it smells like you! Be forewarned that the item could be destroyed by industrious fluffing, carrying and nosing.

Getting The Most Out Of Toys

- Rotate your dog's toys weekly by making only four or five toys available at a time. Keep a variety of types easily accessible. If your dog has a favorite comfort toy, like a soft "baby," you should probably leave it out all the time.
- Provide toys that offer a variety of uses - at least one toy to carry, one to "kill," one to roll and one to "baby."
- "Hide and Seek" is a fun game for dogs to play. "Found" toys are often much more attractive. Making an interactive game out of finding toys or treats is a good rainy-day activity for your dog, using up energy without the need for a lot of space. For example, scattering a handful of kibble in the grass or on a patterned carpet will require your dog to use his nose to find the food.
- Many of your dog's toys should be interactive. Interactive play is very important for your dog because he needs active "people time." By focusing on a specific task, like repeatedly returning a ball, Kong or Frisbee, or playing "hide-and-peek" with treats or toys, your dog can expend pent-up mental and physical energy in a limited amount of time and space. This greatly reduces stress due to confinement, isolation and/or boredom. For young, high-energy and untrained dogs, interactive play also offers an opportunity for socialization and helps them learn about appropriate and inappropriate behavior, such as jumping up or being mouthy.

Tug of War

Tug of war has long been thought to be an absolute “don’t” in many dog-owning households. However, by taking a few precautions and setting some basic rules it can be a fun game for you and your dog.

- Choose a toy that will be reserved exclusively for this particular activity. This will help prevent your dog from grabbing and tugging anything you have in your hand.
- Teach two commands:
 - “Let’s tug” begins the game. Never allow the dog to initiate tug on his own and always use your starting phrase when you begin the game.
 - “Give” or “Out” ends the game. Teach your dog to release the toy by offering a treat or better toy in exchange. Do not start playing tug with your dog until he is consistently releasing the toy on command.

Safety

There are many factors that contribute to the safety or danger of a toy. Many of those factors are dependent upon your dog’s size, activity level and play style. Although we cannot guarantee your dog’s enthusiasm or his safety with any specific toy, we can offer the following guidelines:

- Toys should be appropriate for your dog’s current size. Balls and other toys that are too small can be easily swallowed or become lodged in your dog’s mouth or throat.
- Avoid or alter any toys that are not “dog-proof” by removing ribbons, strings, eyes or other parts that could be chewed off and ingested.
- Monitor your dog’s toys and discard any toy that starts to break into pieces or has pieces torn off.
- Ask your veterinarian about the safety of items like bones, hooves, pig’s ears and rawhides. Very hard rubber toys are safer and last longer.
- Take note of any toy that contains a “squeaker” buried in its center. Your dog may feel that he must find and destroy the squeak source and could ingest it, in which case squeaking toys should be given only under supervision.
- Know your dog’s chewing habits before leaving him alone with any toy. For example, some dogs will carry a plush toy around for years. Others will enjoy “disemboweling” the toy by pulling all the stuffing out. Still others will chew it apart and ingest the pieces, creating a safety hazard for that dog.

Marking Behavior in Dogs

Urine-marking occurs when there is either instability in a dog's relationships or when a dog is feeling anxious. It is not a house soiling problem. To resolve the problem, you need to address the underlying reason for your dog's need to mark.

House Soiling or Urine-Marking? How to Tell the Difference!

Your dog may be urine-marking if:

- The problem is primarily urination. Dogs rarely mark with feces.
- The amount of urine is small and is found primarily on vertical surfaces. Dogs do however, sometimes mark on horizontal surfaces. Leg-lifting and spraying are versions of urine-marking, but even if your dog doesn't assume these postures, he may still be urine-marking
- A pet in your home is not spayed or neutered. Intact males and females are more likely to urine-mark than spayed or neutered animals. However, even spayed or neutered animals may mark in response to other intact animals in the home.
- Your dog urinates on new objects in the environment (a shopping bag, a visitor's purse); on objects that have unfamiliar smells, or on objects that have another animal's scent.
- Your dog has conflicts with other animals in your home. When there's instability in the relationship, a dog may feel a need to communicate by urine-marking.
- Your dog has contact with other animals outside your home. If your dog sees another animal through a door or window, he may feel a need to mark.
- Your dog marks frequently on neighborhood walks.

What You Can Do:

- Spay or neuter your pets as soon as possible. Spaying or neutering your dog may stop urine-marking altogether; however, if he has been urine-marking over a long period of time, a pattern may already be established.
- Resolve conflicts between animals in your home.
- Restrict your dog's access to doors and windows through which they can observe animals outside. If this isn't possible, discourage the presence of other animals near your house.
- Clean soiled areas thoroughly. Don't use strong smelling cleaners as they may cause your pet to "over-mark" the spot.
- Make previously soiled areas inaccessible or unattractive.
- Keep objects likely to cause marking out of reach. Guest's belongings, new purchases, and so forth should be placed in a closet or cabinet.
- If your dog is marking in response to a new resident in your home (a new baby, roommate, or spouse), have the new resident make friends with your dog by feeding, grooming, and playing with your dog. Also make sure good things happen to your dog when the new baby is around.
- Watch your dog at all times when he is indoors for signs that he is thinking about urine-marking. When he begins to urinate, interrupt him by making a noise of some sort and take him outside, then praise him and give him a treat if he urinates. When you're unable to watch him, put your dog in confinement (a crate or small room where he has never marked) or tether him to you with a leash.
- Have your dog perform at least one behavior (such as "sit") before you pet him, feed him, put on his leash, or throw a toy for him. "Nothing in life is free" helps build confidence in your dog and will reduce his need to mark.
- Clicker train and play with your dog every day to reduce anxiety.

What Not to Do:

Don't punish your dog after the fact. Punishment administered, even a minute after the event, is ineffective because your dog won't understand why he is being punished. It can also lead to issues of fear or aggression.

Pets Aren't People

Dogs don't urinate or defecate out of spite or jealousy. If your dog urinates on your baby's diaper bag, it's not because he is jealous, or dislikes your baby. The unfamiliar scents and sounds of a new baby in the house are simply causing him to urine-mark.

Anxiety

Urine-marking is usually associated with instability in relationships. While this is often the case, some dogs may mark when they feel anxious due to changes in their living situations. For example, a new baby in the home brings new sounds, smells, and people, as well as changes in routine. Your dog probably isn't getting as much attention as he was used to getting. All of these changes cause him to feel anxious, which may cause him to mark. Likewise, a dog that is generally anxious may become more so by the presence of roaming neighborhood animals in your yard, or by the introduction of a new cat or dog into your household. If your dog is feeling anxious, you might consider talking to your veterinarian about medication to reduce his anxiety while you work on behavior modification.

Houstraining Your Puppy

Houstraining a puppy requires time, vigilance, patience and commitment. By following the procedures outlined below, you can minimize house soiling incidents, but virtually every puppy will have an accident in the house (more likely several). This is part of raising a puppy and should be expected. The more consistent you are in following the basic houstraining procedures, the faster your puppy will learn acceptable behavior. It may take several weeks to houstrain your puppy and with some of the smaller breeds it might take longer. A puppy can usually be considered reliably houstrained when it has not had any accidents for two to three months.

Establish a Routine

- Your puppy will do best if he is taken outside on a consistent and frequent schedule. He should have the opportunity to eliminate after waking up from a nap, after playing, and after eating.
- Choose a location not too far from the door to be the bathroom spot. Always take your puppy, on a leash, directly to the bathroom spot. Taking him for a walk or playing with him directly after he has eliminated will help him to associate good things with elimination. If you clean up an accident in the house, take the soiled rags or paper towels and leave them in the bathroom spot. The smell will help your puppy recognize the area as the place he is supposed to eliminate. While your puppy is eliminating, use a word or phrase, like “go potty,” that you can eventually use before he eliminates to remind him what he’s supposed to be doing.
- Praise your puppy lavishly every time he eliminates outdoors. You can even give him a treat. You must praise him or treat him immediately after he’s finished eliminating, not after he comes back inside the house. This step is vital; because rewarding your puppy for eliminating outdoors is the only way he’ll know that this is an appropriate behavior.
- If possible, put your puppy on a regular feeding schedule. Depending on their age, puppies usually need to be fed three or four times a day. Feeding your puppy at the same times each day will make it more likely that he’ll eliminate at consistent times as well. This makes houstraining easier, for both of you.

Supervise, Supervise, Supervise

Don’t give your puppy an opportunity to soil in the house. He should be watched at all times when he is indoors. You can tether him to you with a leash or use baby gates to keep him in your view. Watch for signs that he needs to eliminate, like sniffing around or circling. When you see these signs, immediately take him outside, on a leash, to his bathroom spot. If he eliminates, praise him lavishly and reward him with a treat.

Confinement

When you’re unable to watch your puppy closely, he should be confined to an area small enough that he won’t want to eliminate there. It should be just big enough for him to comfortably stand, lie down, and turn around. This area could be a portion of a bathroom or laundry room, blocked off with boxes or baby gates. Or you may want to crate train your puppy and use the crate to confine him. If your puppy has spent several hours in confinement, make sure to take him out directly to his bathroom spot before doing anything else.

Oops!

Expect your puppy to have an accident in the house – it’s a normal part of houstraining.

- When you catch him in the act of eliminating in the house, do something to interrupt him, like make a startling noise (be careful not to scare him). Immediately take him to his bathroom spot, praise him, and give him a treat if he finishes eliminating there.
- Don’t punish your puppy for eliminating in the house. If you find a soiled area, it’s too late to administer a correction. Do nothing but clean it up. Rubbing your puppy’s nose in it, taking him to the spot, and scolding him (or any other punishment or discipline) will only make him afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence. Animals don’t understand punishment after the fact, even if it’s only seconds later. Punishment will do more harm than good.
- Cleaning the soiled area is very important because puppies are highly motivated to continue soiling in areas that smell like urine or feces.

It's extremely important that you use the supervision and confinement procedures outlined above to minimize the number of accidents. If you allow your puppy to eliminate frequently in the house, he'll get confused about where he's supposed to eliminate, which will prolong the housetraining process.

Paper Training

A puppy under 6 months of age cannot be expected to control his bladder for more than a few hours at a time. If you have to be away from home for more than four or five hours a day, this may not be the best time for you to get a puppy. If you're already committed to having a puppy and have to be away from home for long periods of time, you'll need to train your puppy to eliminate in a specific place indoors. Be aware, however that doing so can prolong the process of teaching him to eliminate outdoors. Teaching your puppy to eliminate on newspaper may create a life-long surface preference, meaning that he may, even in adulthood, eliminate on any newspaper he finds lying around the house.

When your puppy must be left alone for long periods of time, confine him to an area with enough room for a sleeping space, a playing space, and a separate place to eliminate. In the area designated as the elimination place, you can either use newspapers, a sod box, or litter. To make a sod box, place sod in a container, like a child's small, plastic swimming pool. You can also find dog litter products at pet supply stores. If you clean up an accident in the house, take the soiled rags or paper towels, and put them in the designated elimination place. The smell will help your puppy recognize the area as the place where he is supposed to eliminate.

Other Types of House soiling Problems

If you've consistently followed the housetraining procedures and your puppy continues to eliminate in the house, there may be another reason for his behavior.

- **Medical Problems:** House soiling can often be caused by physical problems, such as a urinary tract infection or a parasite infection. Check with your local veterinarian to rule out any possibility of disease or illness.
- **Fearful/Excitement Urination:** Some dogs, especially young ones, temporarily lose control of their bladders when they become excited or feel threatened. This usually occurs during greetings, intense play, or when they're about to be punished.
- **Urine-Marking:** Dogs sometimes deposit urine or feces, usually in small amounts, to scent-mark. Both male and female dogs do this, and it most often occurs when there is instability in their relationships.
- **Separation Anxiety:** Dogs that become anxious when they're left alone may house soil as a result. Usually, there are other symptoms, such as destructive behavior or vocalization.
- **Fears or Phobias:** When animals become frightened, they may lose control of their bladder and/or bowels. If your puppy is afraid of loud noises, such as thunderstorms or fireworks, he may house soil when he's exposed to these sounds.

Re-Housetraining Your Adult Dog

Many adult dogs adopted from animal shelters were housetrained by their previous homes. While at the shelter, however, they may not have gotten enough opportunities to eliminate outside, and consequently, they may have soiled their kennel areas. This tends to weaken their housetraining habits. Additionally, scents and odors from other pets in the new home may stimulate some initial urine marking. Remember that you and your new dog need some time to learn each other's signals and routines. Even if he was housetrained in his previous home, if you do not recognize his "bathroom" signal, you might miss his request to go out, causing him to eliminate indoors.

Therefore, for the first few weeks after you bring him home, you should assume your new dog is not housetrained and start from scratch. If he was housetrained in his previous home, the re-training process should progress quickly. The process will be much smoother if you take steps to prevent accidents and remind him where he's supposed to eliminate.

Establish a Routine

- Take your dog out at the same times every day. For example, first thing in the morning when he wakes up, when you arrive home from work, and before you go to bed.
- Praise your dog lavishly every time he eliminates outdoors. You can even give him a treat. You must praise him and give him a treat immediately after he has finished and not wait until he comes back inside the house. This step is vital; because rewarding your dog for eliminating outdoors is the only way he will know that is what you want him to do.
- Choose a location not too far from the door to be the bathroom spot. Always take your dogs, on a leash, directly to the bathroom spot. Take him for a walk or play with him only after he has eliminated. If you clean up an accident in the house, leave the soiled rags or paper towels in the bathroom spot. The smell will help your dog recognize the area as the place where he is supposed to eliminate.
- While your dog is eliminating, use a word or phrase like "go potty", that you can eventually use before he eliminates to remind him of what he is supposed to be doing.
- Feeding your dog on a set schedule, once or twice a day, will help make his elimination more regular.

Supervise, Supervise, Supervise

Do not give your dog an opportunity to soil in the house. He should be watched at all times when he is indoors. You can tether him to you with a six-foot leash, or use baby gates to keep him in the room where you are. Watch for signs that he needs to eliminate, like sniffing around or circling. If you see these signs, immediately take him outside, on a leash, to his bathroom spot. If he eliminates, praise him lavishly and reward him with a treat.

Confinement

When you're unable to watch your dog closely, he should be confined to an area small enough that he won't want to eliminate there. It should be just big enough for him to comfortably stand, lie down, and turn around in. This could be a portion of a bathroom or laundry room blocked off with boxes or baby gates. Or you may want to crate train your dog and use the crate to confine him (see our handout: "Crate Training Your Dog"). If he has spent several hours in confinement, when you let him out, take him directly to his bathroom spot and praise him when he eliminates.

Oops!

Most dogs, at some point, will have an accident in the house. You should expect this, as it is a normal part of your dog's adjustment to his new home.

- If you catch your dog in the act of eliminating in the house, do something to interrupt him like making a startling noise (be careful not to scare him). Immediately take him to his bathroom spot, praise him, and give him a treat if he finishes eliminating there.
- Do not punish your dog for eliminating in the house. If you find a soiled area, it is too late to administer a correction. Do nothing but clean it up. Rubbing your dog's nose in it, taking him to the spot and scolding him, or any other type of punishment, will only make him afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence. Animals do not understand punishment after the fact, even if it is only seconds later. Punishment will do more harm than good.
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- **Fears or Phobias:** When animals become frightened, they may lose control of their bladder and/or bowels. If your dog is afraid of loud noises, such as thunderstorms or fireworks, he may house soil when he is exposed to these sounds.
- **Surface Preferences:** When a dog had been trained to eliminate on only one type of surface, such as newspapers, or has not been offered a variety of surfaces, such as being confined to a run with a concrete floor, a surface preference may develop. This can be difficult to change but is often managed by ensuring that their preferred surface is unavailable indoors, but is available in an outdoor location.

Crate Training Your Dog

Crate training your dog may take some time and effort, but can be useful in a variety of situations. If you have a new dog or puppy, you can use the crate to limit his access to the house until he learns all the house rules, such as what he can and can't chew and where he can and can't eliminate. A crate is also a safe way of transporting your dog in the car, as well as a way of taking him places where he may not be welcome to run freely. If you properly train your dog to use the crate, he will think of it as his safe place and will be happy to spend time there when needed. Always provide water for your dog anytime he is in the crate. Spill proof bowls or bowls that attach to the kennel gate work best.

Selecting a Crate

Crates may be plastic (often called "flight kennels") or collapsible metal pens. Collapsible fabric kennels are designed for use when the owner is present and may not contain a dog for long periods while unsupervised. Crates come in different sizes and can be purchased at most pet supply stores. Your dog's crate should be large enough for him to stand up and turn around.

The Crate Training Process

Crate training can take days or weeks, depending on your dog's age, temperament and past experiences. It's important to keep two things in mind while crate training; one, the crate should always be associated with something pleasant; and two, training should take place in a series of small steps – don't go too fast.

Step 1: Introducing Your Dog To The Crate

- Put the crate in an area of your house where the family spends a lot of time, such as the family room. Put a soft blanket or towel in the crate. Bring your dog over to the crate and talk to him in a happy tone of voice. Make sure the crate door is securely fastened open so it won't hit your dog and frighten him.
- To encourage your dog to enter the crate, drop small food treats near it, then just inside the door, and finally, all the way inside the crate. If he refuses to go all the way in at first, that's okay – don't force him to enter. Continue tossing treats into the crate until your dog will walk calmly all the way into the crate to get the food. If he isn't interested in treats, try tossing a favorite toy in the crate. This step may take a few minutes or as long as several days.

Step 2: Feeding Your Dog His Meals In The Crate

- After introducing your dog to the crate, begin feeding him his regular meals near the crate. This will create a pleasant association with the crate. If your dog is readily entering the crate when you begin Step 2, put the food dish all the way at the back of the crate. If your dog is still reluctant to enter the crate, put the dish only as far inside as he will readily go without becoming fearful or anxious. Each time you feed him, place the dish a little further back in the crate.
- Once your dog is standing comfortably in the crate to eat his meal, you can close the door while he's eating. At first, open the door as soon as he finishes his meal. With each successive feeding, leave the door closed a few minutes longer, until he's staying in the crate for 10 minutes or so after eating. If he begins to whine to be let out, you may have increased the length of time too quickly. Next time, try leaving him in the crate for a shorter time period. If he does whine or cry in the crate, it's imperative that you not let him out until he stops. Otherwise, he'll learn that the way to get out of the crate is to whine and he'll keep doing it.

Step 3: Conditioning Your Dog To The Crate For Longer Time Periods

- After your dog is eating his regular meals in the crate with no sign of fear or anxiety, you can confine him there for short time periods while you're home. Call him over to the crate and give him a treat. Give him a command to enter, such as, "kennel up." Encourage him by pointing to the inside of the crate with a treat in your hand. After your dog enters the crate, praise him, give him the treat and close the door. Sit quietly near the crate for five to 10 minutes and then go into another room for a few minutes. Return, sit quietly again for a short time, then let him out of the crate.
- Repeat this process several times a day. With each repetition, gradually increase the length of time you leave him in the crate and the length of time you're out of his sight. Once your dog will stay quietly in the crate for about 30 minutes with you out of sight the majority of the time, you can begin leaving him crated when you're gone for short time periods and/or letting him sleep there at night. This may take several days or several weeks.

Step 4: Part A – Crating Your Dog When Left Alone

After your dog is spending about 30 minutes in the crate without becoming anxious or afraid, you can begin leaving him crated for short periods when you leave the house. Put him in the crate using your regular command and a treat. You might also want to leave him with a few safe toys in the crate (see our handout, "Dog Toys and How to Use Them"). You'll want to vary at what point in your "getting ready to leave" routine you put your dog in the crate. Although he shouldn't be crated for a long time before you leave, you can crate him anywhere from five to 20 minutes prior to leaving. Don't make your departures emotional and prolonged, but matter-of-fact. Praise your dog briefly, give him a treat for entering the crate and then leave quietly. When you return home, don't reward your dog for excited behavior by responding to him in an excited, enthusiastic way. Keep arrivals low key. Continue to crate your dog for short periods from time to time when you're home so he doesn't associate crating with being left alone.

Part B – Crating Your Dog At Night

Put your dog in the crate using your regular command and a treat. Initially, it may be a good idea to put the crate in your bedroom or nearby in a hallway, especially if you have a puppy. Puppies often need to go outside to eliminate during the night, and you'll want to be able to hear your puppy when he whines to be let outside. Older dogs, too, should initially be kept nearby so that crating doesn't become associated with social isolation. Once your dog is sleeping comfortably through the night with his crate near you, you can begin to gradually move it to the location you prefer. Puppies that are healthy can have their water taken from them a few hours before bedtime to help decrease the frequency of potty trips they need to make during the night.

Potential Problems

Too Much Time In The Crate

A crate isn't a magical solution. If not used correctly, a dog can feel trapped and frustrated. For example, if your dog is crated all day while you're at work and then crated again all night, he's spending too much time in too small a space. Other arrangements should be made to accommodate his physical and emotional needs. Also, remember that puppies under 6 months of age shouldn't stay in a crate for more than three or four hours at a time. They can't control their bladders and bowels for longer periods.

Whining

If your dog whines or cries while in the crate at night, it may be difficult to decide whether he's whining to be let out of the crate, or whether he needs to be let outside to eliminate. If you followed the training procedures outlined above, your dog hasn't been rewarded for whining in the past by being released from his crate. Try to ignore the whining. If your dog is just testing you, he'll probably stop whining soon. Yelling at him or pounding on the crate will only make things worse. If the whining continues after you've ignored him for several minutes, use the phrase he associates with going outside to eliminate. If he responds and becomes excited, take him outside. This should be a trip with a purpose, not play time. If you're convinced that your dog doesn't need to eliminate, the best response is to ignore him until he stops whining. Do not give in, otherwise you'll teach your dog to whine loud and long to get what he wants. If you've progressed gradually through the training steps and haven't done too much too fast, you will be less likely to encounter this problem. If the problem becomes unmanageable, you may need to start the crate training process over again.

Separation Anxiety

Attempting to use the crate as a remedy for separation anxiety will not solve the problem. A crate may prevent your dog from being destructive, but he may injure himself in an attempt to escape from the crate. Separation anxiety problems can only be resolved with counter-conditioning and desensitization procedures.

Destructive Chewing

It is normal for dogs to explore the world with their mouths. However, chewing can be directed into appropriate items so your dog is not destroying items you value. Until he has learned what he can and cannot chew, it is your responsibility to manage the situation as much as possible, so he doesn't have the opportunity to chew on unacceptable objects.

Managing the Situation

- Take responsibility for your own belongings. If you don't want it in your dog's mouth, don't make it available. Keep clothing, shoes, books, trash, eyeglasses, cell phones, and remote controls out of your dog's reach.
- Don't confuse your dog by offering him shoes and socks as toys and then expect them to distinguish between his shoes and yours. Your dog's toys should be obviously different from household goods.
- Until he learns, confine him when you are unable to keep an eye on him. Choose a "safe place" that is dog proof with fresh water and "safe" toys. If your dog is crate trained, you may also crate him for short periods of time.
- Take your dog to an obedience class to teach him important commands, like "leave it." Classes may have the added benefit of reducing destructive behavior because they will help your dog burn off excess energy. You can also do basic training at home, using clicker training.
- If, and only if, you actually catch your dog chewing on something he shouldn't, interrupt the behavior with a loud noise and offer him an acceptable chew toy instead. Play with him when he takes the toy in his mouth.
- Have realistic expectation. It is highly likely that your dog will, at some point, chew up something you value. This is often part of the transition to a new home.

Dogs will engage in destructive behavior for a variety of reasons. In order to deal with the behavior, you must first determine why your dog is being destructive.

Play, Boredom, and/or Social Isolation

Normal play behavior can result in destruction, as it may involve digging, chewing, shredding, and/or shaking toy-like objects. Since dogs investigate objects by pawing at them and exploring them with their mouth, they may inadvertently damage items in their environment.

Your dog may be chewing for entertainment if:

- He's left alone for long time periods without opportunities for interaction with you or other family members.
- His environment is relatively barren, without playmates or toys.
- He's a puppy or adolescent (under 3 years old) and he doesn't have other outlets for his energy.
- He's a particularly active type of dog (like the herding or sporting breeds) who needs an active lifestyle to be happy.

Solutions:

- Play with your dog daily in a safe, fenced-in area. If you don't have a yard, a tennis court can be a good place to play. Fetch is a great game that will use up your dog's excess energy without wearing you out!
- Go for a walk. Walks should be more than just "bathroom time." On-leash walks are important opportunities for you and your dog to be together. Don't forget to allow time for sniffing, exploring, instruction, and praise.
- Increase your dog's opportunities for mental stimulation. Teach your dog a few commands and/or tricks using clicker training and practice them daily. If you have time, take an obedience class.
- Provide your dog with lots of toys (see our handout).
- Rotate your dog's toys to refresh his interest in them. "New" toys are always more interesting than old ones.
- Try different kinds of toys, but when you introduce a new toy, watch your dog to make sure he won't tear it up and ingest the pieces.
- Consider the various types of toys that can be stuffed with food. Putting tidbits of food inside chew toys focuses your dog's chewing activities on these toys instead of unacceptable objects.
- Make your dog's favorite off-limits chew objects unattractive to him by covering them with heavy plastic, aluminum foil, hot pepper sauce, or a commercial "anti-chew" product.
- Consider a good doggie daycare program for two or three days a week to work out some of your dog's excess energy.

Separation Anxiety

Dogs with separation anxiety tend to display behaviors that reflect a strong attachment to their owners. This includes following you from room to room, frantic greetings, and reacting anxiously to your preparation to leave the house.

Factors that can precipitate a separation anxiety problem:

- A change in the family's schedule that result in your dog being left alone more often.
- A move to a new house.
- The death or loss of a family member or another family pet.
- A period at a shelter or boarding kennel.

These behaviors are not motivated by spite or revenge, but by anxiety. Punishment will only make the problem worse. Separation anxiety can be resolved by using counter conditioning and desensitization techniques.

Attention-Seeking Behavior

Without realizing it, we often pay more attention to our dogs when they are misbehaving. Dogs who don't receive much attention and reinforcement for appropriate behavior may engage in destructive behavior when their owners are present as a way to attract attention – even if the attention is “negative”, such as a verbal scolding. From a dog's point of view, negative attention is better than no attention at all.

Solutions:

- Make sure that your dog gets plenty of positive attention everyday – playing, walking, grooming, or just petting.
- Ignore (as much as possible) bad behavior and reward only good behavior. Remember to reward your dog with praise and petting when he's playing quietly with appropriate toys.
- Make his favorite off-limits chew objects unattractive or unavailable to him. Use aversives on objects that cannot be put away.
- Teach your dog a “drop it” command so when he does pick up an off-limits object, you can use your command and praise him for complying. The best way to teach “drop it” is to practice having him exchange a toy in his possession for a tidbit of food. Practice “Nothing in Life is Free” with your dog. This gets your dog in the habit of complying with your commands and is a good way to make sure he gets lots of positive attention for doing the right things – so he won't have to resort to being naughty just to get your attention.
- Increase your dog's opportunities for mental stimulation. Teach your dog a few commands and/or tricks using clicker training and practice them daily. If you have time, take an obedience class.

Fears and Phobias

Some dogs are afraid of loud noises. Your dog's destructive behavior may be caused by fear if the destruction occurs when he's exposed to loud noises, such as thunderstorms, firecrackers, or construction sounds, and if the primary damage is to doors, doorframes, window coverings, screens or walls (see our handout: “Stress Relief for Your Pet”).

Solutions:

You can work on your dog's fear and reduce his stress using clicker training. See our handout or attend an obedience class.

Puppies

Chewing is normal teething and investigative puppy behavior.

What Not To Do

Punishment is rarely effective in resolving destructive behavior problems and can even make them worse. Never discipline your dog after-the-fact. If you discover an item your dog has chewed, even just a few minutes later, it is too late to administer a correction. Your dog doesn't understand that, “I chewed those shoes an hour ago and that's why I'm being scolded now.” People often believe their dog makes this connection because he runs and hides, or “looks guilty.” Dogs don't feel guilt; rather they display appeasing postures like cowering, running away, or hiding when they feel threatened by an angry tone of voice, body posture, or facial expression. Your dog doesn't know that he's done something wrong; he only knows that you're upset. Punishment after-the-fact will not only fail to eliminate the undesirable behavior, but may also provoke other undesirable behaviors.

“Bark! Bark! Bark!”

Barking is the result of either anxiety or your dog being pre-genetically disposed to barking, like hounds. If you own a breed that is known to bark, then work on teaching your dog the “quiet” command (see below), provide plenty of outlets, and provide toys to keep them busy.

Anxiety-related barking, especially if it is a new behavior, may be the result of an underlying medical issue, so the first thing you should do is take your dog to the vet. If everything checks out medically, the second thing you need to do is determine when your dog barks, for how long your dog barks, and what is causing him to bark. If your dog barks when you are not home, ask your neighbors, drive or walk around the block then watch and listen for a while, or start a tape recorder or video camera when you leave for work. Hopefully you will be able to discover which of the following anxiety related problems is causing your dog to bark.

Social Isolation / Attention Seeking

Your dog may be barking because he’s bored and lonely if:

- He’s left alone for long periods of time without opportunities for interaction with you.
- His environment is relatively barren, without playmates or toys.
- He’s a puppy or adolescent (under 3 years old) and does not have other outlets for his energy.
- He’s a particularly active type of dog (like the herding or sporting breeds) who needs a “job” to be happy.

Recommendations

Expand your dog’s world and increase his “people time” in the following ways:

- Walk your dog daily – its good exercise for both of you.
- Teach your dog to fetch a ball or Frisbee and practice with him as often as possible.
- Teach your dog a few commands and/or tricks and practice them every day for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Take an obedience class with your dog.
- Provide interesting toys to keep your dog busy when you’re not home (Kong-type toys filled with treats or busy-box toys). Also rotating the toys makes them seem new and interesting (see our handout “Dog Toys and How to Use Them”).
- If your dog is barking to get your attention, make sure he has sufficient time with you on a daily basis (petting, grooming, playing, and exercising), so he doesn’t have to resort to misbehaving to get your attention.
- Keep your dog inside when you’re unable to supervise him.
- Take your dog to work with you every now and then, if possible.
- If you work very long hours, take him to a doggie daycare or have a friend or neighbor walk and/or play with him.
- Never give your dog attention while he is barking. Ignore him until he stops for at least three seconds, then reward with attention or treats.

Frustration/Learned

Your dog may be barking due to frustration or as a learned behavior if:

- The barking occurs in the presence of “strangers” seen through the window and/or fence or when on a leash. It may include the mail carrier, children walking to and from school, and other dogs or neighbors in adjacent yards.
- Your dog’s posture while he’s barking appears threatening – tail held high and ears up and forward.
- You’ve encouraged your dog to be responsive to people and noises outside.

Recommendations

- Teach your dog the “quiet” command. When he begins to bark at a passer-by, interrupt him, without calling his name or startling him. You can also wait for him to take a breath. The moment he is quiet reward him with a high value treat. You can also use clicker training to teach the “quiet” command by clicking and treating when he is quiet. The more times he is rewarded for being quiet the more often he will be quiet. Once he is starting to understand the behavior of being quiet, you can start to use the “quiet” command. Avoid yelling “quiet” before your dog actually knows the command.

- Counter-condition your dog to the stimulus that triggers the barking. Teach him that strangers are actually friends and that good things happen to him when these people are around. By giving him a treat when he sees someone new, your dog will learn to associate good things and be less likely to bark. Use a high value food reward such as little pieces of cheese or meat and every time your dog sees a new person, reward him with these high value treats. It may take several sessions before a person can come close without your dog barking. When a person does finally get close enough without your dog barking, have them feed him the treats or throw a toy for him. In order for this technique to work however, you'll have to make sure your dog doesn't see new people between sessions.
- Limit the dog's access to views that might be causing him to bark when you are not home, by closing the blinds or curtains, especially if working on counter-conditioning.
- If your dog barks while inside the house when you're home, redirect his attention by having him obey a command, such as "sit" or "down," and reward him with praise and a treat.
- Don't inadvertently encourage this type of barking by enticing your dog to bark at things he hears or sees outside.
- Have your dog neutered (or spayed if your dog is a female) to decrease frustration.

Fears and Phobias

Your dog's barking may be a response to something he is afraid of if:

- The barking occurs when he's exposed to loud noises, such as thunderstorms, firecrackers, or construction equipment.
- Your dog's posture indicates fear – ears back, tail held low.

Recommendations

- Identify what is frightening your dog and desensitize him to it.
- Mute noise from outside by leaving your dog in a basement or windowless bathroom and leave on a television, radio, or loud fan. Block off your dog's access to outdoor views that might be causing a fear response, by closing curtains or doors to certain rooms.

Separation Anxiety

Your dog may be barking due to separation anxiety if:

- The barking occurs only when you're gone and starts as soon as, or shortly after, you leave.
- Your dog displays other behaviors that reflect a strong attachment to you, such as following you from room to room, frantic greetings or reacting anxiously to your preparations to leave.
- Your dog has recently experienced a change in the family's schedule that results in his being left alone more often; a move to a new house; the death or loss of a family member or another family pet; a period at an animal shelter or boarding kennel.

Recommendations

Separation anxiety may be resolved using counter-conditioning and desensitization techniques.

What not to do

We do not recommend the use of bark collars. Bark collars are specially designed collars that deliver an aversive whenever your dog barks. There are several different types of bark collars: citronella collars, aversive sound collars, and electric shock collars. However if your dog is barking due to anxiety, using any form of aversive will not solve the problem; rather it will make the anxiety worse.

We especially DO NOT recommend an electric shock collar. The shock is painful for your dog and can result in redirected aggression toward people or other pets that may be around the dog when shocked.

The other main drawback of bark collars is that they do not address the underlying cause of barking. You may be able to eliminate the barking itself, but symptom substitution may also occur, resulting in your dog digging, escaping, or becoming destructive or even aggressive

The Fearful Dog

Dogs may display a variety of behaviors when they are afraid. A frightened dog may try to escape, may show appeasement behaviors (avoidance of eye contact, fearful urinating, rolling over to expose his belly), or he may freeze and remain immobile. Some dogs will bark and/or growl at the object that is causing their fear. In extreme cases of fearfulness a dog may be destructive (out of general anxiety or in an attempt to escape), or he may lose control of his bladder or bowels and, therefore, house soil. A fearful dog will display certain body postures, including lowering his head, flattening his ears back against his head, and tucking his tail between his legs. He may also pant, salivate, tremble and/or pace.

Causes of Fearful Behavior

Determining why your dog is fearful is not always essential to treating the fearful behavior, although the reason for his fear will dictate the relative success of the treatment. A dog that is genetically predisposed to general fearfulness, or a dog that was improperly socialized during a critical stage in the development, will probably not respond as well to treatment as a dog that has developed a specific fear in response to a specific experience. It is essential, however, to first rule out any medical causes for your dog's fearful behavior. Your first step should be to take your dog to your veterinarian for a thorough medical evaluation.

What You Can Do

Most fears will not go away by themselves, and if left untreated, may get worse. Some fear, when treated, will decrease in intensity or frequency but may not disappear entirely. Once medical reasons have been ruled out, the first step in dealing with your dog's fearful behavior is to identify what triggers his fear. If he is afraid of being left alone, see our handout: "Separation Anxiety." Most fears can be treated using clicker training, desensitization, and counter-conditioning.

Clicker Training

- Condition the clicker, by clicking and giving your dog a treat. Repeat 10 to 12 times.
- Once your dog is conditioned to the clicker, shape a new behavior, like spin or shake starting at a safe distance from the fear stimuli and then gradually decrease the distance to the stimuli. To shape a behavior, you want to click and treat for any small approximations of the finished behavior. For instance, if you are shaping spin, then you would click and treat for any head movement in one direction, building up to your dog looking over his shoulder in that same direction, and then finally taking steps until he spins completely around.

Desensitization

- Begin by exposing your dog to a very low level or small amount of whatever it is that is causing his fear. For example, if he is afraid of bicycles, start with a bicycle placed at a distance of 100 feet from your dog.
- As long as your dog remains relaxed gradually move the bicycle closer to him. If at any point he becomes anxious, move the bicycle further away and proceed at a slower pace.
- When your dog can remain relaxed in the presence of a stationary bicycle, move the bicycle 100 feet away again and have someone slowly ride it around. Gradually increase the proximity of the slowly moving bicycle. Repeat this procedure as many times as necessary, increasing the speed of the moving bicycle.
- This process may take several days, weeks, or even months. You must proceed at a slow enough pace that your dog never becomes fearful during the desensitization process. Additionally, whatever causes the dog's fearful reaction must be limited or (preferably) completely removed from his environment during times that you are not working on treatment.

Counter Conditioning

Counter conditioning works best when used along with desensitization. This involves teaching the dog a new reaction to the fear stimulus.

- Using the desensitization technique example described previously, when your dog is first exposed to the bicycle, give him praise. By pairing positive things with the bicycle, your dog will begin to make good associations and over time learn that whenever the bicycle appears, good things happen!
- Do not use punishment, collar corrections, or scolding. The point of counter conditioning is for him to always associate pleasant things with the thing that frightens him.

Realistic Expectations

Some of the things that frighten dogs can be difficult to reproduce and/or control. For example, if your dog is afraid of thunderstorms, he may be responding to other things that occur during the storm, such as smells, barometric pressure changes, and/or changes in the light. During the desensitization process it is impossible for you to reproduce all of these factors. If your dog is afraid of men, you may work at desensitizing him, but if an adult man lives in your household and your dog is constantly exposed to him, this can disrupt the gradual process of desensitization.

When to Get Help

Because desensitization and counter conditioning can be difficult to do, and because behavior problems may increase if these techniques are done incorrectly, you may want to get professional, in-home help from an animal behavior specialist. It is important to keep in mind that a fearful dog that feels trapped or is pushed too far may become aggressive. Some dogs will respond aggressively to whatever it is that frightens them. If your dog displays any aggressive behavior, such as growling, snarling, snapping, or baring his teeth, stop all behavior modification procedures and seek professional help from an animal behavior specialist as soon as possible.

Consult With Your Veterinarian

Medication may be available that can help your dog feel less anxious for short time periods. Your veterinarian is the only person who is licensed and qualified to prescribe medication for your dog. Do not attempt to give your dog any over-the-counter or prescription medication without consulting with your veterinarian. Animals do not respond to drugs the same way people do, and a medication that may be safe for humans could be fatal to your dog. Drug therapy alone will not reduce fears and phobias permanently. In extreme cases, behavior modification and medication used together may be the best approach.

New Products

There are products being marketed by reputable companies to help with anxiety and stress relief in dogs. Please note that none of these is an automatic cure for fear/anxiety, but should be used in conjunction with behavior modification techniques. Please see our handout “Stress Relief for Your Pet” for more information.

What Not To Do

- Do not punish your dog for being afraid. Punishment will only make him more fearful. That includes punishment after the fact for destruction or house soiling caused by anxiety or fear. Animals do not understand punishment after the fact, even if it is only seconds later. This kind of destruction or house soiling is the result of panic not misbehavior.
- Do not try to force your dog to experience the object or situation that is causing him to be afraid. For example, if he is afraid of bicycles and you force him to stand in place while bicycles whiz by, he will probably become more fearful, rather than less fearful of bicycles.

Separation Anxiety

Dogs with separation anxiety exhibit behavior problems when they're left alone. Typically, they'll have a dramatic anxiety response within a short time (20-45 minutes) after their owners leave them. The most common of these behaviors are:

- Digging, chewing, and scratching at doors or windows in an attempt to escape and reunite with their owners.
- Howling, barking, and crying in an attempt to get their owners to return.
- Urination and defecation (even with housetrained dogs) as a result of distress.

Why Do Dogs Suffer From Separation Anxiety?

We don't fully understand exactly why some dogs suffer from separation anxiety and under similar circumstances, others don't. It's important to realize, however, that the destruction and house soiling that often occur with separation anxiety are not the dog's attempt to punish or seek revenge on his owner for leaving him alone, but are actually part of a panic response.

Separation anxiety sometimes occurs when:

- A dog has never or rarely been left alone.
- Following a long interval, such as vacation, during which the owner and dog are constantly together.
- After a traumatic event (from the dog's point of view) such as a period of time spent at a shelter or boarding kennel.
- After a change in the family's routine or structure (a child leaving for college, a change in work schedule, a move to a new home, a new pet or person in the home).

How Do I Know If My Dog Has Separation Anxiety?

Because there are many reasons for the behaviors associated with separation anxiety, it's essential to correctly diagnose the reason for the behavior before proceeding with treatment. If most, or all, of the following statements are true about your dog, he **may** have a separation anxiety problem:

- The behavior *always* occurs when he's left alone, no matter how long.
- He follows you from room to room whenever you're home.
- He displays effusive, frantic greeting behaviors.
- He reacts with excitement, depression, or anxiety to your preparations to leave the house.
- He dislikes spending time outdoors by himself.

What to Do If Your Dog Has Separation Anxiety

For a minor separation anxiety problem, the following techniques may be helpful by themselves. For more severe problems, these techniques should be used along with the desensitization process described in the next section. It is also recommended to seek professional help for more severe problems.

- Keep arrivals and departures low-key. For example, when you arrive home, ignore your dog for the first few minutes, and then calmly pet him.
- Leave your dog with an article of clothing that smells like you, an old t-shirt that you've slept in recently, for example.
- Establish a "safety cue" – a word or action that you use *every* time you leave that tells your dog you'll be back. Dogs usually learn to associate certain cues with short absences by their owners. For example, establish a "safety cue" – a word or action that you use *every* time you leave that tells your dog you'll be back. Dogs usually learn to associate certain cues with short absences by their owners. For example, when you take out the garbage, your dog knows you come right back and doesn't become anxious. Therefore, it's helpful to associate a safety cue with your practice departures and short-duration absences. Some examples of safety cues are: a playing radio; a playing television; a bone; or a toy (one that doesn't have dangerous fillings and can't be torn into pieces). Use your safety cue during practice sessions, but don't present your dog with the safety cue when you leave for a period of time longer than he can tolerate or the value of the safety cue will be lost. Leaving a radio on to provide company for your dog isn't particularly useful by itself, but a playing radio may work if you've used it consistently as a safety cue in your practice sessions. If your dog engages in destructive chewing as a part of his separation distress, offering him a chewing item as a safety cue is a good idea. Very hard rubber toys that can be stuffed with treats, Nylabone-like products and natural chew bones are good choices.

Desensitization Techniques for More Severe Cases of Separation Anxiety

The primary treatment for more severe cases of separation anxiety is a systematic process of getting your dog used to being alone. You must teach your dog to remain calm during “practice” departures and short absences. We recommend the following procedure:

- Begin by engaging in your normal departure activities (getting your keys, putting on your coat), then sit back down. Repeat this step until your dog shows no distress in response to your activities.
- Next, engage in your normal departure activities and go to the door and open it, then sit back down.
- Next, step outside the door, leaving the door open, and then return.
- Finally, step outside, close the door, and then immediately return. Slowly get your dog accustomed to being along with the door closed between you for several seconds.
- Proceed very gradually from step to step, repeating each step until your dog shows no signs of distress (the number of repetitions will vary depending on the severity of the problem). If at any time in this process your actions produce an anxiety response in your dog, you’ve proceeded too fast. Return to the earlier step in the process and practice this step until the dog shows no distress response, then proceed to the next step.
- When your dog is tolerating your being on the other side of the door for several seconds, begin short-duration absences. This step involves giving the dog a verbal cue (for example, “I’ll be back”), leaving and then returning within a minute. Your return must be low-key: either ignore your dog or greet him quietly and calmly. If he shows no signs of distress, repeat the exercise. If he appears anxious, wait until he relaxes to repeat the exercise. Gradually increase the length of time you’re gone.
- Practice as many absences as possible that last less than ten minutes. You can do many departures within one session if your dog relaxes sufficiently between departures. You should also scatter practice departures and short-duration absences throughout the day.
- Once your dog can handle short absences (30 to 90 minutes), he’ll usually be able to handle longer intervals alone and you won’t have to work up to all-day absences minute by minute. The hard part is at the beginning, but the job gets easier as you go along. Nevertheless, you must go slowly at first. How long it takes to condition your dog to being alone depends on the severity of his problem.

Teaching the Sit-Stay and Down-Stay

Practice sit-stay or down-stay exercises using positive reinforcement. Never punish your dog during these training sessions. Gradually increase the distance you move away from your dog. Your goal is to be able to move briefly out of your dog’s sight while he remains in the “stay” position. The point is to teach him that he can remain calm and happy in one place while you go to another. As you progress, you can do this during the course of your normal daily activities. For example, if you’re watching television with your dog by your side and you get up for a snack; tell him to stay, and leave the room. When you come back, give him a treat and quietly praise him.

Interim Solutions

Because the above-described treatments can take a while, and because a dog with separation anxiety can do serious damage to himself and/or your home in the interim, some of the following suggestions may be helpful in dealing with the problems in the short term:

- Consult your veterinarian about the possibility of drug therapy. A good anti-anxiety drug should not sedate your dog, but simply reduce his anxiety while you’re gone. Such medication is a temporary measure and should be used in conjunction with behavior modification techniques.
- Take your dog to a dog day care facility or boarding kennel.
- Leave your dog with a friend, family member, or neighbor.
- Take your dog to work with you, even for a half a day, if possible.

What Won’t Help a Separation Anxiety Problem:

- Punishment is not an effective way to treat separation anxiety. In fact, if you punish your dog after you return home it may actually increase his separation anxiety.
- Crating your dog. Your dog will still engage in anxiety responses in the crate. He may urinate, defecate, howl or even injure himself in an attempt to escape from the crate.
- Leave the radio on (unless the radio is used as a “safety cue” – see above).
- Obedience school. While obedience training is always a good idea, it won’t directly help a separation anxiety problem. Separation anxiety is not the result of disobedience or lack of training, it’s a panic response.

Stress Relief for Your Pet

What stresses your pet? A trip to the veterinarian? Overnight guests? Thunder and firecrackers? Leaving him alone? Clipping his toenails?

Stress and anxiety often cause behavior problems in our pets. Stressed-out cats may have litter box problems or begin fighting with other pets. Anxious dogs may be destructive, escape, urine mark, or simply pant and pace.

If your pet suffers from anxiety, you should first consult with your veterinarian. Once you've ruled out any physical problems, you can discuss behavior modification techniques and, if necessary, prescription anti-anxiety medication.

If your pet's problems aren't severe enough to call for prescription medication, there are some over-the-counter products you can try to help him feel calm and collected.

Pheromone Products

Pheromones are used in a variety of applications to influence animal emotions and behaviors. Comfort Zone makes a pheromone product that can help cats feel less anxious. Also called Feliway, the product comes in two versions. The spray version may be used inside your cat's carrier, for example, or on a towel that you can wrap around him when clipping toenails. The plug-in diffuser version can be used in your home. The diffuser covers a 500 to 650 square foot area and is useful for more prolonged exposure to stressful situations. You may find it useful if you are introducing a new person or animal to your household or when guests disrupt your cat's normal routine. The active ingredient in Feliway is a synthetic version of the pheromone cats leave behind when they use their cheeks to mark objects. Cheek marking is an activity that indicates a cat is happy and comfortable in his environment.

A similar product for dogs, Comfort Zone with D.A.P.®, contains a substance called "dog appeasing pheromone." It may be used to help dogs with noise phobia, mild separation anxiety or other situations that cause stress. The active ingredient in D.A.P. is a synthetic version of the pheromone produced by nursing female dogs.

Pheromones are purportedly safe for animals and do not affect humans. Comfort Zone products can be purchased at most pet supply stores or through pet supply catalogs.

Flower Essences

Flower essences are dilute extracts of various types of flowers and plants. They are used to treat emotional distress in animals and people. A liquid administered in very small doses (a few drops a day in your pet's water bowl), flower essences can be purchased at specialty pet supply stores, as well as most health food stores. One brand of flower essence, Bach Flower Remedies®, though originally created for humans, has been used successfully with pets. To learn more about the use of the Bach remedies read "Bach Flower Remedies for Animals," a book by Gregory Vlamis and Helen Graham. There are also flower essences created expressly for pets. One Web site you can check out is www.spiritessence.com.

Body wraps

Wrapping a dog in a snug garment may help reduce stress. The wrap is believed to help calm sensory reception. This remedy is based on therapeutic touch and on work done with autistic children. Wraps can be purchased under the product name "Anxiety Wrap" on the Internet. An easy and inexpensive alternative is to fit the dog with a tight t-shirt, knotted on top of his back to make it snug.

Herbal Products

The aroma of some herbs has calming effects on animals and people. The Calming Collar incorporates a blend of herbs in a collar for dogs or cats. Go to www.calmingcollars.com for more information.

Supplements

Two products use a combination of natural ingestible ingredients that are known to have anxiety-relief benefits. Composure (made by Vetri-Science®) and Calming (made by PetNaturals®) contain L-theanine, an amino acid, thiamine (Vitamin B1), and colostrum. Composure is made to be given twice daily and becomes effective after the animal has been taking it for 10 to 14 days. Calming is designed to be used in short-term situations and becomes effective within 15 minutes and lasts for several hours. For more information, you can visit the manufacturers' Web sites at *vetriscience.com* and *petnaturals.com*.

Like us, individual dogs and cats may respond differently to different treatments, so you'll want to experiment to see what works best for your pet.

Note: None of these products is intended as an automatic cure for behavior problems. Each should be used in conjunction with behavior modification techniques. Some products may work better than others on your animal and others may not have an effect at all. All of the products are natural and not known to cause harm.

The suggestions provided are for informational purposes and are not intended as a substitute for advice from a veterinarian. The products mentioned are not approved for the diagnosis, treatment or prevention of disease. For more information on the use and efficacy of these products, please refer to the directions provided by the manufacturers or contact them directly.

Understanding Reactivity in Dogs

Reactivity is not aggression. Aggression means intent to do harm and though reactivity can look aggressive in nature when your dog is barking and lunging on leash, there is no intention to do harm. Many reactive dogs live well with other dogs or play well at dog parks, because reactivity is just your dog reacting to a specific stimulus. Dogs can be reactive to a variety of different stimuli like people, other dogs, and bicycles.

There are many different reasons for reactivity and different levels of intensity. Because reactivity is so complex, we recommend that you get professional in-home help from an animal behavior specialist if your dog is displaying any reactive behavior. Phone consultations can give you tips on how to manage the reactivity but to completely resolve the behavior, an animal behavior specialist is recommended.

Why Reactivity Occurs:

Frustration: Some dogs, if restrained by a barrier, like a leash or fence, can become aroused or excited at the sight of a person, dog, or object. For example, when your dog is on leash and tries to pull towards a specific stimulus, they are met with tension from the leash, which leads to frustration and escalates the behavior to reactivity.

Fear: Some dogs become fearful at the sight of a person, dog, or object. This may be the result of a specific scary experience that occurred in your dog's life or due to the lack of socialization. Either way, as the person, dog, or object gets closer, your dog is unable to leave due to the leash, which then forces your dog to face the specific stimulus, causing reactivity.

Learned behavior: When some dogs see a stimuli, like a person, dog, or object and proceed to approach but are met with an aversive, like being pulled back on the leash, they may begin to associate the jerk on leash to the people, dogs, or objects. This results in them reacting to the stimuli when first seen, which often results in more tension on the leash and over time an escalation in behavior to reactivity.

What You Can Do

- Teach your dog some redirection behaviors like target and “watch me”. Once your dog knows some of these behaviors, use them to redirect his attention when reacting.
- Start training your dog at a distance he doesn't react to the stimuli and build up to being closer to the person, dog, or object that causes him to react. If you move closer and your dog starts to react, then you have moved too close too fast. The idea is to only move when your dog is not reacting at that distance.
- Using treats and praise, reinforce appropriate and calm behaviors when your dog is around a specific stimulus and doesn't react.
- Avoid exposing your dog to situations where he is more likely to show reactivity. For instance avoid walking your dog at times of the day when you know there will be many other people and dogs out.
- If in a situation where your dog is reacting and you are unable to redirect, gently lead your dog away from the situation.
- Spay or neuter your dog.

What Not To Do

- Do not punish. Punishment won't help and, in fact, will make the problem worse. If the reactivity is motivated by fear, punishment will make your dog more fearful, and could lead to aggression. Attempting to punish or physically restrain a reactive dog may cause him to escalate his behavior and is likely to result in a bite or a severe attack.
- Do not pull back on the leash when your dog is reacting. Same is true if you know your dog will react; do not tighten up on the leash before a person or another dog gets closer.
- Do not leave your dog unattended outside for long periods of time.

Your Cat: Indoors or Out

If you allow your cat to wander around outside on her own, without your supervision, she is susceptible to any of the following tragedies:

- Being hit by a car
- Ingesting a deadly poison, like antifreeze or pesticide
- Being trapped by a unhappy neighbor or picked up by animal control
- Contracting a disease
- Being attacked by a roaming dog, cat, or wild animal
- Becoming lost and unable to find her way home
- Encountering an adult or child with cruel intentions

Benefits of keeping your cat indoors:

- You are able to create a stronger bond with your cat. An indoor cat is easier to spend quality time with than an outdoor cat that comes and goes.
- Your cat is safe from outdoor tragedies. There are many fatal situations that your cat may encounter when roaming, like a car or another animal.
- Your cat will live longer; the average life span of an indoor cat is 12 to 20 years, versus 1 to 9 for an outdoor cat.
- You are able to reinforce litter box habits and catch any changes, like straining to pee or blood in her urine.
- You can control what your cat eats, which will help manage her weight and prevent things like diarrhea from occurring.
- You can monitor your cat's health. Cats are good at hiding illnesses and injury. If you only see your cat from time to time, you may not notice if she has lost weight or if she isn't drinking enough water.

If you currently have an outdoor cat, you can change her behavior. It will take time and patience, but it might save her life. Remember to always keep your doors closed and teach your children the importance of keeping the doors closed, too.

To help her be a happy indoor cat, provide her with the following:

- Provide plenty of toys. By providing your cat with a variety of toys that she can chase, bat around, pounce on, and chew you can prevent boredom. She'll also learn to love the indoors as a result.
- Provide scratching posts. Scratching is a normal cat behavior, which cats love to do, however when done on the carpet or furniture can be destructive. By providing a variety of scratching posts you can prevent any destruction and allow her the chance to still stretch her muscles, mark her territory, and work off some energy.
- Provide a room with a view. Include perches in this room, so she can watch the birds. Your cat will also enjoy sunning herself by the window.
- Provide her with some cat grass or cat nip. She will enjoy nibbling it and rolling in it.
- Teach you cat to walk on a harness and leash, so together you can enjoy the outdoors. A harness and leash will allow you to supervise your cat when outdoors but keeps her safe from any dangers.

Starting Out Right With Your New Cat And The Litter Box

Most cats have a specific preference about where they want to eliminate. By following the suggestions outlined in this handout, you'll be able to start off on the right foot with your new cat.

There are many reasons not to ever declaw a cat, avoiding litter box problems is just one small one. A very common behavior after declawing is the cat going outside the box. By removing the nails the cat's natural sense of feel and scratching are altered dramatically and it often results in refusing to use the box.

Location

Most people are inclined to place the litter box in an out-of-the-way spot in order to minimize odor and loose particles of cat litter in the house. Often, the litter box ends up in the basement, sometimes next to an appliance and/or on a cold cement floor. This type of location can be undesirable from your cat's point of view for several reasons.

If you have a kitten or an older cat, she may not be able to get down a long flight of stairs in time to get to the litter box. If she is new to the household, she may not remember where the litter box is if it's located in an area she seldom frequents. Your cat may be startled while using the litter box if a furnace, washer or dryer suddenly comes on and that may be the last time she'll risk such a frightening experience! If your cat likes to scratch the surface surrounding her litter box, she may find a cold cement floor unappealing.

Therefore, you may have to compromise. The litter box should be kept in a location that affords your cat some privacy, but is also conveniently located. If you place the litter box in a closet or a bathroom, be sure the door is wedged open from both sides, in order to prevent her from being trapped in or out. Depending on where it's located, you might consider cutting a hole in a closet door and adding a swinging door. If the litter box sits on a smooth, slick or cold surface, put a small throw rug underneath the litter box.

Type of Litter

Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained litters, presumably because they have a softer feel. The new scoopable litters usually have finer grains than the typical clay litter. However, high-quality, dust-free, clay litters are relatively small-grained and may be perfectly acceptable to your cat. Potting soil also has a very soft texture, but is not very absorbent. If you suspect your cat has a history of spending time outdoors and is likely to eliminate in your houseplants, you can try mixing some potting soil with your regular litter. Pellet-type litters or those made from citrus peels are not recommended. Once you find a litter your cat likes, don't change types or brands. Buying the least expensive litter or whatever brand happens to be on sale, could result in your cat not using the litter box.

Many cats are put off by the odor of scented or deodorant litters. For the same reason, it's not a good idea to place a room deodorizer or air freshener near the litter box. A thin layer of baking soda placed on the bottom of the box will help absorb odors without repelling your cat. Odor shouldn't be a problem if the litter box is kept clean. If you find the litter box odor offensive, your cat probably finds it even more offensive and won't want to eliminate there.

Number of Litter Boxes

You should have at least as many litter boxes as you have cats. That way, none of them will ever be prevented from eliminating in the litter box because it's already occupied. You might also consider placing them in several locations around the house, so that no one cat can "guard" the litter box area and prevent the other cats from accessing it. We also recommend that you place at least one litter box on each level of your house. It's not possible to designate a personal litter box for each cat in your household, as cats will use any litter box that's available. Occasionally, a cat may refuse to use the litter box after another cat has used it. In this case, all of the litter boxes will need to be kept extremely clean and additional boxes may be needed.

To Cover or Not To Cover

Some people prefer to use a covered litter box, however, there are some potential problems with using this type of box. You may want to experiment by offering both types at first, to discover what your cat prefers.

Potential Problems

- You may forget to clean the litter box as frequently as you should because the dirty litter is “out of sight – out of mind.”
- A covered litter box traps odors inside, so it will need to be cleaned more often than an open one.
- A covered litter box may not allow a large cat sufficient room to turn around, scratch, dig or position herself in the way she wants.
- A covered litter box may also make it easier for another cat to lay in wait and "ambush" the user as she exits the box. On the other hand, a covered litter box may feel more private and may be preferred by timid cats.

Cleaning the Box

To meet the needs of the most discriminating cat, feces should be scooped out of the litter box daily. How often you change the litter depends on the number of cats you have, the number of litter boxes, and the type of litter you use. Twice a week is a general guideline for clay litter, but depending on the circumstances, you may need to change it every other day or once a week. If you scoop the litter daily, scoopable litter can go two to three weeks before the litter needs to be changed. If you notice an odor or if much of the litter is wet or clumped, it's time for a change. Don't use strong smelling chemicals or cleaning products when washing the litter box, as it may cause your cat to avoid it. Washing with soap and water should be sufficient.

Liners

Some cats don't mind having a liner in the litter box, while others do. Again, you may want to experiment to see if your cat is bothered by a liner in the box. If you do use a liner, make sure it's anchored in place, so it can't easily catch your cat's claws or be pulled out of place.

Depth of Litter

Some people think that the more litter they put in the box, the less often they will have to clean it. This is not true. Most cats won't use litter that's more than about two inches deep. In fact, some long-haired cats, actually prefer less litter and a smooth, slick surface, such as the bottom of the litter box. The litter box needs to be cleaned on a regular basis and adding extra litter is not a way around that chore.

"Litter-Training" Cats

There's really no such thing as "litter-training" a cat in the same way one would house-train a dog. A cat doesn't need to be taught what to do with a litter box. The only thing you need to do is provide an acceptable, accessible litter box, using the suggestions above. It's not necessary to take your cat to the litter box and move her paws back and forth in the litter, in fact, we don't recommend it. This may actually be an unpleasant experience for your cat and is likely to initiate a negative association with the litter box.

If Problems Develop

If your cat begins to eliminate in areas other than the litter box, your first call should always be to your veterinarian. Many medical conditions can cause a change in a cat's litter box habits. If your veterinarian determines that your cat is healthy, the cause may be behavioral. Most litter box behavior problems can be resolved by using behavior modification techniques. Punishment is not the answer. For long-standing or complex situations, contact an animal behavior specialist who has experience working with cats.

Solving Litter Box Problems

Cats tend to have surface and location preferences for where, and on what, they like to eliminate. Most cats prefer a loose, sandy substance, which is why they will use a litter box. It's only when their preferences include the laundry basket, the bed, or the Persian rug, that normal elimination behavior becomes a problem. With careful analysis of your cat's environment, specific factors that have contributed to the litter box problem can usually be identified and changed, so that your cat will again use the litter box for elimination.

Some common reasons why cats don't use the litter box are: medical, anxiety, an aversion to the box, a preference for a particular surface not provided by the box, a preference for a location where there is no box or a combination of them. You'll need to do some detective work to determine the reason your cat is house soiling. Sometimes, the reason the litter box problem initially started may not be the same reason it's continuing. For example, your cat may have stopped using the litter box because of a urinary tract infection, and has now developed a surface preference for carpet and a location preference for the bedroom closet. You would need to address all the factors in order to resolve the problem.

Cats don't stop using their litter boxes because they're mad or upset and are trying to get revenge for something that "offended" or "angered" them. Because humans act for these reasons, it's easy for us to assume that our pets do as well. Animals don't act out of spite or revenge so it won't help to give your cat special privileges in the hope that she'll start using the litter box again.

Medical Problems

It's common for cats to begin eliminating outside of their litter box when they have a medical problem. For example, a urinary tract infection or crystals in the urine can make urination very painful. Cats often associate this pain with the litter box and begin to avoid it. If your cat has a house soiling problem, check with your veterinarian first to rule out any medical problems for the behavior. Cats don't always act sick, even when they are, and only a trip to the veterinarian for a thorough physical examination can rule out a medical problem.

Anxiety

It's also common for cats to begin eliminating outside of their litter box when there are stressed or feeling anxious. Many things can cause anxiety, like a new baby, a new pet, moving, conflict between animals in the home, or a roaming cat sitting outside the window.

What You Can Do

- If your cat is eliminating in response to a new resident in your home (a new baby, roommate, or spouse), have the new resident make friends with your cat by feeding, grooming, and playing with your cat. Also make sure good things happen to your cat when the new baby is around.
- Resolve conflicts between animals in your home.
- Restrict your cat's access to doors and windows through which they can observe animals outside. If this isn't possible, discourage the presence of other animals near your house.
- Reduce your cat's stress using stress reducing techniques like clicker training and play therapy.

Aversion to the Litter Box

Your cat may have decided that the litter box is an unpleasant place to eliminate if:

- The box is not clean enough for her.
- She has experienced painful urination or defecation in the box due to a medical problem.
- She has been startled by a noise while using the box.
- She has been "ambushed" while in the box either by another cat, a child, a dog, or by you, if you were attempting to catch her for some reason.
- She associates the box with punishment (someone punished her for eliminating outside the box, and then placed her in the box).

What You Can Do

- Keep the litter box extremely clean. Scoop at least once a day and change the litter completely every four to five days. If you use scoopable litter, you may not need to change the litter as frequently. This will vary according to how many cats are in the household, how many litter boxes you have, and how large the cats are that are using the box or boxes. A good guideline is that if you can smell the box, and then you can be sure it's offensive to your cat as well.
- Add a new box in a different location than the old one and use a different type of litter in the new box. Because your cat has decided that her old litter box is unpleasant, you'll want to make the new one different enough that she doesn't simply apply the old, negative associations to the new box.
- Make sure that the litter box isn't near an appliance that makes noise or in an area of the house that your cat doesn't frequent.
- If ambushing is a problem, try to create more than one exit from the litter box, so that if the "ambusher" is waiting by one area, your cat always has an escape route.

Surface Preferences

All animals develop preferences for particular surface on which they like to eliminate. These preferences may be established early in life, but they may also change overnight for reasons that we don't understand. Your cat may have a surface preference if:

- She consistently eliminates on a particular texture. For example, soft-textured surfaces, such as carpet, bedding, or clothing, or slick-textured surfaces, such as tile, cement, bathtubs, or sinks.
- She frequently scratches on this same texture after elimination, even if she eliminated in the litter box.
- She is or was previously an outdoor cat and prefers to eliminate on grass or soil.

What You Can Do

- If your cat is eliminating on soft surfaces, try using a high quality, scoopable litter, and put a soft rug under the litter box.
- If your cat is eliminating on slick, smooth surfaces, try putting just a very thin layer of litter at one end of the box, leaving the other end bare, and put the box on a hard floor.
- If your cat has a history of being outdoors, add some soil or sod to the litter box.
- Make the area where she has been eliminating aversive to her by covering it with an upside down carpet runner or aluminum foil, or by placing citrus-scented cotton balls over the area.

Location Preferences

Your cat may have a location preference if:

- She always eliminates in quiet, protected places, such as under a desk downstairs or in a closet.
- She eliminates in an area where the litter box was previously kept or where there are urine odors.
- She eliminates on a different level of the house from where the litter box is located.

What You Can Do

- Put at least one litter box on every level of your house.
- Make the area where she has been eliminating aversive to her by covering it with upside down carpet runner or aluminum foil, or by placing citrus-scented cotton balls over the area.

OR

- Put a litter box in the location where your cat has been eliminating. When she has consistently used this box for at least one month, you may gradually move it to a more convenient location at a rate of an inch per day.

Cleaning Soiled Areas

Because animals are highly motivated to continue soiling an area that smells like urine or feces, it's imperative that you thoroughly clean the soiled areas.

What Not to Do

Don't ever punish your cat for eliminating outside the litter box. If you find a soiled area, it's too late to administer a correction. Do nothing but clean it up. Rubbing your cat's nose in it, taking her to the spot and scolding her, or any other type of punishment, will only make her afraid of you or afraid to eliminate in your presence. Animals don't understand punishment after the fact, even if it's only seconds later. Punishment will do more harm than good.

Other Types of House Soiling Problems

- **Marking/Spraying:** To determine if your cat is marking or spraying, please see our handout: "Territorial Marking Behavior in Cats."
- **Fears or Phobias:** When an animal becomes frightened, they may lose control of their bladder and/or bowels. If your cat is afraid of loud noises, strangers, or other animals, she may house soil when she is exposed to these stimuli.

Introducing Your New Cat to Your Other Pets

It's important to have realistic expectations when introducing a new pet to a resident pet. Some cats are more social than other cats. For example, an eight-year-old cat that has never been around other animals may never learn to share her territory (and her people) with other pets in the household. However, an eight-week-old kitten separated from her mom and littermates for the first time might prefer to have a cat or dog companion. Cats are territorial and need to be introduced to other animals very slowly in order to give them time to get used to each other before there is a face-to-face confrontation. Slow introductions help prevent fearful and aggressive problems from developing. PLEASE NOTE: When you introduce pets to each other, one of them may send "play" signals that can be misinterpreted by the other pet. If those signals are interpreted as aggression by one animal, then you should handle the situation as "aggressive."

Confinement

Confine your new cat to one medium-sized room with her litter box, food, water, and a bed. Feed your resident pets and the newcomer on each side of the door to this room. This will help all of them to associate something enjoyable (eating!) with the other's smells. Don't put the food so close to the door that the animals are too upset by each other's presence to eat. Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until your pets can eat calmly, directly on either side of the door. Next, use doorstops to prop open the door just enough to allow the animals to see each other, and repeat the whole process.

Swap Scents

Switch sleeping blankets or beds between your new cat and your resident animals so they have a chance to become accustomed to each other's scent. Rub a towel on one animal and put it underneath the food dish of another animal. You should do this with each animal in the house.

Switch Living Areas

Once your new cat is using her litter box and eating regularly while confined, let her have free time in the house while confining your other animals to the new cat's room. This switch provides another way for the animals to experience each other's scents without a face-to-face meeting. It also allows the newcomer to become familiar with her new surroundings without being frightened by the other animals.

Contact Stage

Do short supervised meetings, then increase the time based off of behavior.

Avoid Fearful and Aggressive Meetings

Avoid any interactions between your pets that result in either fearful or aggressive behavior. If these responses are allowed to become a habit, they can be difficult to change. It's better to introduce your pets to each other gradually so that neither animal becomes afraid or aggressive. You can expect mild forms of these behaviors, but don't give them the opportunity to intensify. If either animal becomes fearful or aggressive, separate them, and start over with the introduction process in a series of very small, gradual steps, as outlined above.

Precautions

If one of your pets has a medical problem or is injured, this could stall the introduction process. Check with your veterinarian to be sure that all of your pets are healthy. You'll also want to have at least one litter box per cat, and you'll probably need to clean all of the litter boxes more frequently. Make sure that none of the cats are being "ambushed" by another while trying to use the litter box. Try to keep your resident pets' schedule as close as possible to what it was before the newcomer's appearance. Cats can make lots of noise, pull each other's hair, and roll around quite dramatically without either being injured. If small spats do occur between your cats, you shouldn't attempt to intervene directly to separate the cats. Instead make a loud noise to separate the cats or throw a blanket over them. Then give them a chance to calm down before re-introducing them to each other. Make sure to avoid punishment. It won't work and could make things worse. Finally make sure each cat has a safe hiding place.

Cat to Dog Introductions

Dogs can kill a cat very easily, even if they are only playing. All it takes is one shake and the cat's neck can break. Some dogs have such a high prey drive they should never be left alone with a cat. Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats and cats usually become afraid and defensive. Use the techniques described above to begin introducing your new cat to your resident dog. In addition:

Practice Obedience

If your dog doesn't already know commands "sit," "down," "come," and "stay," you should begin working on them. Clicker training is a good way to train your dog these commands. Small pieces of food will increase your dog's motivation to perform, which will be necessary in the presence of such a strong distraction as a new cat. Even if your dog already knows these commands, work on obeying commands in return for a tidbit of food.

Controlled Meeting

After your new cat and resident dog have become comfortable eating on opposite sides of the door, and have been exposed to each other's scents as described above, you can attempt a face-to-face introduction in a controlled manner. Put your dog's leash on, and using treats, have him sit or lie down and stay. Have another family member or friend enter the room and quietly sit down next to your new cat, but don't have them physically restrain her. Have this person offer your cat some special pieces of food or catnip. At first, the cat and dog should be on opposite sides of the room. Lots of short visits are better than a few long visits. Don't drag out the visit so long that the dog becomes uncontrollable. Repeat this step several times until both the cat and dog are tolerating each other's presence without fear, aggression, or other undesirable behavior.

Let Your Cat Go

Next, allow your cat freedom to explore your dog at her own pace, with the dog still on-leash and in a "down stay." Meanwhile keep giving your dog treats and praise for his calm behavior. If your dog gets up from his "stay" position, he should be repositioned with a treat lure, and praised and rewarded for obeying the "stay" command. If your cat runs away or becomes aggressive, you're progressing too fast. Go back to the previous introduction steps.

Positive Reinforcement

Although your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with your cat is unacceptable behavior, he must also be taught how to behave appropriately and be rewarded for doing so, such as sitting, coming when called, or lying down in return for a treat. If your dog is always punished when your cat is around, and never has "good things" happen in the cat's presence, your dog may redirect aggression toward the cat.

Directly Supervise All Interactions Between Your Dog and Cat

You may want to keep your dog on-leash and with you whenever your cat is free in the house during the introduction process. Be sure that your cat has an escape route, high perches, and a place to hide. Keep your dog and cat separated when you aren't home until you're certain your cat will be safe.

Precautions

Dogs like to eat cat food. You should keep the cat food out of your dog's reach (in a closet or on a high shelf). Eating cat feces is also a relatively common behavior in dogs. Although there are no health hazards to your dog, it's probably distasteful to you. It's also upsetting to your cat to have such an important object "invaded." Unfortunately, attempts to keep your dog out of the litter box by "booby trapping" it will also keep your cat away as well. Punishment after the fact will not change your dog's behavior. The best solution is to place the litter box where your dog can't access it, for example: behind a baby gate; in a closet with the door anchored open from both sides and just wide enough for your cat; inside a tall, topless cardboard box with easy access for your cat.

A Word About Kittens and Puppies

Because they're so much smaller, kittens are in more danger of being injured, or being killed by a young energetic dog or by a predatory dog. A kitten will need to be kept separate from an especially energetic dog until she is fully-grown. Usually a well-socialized cat will be able to keep a puppy in its place, but some cats don't have enough confidence to do this. If you have an especially shy cat, you might need to keep her separated from your puppy until he matures enough to have more self-control.

When to Get Help

If the introductions don't go smoothly, seek professional help right away. Animals can be severely injured in fights, and the longer the problem continues, the harder it can be to resolve. However with professional help, conflicts between pets can often be resolved.

Territorial Marking Behavior in Cats

Cats are territorial animals, selecting areas of territory for survival. They let other people and animals know about their territory by marking it with a variety of methods and at many levels of intensity. For example, a cat may mark a valued object by rubbing it with her face. However some cats may go to the extreme of urinating or defecating to mark a particular area as their own. Urine-marking is not a house soiling problem, but rather a territorial behavior. Therefore, to resolve the problem, you need to address the underlying reason for your cat's need to mark his territory in this way.

Your cat may be urine-marking if:

- The problem is primarily urination; cats rarely mark with feces.
- Your cat urinates on new objects in the environment (a shopping bag, a visitor's purse), on objects that have unfamiliar smells, or on objects that have another animal's scent.
- Your cat has conflicts with other animals in your home.
- There are several cats in a household but not enough territory.
- Your cat has contact with other animals outside your home. A cat that's allowed outdoors may come home and mark after having an encounter with another cat outside. If your cat sees another animal through a door or window, he may also feel a need to mark his territory.
- Your cat still uses the litter box for urination and defecation.

What You Can Do:

- Spay or neuter your pets as soon as possible. Spaying or neutering your cat may stop urine-marking altogether; however, if he has been urine-marking over a long period of time, a pattern may already be established.
- Resolve conflicts between animals in your home.
- Restrict your cat's access to doors and windows through which they can observe animals outside. If this isn't possible, discourage the presence of other animals near your house. Keep your cat indoors. He'll be safer, live longer, and feel less need to mark his territory.
- Clean soiled areas thoroughly.
- Make previously soiled areas inaccessible or unattractive.
- If making soiled areas inaccessible or unattractive isn't possible, try to change the significance of those areas. Feed, treat, and play with your cat in the areas he is inclined to mark.
- Keep objects likely to cause marking out of reach. Guest's belongings, new purchases, and so forth should be placed in a closet or cabinet.
- If your cat is marking in response to a new resident in your home (a new baby, roommate, or spouse), have the new resident make friends with your cat by feeding, grooming, and playing with your cat. Also make sure good things happen to your cat when the new baby is around.
- Increase the territory by adding vertical space, like cat towers. Also reduce any stress through play therapy and positive reinforcement training techniques, like clicker training.
- Practice "nothing in life is free" with your cat. Have your cat perform at least one behavior (such as "sit") before you pet him, give him dinner, put on his leash or throw a toy for him. "Nothing in life is free" will also help build confidence in your cat and reduce the need to mark his territory.

What NOT To Do:

Don't punish your cat. Punishment is ineffective because your cat won't understand why he is being punished.

Pets Aren't People

Cats don't urinate or defecate out of spite or jealousy. If your cat urinates on your new boyfriend's backpack, this is not his opinion of your taste in men. Instead, the presence of someone new has caused stress and your cat is communicating this stress through natural responses.

Assertion or Anxiety?

Urine-marking is usually associated with instability in relationships. While this is often the case, some cats may mark when they feel anxious or stressed. For example, a new baby in the home brings new sounds, smells, and people, as well as changes in routine. Your cat probably isn't getting as much attention as he was used to getting. All of these changes cause him to feel anxious, which may cause him to mark. Your cat may also become anxious by the presence of roaming neighborhood animals in your yard, or by the introduction of a new cat or dog into your household. If your cat is feeling anxious, you might consider talking to your veterinarian about medication to reduce his anxiety while you work on behavior modification.