



Newsletter



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Welcome to my third Veterinary Newsletter, later than I hoped as January has been so busy, but better late than never.

I hope, as ever, that you find it interesting and informative. Do let me know if you would like an individual electronic copy or more than one copy for your practice

Kind regards

Stephanie

Quote of the month

If you think dogs can't count, try putting three dog biscuits in your pocket and then giving Fido only two of them

Phil Pastoret

Facebook

I now have a Facebook page which I will be using to offer hints and tips and pass on information regarding good courses and books. You can find me under 'Stephanie Hedges Canine Behaviour Counsellor'

CPD events

APBC conference 3rd March Kettering

There are still a few spaces left on this year's APBC conference. Aimed at owners and professionals alike this year's conference focuses on the dog's nose and how the dog's sense of smell affects behaviour. The first speaker is John Bradshaw, author of last year's surprise (but highly deserved) best seller 'In Defence of Dogs'. Promises to be a fascinating day. For more details go to www.apbc.org.uk/node/844

Canine hypothyroidism 9th June Manchester

Presented by Dr Jean Dodds DVM, this seminar promises to look at the latest diagnosis and treatment techniques for this condition, which can often underpin aggressive behaviour in dogs. For more information go to -

http://www.apdt.co.uk/dog_training_events.asp

Adaptil

Adaptil is a very useful product in behaviour modification and management. Whilst it is rarely effective as a treatment on its own, it can prevent development of predictable problem behaviour and there is a great deal of independent research suggesting its efficacy in supporting treatment programmes.

The key principles when deciding which Adaptil product to use are:-

- Diffusers are most suited to behavior problems that only occur indoors such as separation problems, firework and thunder phobias, moving house or new arrivals to the household of any kind.
- Collars are most suited to problems that occur outdoors or in more than one location such as general fearfulness, anxiety or a period in kennels.
- Spray Adaptil is best suited to occasional problems such as car travel or visiting the Vet.

Whilst Adaptil can help some dogs that are behaving aggressively it can make others worse by increasing a dog's confidence or disrupting the relationship between two dogs in a household. It is therefore advisable for aggression cases to be evaluated before Adaptil is used.



Training tip of the month

Many owners find it hard to teach their dogs to walk on a lead without pulling. One of the most common mistakes is to first try to teach the command on a walk.

If the owner starts by teaching loose lead walking in the house and garden instead, then on the way back from the park before on the way to the park it is far less frustrating for both dog and owner.

Can we reward fear?

It is often suggested we should ignore our dogs when they are reacting in a fearful way to something, in case we 'reward' the fear and encourage the dog to react the same way next time. Is it really as simple as that?

Fear is a natural response to threat. It can be learnt but it cannot be turned on and off voluntarily. Therefore the dog cannot choose to feel fearful because he realised it got him some attention the last time. Occasionally the dog may learn that the things he did when afraid (e.g. shaking) got him attention and so repeat them the next time. However this is rare and can only happen if the dogs fear is very low, otherwise the fear outweighs the pleasure from the attention. It also isn't teaching the emotion of fear - just to pretend to be afraid to get some fuss.

If fear is punished, however, the trigger for the fear can become linked to the punishment, making the dog more afraid next time. Ignoring is a widely used punishment. Therefore ignoring a dog that is fearful is more likely to increase fear than giving it attention is.

For more information see my blog at <http://www.inthedoghouse.org.uk/blog&links.htm>

Do dogs look guilty?

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Many owners report that their dog looks 'guilty' after he has done something the owner feels is wrong. The behaviours suggested to imply guilt include cowering, averting gaze or tucking the tail. This interpretation of guilt can then lead an owner to punish their dog as they believe he will know why he is being punished. Will he?

Scientists decided to test this. They trained 14 dogs to leave a treat on command. The owners were then asked to give their dog a treat, tell them to leave it and then go out of the room. The researchers would then either remove the treat or encourage the dog to eat it. When the owner came back the researchers randomly told some owners that their dog had eaten the treat and others their dog hadn't, regardless of what the dog had actually done. They then watched the dog's behaviour when the owner went back into the room.

They found that dogs belonging to owners who had been told their dog had stolen the treat showed behaviours described as 'guilty' whereas dogs belonging to owners who had been told their dog had not taken the treat didn't, regardless of what the dog had actually done. This shows that the dogs 'guilty' behaviour is in fact simply a reaction to their owner's anger or correction, not any sense of guilt or understanding of what they may have done earlier. Any punishment is therefore only likely to confuse or distress the dog.



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