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What should I expect from a behaviour consultation?

The aim of a behaviour consultation is to resolve problems you are having with your dog's behaviour. How this is done will vary with each case and may include: -

- Training your dog to obey certain commands which are then used to guide behaviour or change habits
- Changing your dog's emotional or behavioural reaction to triggers, people or situations
- Developing your knowledge so you may better understand and communicate with your dog
- Changing feeding, handling, sleeping or exercise routines
- Environmental changes e.g. reinforcing fencing or moving letterboxes.
- Dietary changes, pheromones or medication
- Developing strategies for managing or controlling behaviour where a cure is not possible or practical
- Rarely we may discuss whether it is best for you and your dog to stay together.

What happens during a consultation?

The first step in the consultation process is to understand why your dog is behaving the way he or she is. This will involve taking a detailed behavioural history and observing your dog's behaviour in trigger situations. Occasionally, it may also be necessary to refer you back to your vet for further tests or to ask you to video or keep a diary of your dog's behaviour over a period of time before the cause of the behaviour becomes clear.

Once Stephanie understands the reasons for your dog's behaviour she will discuss the changes you hope to achieve and the training, behaviour modification and

management techniques that will be practical for you. She will then agree a programme of treatment or management with you based on this information, and will explain and demonstrate the first steps in any practical training needed.

In some cases you may need to perform some preparatory training or take steps to change your dog's emotional state before his or her behaviour can be fully addressed. Where this is the case the problem may need to continue being managed in the short term. However, this approach generally leads to a much more lasting change in your dog's behaviour and so is worth the time investment. The initial consultation takes between 2-3 hours.

What happens after the initial consultation?

In the first week after the initial consultation Stephanie will send you a written report which will: -

- Outline the key information used for diagnosis and treatment so you can check nothing has been missed or misunderstood
- Explain the reasons for your dog's behaviour.
- Give step by step instructions for the first phase of treatment.

Support is available by phone or e mail throughout this first phase in case you have any queries. Office hours are Tuesday to Saturday 9am - 7pm.

Stephanie will ask you to contact her a couple of weeks after the initial consultation to discuss progress and when you feel you will be ready for your first follow up visit. This can either be when you have completed the first steps, or earlier if you feel you are unable to progress further without additional help. Follow up visits normally take 1-2 hours and enable progress to be reviewed, any difficulties you are having to be addressed and the second stage of treatment to be explained and demonstrated (where appropriate). The first follow up visit is included in the initial package fee provided it is taken within 3 months of the first visit. Success is greatly improved by taking this follow up visit.

Whether additional follow up visits are needed after this depends on the complexity of the problem behaviours your dog is showing, the nature of the treatment and how confident you are carrying out the training.

Who carries out the training and behaviour modification?

Whilst the package offers support and guidance the majority of the treatment and training will need to be conducted by the owner and household members over the days and weeks following the consultation. This is because behaviour modification takes time and involves day to day training and changes in routines and handling. It also often seeks to change the relationship between dog and owner, which can only be achieved if the owner carries out the training and behaviour modification themselves.

How long will it take for my dog's behaviour to get better?

The time it takes for a dog's behaviour to improve varies and so is discussed on an individual basis once a diagnosis has been made. However, in most cases there won't be an overnight resolution of problem behaviour and permanent change will only happen after a period of consistent training and behaviour modification.

In some cases it may not be possible to make the changes an owner is hoping for, perhaps due to household or personal circumstances, genetic drives for behaviour that can't be removed or physiological causes that cannot be treated. In this case techniques for management, or alternatives if management isn't a suitable option, will be discussed.