

Territorial Aggression

Every dog will begin to mark an invisible outline to the area they see as their own, this is known as their territory. When they begin to feel threatened within this territory, they may begin to show territorial aggression, which is essentially fear, motivated.

The experience of a dog whilst young will influence their behaviour towards visitors to the home. If the dog feels that a visitor is potentially threatened they will show a degree of defensive behaviour. This can range from barking and growling to jumping and lunging.

A regular target for dogs is postman and milkmen. Every day they come and everyday the dog scares them off again. Not knowing that the delivery person was going to leave, the dog gets rewarded for their actions and is likely to repeat the process next time. This is why this behaviour seems to be never ending to pet owners. When someone does not go away promptly, such as delivery person with a large parcel who needs the door opened, the dog may seem to be getting frustrated. This is because the dog is becoming frustrated that their actions aren't working and is when some dogs may nip at people or get them to leave.

Reducing your dog's territorial tendencies towards visitors and delivery people means introducing them on neutral territory. Arrange to meet the postman on his early morning rounds, and whilst getting him familiar with the 'friendly' postman you will also be exercising the dog too. Postman really appreciate people making the early morning effort, after all it makes their life easier and safer.

Consistent periods of socialisation with people visiting regularly, increasing the dog's socialability is necessary for consistent learning with an established offender. Introduce people, off the dog's territory and return to the house together. The use of a lead, or placing the dog in another room behind a baby gate so they can become familiar with the goings on at a safe and tolerable distance maybe necessary.

With puppies, you will find no shortage of volunteers to help socialise them. There is no greater reward than being able to play with a cute cuddly puppy.

Teaching dogs to be left alone

For even the most dedicated of dog owners there will be times when the dog has to be left alone, even if this is for short periods, whilst shopping or visiting friends. Teaching dogs how to cope with isolation is necessary to prevent problems in later life.

Dogs are by their very nature pack animals and live in groups. They derive many social benefits from this group living including safety, security and access to food and shelter. When they become separated vocalising, is a means of calling for the members of their pack to return. When they do not, they make every effort to find the group themselves and this is when destructiveness or escaping is commonly seen and in extreme cases loss of toilet training with dogs that cannot cope satisfactorily with isolation.

Teaching the dog to be left alone should begin as early in their life as possible and wherever possible within the first week or so of getting the puppy home. Puppies are quite predictable in the rest and sleep routines, generally sleeping after exercise, play or feeding. These are appropriate times to put the puppy in it's bed / resting area and once it is settled down allowing time to rest separate from the family is the start of the separation process. Dogs generally feel safe and secure in den type areas, such as an indoor kennel. Whining and scratching should be ignored if experienced but the use a baby gate between rooms can be a good idea, where the puppy still receives comfort in being able to see the other pack members but is denied direct access. This process should be repeated regularly for the puppy to be able to learn appropriately, gradually increasing the time the dog is left alone.

When you decide to return to your puppy, you must choose a time when the puppy is quiet and relaxed. Entering the room when the dog is barking or whining is rewarding the dog for this behaviour, which is exactly what you're trying to avoid.

Should you return to the home and find that your dog has had an accident or chewed something inadvertently, it is important not to tell off the dog for this behaviour. They will not be able to connect what was probably done some time ago with the telling off. All you will serve to do is punish the dog for you returning home making being left even more daunting the next time. Should accidents

occur management steps should be taken to avoid this situation next time. See chewing or house training for advice.

Submissive Urination

Dogs are programmed to accept authority from those they consider to be superior to them. Seeking approval and an eagerness to please is instinctive.

Some dogs are more submissive than others and some dogs that lack confidence when greeting others will urinate when in their presence. They are telling the other person or dog that 'you are superior and I am no threat'

This behaviour can be seen in puppies and sometimes dogs that have been admonished excessively. This isn't a deliberate act to annoy, but is involuntary and may not even be aware that he's doing it at the time!

What seems like a housetraining problem is in fact something completely different and should therefore be approached differently. Punishment should be avoided because when punishment is applied, the next time the dog is approached, the dog will adopt the same strategy and the owner and dog end up in a vicious circle of unwanted events.

Excitement and stress are key triggers to this behaviour. When arriving home, anticipating the dog's greeting and likelihood he will get excited and urinate, you need to minimise the excitement. Do not speak to the dog immediately when returning home. Do other tasks and jobs. Do not look at him / her as eye contact can often be sufficient to cause the urination. Let the dog outside to relieve as normal, but without fuss and reward him / her for relieving in the correct place. Every family member and visitor must adopt the same approach and strategy, for your training to be effective

- Dog-training classes that use positive reinforcement are a great way to socialise and improve your dog's confidence.
- Have plenty of helpers to assist, so your dog generalizes his newly learned response.
- Incorporate other activities into his weekly schedule such as agility, fly ball, or obedience classes all of which create self-esteem, confidence and above all the opportunity to meet

people who understand dogs and are likely to be helpful with your training.

Teaching a kitten to come when called

It is extremely useful to have a kitten that responds to her name and avoids you spending hours stood outside in the cold on a dark winters night. It also allows you to call your kitten away from times of danger particularly around bonfire night and when the local stray dog is seen out and about.

Cats that learn their name tend to respond with a reply meow, which can help, should your inquisitive, adventurous feline friend get into any unfortunate predicament. Many cats get innocently locked in sheds, garages and even stuck up trees because of their antics whilst out alone and hearing them reply to their name makes it easier to locate them.

Start teaching them to come when called as young as possible and most cats are motivated by food. Have your cat in sight of you and call it's name in a light gentle voice and as soon as it reaches you provide a tasty treat. Move further away each time and eventually out of sight and then begin the same exercise outside. Let the cat outside when hungry, just before a due meal and after calling her name provide her with a tasty meal of fish or chicken.

How to stop cats climbing trees

When frightened cats go upwards to avoid danger, this sometimes means the nearest tree. And to gain a vantage point to sight their prey, cats will climb trees. Going up is the easy bit, it is sometimes the coming down that causes the difficulty. The design of their claws being rearward curving provides them with a steadfast grip when climbing, therefore this can make the reverse difficult and more of a controlled fall than a steady descent. This precarious situation they sometimes get themselves into, will occasionally necessitate the need of the fire brigade to rescue a feline in distress.

If your cat is a persistent client of the emergency services you will need to find a suitable solution to deter your climbing feline friend. Cat deterrents come in various forms and it is a case of finding one that works with your particular offender.

There are proprietary branded pet repellents available from garden centres and pet stores. These are usually sprays that can be applied to many surfaces. They can be used to good effect when sprayed to excess on an old rag or piece of Hessian. This can then be tied around bark of the tree your cat finds it difficult to get down from, to deter him in the first place. A ring of Vaseline around the trunk also has a similar effect.

Cats do not tend to like tin foil and a sheet of this placed around the base of the tree is a deterrent to keep the cat away from its launch pad. An old wives tale is also to use an open top jar filled with a small amount of water and old cigarette ends. Nicotine is a natural pest repellent and keeps most pets away from designated areas. Lavender oil sprayed onto pieces of cotton wool, then attached around the base of the tree is also a deterrent.

Finding out which deterrent is best for your own situation will be a process of elimination.

Stealing

Stealing inanimate objects of any kind is quickly learnt as a means of gaining or seeking attention. I steal, you chase. Unless likely to be expensive or dangerous not intervening is usually the best option therefore attention isn't received.

Knowing how to deal effectively with a dog that steals makes living with them much more pleasant. Looking why pets steal is important to know how to deal with it.

Attention seeking

As described, I steal you chase, is a good strategy to get attention. It is important to ensure all your pet's needs are being met during their daily routine. Play, exercise, feeding, grooming, health care and availability of fresh drinking water. Once the availability of these has been established and a good routine is in place, you can begin to measures to control this behaviour.

Control

Taste deterrents are usually the preferred option to prevent persistent offenders. These bitter tasting sprays can be applied to most materials and objects. As the dog takes the item in their mouth, they simultaneously have an unpleasant bitter tasting sensation. The pet learns that certain objects no longer taste too good and learns to avoid them.

A few empty tins tied with string to a favourite pair of shoes, then placed on a high surface sets an effective trap for your dog. As the dog takes the slipper, thinking he has got clean away, an almighty crash follows. This is likely to startle the dog and drop the item. If you can control your dog in a subtle manner, with a small squirt of water from a small water pistol, this too can be a good method of controlling a persistent thief.

Appropriate chew toys and pacification toys such as food filled toys should be made available. These give the dog plenty to do and think about and prevent them from getting bored.

Ensure there are plenty of opportunities within the dog's daily routine that he receives your attention. Playing tug-o-war and other

interactive games gives the dog the attention he deserves, but at a time convenient to you and on your terms. Be consistent with your training.

Sleeping Areas

It is the privileges of the alpha dog of any pack too choose where they rest and sleep. Should anyone try and challenge the right to this area, then the dominant dog will do all it can to reclaim this position.

Dogs and their ancestors, the wolf, naturally choose areas with height so they have a good vantage point, to see that is going on within their pack. The only objects of height around the home are beds, chairs and sofas. Allowing your pet access to these gives him the message that he maybe in control of the group. A message you most definitely do not want him to get.

To establish yourself as the leader you need to take control of these areas for sure. Setting your stall out from the very start avoids any confusion or grey areas appearing with your puppy's control. No go areas such as bedrooms should be established from the very beginning. If you have to keep your door shut, then this should be established right from the start.

Furniture is designed and bought for the people of the house and not generally the pets. However as soon as your back is turned they may very well take advantage, sneaking up there when you're not looking. Keep them out of these rooms when you leave them unsupervised, or up turn the cushions, to make the furniture inaccessible.

Being able to do things first, going through doorways, out into the yard, into the car and upstairs first, is again giving your dog the signals that he is in charge. Making sure your dog waits until told they can go through the door, or jump into the car gives the control and authority to the owner and therefore increases their position within the pack. This is very important before walks. Establish the rules that you will be in control before you even leave the house. Waiting until you're actually on the walk, before you take control is far too late, by which time the dog will have the upper hand.

Do you ever go and stand or move the dog's bed from time to time? By doing this you are demonstrating to the dog, that you have the ability and right to do this as leader. Call the dog out of his bed now and again ensuring you have full control not just whilst on walks, but around the house too.

Rolling

Dogs are hunting animals albeit refined over years of domestication; they still recall many of their instinctive traits. This instinctive behaviour disguises their own scent from their quarry. When you are hungry, in need of food and don't want to be spotted by your prey, you have to use camouflage and stealth to get as close to them. Many animals have a keen sense of smell, and the scent emitted by the dog would be detected miles away. Therefore the prey will become less aware to these foul smelling natural odours, allowing the dog to get as close as possible.

There is another reason why your dog might roll in faeces of other dogs, foxes or cows and that is to disguise their own scent for another reason. Some dogs that lack confidence around other dogs adopt this strategy to keep their presence secret. If you are less than confident the last thing you want to do is announce to the world that you have arrived. Therefore by creating a natural 'odour', cloak to disguise your own scent, you are less likely to feel threatened and relax a little more whilst out.

Whatever the reason your dog rolls in things unpleasant your greatest allies will be a large bottle of shampoo and an extending lead.

Ripping up the bed.

Bed shredding can occur for a variety of reasons with male and female dogs. With female dogs it can occur if they are expecting a litter of pups. This is a natural denning behaviour when the mother begins to prepare a safe, warm and secure nest area within which to deliver her puppies. In the wild this maybe a hollowed out piece of earth, a cave or crevice within rocks or a sheltered piece of woodland. Sometimes if dogs are experiencing a false pregnancy also known as a phantom pregnancy, similar behaviour can be seen. If you are in any doubt if your dog maybe pregnant or experiencing a phantom pregnancy, contact your home vet who will be able to advise you.

In other cases bed shredding can be due to the frustration of being left alone. When dogs become agitated, anxious or frustrated they will adopt strategies that relieve these emotional feelings that are causing them discomfort. In these cases it would be necessary to gradually teach your dog to be separated from the family for only short periods at a time. This needs to be introduced whilst the family is still present in the house, but the dog does not have immediate contact. But the main reason that most dogs chew their own bedding is boredom.

If your dog has the energy to chew one bed after another then he / she is likely in need of extra activity. Mental stimulation is the key to having a satisfied dog especially with working breeds and those that are mentally active. Using some of the many challenge toys available, can keep them occupied for hours. Change your dog's walks to interesting areas with lots of scents and areas where she can explore safely off the lead and expel any excess energy. Walking with other dog owners also provides all the dogs with other sources of amusement and entertainment and the energy they use playing with one another means that you don't have to become your dog's sole source of entertainment. Avoid leaving your dog for long periods where, she / he can become bored. Employing a dog walker, as part of your dog's daily routine is a good idea for those people with limited time.

Reward based training

- Can you imagine learning from someone that clips you around the ear when you do something wrong?
- Can you imagine learning from someone who scolds you for trying?
- Can you imagine learning from someone who punishes your efforts?

This is why reward based training is about utilising motivational techniques and encouraging responses rather than compulsion. Corrective methods of training are demotivating, harsh, archaic, counter-productive to training and potentially harmful to dogs and at the very least they damage the owner dog relationship.

Lets take a few moments to look at what a reward is and how it can be used effectively.

Timing your reward / praise.

When you begin to teach your dog a new exercise, you should give him, his earned reward as soon after the desired behaviour has occurred as possible, hopefully within a second or two. When this occurs every time, it is termed a continuous schedule of reinforcement, (the behaviour has been reinforced continually).

Similarly, you go to work each day and earn a paycheck continually at the end of each week. Although the time scale in which you receive your reward is extended the principle remains the same.

Once the desired behaviour is being achieved successfully time after time, then the reward can be placed on a random reward schedule, this will have the effect of strengthening a response and is the best way to perpetuate a learned behaviour.

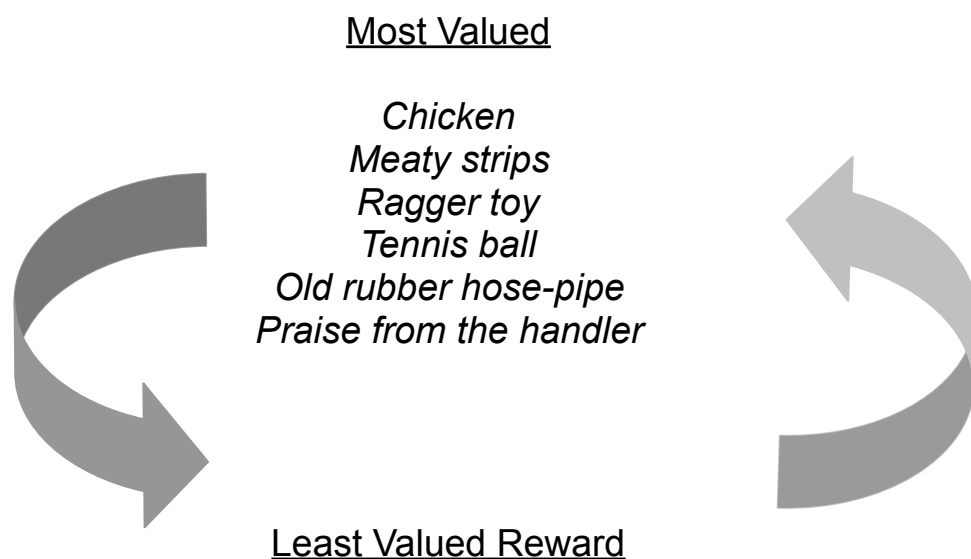
Have you ever played the 'Lottery'? Camelot places their reward on a random reward schedule. You play each week in the hope of changing your life for the better, but as each week passes the reward doesn't come. That doesn't stop you from playing, in-fact it has the opposite effect of creating a greater desire to want to play more. It is just the same for your dog.

What is a reward?

A reward is anything that your dog perceives as pleasurable following an event. This can take the form of many things. Toys, food, a free-run, playtime, a tug-o-war, a pat, stroke or smile. Dogs value the strangest of things. Some dogs will not perform the simplest of tasks for less than a meaty strip, yet other dogs such as mine adores nothing better than an old pair of socks.

Whatever the reward, as long as it is perceived as valuable and worth working for to the dog, then that is all that matters. Figuring out which reward works best, in which situation and for what behaviour, is time well spent.

Each dog has a reward hierarchy, a schedule of rewards with varying degrees of value, eg:



Different tasks and behaviours will require different rewards dependant upon several factors. These can include distractions, the complexity of the task, & the work effort involved etc. Therefore the consideration of several factors and observing the behaviour of the dog will conclude with the most appropriate reward being offered to the dog.

Rehoming

There are many reasons why pets need to be re-homed, and in some cases it can be because of unforeseen circumstances or changes, which are just unavoidable.

Working abroad, bereavements, change of job, housing or unemployment are all reasons why rehoming pets may have to be considered. Deciding what will be best option is an emotionally challenging situation.

There are various options which should be carefully considered. An advert in the newspaper makes choosing the most suitable home difficult and sometimes uncertain. You do not have the opportunity to assess the facilities of a prospective new home, or the assess the commitment of the prospective new adopters. Rescue kennels do remarkable and admirable work with pets but the future for these dogs is again uncertain, with dogs also finding a kennel environment sometimes stressful. There are hundreds of thousands of animals awaiting homes in rescue kennels and catteries and the chances of a dog finding a suitable home first time and in a short space of time are greatly reduced because of the vast number of pets already in these establishments.

However for each breed type there is usually a breed rescue group. These groups work solely for the welfare of that particular breed finding suitable homes for dogs requiring new families to care for them. Your vet will have a breed rescue directory with a list of contact numbers.

Recall Training

Many owners tell me that their dog does not come back to them when they call it. Well I say what training have you given the dog? The reply usually goes along the line of, "I keep on taking it to the field to practice it".

However the training should begin the home before even taking the dog outside. The dog should be taught in stages and these are simply broken down.

Step One

Have your dog in the house with you wait until the dog is disinterested in you and not in the pre-set training mode. Call his name and the word 'Come' or 'Here'. Only produce the reward following the action of Coming. Hold onto the collar and then give the reward. Dog's can very quickly learn that the response is only worthwhile if you have food on show first, and therefore only return if you are waving food at them.

Repeat this exercise several times throughout the day until you are able to achieve a 10 out of 10 response. Do not tire your dog though. It will be far more effective to train 2-3 recalls in one session several times a day rather than 10 all at once.

Step Two

Wait until your dog is out of sight of you in the house and paying little attention to you, (Don't Set up a training session. Impromptu training is far more effective), and recall him with his name and again the chosen command. When he rushes to you and is within easy reach, hold onto the collar and reward him as previously. Avoid making a quick snatch or grab for the dog he should be confident with your hand / arm going towards him without him feeling the need to retreat away. If this is the case go back a few stages and re-teach a solid collar hold before progressing further. A maximum 10 out of 10 response will be needed before progressing to stage three.

Step Three

Wait until a family member entering the room, which creates an incentive for the dog to go away from his trainer, distracts your dog. Call your dog away in pleasant manner as you have done previously. Hold the collar and once again reward the dog. This stage is the final indoor stage, however we can add the essential ingredient at this stage, which strengthens the whole recall response. At this point we begin to use 'Random Reward'.

In human terms random reward is the exact same reason that you or I play the lottery each week. You pay a £1 and win £10. You play & lose, you play & lose, you play & lose.....but this does not stop you from playing, because there is always the chance of getting the Jackpot.

To the dog the Jackpot could be his favourite treats or that extra few treats, or that piece of fresh chicken that you included in his treat bag today. Rewarding only the quickest recalls, the fastest recalls, the recalls when he came away from people petting him all encourage him to put in a little more effort. Consistent reward each and every recall can be just as bad as no reward at all. The dog could then make a choice of when to return and still be sure of earning a reward

Preparing Pets For Christmas

Christmas is a time for the family to celebrate and that includes our Pets. As Christmas approaches, early December is the time to begin thinking about what you are going to need over the festive period. Turkey, sprouts, crackers and presents for everyone including the husband's traditional new pair of socks. But now is also the time to begin thinking about your pets and their needs at Christmas. The festive period is a time for celebration, and with careful planning Christmas can become one to be remembered for the right reasons.

You only have to chat with your vet over a glass of mulled wine to learn about the variety of foreign bodies that have been retrieved from intestines of the over inquisitive pets. Assessing the potential dangers around the home will not only save your pet an untimely visit to the vets, but also may save you a few pounds for that extra Christmas present to yourself. Prizes inside crackers, baubles, ribbon, batteries, turkey bones and small children's toys are all common Christmas items that can cause your pet harm if ingested. It is well worth taking a few moments to assess the potential risks of your own yuletide home.

Christmas is also a time for giving and presents for the pets are no exception. Traditionally food orientated gifts are the most popular type of gift for pets, closely followed by toys. Ensure the toys your pet receives from friends and family are suitable and safe. Pet Christmas stockings provide great value and variety but beware of the potentially dangerous squeaky toys, with those pets that could demolish a toy quicker than a shoal of Piranha. The novelty of all those rich treats can easily upset the sensitive stomachs of some pets, so caution is the key word here. It may be sensible to give thought to provide alternative gifts such as new bedding, a new lead or even Pet insurance cover for the New Year.

Whether you have a cat or dog the look of amusement on the face of your pet as they see the overnight appearance of a tree in their living room, is something to behold. Both species use trees in different ways and it needs no further explanation on how dogs utilise these facilities. However cats are a prey species which means when threatened they immediately adopt an escape strategy, and for cats this usually means climbing the nearest

object and trees are no exception. Therefore with all the noise, commotion, sudden snapping of crackers and whizzing or whirring of children's toys, which your cat finds unfamiliar, can cause your pet to escape this threatening environment using the carefully decorated tree as an escape route. Therefore keeping your pet in a safe, quiet room during the big day or whilst all the family are visiting will prevent any potential Christmas tree catastrophe. With careful planning and organization this year's festive period can be a safe, happy and enjoyable for all the members of your family.

Postman

Dogs become territorial about their home quite rapidly and learn to alert other house members to presence of potential intruders and threats. Everyday the postman arrives and delivers mail and every day he goes. The dog barks and thinks that his actions have made the visitor retreat; therefore the dog is rewarded for his actions. A post basket attached to the rear of the door will keep your post & all those household bills safe and intact but creating better association with the postman will prevent those early morning disturbances.

Dogs are a postman's worst nightmare and they run the gauntlet at many houses across Great Britain every single day. So when a pet owner takes the time to improve their dog's association to the postman, it can be welcomed with great enthusiasm.

Arrange to meet you postman off the dog's territory. Using toys and tasty treats to build a good bond and relationship is a good idea. Try following your postman on his daily round, which will also give your dog good exercise.

You might want to supply your postman with a supply of treats that he posts each morning. Now instead of rushing to the door to attack the post, your dog becomes more interested in foraging for the kibble tossed through the letterbox.

Persistent offenders can be managed by arranging delivery of the post to a PO Box at the local sorting office, or having a mailbox constructed at the end of the path.

Play Biting

Puppies have an annoying habit of play biting and it is a good thing that they do. This allows them to learn bite inhibition, which is invaluable for the owners and dogs as they grow.

Interaction with other dogs and people encourages them to use their mouths and the greater the opportunities, the better. Achieving good control over those needle sharp teeth can be done with consistent training by everybody in the house.

Smacking, punishing, or slapping the puppy is not conducive to good learning and will only serve to reinforce the puppy's mistrust. We must first establish that painful nips and bites are no longer permitted. A straightforward, "OUCH!" is usually sufficient to control the puppy's biting. The volume at which this is said is dependant upon the dog's sensitivity. When puppies play with littermates, any painful bites evoke a yelp or scream, and you are replicating this noise with the word 'Ouch'. You can also add other strategies with this, by following the word with leaving the room temporarily or ignoring the puppy completely for a few minutes.

When the puppy is quiet, calm and not seeking attention call the pup to you and resume play. Repeat this several times so the puppy has good opportunities to learn. Bite inhibition should be learned on average by about three months of age.

Offering tit-bits from your fingers and repeating the 'Ouch' for harder nips is also good practice to teach your puppy how to use his mouth properly. He will learn that humans are really hypersensitive. Bite inhibition is really important and should be taught when young because these small dogs grow into much larger dogs as they mature.

The dog should never be allowed to exert any pressure upon human hands whether in play or if seeking attention. Ensure visitors are aware of these rules, who can usually excuse the dog's behaviour as excitable and 'just pleased to see me'.

Another useful tip is to spray hands with an anti chew spray, available from good pet shops, before playing. When the puppy

tastes the bitter spray on your hands, he will learn that no longer should hands be seen as tasteful, but quite the opposite and things to be avoided. If the puppy can learn himself or herself, what is good and not so good, then you will save a lot of training time and ensure that the puppy retains the information.

- Unsolicited mouthing is essential for puppies.
- Unsolicited mouthing is inappropriate for the adolescent dog.
- Unsolicited mouthing is unacceptable for the adult dog, to mouth at a young child's arm no matter how friendly his intentions.

Whether or not the dog will be requested to mouth is dependant upon the owner.

Some owners will allow play biting to get out of control. This is why so many dog-training manuals will tell you to stop play fighting with your dogs. However I feel that maintaining the dog's understanding of bite inhibition, and prevent this essential learning process from fading, is of primary importance to a responsible dog owner. Play fighting must only happen with consistent rules. Play fighting teaches the dog to mouth hands only, never clothes. The game teaches him to adhere to rules regarding his mouth. Pressure is not allowed

It is recommended to regularly hand feed the dog to maintain the soft-mouthed approach as previously taught. Cleaning the dog's teeth daily will help the gentleness required when human hands are manoeuvred around the mouth.

Physical Punishment

A long established tradition of the 'old school' of dog training was to administer physical punishment to a dog or even puppy if they do not co-operate first time. The barbaric use of choke chains, only serves to inflict pain, cause mistrust of people and induce fear. The long-term consequences of using punishment can also be health problems, with dogs suffering neck injuries because of incorrect and excessive use of equipment.

Dogs that are regularly controlled with physical punishment sometimes develop defensive aggression tendencies, trying to protect themselves as people approach them. This is purely because the association they have developed towards the approach of others, as one that is likely to elicit pain. Some dogs can often be seen to flinch, as a hand is raised to praise or stroke. This is known as hand shyness and develops because of someone using the hand to apply punishment. Unfortunately some dogs that have become hand shy inadvertently bite when a sudden movement is made towards them. Dogs that are rewarded from hands and get a pleasant association do not develop any concern or worry about hands.

Punishment is often seen to be used by some people and this is likely because they believe their actions to be working. When the dog steps out of line if they apply punishment the dog seems to stop what it is doing and they have resolved the situation, whereas all that has occurred is the treatment of the symptom. For example if a dog barks at children and they receive a firm check on a chain, the dog doesn't bark next time because the dog is concerned about what might follow instead, of the owner recognising the dogs approach towards children and taking measures to manage the dogs behaviour better. The dog may even develop an association of pain, when children are around, thereby heightening their sensitivity towards the presence of children.

Have you ever seen someone punish his or her dog because he isn't doing as he is told? Would you ask a 3-year-old child to repair the computer and then rewire the house, I think not! Taking time to understand the dog and teach them tasks that they can cope with, which they really understand and can undertake in a variety of situations is much better than resorting to measures that fundamentally make the dog frightened of people.

Pets in Winter

As well as avoiding the potential festive chaos inside the house there are outdoor seasonal risks to be considered during the winter season in the UK. Long walks on those cold winter morning walks are all the more enjoyable with the family dog. But consideration needs to be given to the safety of your pets outside during winter.

Every winter there are numerous unnecessary incidents around the country that make the headlines, which unfortunately involve the loss of either an animal or at worst, human life. Accidents around frozen rivers, ponds or lakes usually occur due to unforeseen and unpredictable events involving pets. Dogs by their very nature are inquisitive and therefore great care must be taken when exercising your dogs near to these potential life-threatening dangers. Even during the deepest depths of winter, frozen lakes are still likely to be fragile and should be avoided at all costs. When in doubt keep your pet on a lead at all times.

In the unfortunate event of an accident, should an animal become trapped in broken ice, it is the natural instinct of every animal owner to want to assist. The greatest assistance can be given by calling the emergency services and avoiding risk to others. Be aware that hypothermia not only affects people but animals too. Our pets are provided with a full coat of hair, which you may think is ideal for the winter, however their coat is maintained in relation to their surroundings. Therefore living within a central heated house, the need to maintain a thick protective coat is reduced, so when outdoors your pet will feel the effects of cold in just the same way as ourselves. Therefore consider the length of time the cat is placed outside, making sure they have easy access back into the house or shelter if necessary

Pets and Christmas

Routine can affect dogs and cats in various ways. The excessive periods out shopping, children getting excited around home, the rearrangement of rooms and appearance of trees in the living room can become all too much for some pets. It is sometimes all too easy to forget about your pets simple needs, therefore it is important that, periods of play, exercise, attention and reassurance are adequately given during this time. Disruption can cause anxiety, which is manifested in various ways, therefore ensure your pet is adequately catered for and your attention is distributed equally.

Diet is always a tempting change over the festive period with the odd scrap from the table. But be warned, over indulgence for animals can result in gastric overload. Edible Christmas presents from granny and granddad can also have similar consequences if not carefully monitored, and you can guarantee that it will be mum or dad to do the cleaning up. Once the dinner has been demolished and the Pudding has been polished off, it is time to clear the tables. However, it is now the opportunistic instincts of our domesticated four legged friends that become active. The left over carcass crammed amongst the chipolatas in a polythene dustbin bag is no match for the claws of the ever-hungry predator. The temptation of the aroma can be all too much for our pets, but the consequences that follow the ingesting of turkey bones and similar rich food are not pleasant for any of the parties concerned. Therefore ensure you dispose of all the rubbish sensibly and avoid the unwanted trip to the vets at Christmas.

Candles are an integral part of advent or as decoration for the festive table. Great care must be taken over the positioning of these decorations, well away from the wag of a tail or swipe of a clumsy claw. Equally the invitation to pets from the glow of an open fire can be irresistible, yet are potential pet hazards, so ensure your pet is supervised at all times. If after careful consideration of your pets' welfare, you decide that alternative care arrangements are needed, make sure you plan well in advance. Boarding Kennels, Pet Sitters, and Catteries get booked up well before Christmas and make sure vaccinations are up to date.

Pets and Chocolate

There are many substances that are commonly known to be poisonous to dogs, others aren't so well known such as chocolate.

Many owners think they are treating their dog to a tasty treat when in fact they maybe causing irreparable damage.

Only after the fact does an owner usually become aware of the damage that can be caused by chocolate. Chocolate intended for human consumption contains a substance called theobromine. This belongs to a chemical group called methylxanthines of which caffeine is a member. The theobromine content and hence toxicity will vary from one product to another. Dark chocolate and cocoa contain a much higher content than milk chocolate.

Theobromine is a pharmacologically active substance; this means the stimulative and irritant actions can cause irregularities throughout the dog's body, which is far more sensitive than that of the human body. Once in the stomach this causes an increase in gastric secretions with the possible cause of mucosal ulceration. This results in acute vomiting and diarrhoea.

Theobromine passes into the bloodstream very quickly, resulting in tachycardia (increased heart rate), and extra systole, (a premature cardiac contraction independent of normal rhythm). Epilepsy or convulsions may follow. The increased cardiac output causes diuresis, which causes thirst. This excessive drinking can therefore cause more vomiting. The clinical picture is one of great distress and death can occur as a result of cardiac / respiratory arrest.

Pack Hierarchy

Dogs are naturally pack animals, and exist amicably in a group environment. The pack affords dogs many benefits, including, safety and security, companionship, and an increased likelihood of obtaining food.

A group will exist much more efficiently with a *leader* at the helm. This leader is termed the *Alpha*. Committee's have a chairman, schools have a head master and businesses have directors, equally within your dog's own adoptive pack, (*you, & your family*), there will have to be a leader for an amicable coexistence.

Achieving a position of leadership does not need the use of heavy-handed tactics.

The boss uses *I*,
The leader uses *we*,
The boss creates *fear*,
The leader inspires *trust*,
The boss *knows* how,
The leader *shows* how,
The boss relies on *authority* to get things done,
The leader relies on *co-operation*,
The boss provokes *resentment*,
The leader fires *enthusiasm*.

- Taken from PPP
Australia Handbook.

The position of the leader is a position that can be achieved by any member of a group. Should a weakness appear in the current leadership, and then a challenge for the position will ensue. If these challenges are met with equal worth, then the hierarchy will remain constant. Should the weakness remain then the dog's instincts will dictate a challenge for the position of control within the pack.

There are many privileges afforded to the leader of a group. There are also many things that can be done on a daily basis to reinforce the owner's position as *Alpha*.

Being first, to do or have something, is the best position to be in. Where you have led others can only follow. It is the privilege of *Alpha* to dictate who does what and when, and in what order.

Eating First
Feeding times
Stopping play sessions
Starting play sessions
Playing tug-o-war to win
Going through doors first
Controlling the greeting of people
Giving affection on your own terms
Controlling the walking position when on lead
Sleeping / Resting in the most desired places
Getting in and out of the vehicles in a controlled manner

Nervousness

Dogs that lead sheltered lives when young and that are not exposed to the many strange, sights, sounds and smells of the world develop a strong instinct of self preservation, act fearful and can appear nervous.

The crucial period in a dogs life is when they are a puppy and experiencing as many situations circumstances and environments as possible creates an adaptable and confident dog. Should they be confined to just one environment and have only minimum experience then any changes in later life become a little harder to deal with. Mentally sensitive dogs such as Collie types are acutely aware of their environment, this coupled with a sheltered existence means that familiarising the dog to new environments when older will require a progressive, positive, training period.

With objects you know the dog is unsure of and that are accessible such as brushes and the Hoover should be placed in the home so the dog can investigate them in his own time. Think of anything within the home likely to startle the dog and gradually begin a process of familiarization. Make sure these items are secure and not likely to fall. Another strategy is to play games whilst these items are out in the same room, to build a positive association. You could also try feeding the dog progressively closer to these items.

Nervous responses to other dogs is likely to be fear motivated, having had minimal contact in the passed with their own species and therefore by building a good association towards other dogs, you can build the dog's confidence. Ensure that the other dogs are friendly and passive. Use friends to help you overcome your dog's fear towards other animals and don't leave it to chance that the dog you meet in the street will be friendly. Remember that if your dog has been kept as a solitary animal in a sterile environment he is unlikely to recognise another dog as one of his own species and have very little in the way of dog language skills. This is the combination of body language, facial expression, use of tail and ears that your dog uses to communicate with other dogs. Without practice he will not be able to communicate himself or read the intentions of other dogs. Because of his unsure start in life he is now reliant on you to assist with this period of adjustment.

If you use a training class to help build your dog's confidence, it is essential you find a training class that is suitable for your dog. By taking him to the wrong class, this could potentially compound his fear. I would suggest that you should view any class you intend to take him along to, in the first instance without the dog, to make sure it meets your criteria.

Whilst on walks and you come across other dogs or strange objects, it would be best to adopt a reward approach for the best responses. This can be with the use of food treats or the dogs favourite toy is produced whilst the dog is remaining calm and relaxed. This should begin when the other dog or object, is at a distance that your dog can tolerate and over the coming weeks expect the distance to reduce. Remain positive and confident.

Using the dog's name

There are disadvantages as well as advantages to using a dog's name for recall. Think about the amount of times that you actually use the dog's name to punish him.

'Ben Get Off'

'Ben Leave it'

'Ben Get Out'

'Ben you naughty lad'

Ben has no longer got a positive association with his name. Quite understandably then when someone actually calls Ben to come to them, he doesn't know 100% whether he is in trouble or not therefore makes the choice to refuse in case of being told off.

Similarly the owner, who punishes the dog for a slow return, has effectively told the dog off for coming back completely the opposite of what the owner actually wanted in the first place. Is it any wonder that we see so many people yelling at the top of their voices in the park for their dogs when it may very well have been that person's own training that has led themselves to behave in that way.

An effective alternative to using the dog's name to call it back is to use a neutral command such as 'here' or 'come' which will create a whole new association to returning when called.

When using the dog's name to encourage him towards you, the way in which you stand is also very important. Body posture can be welcoming or overpowering to animals. Crouching with open arms is welcoming, whereas bending over and staring at the dog can be quite threatening. Remember to think about what message you want to give the dog when using its name in future and how you can adapt your own positioning to achieve the best result.

Mischievous Pet

When young pets are constantly getting into mischief around the house and can sometimes unfortunately result in injury if correct control isn't applied. Traditionally a rolled up newspaper or smack of the hand has been sufficient to control the mischievous house pet, but as a greater understanding of behaviour is achieved, then the way we approach and understand our pets should also change the way we control and manage different situations.

Historically, punishment has been used for generations on naughty children and animals alike, usually as a result of frustration or anger. Therefore this tends to be the only reason for the punishment rather than a plan to alter the behaviour. The application of punishment used as an intention to teach is futile, as the dog isn't given an opportunity to learn a more desirable behaviour.

Excessive punishment causes fear, which can obviously be detrimental to the pet and owner relationship. Rewarding the behaviour you desire increases the likelihood of the animal repeating what you actually want. For example lying quietly beside you or for keeping all four paws on the floor & not jumping when coming in through the door. Providing your pet with the correct toys to occupy themselves, sufficient exercise and mental stimulation will help with satisfying the pet's inquisitive and investigative nature.

For pets to learn correctly, they must receive consistent training and attention. Pets become confused very easily if several members of the house are teaching different things, in a different way and not being consistent. Imagine being taught at school by three teachers teaching the same subject in different ways, three times a day, you would become easily confused too! Learning is also about building a relationship based on trust and confidence. Establishing clear rules makes the boundaries for behaviour much more easily definable for your pet and the likelihood of them adopting the preferred behaviour that much quicker.

Loose Lead Walking

There are several methods that can produce the same results. The following notes describe a process by which a loose lead can be achieved using reward.

Essential items are, rewards, a collar and a short leash. The exercise will be taught on a short leash to begin with, as anyone with a pulling dog can verify, within the space of just a six foot length of lead, the momentum that can be built up is enough to pull the owner over. There is also less opportunity to find alternative distractions on such a restricted scale.

Begin in a distraction free area. Begin walking in a straight line, saying nothing. Should the dog pull, and he will. Stand still. The dog will make greater efforts to continue, but there will come a time when he may look back, step back or turn around. This is the first criteria for reward / reinforcement and should be rewarded. If the treat is ignored verbal praise would suffice, and quite common because the continued forward movement can be used as the reinforcer.

Once the behaviour has been performed consistently and the dog has worked out that pulling means all movement forward STOPS! ...you can then heighten the criteria for reward and expect a little more self control. (That is a dog that was initially rewarded for looking back should now be expected to step back before being rewarded, this is a large effort and should earn a jackpot).

This process of achieving a reliable response for achievable criteria for reward is continued until an acceptable walking position on a loose lead is achieved. At this stage the dog's environment can be changed and the loose-lead walking can be practiced in the presence of distractions.

Beginning at a distance that the dog can tolerate is the correct way to introduce the exercise. Now that a sensible walking position and loose lead are the criteria for reward, it would be unfair and unrealistic to expect the dog to now perform with just a few paces of a distraction such as another dog. If the dog cannot achieve the same response at 20 paces then begin at 30 paces away from a distraction. Once this is reliable move a little closer.

As long as you work at the dog's rate of learning and tolerance level then progress should continue, because the correct behaviour will be consistently being reinforced. The dog will make indications as to what his tolerance level is, by his behaviour on the lead. Should you find that the behaviour regresses consistently as you move progressively closer, then you may want to consider using a reward of increased value.

Practice the loose lead walking in a whole variety of environments, teaching the dog to generalize the response. Have the dog practice the loose lead walking with a variety of distractions, i.e. well behaved dogs, not so well behaved, approaching toy's lying on the floor, approach family across a field or familiar faces down the street. Use various reinforcers, such as the attention from the people, if the approach was on a consistent loose lead, toys and various food treats. Approach the dog's favourite tree Or lamppost and once again should the lead remain loose, then click and reward him with a sniff and cock of his leg at the post.

Trouble-shooting

What if your dog doesn't appear to be maintaining a loose lead?

- Don't push the dog too far too soon
- Work at the dog's learning rate
- When introducing distractions, begin with one which is mild on the dog scale
- Increase the reward
- Observe your dog closely and accept and reward effort that is offered no matter how small
- Change the reward
- Change the environment
- Change direction by turning in towards the dog
- Try introducing a word that will indicate to the dog that the previous effort was wrong. The word "WRONG" can be used, and to good effect, if used in a NORMAL tone of voice, whilst simultaneously turning away from the distraction you are approaching. This in the dogs mind is a form of punishment because the reward has been removed, without the need for any physical corrective methods being necessary. Re-approach the distraction giving the dog another opportunity.

Litter tray problems

Cystitis

Cats can associate the use of her litter tray as an uncomfortable and possibly painful experience, particularly after an illness such as cystitis. To resolve this situation a brand new association should be developed with the purchase of a new litter tray, with a change in it's appearance if possible.

Location

The location of the litter tray is particularly important to cats. A quiet, distraction free area should be chosen, so the cat isn't disturbed. If there are other pets in the house, it can be very threatening to the cat if they are constantly being aggravated by others, especially whilst in their litter tray. In this instance you may choose to place the litter tray in an area only the cat can access. A baby gate is useful as they can usually squeeze through the bars into another room, leaving the dog or other pet behind.

Substrate

A change of substrate can effect a change to the cat's toileting behaviour. Some substrates such as wooden pellet types can be uncomfortable to stand on and scented litters can cause irritation to some cats. A simple change to a loose substrate makes the use of the litter tray more welcoming

Cleanliness

Cats by their very nature are very clean animals and the litter tray should be cleaned regularly, with many cats relieving elsewhere should the tray become dirty.

Disinfectants

Strong smelling disinfectants can discourage cats from using their trays; Make sure any disinfectants are thoroughly rinsed from the tray before returning

Lead problems

What may appear to be a straight forward exercise of putting a lead on and off can be made very difficult with an over exuberant dog. You will be pleased to know that this scene is repeated in hundreds of houses across the country.

The lead for many pet owners is usually kept out of the way and only put on before walks, which is only to be expected. But to your dog his behaviour of jumping and leaping around is rewarded because the walk always follows. Practice placing the lead on and off in a variety of rooms around the home, without the following expectation of a walk. The reward of the walk itself should only ensue when he is quiet. Try changing your routine before walks, for example if you presently place on your shoes, coat and then get the lead, your dog already knows a walk is imminent and is becoming excited therefore trying to control him becomes harder each time. Instead try the task of placing the lead on and off a dozen times before a walk. This is repetitive and can have a calming effect. Always keep your lead lying around the house, occasionally picking it up when moving from room to room, which will reduce your dogs expectation of a walk every time the lead is picked up. There is no substitute for practice and will eventually make the prospect of walks much more enjoyable for you and your dog.

However, when eventually on the walk, some dogs have a tendency to grab and hold the lead in their mouths whilst walking. There are a variety of reasons why a dog will bite their lead in this way. Sometimes this is due to the excitement of the walk to the park or maybe because they are frustrated that they are being restricted. Webbing or leather leads are highly chewable, but chain leads are very discouraging for dogs that chew leads. Equally you may find that by wiping your lead in either lemon juice or Tabasco sauce, or you may want to try spraying a chew deterrent on your lead this will discourage the behaviour. If it is just a fact that your dog likes carrying things then why not give him either a toy to hold, or make him earn his biscuits and get him to carry your copy of the newspaper back home from the newsagents.

Kittens around the home

Imagine the world from your 'kittens eye view', and everything is easier to understand. A lounge is like Alton Towers to a child, full of adventure, exciting rides and amusement. For a hunter, exploring your territory is vital, and getting to know your limitations and vantage points to take your prey is all in a days work. But people don't seem to understand this! So when the curtains resemble rags and the sofas lost it's stuffing its time to change.

Cats scratch to remove the outer layer of nail, to reveal a gleaming razor sharp replacement underneath. Hessian draped over the targeted area and then after a few days tied to a scratching post redirects the kittens attention to the right area. Alternatively the same technique can be used with a clean piece of bark.

Startling the kitten with a loud clap or dropping a set of keys onto a steel tray each time the curtains become victim, is a reliable technique as long as the kitten doesn't associate you with this action, otherwise she will still do it, but only when you are not around.

Maintaining a kittens interest around the house can be a challenge, but can be done in ways that are neither costly nor time consuming to the owner. Tying string to door handles with pieces of wool attached to it keep kittens amused for hours. Suspended ping-pong balls, or toys that contain fish treats from furniture. Fishing rod style toys can be suspended and attached to work surfaces so they teas the kitten to catch the artificial prey.

Kittens like to climb, so by providing them with suitable platforms, satisfies this need to explore. Wooden platforms secured to a small tower like structure, covered in carpet is ideal. This can be indoors or in the safety of the kitten's garden. Remember to keep windows closed to prevent accidents and kitten proof your home by keeping valuables and potential hazards out of reach and behind lock and key.

Jumping Up

Dogs jump up as a form of greeting, to receive attention, this is because humans provide attention from their upper part of the body, from hands and facial expressions. By jumping up the dog gets closer to the source of attention. It is important to teach the desired behaviour at an early age is vital to prevent this problem. People think that when a puppy is young, if they excuse the jumping as pure puppy behaviour, it will go away as the puppy grows in age. But what must be remembered is that these small dogs grow into very large dogs and jumping up can become a bit of a problem.

Teaching the dog an appropriate style of greeting yourself will be necessary. The much-preferred behaviour being to keep all four feet firmly on the ground as you or visitors enter. There are several techniques to resolve jumping up and choosing one most appropriate your dog is necessary. For small dogs, crouching and bending to the dog's height and level reduces the temptation for jumping up.

With more excitable dogs, the excitement of people arriving can be reduced by repetition. This is a technique, which reduces the dog's anticipation of receiving attention immediately upon returning home. Leave the house with a hidden reward, re-enter and request the dog to sit & then give the dog the reward. Repeat this several times and as you re-enter the room the dog will begin sitting without a command. This should receive a reward or alternatively affection, such as stroking or petting. The dog is only rewarded for all four feet on the floor. Should the dog jump up, quickly turn your back and fold your arms and leave the room if the dog becomes persistent at trying to seek your attention even whilst your back is turned. A definite display of no attention & promptly leaving the room signal to the dog that their advances are not welcome. Practice these techniques with various members of the family and visitors. With persistent offenders the use of a lead in the early stages of training, maybe necessary to assist with the dogs learning.

Within a short time you should see a great improvement & to ensure the dog understand what is required you must practice this regularly and at various points around the home from which people enter, eg. Front door, back door and garden gates.

Introducing a kitten to an established cat

Introducing a kitten into a home with a cat already is straightforward if carried out correctly. Introductions should be staged, after all your existing cat needs to know that this new arrival is no threat to her own resources such as food, attention and resting areas. After all you wouldn't go into the home of someone you had just been introduced to, steal food from their cupboards or sleep on their bed.

Having the kitten in a kitten holding playpen allowing both cats to become familiar with each other's scent and feeding them whilst they can still see one another builds a positive relationship. Move the pen around the room and have separate play times for each cat so they can explore these new scents around the home. When both cats are comfortable, supervise their nose-to-nose introductions making them brief but positive and over time lengthen the times they spend together.

Ensure your home is safe for your kitten. Cover electrical cables with tubing, close windows and make sure all your houseplants are non-toxic to pets. Toilets should be kept with the lid down and care should be taken when opening and closing the front door to the house.

Ensure your kitten can access the litter tray, or an additional tray maybe necessary in a multi-cat household. Medicines, disinfectants and cleaning solutions should be kept locked away and remember to always check the tumble dryer or washing machine before turning it on.

When letting your kitten out for the first time, you may want to use a lead and harness to familiarize it to the garden initially. Choose the correct time of day when the cat is old enough to go out alone, avoiding dusk and early morning, which can be hazardous for pets. Letting your cat out before meal times ensures they have a motivation for returning. Ensure they can use the cat flap or other access point to the house and gradually build the time they are allowed out each day. Be sure they are wearing an identity disc and reflective collar to keep them safe and being micro-chipped can help in tracing owners should the collar go missing.

It is a good idea to let neighbours know you have a new kitten, when the time comes to letting him outdoors, incase he gets lost or the incase the neighbours quite innocently begin feeding him / her. Be aware that when you let your kitten out, preferring the neighbours cooking to your own, is quite common, so discouraging these actions in a polite way, ensures your cat knows which house to return home to for feeding.

Inter pack Fighting

When relationships go wrong we all begin to get concerned and try to help whenever, and wherever we can. But when the relationships between our pets begin to fall apart we feel a little helpless.

Disputes between animals that have previously lived quite amicably can occur for a variety of reasons. Sometimes due to sexual maturity, aging of the dogs or maybe introduction of a new household member such as a baby or long staying visitor can disrupt the harmony within the pack and cause disputes to occur within the pack hierarchy. Bitches can begin to compete especially when seasons are due, as it is in the animals best interest to pass on her own genes to the next generation. If this is the cause of the problem, it maybe sensible to consult with your veterinary surgeon and discuss the options which may include spaying.

With some dogs, particularly males, sexual maturity is the general cause for the behaviour, but this does not automatically mean an immediate trip to the vets to get them all neutered. Neutering can cause as many problems as it solves if the incorrect dog is neutered or if both dogs are neutered simultaneously. Neutering can cause a reduction in the status of the dog within the pack and being able to identify the dog that is capable of holding the position of the top alpha dog, in a sensible and tolerable manner should be generally left entire whilst, the subordinate male is castrated. Always consult with your vet or professional behaviour counsellor. When considering neutering as an option, is important to consider the long-term effects.

Some situations can become untenable. The welfare of individual dogs and the group as a whole should be considered. In a natural environment, disputes would be resolved by the challenger leaving the group to find another pack. In domestic society a sensible solution for the welfare and safety of all concerned, however emotional the ties maybe, rehoming could be the only solution. The Kennel Club can provide a list of every breed rescue group which can assist with the rehoming your specific breed, alternatively speaking with your local pet rescue agency can also help with a difficult situation such as this.

House Training

As a newspaper is not recommended to house train puppies, as it only prolongs the process and effectively teaches pups to relieve indoors. It is very important to initially establish a regular feeding, sleeping and play routine. Puppies are sure to need to relieve after all of the above and therefore their routine can become predictable and if you can predict when they need to relieve then the house training becomes much more effective and efficient.

Routine and supervision is key to success. Take the puppy to the designated relief area regularly. As the puppy begins to perform, give the dog a command such as 'Be Quick'. Without supervision you will not be able to reinforce the correct response, therefore even if the puppy needs to go outside in the worst of weather or most awkward time of night, then you must be with him to praise him. After all it is far better to encourage the dog in the first place, rather than step into a wet, warm puddle in the morning. Reward the dog for his actions each time and your training process should be consistent & regular.

Should the puppy have an accident in front of you, do not tell him off. This will only teach him to go and relieve out of sight. Therefore a clap of the hands is usually sufficient to interrupt him, carry him to the designated area and continue to supervise and add the command. Using indoor crates over night, confines the puppy to an area they are programmed not to relieve in, their bed. By having this crate near to your bedroom at night you will be able to hear any attempt to get out top relieve and therefore allow your puppy to relieve in the correct place, rather than wander around the home to find a suitable discreet spot. This inconvenience at night should only be short lived and by the time the puppy is three months old, they should be well on the way to being fully house trained.

Any accidents should be cleared up with a solution of warm water and washing powder, as many disinfectants contain ammonia, which encourages animals to relieve over the top time and again.

Heat Exhaustion

What causes Heat Exhaustion?

There are many contributing factors that add to the cause of what invariably becomes a summer problem.

The dogs Physical condition, Age, Breed, (Brachycaphalic dogs – short muzzled), Coat Colour

The main cause is an over exposure to a heat source, usually the sun. Dogs are at an increased risk when they are exercised in hot weather or remain in an enclosed unventilated area, in direct heat.

Signs

Excessive panting, drooling, restlessness and distressed. As the dogs body temperature increases with an increased inability to reduce their body temperature, the dog may collapse.

Treatment

This is an EMERGENCY. There is no time to contact the vet and wait for him to arrive, you must act immediately.

Cool the dog ASAP. The application of cold water to the skin via a spray, placing the dog in the bath supporting his head, applying wet towels.

Check the rectal temperature every 15 minutes to avoid over cooling, Or call the vet once the dog shows signs of recovery. Once the temperature has fallen to 102 F the dog should be dried and placed in a cool area with access to drinking water.

Prevention rather than cure

Keep long coated dogs well groomed. Removing excess hair allows a cool flow of air against the skin and prevents the trapping of heat against skin.

Limit and control the dogs exercise in warm weather. Ensure there is an area of shade within which to rest.

Supervise your dog in warm weather. Ensure the dog has continual access to drinking water. Do not leave dogs in cars.

Grooming

Everybody likes to see a well-groomed pet and there is nothing more annoying than hairs all over your clothes before you're about to go out. So as well as looking nice and keeping your home hair free, grooming has many other benefits, but do we groom regularly enough?

Cats and dogs should be groomed daily all year round. Grooming stimulates healthy growth of hair, removes debris and dead hair from the coat and induces natural coat oils to condition the coat, producing a healthy shine. Contrary to popular belief, regular bathing can be damaging to your pet's coat, washing away these essential oils that help maintain a soft gleaming coat. Breeds with long hair may need a clip or trim to prevent the coat from matting and careful attention should be given to the long hair around the ears and legs to prevent matting and knots. Some pets require professional grooming, but for the majority of pets a five-minute daily brush and comb is time well spent. A good grooming kit should include a soft brush to loosen dead hair, a comb to remove tangles and a clean damp cloth to produce a healthy shine.

Grooming technique

- Remove all loose hair from the dog's coat by brushing the hair against the natural lay of the coat, with your fingers. Your pet will find this very stimulating
- Using a soft brush, groom the dog from the tail towards the head. This will remove all the fine loose hair
- Using a comb, groom the dog from the head towards the tail, taking great care where hair is thin.
- Finally using a damp cloth wipe the dog's face and then the rest of the body to give a good shine. Make sure you clean and rinse the grooming equipment
- Some pets require particular specialist grooming equipment. Consult a professional grooming parlour or your vet for advice

Greeting Visitors

Some dogs can become very excitable with visitors and guests to the home, because they have such novelty value and every effort must be made to get their attention before they leave. Although owners can tolerate this, it can be a little overwhelming for guests.

Taking control of the situation first means that you are prepared for visitors. A dog should be given an allocated rest area in the room where you spend most time with the visitors. Placing him on the lead a few minutes before they arrive sets the scene. Once the guests have arrived a pacification item should be provided to the dog, for example a food filled toy or rawhide chew, which should be reserved purely for these occasions. Visitors must be given strict instructions not to look at, fuss or speak to the dog otherwise all your training will be in vain.

Once settled your dog can be allowed to say hello, with permission and only with control provided on the lead. Each introduction should be calm and relaxed with the dog being encouraged to sit before being petted. Over several sessions you should allow greater freedom with occasional use of the lead as required. Having guests practice entering and leaving the house repeatedly, gives the dog a greater opportunity to learn the desired response.

Having the dog sit quietly and calmly on the lead and receiving a reward of praise or treat after remaining quiet, builds the dog's self control. When the dog begins to learn the new manner of greeting people and visitors, the lead can be gradually withdrawn and only intermittent use should be necessary. Remember that the value of the reward you give to the dog should be something really worth working for. This should be changed regularly so the expectancy and anticipation of the reward does not become too predictable and therefore keeps the dog motivated.

By designating a specific area for the dog and providing an alternative source of amusement when guests arrive and with consistent training, you should soon re-establish your old circle of friends.

Games

Experiencing the interaction given by your dog through play is an absolute joy and should be maximized to its potential. It is a great way to get to know your dog.

There are many different games that you can play, and of course each dog will have their favourite. Your imagination is the limit to the endless number of games you can invent and play, but here are a few to get you started.

Tug-o-war

There are many flexible and durable toys on the market well designed and suited for this purpose. Remember though that the leader in a group should win more time than he loses.

Frisbee

The flying Frisbee is an easy handler sport and tiring canine sport. Purpose made canine Frisbees are best as the children's toy equivalent can be hard for dogs to pick up.

Kong(ing)

The Kong is an odd shaped ball, made from durable rubber that when thrown will land almost anywhere. This will provide endless hours of retrieving fun.

Tennis ball

An old faithful. Make sure that your dog is no danger of getting the ball lodged in his throat, "Oh yes....and should you indulge in this sport and your dog sees a child playing with a similar ball in the street as you're walking passed.....don't be too ready to tell your dog off when he makes a lunge for it, because that what you've taught him to do !"

.N.B Never throw sticks for dogs, because they do stick into the ground and can cause serious injuries to running dogs, and at least splinters in the mouth.

Hide and seek

On your own, or with a helper. One of you hides in the house and ask the dog to find you. A reward at the end will create motivation for the next time. Similarly this game can be played by hiding the dog's favourite toys. Food filled toys will assist with the detection. Multiple toys will increase the likelihood of success and therefore motivation to participate.

Food filled toys

There are several purpose made, 'food fill able' toys available, which provide great stimulation for the dogs. They are a toy they can play with alone, and I have found that the dog will need a brief lesson or demonstration in how to achieve a reward before the dogs start doing it themselves, but when they've got it, boy have they got it.

A smoked sterilized bone will provide hours of occupation for your dog for minimal cost. They are hollowed beef shinbones, sterilized and then smoked to add interest and flavour for the dogs. They are also a great way to descale teeth. After a while these bones will loose their taste, so to replenish them, filling them with, cheese (*low-fat of course*), a smearing of jam, peanut butter or marmite etc. regenerates the interest. Because the bones are hollow they are easily rinsed out at the end of the day.

The Kong can make an ideal, robust toy to be filled. Shape biscuits 'pop' into the large opening nicely and the dog has to work hard to get them out. Similarly a smearing of a desirable spread has the same effect. Once again the Kong is easily rinsed through. And for a Hot summers day, smear a helping of peanut butter on the inside of the Kong covering the small hole, fill with water, wrap tinfoil around the Kong and support upside down in the freezer. Allow to set, remove the foil and a ready-made *COOL* toy for a hot summers day.

SEARCH AND RESCUE !

For some dogs, the everyday mundane routines we have, are no where near stimulating enough for them and this can lead to problems both in and out of the house.

Setting time aside and providing them with quality, stimulating time through play and games, we can begin to transform their lives and characters into fuller and richer ones.

Imagination is the only restriction upon the games you can play with your dog.

Here is a game to get you started:

- Use a large cardboard box – the bigger the better - and fill it with scrunched up newspaper.
- Throw or place your dog's favourite toy or treats into the box. Scatter several treats amongst the papers to provide frequent rewards.
- Encourage your dog to jump into the box. Try using an encouraging voice or familiar command such as "FIND IT" to encourage the initial jumping in.
- If your dog cannot, or shows a reluctance to jump in, then have the cardboard box lay on its side, to make the game easier.

Your dog will have hours of fun delving beneath the scrunched up newspapers in search of that ever-elusive 'FOOD'

Buster – Cubes / Balls

These food - treat balls and cubes are ideal pacification toys. They are filled with the dog's favourite treats and then the dog has to manoeuvre the toy in a particular way to make the food drop out of the receptacle.

Food Guarding

In the wild, dogs work together as a "pack" to get the food they need for survival. They would naturally protect the food they have captured because their survival depends on it. Domestic dogs are not much different, especially if food plays an important part in its daily activities. Gun dogs are a good example of breeds usually highly motivated by food.

The easiest way to teach a food orientated dog to become aggressive around its food bowl, is to try to keep taking it away, to see if you can. You are effectively letting the dog know you are unpredictable, a potential competitor and confirm to the dog you are not to be trusted at meal times. Have you ever had your meal taken away from you whilst eating? It isn't pleasant and you would soon become annoyed at a persistent offender.

The way to deal with dogs that guard food is to employ safety measures and bring about change by new associations. Always seek professional advice for specific food guarding problems from a qualified behaviour counsellor. Generally, improvements can be made by feeding the dog and completing these exercises in different rooms of the house, as food guarding can soon extend to room guarding. Have several empty bowls placed on the floor. Prepare the dog's food as normal and after having attached a house line (thin safety line) to the dog's collar, drop a handful of his food into the dish. When finished take your dog with the house line to another dish and empty another handful of food into the dish. Repeat this with all the dishes until the food has gone. After several days allow the dog a greater amount of food in his dish, whilst offering tastier morsels such as chicken strips or liver. Move from dish to dish, placing tasty morsel in each.

After several more days, the number of dishes can be reduced, with intermittent offerings being made at meal times. The dog's perception of approaches to the dish will begin to change from guarding to expectancy of reward. Due to the nature of food guarding problems, professional advice should always be sought.

Castration is often advised for aggression related problems. A possible side effect of castration is an increase of appetite; therefore with a food-guarding problem there is likelihood that problems such as this can be exacerbated following this routine

procedure. Discuss these possibilities with your vet or behaviour counsellor.

Elderly dogs

Old age comes to us all I'm afraid and the changes that it brings about can sometime be restrictive. Maintaining a level of fitness is sometimes difficult but can be eased with short but regular walks on softer ground. Canine hydrotherapy is also good in maintaining muscle tone, where the water provides buoyancy allowing supported exercise. Your vet will be able to provide you with details of your local canine hydrotherapy centre.

It is important to maintain a healthy weight for your pet as it increases in age. Weight problems are a major contributing factor to other health related problems in pets. Cardiovascular disease, joint strain and skeletal problems can all be attributed to being over weight. Special geriatric diets are available which maintains a pet's condition, coat and general health by providing and compensating with all the necessary vitamins and minerals required in the older animal. Two small meals are generally better for your older dog rather than one large meal.

Walks should be kept short, yet fulfilling enough for your dog. Create interest for them by visiting different places, particularly areas with lots of scents that will keep their interest and stimulated. Older pets tend to sleep more and a firm, supportive bed will help when their joints begin to feel the strains of aging. In a busy household, be sure to let your older dog get plenty of rest and a quiet, draft free area of the house should be chosen to site his bed.

If there are other younger animals in the house, allowing them time apart from one another to get sufficient rest is important to prevent irritability. Regular three monthly vet check ups should be made, to ensure they are kept healthy. As with any elderly species there is an increased incidence of ailments, therefore by being diligent with health check ups prevents any unnecessary problems developing.

Why pets eat plants

The behaviour of pets eating plants is repeated in many gardens all over the United Kingdom. With young dogs especially, the garden becomes a playground of discovery and adventure. Animals explore using their sense of smell and taste and once a delectable source of interest is located, regardless of how repulsive it may appear to us, they focus their attention upon it 100%.

Bark chippings are indeed a great favourite along with the edge of decking panels, rose bushes and the wooden garden gate. Many of us can connect with this image and management of your pet's environment is key to preventing the problem.

A mulch of gravel and cobbles instead of wood or bark chippings, is a good way to discourage digging, foraging and devouring the mulch. Provision of safe chew toys in the garden as an alternative is a good idea. These will keep the dog occupied and stimulated, preventing him getting bored. By occupying your pet and providing sufficient mental stimulation you can avoid the pets need to find their own entertainment, which can sometimes lead to annoying habits like these. Care should also be taken with all pets in the garden to ensure they are kept safe. Weed-killers, Insecticidal sprays, slug pellets, ponds, electric cables supplying water features are all potentially dangerous to animals. Equally the type of plants in your garden can be harmful with common examples including the laurel bush with its shiny leaves and flower bulbs. Your vet will be able to advise you what plants are potentially dangerous to pets.

Pets will digest plant matter to either help regurgitation if feeling unwell, alternatively if an animals diet is lacking in roughage, they will source their own quantity of this by scavenging. Dogs are omnivores and should be provided with a balanced diet. Cats tend to eat grass regularly to help regurgitate fur balls.

Cocoa shell should be avoided as mulch in gardens with pets that have a tendency to scavenge. Cocoa shells can cause pets to become ill very quickly if ingested.

Dog's that dislike family members

Many dogs act differently towards different members of the family. This can be because of various reasons and identifying the animal's motivation for the dislike of the family member is important;

- Fear
- Concern
- Anxiety
- Unsure
- Worry
- Lack of confidence

Being fearful of the advances by people towards the dog can be quite intimidating for pets that lack confidence. It is important that the dog feels safe and that the people are also kept completely safe. Allowing the pet to see people at a distance will allow the dog to get his confidence. Behind a baby gate or on a lead with the owner sat at a safe distance are ways of familiarizing the dog. Avoiding eye contact, and direct approaches. Tossing treats towards the dog or offering toys increases the positivity associated with the person.

If your dog is particularly motivated by food, feeding the dogs meals whilst in proximity to the new family member increases the positive association. Only progress at a rate that the dog can tolerate and is being successful

Play, attention and petting should be given by the new family member and reduced to a minimum by other family members so the value of the newcomer is increased. Building a relationship on neutral territory is also a useful way to develop a bond. Walks and exercise in interesting areas creates a stimulating and exciting environment within which the dog can relax. This will allow the dog and person to develop their relationship. Feeding, grooming and all pleasurable activities should be left to the new comer as long as the dog is being successful. Visits to the vet, bathing and treatments or another activity with negative connotations, should be left to an established member of the family.

Always seek the advice of a professional behaviour counsellor or your home vet before implementing a behaviour modification programme.

Dogs and children

The early stages in a puppy's life are absolutely crucial to its development into adulthood. Becoming familiar with lots of people, other animals and different sounds, accompanied with a pleasant association ensures they don't begin to worry about them, as they grow older. Even when dogs brought up with a litter brother or sister you will see some dogs that dislike other dogs as they do not recognize a different breed as the same species as themselves. Equally dogs of the same litter can grow to dislike either men, women or children by the same sort of means.

Puppy socialisation classes are ideal to getting your dog familiar with a whole variety of people and different sights and sounds. However with a dog that has developed an aversion towards children, management of the situation is necessary. Dogs that were previously fine with children, can develop an aversion for even the slightest of events, that may or may not have been attributed to a child themselves. For example, upon hearing a sudden explosion, which startles the dog, if the dog happens to be looking at a child at that moment, it is understandable how some dogs can associate that event with a child and therefore make the connection, between a frightening experience and children. Therefore an aversion towards children can be formed. Equally children tend to be unpredictable, screech in high-pitched voices and run around moving suddenly. This can be worrying to some underconfident dogs and can cause them to adopt a self-preservation defensive strategy.

In trying to resolve a situation where a dog has an aversion towards children, management of the dog, their environment and the likelihood of their contact with children is necessary. Whenever in a public place the dog should be on a lead and with a history of any dog, snapping, snarling or growling, the dog should wear a muzzle for the safety of both the dog and people. It is difficult to socialise a dog with an established aversion towards children, because in order to do children need to be involved and with the safety of people paramount, these are situations, which can be untenable.

A consultation with a professional behaviour counsellor is probably the most sensible solution with a dog that has an established history, when the most appropriate advice may be given.

Digging

Dogs are a tenacious species, being determined, active, intelligent & resolute. An equally active and inventive mind is needed to provide the degree of stimulation necessary to prevent the onset of boredom, which is a primary reason for digging in the garden.

I would suggest that to satisfy your dog's inherent need to dig, that a small sandpit be constructed in a suitable place in the garden. The sand pit needs only be a few feet square in a very discreet area of the garden, yet deep enough to provide hours of fun. Hidden beneath the surface of the sand, a selection of rawhide chews, sterilised bones, or chew sticks can be concealed. This will direct the dog's digging to a designated area, rather than the prized rose bushes, which will now hopefully bloom.

This technique diverts the dog's attention to somewhere that is rewarding to dig, rather than adopting a random, dig-and-hope strategy. Digging is best resolved in this way, because it is otherwise dependant upon you always being in the garden with the dog to prevent it.

Dogs also dig if they have resources to excess. Digging and burying is the dog's instinctive response to saving things until later. Bones, slippers, shoes, chews and even bedding can be found in the vegetable patch or amongst the daisies. If your dog has a lot of toys or resources that he constantly taking into the garden to bury, I would adopt a new living strategy with your pet. This should involve keeping toys and other prized items away for periods of the day and brought out for play times when your dog receives 100% of your attention with these toys. After a play period the toys are removed and the dog is left with only a couple of special pacification items to prevent him from becoming bored. These play times should be regular and interesting for your dog and enjoyable.

Chewing

You've saved up for everything you wanted and got your house just the way you had dreamed. Imagine the horror when you come home and find that your possessions are strewn carelessly across the floor, some in pieces and others unrecognisable. But this scene of a battlefield hasn't been caused by a burglar or the after effects of the night before. No, it has been the careful work of that cute four-legged so-called friend.

During the summer months particularly, people spend more time out and about and leaving their pets at home. This coincides with an increased incidence of destructiveness around these periods. When young, puppies will have a tendency to chew to relieve pain from the growing pains of their adult teeth. Boredom, anxiety and even pleasure are amongst other causes of destructiveness. Dogs amuse themselves using their feet and mouths, and chewing is such a satisfying and rewarding activity for dogs. The therapeutic action of chewing alleviates the feeling of anxiety and provides comfort during the periods of loneliness. But for anyone who has experienced the habits of a destructive dog there is much to be learnt.

The way in which we live with our dogs can teach them so much on the way to behave when they are left. If your dog spends every waking moment in your company whilst you are at home, then they will soon learn to depend on you and therefore when you are not around they can become anxious. Giving your pet adequate quality time on their own during the day can begin to teach them to cope when left. Close doors behind you, when leaving a room, not allowing the dog to follow you. Not to give attention on demand and providing an appropriate sleeping position away from the family is valuable learning.

The reaction a pet receives when you return home can also affect the situation. Scolding is a fruitless exercise as Fido will not connect his chewing with the punishment. He will only learn that your attitude changes when you return home, and will begin to worry and become anxious the next time you leave the house because of your previous actions upon return.

Size doesn't matter when it comes to destructiveness. One terrier client I dealt with caused £4,000 worth of damage in 30 minutes

and having observed a scene reminiscent of a battlefield, I can testify that even the smallest of hounds can cause serious damage. Lap dogs get the best deal of close contact from their owners and can become to depend upon them being around for comfort, so the impact when left alone is increased. Identifying the reason why your dog is becoming destructive is necessary so you can treat it in the correct manner. More commonly most destructiveness occurs within the first ten minutes of leaving the home. Boredom can be relieved with stimulating and occupational items Whereas dogs who feel insecure can be accustomed to the use of an indoor kennel which provides a safe environment to be left for short periods. What is natural for dogs is sometimes unacceptable and indeed expensive to us, therefore by living with our four-legged friends a little differently, we can begin to teach them to stand on their own four feet.

Destructiveness in a multi-pet household

Not all thieves wear a mask, striped jumper and carry a swag bag? Many pet owners could easily identify with the chaos, distress and expense caused by a villain of the peace, and some have four legs and a tail. At some time we have all returned home to find at best, something that doesn't look quite right or slightly out of place, and at the very worst a scene that replicates a student flat after a late night on the town. Uprturned dustbins, ripped cushions, broken crockery, mangled furniture and curtains that have been used as a climbing frame can all be the hard work of that cute little angel, that greets us with a wag of a tail or a purr when we return home from a hard day at the office.

Destructive behaviour is probably one of the most common problems experienced by pet owners, and it isn't always the dog that should take the blame. When making accusations it is important that the finger of blame is pointed in the right direction. Imagine being accused of a crime and being sentenced to a life of blame, misery and name calling when you cannot speak up for yourself. But with a little invention, thought and planning identifying the cause, culprit and event can be as simple as A,B,C.

Arrange the furniture in the room to accommodate a video camera to record your animals when left.

Be yourself and leave the house as normal. Any changes in your routine will be noticed by your pet.

Camera, ensure you flick the switch before you leave the house. A video camera is the ideal tool to see exactly what goes on behind closed doors and you'll be surprised. Not only is it just dogs, but also both cats and parrots can claim their place in the hall of destructive shame. When the event is caught on camera, you are able to see if the pets are enjoying the efforts of their actions or whether they appear anxious. This will give you vital information to whether the animals are either bored or if you may need professional advice. Destructive behaviour is not only expensive, but worrying and potentially dangerous for your pet, therefore it is important to identify exactly which pet is the cause of the problem in a multi-pet household. Many events occur within moments of leaving, therefore generous exercise before leaving your pet will ensure they are relaxed and suitably tired.

Deaf Dogs

Animals learn using all their senses and by combining all the clues, consequences and feedback they receive from their environment they are able to learn effectively.

Signals can be either through visual, scent or audible means and we give these to our dogs everyday of their lives, and sometimes without us even knowing about it. Dogs can detect some of the most imperceptible changes in our behaviour and interpret these changes dependant upon their consequence to the dog. It is only when you become aware that a dog has a particular sensory loss, which you begin to wonder how you might be able to communicate effectively to your pet. Consequently deaf animals learn to adapt and refine their remaining senses to their advantage. Deafness can occur in dogs for a variety of reasons. Congenital deafness has been associated to certain breeds and colour types, with other breeds being highlighted as prone to the disability.

However, the adaptability of dogs is quite remarkable and it is only the training of the owner that is required in order for the dog to lead a happy, contented and normal life. Owners require practice at utilising their own dexterity and imagination to overcome the obstacles of training. A dog's eyes are built and designed to detect movement rather than detail and colour. Therefore signals need to be exaggerated, definite and consistent when considering training. Clear practiced visual arm and hand signals can be given as instructions to dogs with the aid of white gloves assisting with clarity. The safety of the dog should always be paramount and the dog should first be trained the commands in a safe and secure environment, possibly the garden. As the training progresses the various stages can be developed to outside situations where there are likely to be more scent distractions. The use of food rewards is a good motivator, utilizing the dog's very sensitive nose to keep his attention. Various vibrating training collars are available for deaf pets that can be used to get the dog's attention and used to teach recall. Remember that deaf animals cannot hear approaching threats including other animals, people and traffic and the element of surprise behaviour is greatly exaggerated. Always supervise a deaf animal closely whilst outdoors.

Crate Training

Many people see crates or indoor kennels are cruel. Indoor Crates keep the puppy safe, prevents destructiveness and safe from electrical cables and your new shoes. It can be considered the same as a playpen for a baby. It is also probably the best training aid for house training or resolving an established housetraining problem. Dogs learn from their mother that they shouldn't soil their sleeping area and are innately trained not to soil the area where they rest.

Crates are also an ideal denning area for dogs. Whenever a dog wants to feel secure they will retreat to a safe enclosed area, which is quiet and enclosed. This is an instinct, which can be seen in their ancestors, the wolf.

If your dog should whine when first put in the crate it is probably because he would rather be closer to you. If you allow the puppy access to you at all times during the day, it will be harder to eliminate whining as the puppy has become familiar with your constant presence. Therefore short periods should be spent in the crate throughout the day, whilst you are present. You must decide as a family before getting the puppy home what the "rules" will be and then stick to them.

Crate training should all be done positively with no negative associations. The crate should be made comfortable for the puppy. Put a towel or suitable in the crate, possibly a t-shirt belonging to a member of the family. When the puppy goes into the crate provide a treat and leave the door open and let him come in & out as he wishes. Feed the puppy in the crate every mealtime.

When the puppy is familiar with the crate you can begin to close the door for short periods. Distracting the puppy with something the puppy hasn't seen before or something interesting will keep his attention. After closing the door, sit with the puppy and do not exclude him from the family.

Overnight the puppy can be placed in the crate with the crate moved closer to the family over night. The puppy may require to go to the toilet over night and it is important you recognize the signs of him wanting to go out. With the kennel being closer to the family

you will be able to let him out and relieve before settling back down sleep. As the puppy grows in age and sleeping consistently, the indoor crate can be moved slowly further away from the family towards the more preferred room that you would like the puppy to sleep in over night. Crates should be kept in a draft free area and away from a radiator. Covering the crate on three sides with a blanket add to the sense of security within the crate.

Coprphagia

Eating animal faeces or the stools of any other animal is known as coprophagia. This condition is instinctive and can be seen in wild dogs, wolves and the domestic dog whether it is in the home or kept in a kennel environment. This condition is also enabled by the rich food that puppies and adult dogs are fed, because the waste that is produced is relatively unchanged nutritionally therefore appealing to puppies and adult dogs no matter how disgusting it appears to us. Some dogs maybe sick a few hours after eating animal faeces and others seem to digest it as if it were their daily meal with little side effects. Other dogs may experience loose motions afterwards. There are products available from pet stores to assist with coprophagia, which are generally food additives that have the effect of making the faeces smell and taste repugnant. The problem is that no-body ever asked the dogs what the faeces tasted like afterwards and therefore for some dogs they work fine and for others it is as if you have just added a little more salt and pepper to taste.

Another commonly used deterrent is a garlic tablet added to the diet. These are available from pet stores and most health food shops and are an economical deterrent. Along with any product that is bought to help prevent coprophagia, it is better to teach your dog to relieve on command followed by a reward which will teach the puppy or dog to come to you after going to the toilet. Alternatively relieving him on a long extendable lead is a valuable tool, or a change to a different dog food to one of higher quality so there is less waste produced, (which should be changed gradually over a week). Experience suggests that there is an increased incidence on dogs fed tinned food or cereal based foods.

There are also many old wives tales about controlling coprophagia and these include adding a ring of pineapple to the dog's diet and also the use of cooked courgettes is often spoken about. These too supposedly have the effect of making the faeces taste repugnant. Lacing stools in the garden with Tabasco sauce or pepper is another old wives tale, but is recommended by many pet owners who have been successful with this method.

If your dog is a prolific offender a muzzle whilst free running will ensure they are safe.

Collars & Leads

All dogs are required to have a collar & lead on whilst out walking. This ensures their safety and that of the general public. The presence of an ID disc on the collar also gives the dog a means of identification in cases of straying or loss.

A puppy can be introduced to a collar and lead at an early stage & become comfortable & accepting with wearing of such items.

Fitting a collar appropriate to the dog's size should be tight enough to allow 3-4 fingers to be placed comfortably under the collar, yet tight enough not to be pulled over the ears and allow the dog to get loose. It is not uncommon for a young dog to pay attention to the collar when it is first placed on, and scratching, attempted biting are common. You can distract the puppy from these behaviours through play or feeding. Once used to the collar the lead can be attached and allowed to trail behind the dog in the safety of the home. Again playing with the puppy with this attached will be sufficiently distracting for the dog to get familiar to this.

The final stage is, being holding the lead and the puppy becoming comfortable with your permanent attachment. Short walks around the home with the holding of a favourite tit-bit or toy in the free hand to distract the puppy's attention once more. The lead & collar should be seen as a rewarding and positive experience.

Collars and leads are manufactured in a whole range of materials and styles. Collars should be of sufficient width as not be uncomfortable or intrusive into the puppies delicate neck. Nylon webbing, or Leather is usually the most common material used. The collar should be strong enough to hold the puppy comfortably and should be changed periodically in relation to the dog's growth.

The lead should also conform to the same criteria allowing for sufficient control. A lead should also be comfortable for the handler to hold. Dual length leads allow flexibility of use. I would suggest that *Retractable leads* are not used for training a puppy to walk correctly due to the lack of control they provide to the owner, but can be used effectively to allow controlled freedom.

Clicker Training

You now have your clicker, & probably wondering what it is and what does it do? Well in simple terms, it is a tool that can be used to tell the dog “*good boy* “. The clicker is able to tell the dog at a very precise moment that any particular behaviour is good. It’s also much faster than verbal approval, without emotion, can be used at distance, and acts as a link between a behaviour and the delivery of a reward.

To accustom the dog (condition), to the clicker it is as simple as click / pause / treat. The pause is as important as the click. This is because you want the dog to be listening for the click, instead of watching your body movement of reaching for the food. Between 20-60 repetitions over several sessions will begin the association of *click / treat*.

H ave your reward already prepared
O nly click behaviour you want
W ork at the dogs learning pace
A lways have a break after five / ten minutes
R eliable offers of behaviours can have a ‘cue’ word added
D o not reduce the food too early,
..... well you don’t work for nothing do you....?

The clicker allows the dog to learn the behaviour before the word, (cue), is added. This is a much more straightforward way of learning for the dog, and avoids having to “*guess* ” two things at once.

If your dog already knows ‘cue’ words, then you can move onto kick-starting the clicker,

Example

OWNER

- Give the command sit
- Dog sits
- Click / Reward

DOG

“ I know this..”
“ You mean like this?”
“ Hooray..Treat “

If you have a new dog or puppy without any prior experience of ‘cues’ or commands, then you can use a food reward as a lure to entice your dog into a required position.

Example

- Food treat held above the dogs nose. “Mmmmmm..”
- Dog follows food
- Hands is raised “ Follow..”
- Head tilts up, bottom goes down “ Sits..”
- Click/pause/treat
hear” “ That’s nice to

Repeating the process, gradually withdrawing the lure from the hand and having the hand signal only. Once a reliable response is achieved to the hand signal, then the ‘cue’ word can be added, “ SIT “. Consolidating this response requires delaying the “click” to achieve a prolonged sitting position and gradually introducing added distractions. Working at the dogs owns rate of learning is essential. When the dog gives his / her best efforts, this should elicit the ‘ jackpot ‘ from yourself. The jackpot is either a special treat kept to one side or several of the regular rewards. This helps the dog define between what is O.K and what is excellent. It helps strengthen the dog’s responses. Any regression in the dog’s responsiveness will require backtracking two, or three stages.

With any behaviour that has greater complexity, it should be broken down into achievable stages. Once again the several stages of the task need to linked together, and completed as a whole before any ‘cue’ word is added.

Example - Teaching the dog to lie on a mat.

- Standing next to / or on the mat, the dog is rewarded for movement toward the mat.
- The dog will place a foot onto the mat; this then becomes the criteria for reward.
- Progression to all four paws, then all four paws and a sitting or lying position is then rewarded.
- The distance between yourself and the mat can then be increased gradually.
- Once a reliable response is achieved, then a ‘cue’ such as on your mat can be added.

Whilst the behaviour is being developed, you can use encouraging clues to your dog if he is making the right moves, but not quite

there, such as “ good dog...nice...lovely ”. Remember not to exhaust the dog. Dogs perform and learn quicker, if training sessions are short and successful.

The rules of Clicker Training

- One click per action
- Click any action similar to one that you want
- Mistaken clicks should be rewarded
- Treats should be anything the dog perceives as pleasurable, toys, praise, but usually food. Food should be anything that doesn't take too long to eat and not leave distracting crumbs on the ground
- Once a reliable response is achieved, develop the criteria for reward i.e. ask for two actions
- Once a complete behaviour is achieved and performed reliably then a 'cue' word can be added
- ABOVE ALL.....ENJOY YOURSELF AND THE PRIVILEGE OF WORKING WITHMAN'S BEST FRIEND.

QUESTIONS

What if my dog doesn't like the sound of the clicker?

I would recommend that the clicker be tested in another room away from the dog to begin with, to test the dog's reaction. If the dog can tolerate this level of noise then progress to a muffled click, by placing the clicker in your pocket or wrapped in a tea towel.

Do I need a clicker to teach my dog this way?

No, you can substitute the use of the clicker with a control word, for example “ YES “.

Will I need the clicker infinitely?

No. The clicker assists in teaching the response. Eventually the food is withdrawn & the click becomes more important, before the clicker is finally withdrawn, when the 'cue' becomes more important.

Are there any do's and don'ts?

Don't point the clicker at the dog; it's not a remote control
Don't use the clicker near the dog's ears

Don't lie with the clicker. You're mis-timing needs reward. It's not the dog's fault.

Do reward behaviour you want

Do progress at the dog's rate of learning

Do take regular time-outs

Do enjoy working with your dog

....because every dog can have their day!

Circling

With any dog, they are hard wired to think and be tasked with stimulating and challenging events. When placed in a sterile, uninteresting environment they can begin to show behaviours that at first may seem amusing, but can soon be recognised by even the untrained eye as being abnormal.

Circling, where the dog paces round and round in a routine manner is generally a stress related or addictive responses because of a lack of stimulation. This cannot only be seen in dogs in the backyard, but is also seen in zoo or circus animals, that are caged or kennelled for prolonged periods. For some dogs such as collie types and other herding breeds, running and herding is a natural behaviour and shouldn't be mistaken for stereotypical behaviour such as this.

Other stress related stereotypical behaviours can include dogs running around in circles chasing their tails, continual jumping at the fence or continual barking, which can all, be symptoms of stress. As many working breeds that are kept as pets don't get the opportunity to practice their natural skills of either herding, chasing or hunting, we must provide them with other more suitable stimulating activities in the garden. You may not have a flock of sheep handy but you could hide toys and treats around the garden and provide them with daily sessions of vigorous play to keep them amused.

Every dog requires feeding and there is nothing more rewarding to most pets than food. By tasking the dog with a daily challenge of working for a proportion of their daily allowance of food, you will be simultaneously providing them with sufficient mental activity too. Their food can be placed in toys, boxes, and cardboard tubes or hidden around the home or garden in several bowls. Their instinct to hunt, seek and find food will take over and will be rewarded for their efforts. By providing them with many daily activities, the boredom is reduced and the symptoms seen in many stereotypical behaviours will also reduce significantly.

Choosing a puppy from a litter

When a litter of puppies is seen for the first time, it is all too easy to be overwhelmed by those cute little eyes looking back at you, desperate to be stroked. It is important to remember that you will be about to make a decision that you could live with for the next decade or more.

Seeing the parents of the puppy will give you an idea of the general temperament and characteristics your dog may develop in adult life. Pay particular attention to the size of the mother and father, as there can be great differences in size even within the same breed. Handle the parents, stroke them, speak to them and assess their reactions towards new people. How they react towards you will give you an indication how they have been handled by the owner previously and whether the same care has been taken with the new litter of puppies.

Look carefully at the environment in which a puppy is reared, because this is very important for later life. Early experiences to noise, people, children, household activity, handling and other animals all help to rear a well adjusted puppy. Puppies kept in a sheltered environment such as a kennel, or single room will be slow to adjust to any new home. Whereas a puppy that has endured the many comings and goings of a busy household, with lots of people handling the puppies will be thoroughly used to change and adapting to new people.

Any selected pet should be confident, bright, alert, clean and approach people with ease. Puppies with signs of lethargy, shyness, or over exuberance should be avoided. Test the puppy's reactions to noise by laughing loudly or clapping your hands. In a busy household the puppies should be used to the sound of a vacuum cleaner, tumble dryer, washing machine and other household noises, which assist greatly in the puppies development.

All the pedigree papers should always be always be fully completed and do not be afraid to ask questions and for references, equally a reputable breeder will ask questions about you and your family circumstances before letting one of their puppies go. Visit the breeder regularly to check on the progress of

your puppy and don't be afraid to ask for references of any previous litters.

Remember that all those small six-week-old puppies grow up into **BIG DOGS** someday!

Checking your dog

Many dogs do not enjoy the vet visit and who can blame them when for the most part the only time, the visit is to be stabbed in the rump with a pointed implement.

Building a positive association with the vets by paying regular visits without the need for treatment, using reward will improve the association. Many vets welcome owners improving the dogs association, because after all it makes their task that much easier. Regular visits can be made to get your dog weighed, this will ensure a regular and balanced diet is being fed, prevents the dog receiving pain associated treatment and allows an opportunity for reward.

Areas of the dog to Check

- Head Injury, *abnormalities*
- Eyes Discharge, *redness, foreign bodies*
- Mouth Foreign *bodies, tar-tar, bad breath*
- Ears Wax, *mites, foreign, bodies, soreness*
- Forelegs *Abnormalities*
- Pads Cuts, *grazes*
- Digits *Abnormalities*
- Flanks / Sides *Abnormalities*
- Brisket / Chest *Abnormalities*
- Hind legs *Abnormalities, injury*
- Genitals Discharge, *soreness*
- Anus Worms, *soreness, discharge, abnormalities*
- Tail *Abnormalities*

Vet visits should be made every six months and dogs should receive a vaccination every 12 months and recommended worming of every three months. Always seek your vet's advice on health care matters relating to your pet.

Chasing Bicycles / Cars

Chasing is an instinct for many breeds, especially working, coursing and herding breeds. For persistent offenders the use of Dog Training discs is a good way to control this undesirable behaviour.

Training Discs are a useful dog-training tool in the right hands. In the hands of those without correct understanding they can be ineffective or at worst very destructive to a dog's mental sensitivity.

Dog training discs must be introduced to the dog by A.N.other person.

The correct use of the discs is as an interrupting device, (Sound Aversion), to interrupt undesired behaviour, in order for the owner, to be able to reward desired behaviour. The discs signify the removal of reward, and upon hearing the discs a dog needs to return to a safety area, the owner, this is why A.N.other person is necessary. Scare tactics with the discs, is detrimental to their use.

Sound sensitive dogs may show a fear reaction to the noise of the discs. This can be overcome by placing the discs on the floor and placing tasty morsels between the discs. Dogs that enjoy retrieve can have play retrieve with the discs.

Once the dog has been conditioned to the discs, you will find through assessment of your dog's hearing, that either a slight chink through to dropping the discs on the floor will be necessary, dependant upon the degree of hearing sensitivity.

Introduce the use of the discs in a situation that is unrelated to the problem for which they were intended. If the discs are non-productive, then the problem will be unaffected. Initial introduction should be a slight Chink, with gradual increase in volume until recognition is demonstrated. Unresponsive dogs can be assisted with the discs being chinked against a biscuit tin-lid out of sight of the dog.

Once the dog has been associated to the discs, they have been conditioned to the noise signalling 'non-reward'. When the dog is placed in a situation that would normally evoke a chase response the owner should be prepared to signal to the dog that this behaviour is no longer appropriate. Start by teaching the dog this new response in a quiet area, where they will only encounter one

bicycle or vehicle at a time. Start at a distant from the moving item, that you are likely to have success. Gradually progress the dog's training closer to the vehicle or bicycles, using the discs as appropriate. It is equally important that you also reward the dog the correct behaviour so they learn the desired behaviour.

The use of a head collar for strong dogs assists with safety and control for dogs with an established chase instinct.

Chasing

Chasing is a common behaviour problem and can be observed in various breeds but is more common in Collie type breeds and racing or coursing breeds. Persistent chasers require consistent work and training. This exercise helps you begin to control your dog's chase instinct and should be practiced regularly to achieve a good response.

For persistent offenders an extending lead for restricted exercise may offer a more suitable solution, for the dog's and others own safety.

How to control your dog's instinct to chase.

Introduction

- Ask a friend to stand 10 paces away from you but facing.
- Have your dog by your side off the lead.
- Tell him to SIT.
- Throw a toy, (not his favourite), at your friends feet. Should the dog move toward the toy your friend picks up the toy.
- When the dog remains sitting whilst the toy is thrown, and the toy lands, wait a brief moment and send the dog to retrieve the item. His reward is to play with the toy for a while. If he moves towards the toy, your training partner quickly picks up the toy, folds their arms and returns the toy to you, to repeat the exercise.
- It will not take long for the dog to learn that remaining stationary by your side is the only way that he earns the reward. No other commands are used except SIT and the release command such as FETCH will get the dog to think a little more.
- Gradually increase the distance between the toy and your friend.
- Practice this exercise in a variety of locations, only once the dog can complete the exercise successfully 10 times out of ten in one area. Gradually increase the distance the article is then and then when you are sure the dog understands the exercise, have your training partner further away from the toy.

Your dog will learn to remain by your side until told to get the reward. He has had to solve the problem himself and you haven't needed to apply any unnecessary control. Don't be afraid to go back a stage or two for a couple of days. You may want to start this exercise in the garden. Whatever toy you use to teach him, do not let him have it at any other time

. After a few weeks change the toy for one he likes a little more and begin training from the beginning again. Keep training sessions short and positive and minimize the other opportunities to chase whilst training, otherwise this is one step forward and two steps back. **There is no time limit to learning.**

Changing Diets

Changing a pet's diet when they get fed up of it, or you feel like a change, or you decide to buy whatever is on special offer that week, can be potentially upsetting to your dog's digestive system. A sudden change in diet can cause stomach upsets, diarrhoea, or sickness.

Fundamentally dogs are scavengers, but due to the advances in the content of pet's diets, all their nutritional requirements are adequately catered for in a complete diet. Complete diets can be wet or dry foods. A balanced diet is necessary for any animal, in order for them to function with normal exercise and mental activity.

Choosing the correct diet will depend on your individual pet. There are a whole range of complete diets available of all different flavours, textures, shapes and sizes. Choose a diet that agrees with your dog's digestive system, with your pet relieving normally with solid, regular stools. Some complete foods require the addition of water to remove some of the dryness, whereas ready prepared semi-moist diets are also available. Some complete diets are available direct from the tin with all the proteins, minerals, carbohydrates and vitamins all in one. However, some tinned meats require the addition of mixer biscuits or meal, to provide the dog with a balanced diet.

Feed times should be kept regular for dogs and generally two smaller meals are more easily digested than one large meal. Regular meal times give the dog security and confidence, also allowing themselves to establish a good house training routine and minimizing problems.

Any change of a dog's diet should be done gradually as a sudden change can cause an upset stomach. Gradually add 10% of the dog's new diet and remove the appropriate amount of the dog's old diet from their daily allowance of food. Within 10 days you will have weaned satisfactorily the dog from their old diet to the new one, with hopefully very few side effects. The new food should be suitable to your dog and appropriate for your dog's age. Generally there are puppy, junior, adult and senior foods available for dogs with low calorie and extra activity levels too, for dogs requiring greater energy levels. There are also specific diets available for

dogs with specific medical conditions. Speak with your vet should you require assistance.

Many pet food manufacturers will provide free samples of their food for you to try with your pet

Cats – Whilst you're away

We all get to know over time what suits our individual pets the best, but as a general rule it is advisable not to leave a kitten unattended whilst away, even for just a few days. Their inquisitive nature can get them into mischief and with a visit only every few hours from even the most reliable of neighbours, this time lapse could be detrimental. It would be a better idea to have someone stay in your house that could supervise the kitten's antics.

Boarding catteries provide professional care for cats whilst people are away. Choosing a cattery should be done well in advance of the holiday. Choosing the right premises ensures your cat is left in safe hands and gives you peace of mind. Premises should be clean, hygienic and have pleasant surroundings for the cat, after all you're not off on holiday to a one star hotel, so why should your cat. Request a tour of the cattery facilities and avoid any cattery that refuses. The proprietor should display a professional knowledgeable manner and you must be reassured that everything is in place should your cat require medical attention during their stay. Friends and vets are usually a good source of recommendations for your local cattery.

Before you go away, make sure that you leave plenty of food with the carer of the cat and they have the following details;

- Diet sheet, including meal times
- Litter Tray
- Bedding
- Collar
- Identity Tag
- Medicines or ongoing treatments
- Veterinary contact details / including emergency number
- Medical History
- Contact numbers for Owner

How do I stop cats digging up my garden?

Cats will choose specific areas in which to dig and will generally choose a texture that is soft and easy to manipulate with their soft delicate paws. Cats will generally dig in soil because they prefer the consistency. They tend to choose areas away from their home,

which keeps their home area free from faeces, debris and unpleasant scents. Their innate behaviour is to cover their own faeces wherever they defecate, but can be irritating and unpleasant for non-pet owners, or those without a natural attraction towards cats.

However there is good news with a variety of ways of stopping cats from relieving in particular areas of the garden or flowerbeds. By gathering fallen pinecones from the woods or forest and spreading them over the exposed earth, covering as much area as possible, acts as a natural deterrent to the cats. The texture is unpleasant and difficult to walk on, making finding a suitable relief area difficult. A mulch of gravel has a similar effect by making the contact with the ground uncomfortable for the cat and sends them on their way. Shell type gravel is used to a greater effect than smooth rounded pebbles, which can be easily manipulated.

Cats will sometimes choose potted plants as a place to dig but can be discouraged with a decorative mulch of either glass marbles, pebbles or large cut bark chippings. There is a variety of proprietary deterrents designed to keep pets off flowerbeds, which are usually gel based. Scattering these gel pellets across the borders discourages pets by releasing an unpleasant odour and can be long lasting.

A few old wives tales that you might try are the use of lavender on cotton wool placed strategically between plants, which are a natural pest repellent and avoided by most pets. Equally cigarette stubs in an open top jam-jar filled with a little water acts as a pest repellent, with nicotine being used in products to deter pets. If all these possible treatments do not work, a sensible option is to place a litter tray in a discreet corner of the garden which will at the very least direct the cat to an area that is easily cleaned, maintained and kept hygienic, thereby keeping the rest of the garden problem free. It is usually a good idea to use a similar substrate in the litter tray that imitates the garden soil, or you may choose to use the garden soil itself.

Cats and Babies

During pregnancy a woman will receive advice from everyone she knows and even those she doesn't about how to prepare for the new arrival, and advice about the pets and the children is no exception.

Toxoplasmosis is a risk from both cats and dogs. This condition is caused by a parasite called *Toxoplasma gondii*. If infected during pregnancy problems to the foetus can be caused. Cats carry the parasite from eating infected prey, and pass on the parasite through their faeces. In order to become infected requires swallowing one of these parasites, therefore it is a good idea to get someone else to clean the litter tray wearing rubber gloves, keep cats off work surfaces and ensure your cats worming and vaccinations are kept up to date. Speak with your vet about the necessary worming policy for your dog or cat.

It is interesting to note that this condition can also be passed on eating undercooked meat or vegetables grown in contaminated soil, therefore ensure these are thoroughly washed and cooked properly.

Cats also have a great tendency to seek warm comfortable places to rest and sleep. Being terrific climbers, baby gates are no object for cats and are easily scaled. Therefore great care must be taken to avoid the cat going into the child's bedroom or wherever they maybe resting. Carrycots, pushchairs and playpens are all inviting for cats to use as rest areas, with the obvious dangers to children all too obvious.

Children are very inquisitive and will reach out towards pets and may innocently take a hand full of hair. An animal will react instinctively to this pain-inducing act, with possible risk of accidents. Great care must be taken between the supervision of children and pets to prevent unnecessary accidents.

Toys can get the better of a pet's inquisitiveness and should be discouraged from playing with them. They should be kept clean and hygienic, as children tend to place these items in their mouths.

Cat Scratching

Scratching on a vertical surface is claw maintenance for the cat. Outdoor cats use tree trunks or fence posts. Punishment is likely to be ineffective, therefore cover the favoured surface in a material not found elsewhere in the house, such as sisal or bark rather than carpet. Once the scratching has been re-directed, move the material to a purpose built scratching post. This should be placed in front of the piece of furniture & moved to a convenient spot over time.

Discouraging the cat when found in the act can be done with a sudden short spray of water from a water pistol or plant spray. Alternatively a startling noise such as a bunch of keys being dropped onto a metal tray, also have the same effect.

Catnip can be used to direct the cat to use a much preferred claw sharpener such as an old piece of carpet secured to the wall

What is Cat Nip?

Catnip is derived from a plant called *Nepeta cataria*, which is a member of the mint family containing oil called *hepetalactone*. It would appear it is this oil that attracts the cats, and causes these reactions of feline ecstasy. When the plant is growing in its natural form cats can be seen licking, eating and even rolling amongst the foliage, which in itself is a reason to avoid planting cat nip. Some research has suggested that there is evidence of mild hallucinogenic effects from the plant upon the cat, which can explain both their desire and behaviour for catnip.

Catnip can be bought separately and used to revitalise toys and objects your cat has lost interest in.

Cat Fear

The causes of a cat being fearful or aware of it's owners can be varied and include stress, trauma, lack of early socialisation or over enthusiasm from the owner wanting to be liked.

When adopting a new animal with these characteristics time and patience are very important. You can increase the positive association and bond between yourselves by feeding very small palatable meals at regular intervals; this increases the dependency of the cat upon you. These should be sporadic to invite the cat to always keep a close eye on your movements, actions and intentions. Equally when the cat is anticipating being fed, carry the dish to the other side of the room so the cat begins to follow you. All these actions should be done in a non-confrontational manner. Try not to approach the cat face onwards, but rather adopt a sideways body posture which is far less threatening. Cats also see eye contact as a direct threat and this should also be avoided.

You will begin to notice your cat's favourite resting points in the house once they have settled in at home. These maybe a cat hammock on the radiator or back of the sofa, therefore by sitting adjacent to these places so the cat uses you as a platform to get to these places increases the cats confidence. Cats feel secure when they are on a height and by having a few perches available from which they can safely view the day to day events around the home provides them with choice and feel safe wherever they happen to be within the home.

Offering palatable treats regularly and encouraging chasing games can also help. There is no substitute for time, patience and respect for the cat's time to adjust to its new surroundings.

Sudden change in toileting

Cats and any other animals can develop a fear of going outside for many reasons and at anytime. Fighting, bullying, dogs, traffic, or fireworks are all common causes of reluctance to go outside. This can result into inappropriate toileting habits and is quite a common reason for the onset of a breakdown in the cats normal outside toileting habits. Dependant upon the cause of the fear, which is hard to know exactly, will determine the action you take to rectify the situation. There are several courses of action to try and those would be:

- Ensure that access is limited to the area where your cat is relieving indoors. Keeping the door closed in the first place reduces the 'practice-time' your cat has at spraying or defecating in this particular spot.
- Provide a suitable indoor alternative litter tray
- Clean any areas that have be marked, thoroughly with a solution of washing powder and warm water. Do not use disinfectants.
- You may place a small bowl of cat food or drinking water, next to the areas commonly used for relief. Cats will not relieve in an area they eat. This will build his respect for this area again.
- Seek professional advice from your vet or professional behaviour counsellor.
- Ensure your cat is medically checked to ensure there are no underlying conditions responsible for the change in behaviour.

Introducing changes one at a time will allow you to discover which changes affect the behaviour most, rather than change everything at the same time.

Cat Castration

Cat castration can have a slight reduction on territorial behaviour between cats; however research shows that this procedure has no real significant effect upon inter-male aggression. There are four times as many cats than dogs in Great Britain today and most live in an amicable and tolerant way with one another. This is achieved by time-sharing their available territories. Some cats are let out during the day whilst their owners are at work and others are allowed out when the owners return home. This time-sharing of territory allows each and every cat feel like they own a piece of the housing estate albeit on a part time basis.

It would be more prudent to agree with neighbours appropriate times when your cats could have an equal yet individual share of the available territory if you experience regular problems of inter male aggression. This would allow for a more peaceful and harmonious lifestyle for all.

The main benefits of castration, which is a simple straightforward procedure, are unnecessary litters of kittens and wandering seeking a mate. There are already hundreds of thousands of kittens born each year and thousands of these are unwanted and end up in rescue catteries across the United Kingdom, with no real homes to go to. By castrating male cats ensures that we do not add to these unwanted pets, which for many end up being euthanised.

There is no worse thought for pet owners than a pet going missing. Wandering frequently occurs in entire male cats when seeking a mate. Some cats will wander miles to find a female on heat and can be missing for days. The peace of mind that this is less likely to occur following castration, is a decision well made.

Cat Aggression towards the owner

Even the most friendly of cats can be reported as having the occasional nip or swipe at its owner. There are a variety of reasons for cats displaying aggression and should you require professional assistance speak with your vet about a referral to a pet behaviour counsellor, who is a member of the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors.

Most of the time instances of what seem to be aggression, are just play but can be taken as aggressive acts. When cats and kittens play between each other they play in a rough manor, swiping at one another, flexing their claws and with razor sharp teeth and will play bite one another around the scruff of the neck. Cats are protected with a thick coat of hair whilst playing with one another but unfortunately humans don't have such protection and therefore when playing the cat's playful behaviour can cause considerable pain. Controlling the excessive play biting can be done with a sharp 'Ouchhh' and scowl towards the cat. Stern eye contact can usually be sufficient to control the more sensitive cats with alternative control necessary for a persistent offender.

Dependant upon the circumstances that the aggression is seen will depend upon the control. A small water pistol or water plant spray, is usually sufficient to interrupt unwanted aggression, especially if your cat has a tendency to ambush members of the family, for example when passing through door ways. A verbal warning command such as 'No!' should be given before the gentle spray of water is applied so the cat can eventually be controlled by command only.

If your cat is aggressive during petting, the use of favourite cat treats during brief petting sessions help distract your pet. Keep petting sessions short and cease stroking before your cat becomes irritated thereby increasing their tolerance level.

Chasing and pouncing in an unpredictable manner, especially targeting the ankles is another common act of aggression. Under stimulation is a likely motivation for this pastime and therefore playing games with the cat that involve chasing will satisfy their natural need to seek amusement, usually in the form of predatory behaviour. Tossing ping-pong balls, or fishing rod style toys are a

good source of amusement. Toys that are treated with catnip provide an extra incentive. You may find that tying a few occupational and stimulating toys just out of reach onto door handles is a good distraction and source of entertainment for your cat, satisfying their need to seek, find, hunt and pounce.

Castration

Having a male dog neutered, can be said by some people as being a universal means of problem solving. Nothing could be further from the truth. There are a number of reasons for castrating a male dog with some of the more common reasons looked at here. The biggest single obvious reason for neutering is to reduce the number of homeless or unwanted dogs in this country. Every year thousands of unwanted dogs are needlessly euthanased because they cannot be found suitable homes and another unwanted litter of puppies will only add to these numbers.

Early castration can assist in preventing the development of problems and indeed some canine medical conditions. Every veterinary surgeon has different ideas about castrating and what age is most suitable, but as a general rule a male dog can be castrated once their testicles are mature and have dropped into the scrotum, making the procedure straightforward. The procedure of castration is a painless, clean and routine operation, with most dogs fit for gentle exercise with a day or two.

Situations that can be improved by castration include roaming and consistent escaping to seek mates. The remarkable sense of smell that dog's have developed allows them to detect a bitch in season from a considerable distance. With a natural urge to mate, entire male dogs can become agitated and frustrated easily. Conflicts can also occur between entire males when competing for territory, bitches or other resources. Marking is a form of identifying territory, with entire dogs cocking their legs to their scent as high and as noticeable as possible on any structure that they find. This can sometimes include furniture in the home and maybe a situation when castration can assist as part of a behaviour modification programme. Aggression displayed towards other dogs or people can be promoted with the body's production of the male hormone testosterone, which is also responsible for providing an animal with an element of confidence. This production of testosterone is removed following castration. A side effect of castration can be an increased appetite, therefore adjustments and monitoring of the dog's diet is sensible.

Therefore knowing all these elements of castration, should problems related to fear be experienced then, professional advice should be sought before neutering as castration could increase the

likelihood of this behaviour. Similarly, any dog displaying guarding behaviour of food should be treated with similar caution as a situation like this could increase in frequency or severity following castration.

Behaviour problems are usually a combination of learned behaviour and instinct therefore castration in conjunction with training is both usually necessary to resolve individual issues. See your vet for advice.

Getting a dog in and out of the car

There are numerous reasons for animals disliking car travel, which include car sickness, instability whilst travelling, getting a mouth full of exhaust fumes from the tail pipe when previously asked to jump in or making journeys without pleasant associations, such as trips to the vet for treatment.

It's therefore not hard to see how animals come to see these metal boxes with wheels having an unpleasant meaning. Introductions to vehicles should be positive to form a good association. Begin with the care stationary and play games of retrieve in and out of the car, hunting out treats and toys from under, in and around all areas of the car with all doors open. Have the car parked on the drive, with the driveway gates closed so the animal can approach the vehicle in their own time, whilst the area remains safe.

Feeding small meals beside or in the tailgate of the car whilst stationary provides good associations, for pets. They begin to associate the car with reward. If your pet is fed several times a day these are good training opportunities to get your dog used to the vehicle. When it is time for journeys, these should be short positive journeys of just a few minutes. These journeys should end in a free run at a park, at the pet shop or at a destination the pet sees as positive. These positive journeys build confidence in travel and the vehicle.

Travelling with a dog in the foot-well, in-between the legs of the passenger of the car provides stability and reduces the sensation of movement whilst travelling. Any vehicle with a passenger air bag should not be used to carry a pet in the footwell, due to the potential dangers in an accident.

If motion sickness is the cause of the distress, talking with your vet about some of the herbal or proprietary branded products available may also help. Ginger is usually the base product of natural remedies and offering a ginger biscuit before journeys has been known to work.

Car Safety

An unrestrained dog in the back of a car, in the event of an accident is like an armed missile waiting to be fired. The effect of momentum under hard breaking conditions upon an average sized dog will have disastrous consequences causing injury to either the dog or those seated in the front of the vehicle. There is therefore a responsibility upon the owner to ensure safety whilst travelling. There are several means available to ensure safety.

Car Harness

A correctly fitted car safety harness can be fitted on the dog before getting into the car. A special attachment is connected to one of the cars safety belts once in the car. The action of the tensioner in the seat belt acts in the same way as it does for a human. Car harnesses are usually padded across the chest area to give added protection.

Dog-Guard

There are a whole variety of dog guards available on the market today. I would suggest that a valuable purchase would be a dog guard designed for the make and model of the car. There are universal dog guards available, however a dog with an ounce of athleticism also easily breaches the bars that can be easily extended.

Car Cage

This is an ideal and sure means of transporting a dog. A dog cage that is correctly fitted in the hatch of the vehicle adds security and protection to the dog whilst travelling. Many cages are fitted with a lockable rear gate also allowing the tailgate to be let open or ajar when the dog is left in the car for a short period with relative security. The cage must however be fixed to the car to avoid the cage being removed, with dog inside, by any potential unscrupulous thief.

Basket / Boxes

Some people transport their animals in small animal carriers.
Correct restraint whilst travelling is essential for both the animals
and passenger safety

Car Nervousness

There are numerous reasons for animals disliking car travel, which include car sickness, instability whilst travelling, getting a mouth full of exhaust fumes from the tail pipe when previously asked to jump in the car, or making journeys without pleasant associations, such as trips to the vet for treatment. It's therefore not hard to see how animals come to see these metal boxes with wheels as having an unpleasant meaning. A positive association is required towards the car. This can be achieved in various ways with suggestions including games of retrieve, hunting out treats and toys from under, in and around all areas of the car with all doors open whilst parked on the drive is a good starting point. This should be a fun exciting event for your dog, with safe unrestricted access to the car.

Another suitable means of changing the association is by feeding regular meals beside or in the tailgate of the car whilst stationary. This provides good associations, but must be consistent, regular and not forced. For dogs with an established phobia of the car, you may have to begin some distance away from the vehicle. Short journeys of a few minutes ending in a free run at a park also build confidence. These can be just a few hundred yards to the pets favourite exercise area, but again must be consistent and frequent to make a real impact upon changing the dog's behaviour. Travelling with a dog in the foot-well, in-between the legs of the passenger of the car provides stability and reduces the sensation of movement whilst travelling. It must be noted that cars with a passenger air bag, present a potential hazard for any dog carried in this manner, in the unfortunate event of an accident.

If motion sickness is the cause of the distress, talking with your vet about some of the herbal or proprietary branded products available may also help.

There are a variety of old wives tales which have been known to have a good effect upon travel sickness including small amounts of ginger added to the food, alternatively a ginger biscuit to prevent nausea whilst travelling.

A crate in the rear of the car that is covered on three sides so the dog can only see out of the rear of the vehicle, reduces the sensation whilst travelling and can be used successfully in some cases.

Associating a dog whilst young to all types of transport, including cars, trains and buses builds the dogs confidence and helps prevent problems in later life. Safety is very important when travelling and it must be ensured that your dog wears a collar and identity disc. This helps with something to hold when getting the dog in and out of the car and is important for the dog's safety.

Break Down of House Training over night

With any house training routine it is critical to firstly get a good and established feeding routine. With an animal that is allowed to free feed as and when he decides, the pets' body clock cannot be synchronised. Therefore the daily allowance of food should be split into two small meals one fed am and the other pm. The feed should be provided for 20 minutes and then removed and any remaining food discarded.

Dogs adopt an innate response to relieve at a point furthest away from their beds area, and therefore we have two possible options to offer as potential solutions.

The use of an indoor crate as a rest area overnight, confines the dog to an area he is less likely to soil. Therefore an indication is likely to be given by the dog that he would like to go outside to relieve. Introducing an indoor kennel should be a positive experience and dogs enjoy finding a simulated den area within the home, like behind sofas, chairs and under tables and a covered indoor kennel is no different and just as inviting. (See [Crate Training](#)) The use of the indoor kennel keeps the dog confined keeps him clean overnight and allows him to be praised for the correct response as opposed to being admonished. It is beyond a dogs reasoning ability to associate a telling off sometime after the event.

The indoor kennel is only a short-term measure until a new habit has been adopted. As time progresses and cleanliness overnight is becoming more consistent the indoor kennel door can be left open for progressively longer periods.

A second option with some dogs would be to allow the freedom of access many dogs are used to, by introducing a dog flap. This allows the dog the access to the garden he is familiar with, but will require a little while to get used to using the flap itself.

Boredom

There are so many toys available for pets in the stores today, that you can easily become bemused with which ones are most appropriate for your pet. With so much variety, unless you have recently won the lottery you must make a choice that suits both the needs of your pet and your pocket.

Toys can be classed as either: -

- **Interactive**, (i.e. need somebody or another animal to play with), or
- **Pacifying**, (ones which reward the animal for his own actions).

Plies & tugging toys are interactive and not much fun to play with on your own, but with the family and other pets they're great for playing tug-o-war. Whilst food filled toys or edible dog treats are rewarding enough on their own. Boredom is a contributing factor to many pet behaviour problems and providing stimulating and interesting toys for your dog will provide psychological relief, achieve a sense of satisfaction and benefit their teeth too.

Safety is a very important factor when selecting toys. Most dogs love to chew and will chew enthusiastically, if this describes your dog then selecting a harder product will be necessary. Select a size that is too large for your dog to swallow and replace old worn out toys. Whenever a new toy is introduced, I would advise you supervise your pet until you are sure it is suitable and being used correctly.

Squeaky toys are great fun, but the squeaks themselves can be removed from toys very quickly by pets and become a danger if swallowed. Whenever choosing a toy to keep your pet amused and active, look at the toy from the pet's point of view. If you were an animal what benefit would you get from that toy? There are a whole range of toys available that can keep your dog from getting bored, which allow you to place a portion of the pets daily diet into the toy and then the pet has to spend time working for their meals. This activity keeps pets active, amused and mentally satisfied. All our domestic pets are fundamentally scavengers having to find their meals day to day and teaching them to work for a portion of their daily allowance is both natural and stimulating

Barking Attention seeking

Barking is the primary means of communication for a dog. They can bark for a variety of reasons, including protection of territory, alerting other pack members to potential dangers or intruders, defence, solitude, anxiety or excitement.

The barking dog offers a good means of deterrent to would be intruders, but constant 'yapping' can also become a very irritable and annoying sound as well. To remedy this we have to find the button that will turn the barking on & off.

Introduction

If you had never seen a light switch before, and someone asked you to turn the light off, how could you?

If you hadn't driven or seen a car before and someone asked you to turn the engine off, how could you?

If someone had never shown you how to bark, and suddenly shouted

"Quiet!", how could you?

*For the dog that doesn't comprehend the word used to cease barking, can learn that the ever escalating quiet, **quiet, quiet, quiet QUIET!**.. is approval from the owners, because you are joining in the commotion?*

Teaching the dog the action of barking, and rewarding the behaviour, allows you to teach the alternative behaviour, and eventual response of *quiet* at a later stage.

The action of barking should be taught away from the problem situation, to avoid further reinforcement.

Stage one

Have a friend hold your dog on a collar and leash, or restrict the dog's movement by attaching his lead to a secure point. Stand just out of reach of your dog, with an article your dog values, such as his favourite toy. Your dog will vocalize through frustration. A whine

or 'yap' is your initial criteria to be indicated for reward and slowly increased until a bark is achieved. Reward, is a piece of dried liver or meaty strip or play with the toy. Do not exceed a period of 5 /10 minutes practice.

Once a reliable barking response is achieved with the presentation of the toy, add the 'cue' such as "**speak**". Develop the speak response in a variety of situations and environments, with and without restriction. A random reward schedule will strengthen the response over a period.

Stage two

Request the dog to speak. Present the toy. In anticipation of the reward the dog will cease barking. Add the cue " **quiet**", with an appropriate hand signal to assist the dogs understanding, and present the reward. Develop the "quiet" command as you did the "speak" in all situations. The final stage of development is to proof the response in the original area the problem occurred. In order to assist with timing, set-up situations, using stooge assistants maybe necessary.

- Progress at the dog's rate of learning
- 5 /10 minutes at a time
- Any regression may require repeating steps
- Do not use the turn-off command in any area that hasn't been previously proofed, because the dog is sure to ignore the request.

At a later date the command speak can be associated to another stimulus, to build into a useful response such as alerting when the smoke alarm triggers, or when the car alarm is set off.

Babies and Dogs

Early preparation and assessment is essential in any family with pets and an expectant mum. As soon as you know there is a new baby on the way, you and your family should begin to prepare yourselves for the changes ahead. Your family pet will also need to be prepared for the new arrival, as there will be alterations to the home and of course your routines, not to mention sleep patterns once the baby comes. This forward planning can get your pet used to the changes well in advance, so that he should hardly notice any difference when the baby actually arrives.

You should start to make preparations as far ahead as possible of the birth and not wait until mum is due home. The initial preparation should begin by placing the new furniture, baby walkers, bouncers playpens, cots, pushchairs, highchairs, changing mats and pushchairs in and around the home. Every entertainment toy for children these days tends to need batteries for the elaborate sound effects they make and getting your pet familiar with these noisy toys at an early stage is good preparation. Children tend to investigate with their hands so a tolerance of touch and being stroked is essential, especially around the areas that are reachable by toddlers, such as the chest, sides and tail. Handling exercises can be practiced well in advance making them positive and enjoyable for your pet.

One of the most curious things about a baby for any unsuspecting pet is the great range of sounds they can make. Playing recordings of a baby crying, giggling and screaming for short periods and following this with something your pet finds rewarding familiarizes him to these soon to be daily experiences. CD's containing baby sounds can be purchased from Dogdayz on 01952 261051. Making this a regular exercise before the arrival of the baby will soon have your pet sleeping through the real life episodes, which is more than you will be able to do! Along with sounds comes the variety of smells. Get the pet used to baby powder, soaps, shampoos and baby milk by using them in the home in the weeks leading up to the baby's arrival.

Your time will be at a premium when the baby arrives so think now about how much exercise your pet gets and any problem you might have. Dogs that pull, cause a nuisance with other dogs will be much harder to control with a pushchair so think about some training or buying new walking equipment that might help. The exercise routine will change too so get any dog used to the new routine as early as possible. You may want to compensate the shorter walks with more interactive games at home.

Before mum arrives home, some worn sleep suits should be left around the home, which the pet can be left to investigate. And when a new mum meets the pet for the first time after coming out of hospital, he is likely to be very excited. Introduce mum and pet without the baby and then later, the baby should be introduced in a quiet room. Associate the baby's presence with positive, enjoyable experiences for your pet. Give lots of praise and control initial interactions. Dogs will appear interested and cats will likely look on with

disbelief. Keep routines as normal as possible and monitor all interactions when both pets and children are together. Keep both cats and dogs out of children's bedrooms and maintain strict hygiene controls at home and parasite treatment for pets. With early preparation most households adapt very well to arrival of a new addition to the home, when everyone can look forward to an enjoyable, fun and fulfilled time together.

Controlled introductions on the lead with two adults present, building relationships between babies and pets outdoors, walking the dog with the pushchair, being included and positive associations all help.

Attention seeking

This problem is probably extremely common and is learned quickly by most dogs and taught quite innocently by most pet owners. Taking a few moments to see things from your pet's perspective gives a clear understanding of why this occurs.

It is quite natural for people to stroke their pet as it approaches them. As the dog puts their head gently onto your lap it is very hard to resist displaying your appreciation for them loving you. But inadvertently the dog is learning, that they are able to train you really quite well. After all it is in the dogs best interest to see what effect their advances will have on you, because after all you are their provider. Whilst sat chatting to friends, talking on the phone or whilst watching TV many people will sit and stroke the dog and they are of course quite contented. But when all of a sudden the telephone rings, or something on TV catches your attention, or whilst you are trying eat your evening meal in peace and everything suddenly changes. Your dog will try every strategy he knows to get your attention, barking, stealing items around the house, scratching, chewing and in some cases relieving indoors. This is because you are not providing him with the attention he wants and he is becoming frustrated. This has happened because he has not been allowed to learn to cope with periods of not having attention.

To resolve this scenario will require a change in the way that all members of the family live with the dog. Everyone should adopt a simple and straightforward rule. It is important that your dog's training is consistent so he does not become confused. Whilst at home with the dog, any attempt to seek attention should be met with an opposite consequence. These should include ignoring the dog, leaving the room temporarily, folding your arms and turning away without speaking. It is important not to speak to the dog or touch him as this is still attention and is just what we are trying to avoid. As your dog walks away, lies down or at anytime he is not asking for attention, he is called to you to receive as much affection and attention as you want to give him. You have placed the control of attention on your terms and something that is dependant upon you deciding to offer it. There should be plenty of activity toys for your dog to play with on his own, but their should also be at least one period of his daily routine which is a designated play time for your dog, when he receives 100% of your

attention. Special toys can be reserved for tug-o-war sessions or a special ball for throw and catch, so he learns that he still receives attention and all his needs for comfort and interaction are met. Ensure your dog receives sufficient daily exercise, which also leads to a contented dog.

Association of Pet Dog Trainers

If it has been something that you have been considering, but have never seem to get around to doing, then don't leave it another minute before getting your dog trained. But finding a suitable dog training school can be difficult. It is always worthwhile seeking a recommendation from either friends, family or your local vet. Always visit a dog training school in the first instance without your dog and assess the suitability of the class for your dog. There should be restricted numbers of dogs, all the dogs should be of a similar age, training methods should be positive and there should be plenty of opportunity for one to one instruction with a good calm way to understand instruction.

The APDT (Association of Pet Dog Trainers), was established in 1994 to offer the highest possible standards of dog training that both clients and vets can rely on. Adhering to a strict code of practice using only kind and effective means of training members are available all across the county of Shropshire.

It is a family's decision to get a dog as a companion and therefore the families responsibility to make sure we teach the new dog how to live by our already established rules. Once you've got your new dog, your training should begin the moment you arrive home. Setting the ground rules avoids confusion to your new housemate and make sure he learns appropriately in the first place and avoids an early eviction. Remember that small puppies grow into huge heavy dogs, and whilst it maybe fun for a young puppy to jump for attention, there is nothing funny about a five stone dog thundering down the hall to greet you the way he did as a puppy. Similarly you will only ever have your dog as a puppy once and as an adult for a lifetime, therefore at this important young age it is so important to make the efforts to socialise him with other dogs, people and different sights, sounds and environments.

With a young baby you would take great care to select the most appropriate nursery where your child would learn and be comfortable. Similar care is needed to select a good training class in your area. Visiting the class without your dog will allow you to see if it is what you require for your dog. Overcrowded, noisy and mixed age classes should be avoided and likely to give your dog the wrong impression about other dogs.

Training is fun and not only limited to obedience but there are so many other activities for you and your dog. For those energetic canines and children with bags of energy, how about agility where both the dog and owner get fit and have fun together. But if you fancy exercising the dog without doing too much running yourself, how about fly-ball where the dog jumps a set of hurdles before retrieving a ball. But if you have more of a relaxed idea about training then how about Heel work to music. This is a new and exciting way of training where the dog and owner learn to perform a sequence of manoeuvres in time with music, resulting in complete dance routines.

Before I bought a car, I learnt how to drive, I read about driving, watched people driving and learnt from their mistakes. When it came to my turn to drive, I made mistakes too and needed help with the occasional repair, but overall found it a fun experience. The same can be said about training our four legged animals that share our home. Read about them, learn from others and get help when you can't get things to function the way you would want. Whether you begin training your dog yourself this week or decide to join in one of the many activities, make sure you have some shared and indulgent fun with man's best friend. More information can be found at www.apdt.co.uk

The Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors

When something goes wrong it is necessary to call a professional who knows what they are doing. But sometimes calling a professional to help with your pet when the pet has been your responsibility can be embarrassing, intimidating or quite daunting for most people. There is a mis-conception that you will be blamed for the problems your dog has developed rather than help with the problem.

It is true that as with any profession there is good and bad. When seeking professional advice it worth seeking the advice of your home vet in the first instance whom maybe able to refer you to a professional behaviour practitioner. There is o legal requirement at present for anyone to take any formal qualification before using the title behaviourist, therefore a reference from either a vet; friend or colleague is always worthwhile.

It is the role of a professional behaviour consultant, to interpret an animal's behaviour and provide suitable remedies for the situation and apportion blame to anyone. Knowing when to contact a behaviour counsellor can be difficult but you should use the guideline of finding help when the ideas you have already tried do not appear to be working but especially if you experience growling, snapping, biting or lunging, chasing or guarding behaviour. After all if your car had broken down and you needed help fixing it, you would call a mechanic so in the case of pets a professional behaviour counsellor would be required.

A consultant should, use mainly positive methods, give no guarantees, see your dog in person and not mis-interpret their credentials. The Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors, (APBC), are an organisation of approved behaviourists, used by veterinary practices as a referral source for cases where it is the behaviour of the animal which is the problem. For pet owners with pet insurance it is worth checking your policy as many companies reimburse the costs of an APBC behaviourist consultation. Every behaviourist works in different ways with some making home visits and other seeing your pet at a veterinary clinic. It is worth asking the way in which each behaviourist conducts their consultation, as some problems will demand a home visit to accurately assess the extent of a problem. Equally some people will feel more relaxed in

the comfort of their own home when discussing what can be a difficult situation. Ask your vet for advice or a referral if necessary.

Aggression towards other dogs

There can be numerous reasons for aggression seen towards other animals. We will try to deal with these in order and provide advice upon each situation.

Fear induced aggression

Aggression towards other dogs is more often than not motivated by fear. An unpleasant experience where the dog has been injured or even frightened teaches them to avoid contact with dogs in the future and in order to display their displeasure at unwelcome advances of other dogs they show aggressive tendencies. The fear is sometimes made worse by the apprehension shown by the owners when they tighten the lead, signalling to the dog there is something to be concerned about.

These displays usually only occur when the offending dog is on the lead. With no option to escape they can only resort to this defensive strategy. Off the lead, they may very well keep a safe distance.

Fear induced aggression requires counter-conditioning by providing many other future positive introductions and associations towards other dogs that are safe, welcoming and passive with other dogs, whilst minimising future frightening experiences.

Status related aggression

Dogs will display aggressive tendencies if they feel their position maybe under threat or they themselves are being directly challenged. You can see this type of behaviour when a puppy is introduced to a household with an older dog and the puppy is tolerated for a while until their games become too rough and over bearing to the older dog. To put the puppy in it's place they maybe show dominant tendencies and 'tell the puppy off'. Persistent, pushy pups that do not learn when to stop or have not been reprimanded by another more confident dog, ca become aggressive as they get older, never having learnt social manners within the dog world and how to interact correctly, usually biting first rather than waiting to see what consequences may follow.

AFTER MEAL MADNESS

It is very common that after a meal whether it is breakfast or in the later evening that you will see your dog suddenly charge off around the room at 100mph. This mad five minutes is sometimes known as 'after dinner madness'. And it is not just adults that are prone to after dinner madness, but puppies are can be prone to short outbursts of madness after eating their meals too. Running around without a care for anyone or anything in their path, they will charge around for a few minutes before settling down once again as if nothing had happened. Tucking their tails underneath them and with ears pinned back, the five-minute fling usually begins as soon as the last morsel of food has been polished off.

There are various reasons, which have been given for after meal madness but the most likely explanation being that it is a sign of enormous relief. You only have to see the pleasure on their faces and body language to see that they also receive reward from their behaviour. If something is found to be rewarding then it is likely to elicit repeat performance, again, again and again. The highlight of the day for many dogs is the excitement of mealtimes. Each moment of everyday is spent waiting to quash the feeling of hunger, after all dogs are fundamentally scavengers and predators with their bellies ruling their brains for the majority of the time. Then imagine the satisfying relief following the most enjoyable part of the day and you can understand why your dog will suddenly charge around in circles.

Although amusing this period can become a little uncontrollable if not managed correctly and can be a little more than dangerous with a dog that is larger than average. If after meal madness becomes a little more than you can bear then there are alternative means to controlling your dog's behaviour. Distraction is a successful method that is used very regularly by behaviourists. By producing the dog's favourite toy as soon after meal times will give the dog another source upon which to focus his attention. Alternatively you may want to make meal times last a little bit longer than is usual and make your dog work just a little bit harder at meal times. By placing a proportion of the dog's food inside toys such as Kong's or roll-a-treat balls, you are teaching your dog to work for their daily allowance of food and making the completion of their daily diet a relief in itself and therefore less likely to begin

charging around the home. A further alternative would be to place your dog on a lead after the meal to break the habit so it doesn't become a repetitive behaviour, because the more practice the dog has to perform the behaviour the harder it would be to resolve at a later date.

A further very effective way of controlling this behaviour would be to split the dog's daily allowance of food into several small meals per day so there is no single highlight of the day but several high spots to each and every day.

Whining at night

It is not at all uncommon for a new arrival to whine or display some other behaviour that shows a little anxiety following a change of environment. Puppies and young dogs tend to whine for attention, particularly during the night and in order to get sufficient sleep it is necessary to know how to deal with the problem.

Having been taken away from everything that was familiar, their mother, littermates and home you can understand how insecure the animal might feel. Now when left alone separated from the adoptive family they can become agitated and anxious. It is necessary to recreate a safe, warm, welcoming environment for the new arrival, in which they will feel safe and secure.

Dogs are naturally denning animals, which means they will seek safe enclosed areas to rest or retreat to when they feel threatened. An artificial den area can be recreated using an indoor crate. This is an ideal solution when made into a safe inviting rest area, providing a sense of well-being, security and confidence for your puppy. Partially cover the crate with a sheet and place the puppy's bed inside making it warm and comfortable. Put this in your bedroom to begin with allowing the puppy to get used to sleeping and resting in here overnight and after a few weeks you can gradually move the crate, a stage at a time further away from your bedroom into the kitchen. The sleeping environment remains the same and therefore the puppy remains comfortable and content. Be sure to use a crate that would fit the adult equivalent of your breed of dog.

It is common for the blanket advice of ignore the dog when it is crying. This is generally fine if the puppy gives up crying quite quickly but for persistent offenders, it can be quite difficult and usually ineffective. With any new arrival having sufficient energy levels to deal with their daily activities is an absolute essential so getting sufficient sleep at night is very important

The Shy Dog

All dogs are different just like people and you will find differences even between littermates. Confident dogs take everything in their stride and are adaptable to most situations and events. At the other end of the spectrum there are the shy type of dogs. The degree of the dog's shyness will depend on how much time and effort will be required to help them overcome their problem.

Particular breeds can be predisposed to shyness. Being shy usually means that the resilience to change is significantly less than the average dog. Collies, German Shepherds and some miniature breeds can be genetically predisposed to a shy tendency. There may very well be a genetic tendency and the situation and environment the dog was brought up in, during the first few weeks of life have a particular influence.

The home circumstances also influence shy dogs behaviour. A quiet home with very few changes is not conducive to helping a shy dog overcome their problem. The set routine and environment makes the dog more likely not to adapt to changes in later life. Even though efforts may have been made when the dog was younger, it is essential that the training is ongoing.

Training can begin in the home. Regular visitors, that are non-confrontational and understanding of the dog, can help their adaptability to change. Every single day the dog should experience something different and it is important you monitor their reaction so changes only occur at a rate the dog can tolerate.

The use of rewards, toys and positive interaction can be used in the home and whilst on positive incentive walks. Exercise should include an incentive for the dog, one that the dog sees as pleasurable and rewarding. This can be something as simple as a shop where the dog receives a treat, or a walk to the local park area.

If your dog's experience of strange or sudden sounds is limited, the use of a desensitisation CD whilst the dog is having fun around the house can assist with increasing the dog's confidence and overcoming their shyness. The CD will help them become familiar with sudden sounds and every day noises. A recommended training

aid for shy dogs is Crash-Bang-Wallop a CD designed specifically to get pets used to sounds. Available at www.dogdayz.co.uk

Frightened of Fireworks..... No More!

Every year thousands of pets are subjected to a bombardment of heart attack inducing explosions around bonfire night. But fireworks are let off at every occasion including, new year, birthdays, weddings or anniversaries. This means that pets are subjected to this fear-inducing event all year round.

Fear reactions include shaking, trembling, chewing, destructiveness, panting, pacing, hiding or trying to escape. But thankfully there is now a sensible solution in helping pets that are frightened of sudden sounds such as fireworks. Crash–Bang–Wallop is a desensitisation CD for pets frightened by noise. Desensitisation is a technique used very successfully to combat fear responses. The problem situation is presented to the dog at gradually increasing intensities, whilst the dog is having a positive experience. This can be at feed times, whilst playing or whilst enjoying favourite toys or treats.

If you use both a positive e or whilst enjoying favourite toys or treats. If you use both a positive experience, whilst simultaneously being exposed to the source of the fear at a level the animal can tolerate, you can begin to make real progress with your dog's fear of sound.

Fireworks, gunshots, thunder, lightening, sirens, traffic noise, aircraft or alarms all startle pets whilst indoors or outdoors. All these sounds are contained on the Crash-Bang-Wallop CD which is available at www.dogdayz.co.uk or by telephoning 01952 261051. Recommended by veterinary surgeons, trainers and behaviourists across the UK.

Recreating a safe environment within the home around bonfire night can help your pet tolerate the worst time of year. Dogs like to hide when frightened so by placing a blanket over the table and placing your dog's bed beneath the table provides a safe den area. Keep curtains closed and radio or TV turned up a little louder than normal to mask the sound. Choose the times carefully that you let your pet out to relive and supervise them at all times. Do not leave the pet alone during the evening.

Feeding the dog a high carbohydrate diet helps the dog rest and sleep during the evening.

Don't wait for bonfire night before you begin a desensitisation programme with the Crash-Bang-Wallop CD; start now ready for next year. The sooner you begin training, the sooner your pet can be helped.

Training Classes

It is always worthwhile attending training classes whatever age of your dog, but what is important is finding a class that is suitable for both you and your dog. If you were to find a suitable nursery for your children, you would take great care and pay lots of attention to the quality of the teachers, standard of the care and professionalism of the staff. Therefore just as much care should be given to the choice of your dog's training class. An unpleasant association from the start means you will be giving your dog the wrong messages about training and socialising with other dogs.

Before you enrol on a training course always ask to come and visit the class in action. This will allow you to see how other people are being taught, how difficult dogs are being dealt with and the general type of training that is being given.

- The instructors should adopt a variety of techniques for training, which suit the individual dog and person. The training should use positive reinforcement and any class that indulges in correcting the dogs or compulsive training should be avoided.
- Each attendee should receive plenty of individual attention and discussions should take place between the instructors and dog owner, rather than being 'told' what to do.
- The instructor's instructions should be clear and concise and easy to understand.
- If you end up being confused about what is going on in the class, then imagine how the dog must be feeling. The class should be controlled and have a limited number of dogs.
- The dogs in the class should be of a similar standard and age.
- The exercises being taught should be practical to the dog owners. They should be able to undertake these exercises at home without the need for special equipment or access to particular training areas. The tasks should be able to be completed by dog owners of all ages and capabilities. Written

instructions should be provided for those clients finding it difficult to retain information.

- A training class should be something that you look forward to attending and not something that you dread.

If you don't like what you see at a training class, try another

Barking Excessive

Barking is a natural means of communication for the dog, but for people incessant yapping, barking and howling can sometimes drive the most patient of people to despair. It is not uncommon that when barking becomes intolerable that complaints are made against pet owners, with the authorities then becoming involved. In extreme cases the council can serve a noise abatement order upon the occupier of the home with the vocal vagabond. But there are a variety of reasons for a dog barking.

There is then a set procedure to be followed in the monitoring and recording of the noise when a complaint has been made against a household occupier, but it is much better to try and resolve the situation yourself before it ever gets this far. Assistance in resolving these situations may usually require the help of a professional, but there is also a lot that you can do for yourself.

Identifying the cause for the barking is key to resolving the problem in the first instance. A sure way of assessing the dog's motivation is to use a little technology, with the assistance of a video camera placed strategically in the home. Barking usually occurs when the dog is left alone and therefore by studying the video, you will see clues on how the dog is feeling by observing their body language. Does your dog look distressed, anxious, worried or concerned? Is the dog howling? A signal that your dog is seeking companionship or is it directing the barking towards another source, such as delivery people, the postman or window cleaner. Barking occurs for a variety of reasons but by taking into account all these factors will help with your eventual treatment plan. A dog does not have to be worried to bark but equally he could be relaxed, contented and barking for pleasure. Barking is innately rewarding for dogs and some get great pleasure about hearing themselves repeatedly. Having taken all these facts into consideration will allow you how to judge the best way to deal the barking, because dealing with the situation having made only a blind judgment, may well end up with you reinforcing the barking by treating it incorrectly.

Howling is a means of expressing loneliness and the craving companionship, rather than just trying to cause annoyance, therefore arranging for people to call at regular intervals whilst you are out will assist. The services of a dog walker whilst out at work, will break up the dog's day and also exercise him, making him

physically satisfied. Barking caused by distraction such as postmen, involves making arrangements to have post delivered at a PO Box or into a mailbox at the end of the drive. Anxiety or stress related barking will involve teaching your dog to be left for progressive periods, initially whilst the owners are still in the house. He should be left with plenty of activity toys such as food filled toys and other items, which will provide comfort. Leaving the radio on and placing worn items of clothing in the dog's bed, provides a degree of comfort. Your vet can prescribe treatment for the more severe cases, with the services of a professional behaviour counselor helpful to many people with dog's that display an inability to cope sufficiently when left alone.

Choosing a dog

There are over 200 registered breeds in the UK and selecting the breed that most suits your family best, can become a task and a half.

There are several points that need to be considered when selecting which breed is most appropriate. These include:

- Size
- Time available
- Cost
- Companionship / Working dog
- Children
- Exercise
- Temperament
- Travel
- Convenience

Of course the dog you select does not have to be a pure bred dog. A cross breed has the combination of traits and characteristics of a whole variety of dogs. Generally they are robust, suffer few health problems and have good longevity.

It should be remembered that certain breeds of dogs are selectively bred for certain characteristic, with a specific purpose in mind. These characteristics serve the dog to undertake a specific function, which can be field work in which case would need excessive exercise and demand a good deal of your time. Guarding breeds will have a selective tendency to bark, guard property and maybe people. Sight hounds such as grey hounds or whippets may have a tendency to chase with Collie type breeds having an instinct need and want to herd.

These selectively bred dogs fit well into families where all their needs are met, but should the circumstances they are placed within, short fall of meeting their requirements, then problems can soon develop. Research and do your homework on the breed of dog you want as a pet and never purchase a dog on impulse.

