

RSPCA
Victoria



Whose problems are 'behaviour problems'?

Is it 'bad' owners or 'bad' dogs and cats?

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Introducing my foster dog



‘Bad’

- not such as to be [hoped](#) for or desired; unpleasant or unwelcome
- of poor quality or a low standard
- not good in any manner or degree. having a wicked or evil character; morally reprehensible
- **evil** or morally unacceptable

What is a problem?

- Behaviour causing difficulties for the care-giver or the pet
 - Unwelcome
 - Harmful
 - Needs to be dealt with
 - Needs to be overcome

 - Or learn how to live with

Is it the owner or the pet?

- Good welfare for cared-givers and pets.
- Build and maintain the human animal bond.

- Behaviour:
 - Getting needs met
 - To adapt or cope with their environment.

Getting needs met

- Secure (safe) social bonds
- Opportunity to express oneself and do things you enjoy
- Maintain adequate mental and physical health
 - 5 domains: nutrition, environment, health, behaviour, mental state,



Adapt and cope with the environment

- Ability and opportunity to learn
- Reasonable control over what happens to them
- A reasonably predictable environment



Control and predictability

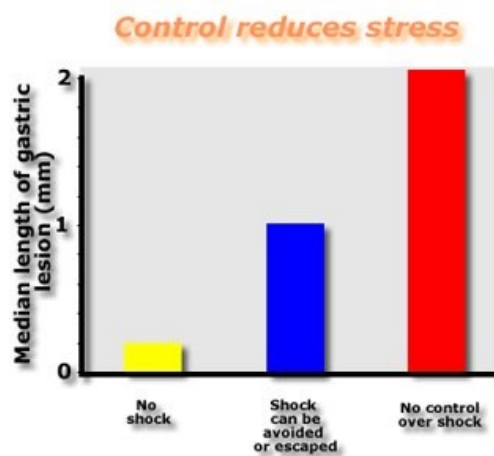
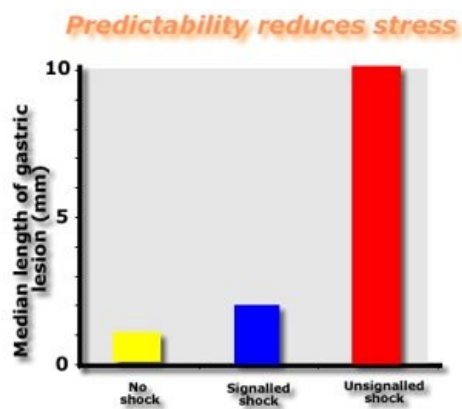
- Care givers want

control
and
predictability

- Pet's want

control
and
predictability

Control and Predictability



Understanding is key to good relationships

- Behaviour
 - Genetics
 - Epigenetics
 - Pre and post natal experiences
 - Early learning – critical periods
 - Experiences
 - Physical health
 - Mental health
 - Environment

Genetics

UNFRIENDLY FATHER



Shy



FRIENDLY FATHER

Bold



Less sociable

Highly sociable



Epigenetics

Environmental information may be inherited across generations at behavioral, neuroanatomical and epigenetic levels.



Mental Health issues

CANINE POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER



CARE GIVER'S MENTAL HEALTH



Personality

Emotionally unstable, extrovert, and low conscientious owner personalities are linked to behavioral concerns in dogs.



Social and cultural environment

- Pet's inside the house/apartment
- Dog's barking
- Cat's spraying and fighting
- Child substitute
- Café lifestyle
- Cultural history and relationship with cats and dogs

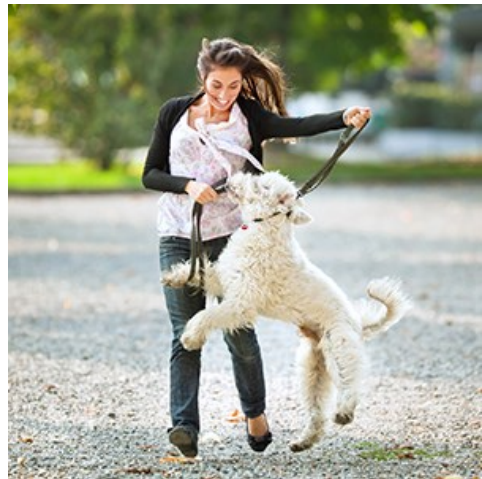


Medical factors

- Pain and discomfort increase irritability
- Pain increases noise sensitivity
 - Dogs with musculo-skeletal pain more noise sensitive
 - Noise sensitivity decreased with treatment of pain

Communication problems

- Not understanding canine or feline body language



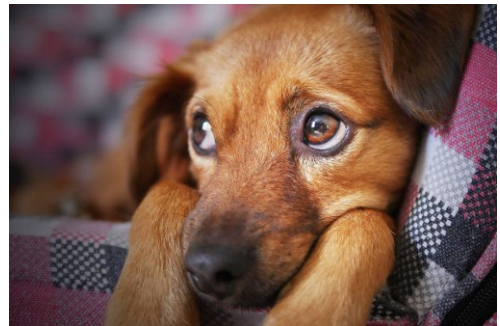
Education and Training

- Lack of appropriate education
- Type of training
 - Confrontation training techniques associated
 - with 25% dogs showing aggression
 - Increased fearfulness
 - Increase in separation anxiety



Training style

- Owner seeking education around dogs training
- Dog is anxious



- A problem for the care-giver and the dog

Cats redirected aggression

- Reasonable for the cat to expect a safe home territory
- Genetic make up may influence nature of aggressive arousal
- Reasonable for owner to feel safe in their own home



- A problem for the care-giver and the cat

Aggression towards unfamiliar dogs.

Reasonable response on the part of the dog

Care giver offering social interaction and enrichment.



A problem for the care-giver and the dog.

Cat spraying

- Reasonable to let the newcomer know who lives here.
- Reasonable to not have cat spray in the house
- A problem for the care-giver and the cat



Dog bites child

A reasonable response on the part of the dog

A reasonable expectation to keep the child safe



- A problem for the care-giver and the dog

Alliance aggression

- Ivory needed the security of the care-giver
- Buster needed not to be attacked
- The care-givers needed to keep Buster safe and happy



- A problem for the care-giver, the companion dog and Ivory

Cats defecates in the house

- A reasonable response for the cat
- Reasonable expectation of the care-giver
- A problem for the care-giver and the cat



Areas for improvement

- Better breeding practices
- Societal norms that take into account pet needs and welfare
- Better understanding of why animals behave as they do
- Ethical and effective training techniques
- Acknowledge role of genetics and environment
 - not just the roles played by pets and their care-givers.

Conclusions

- No one is perfect: pets and humans
- Find our way to help each other and live our best lives together
- Empathy and understanding key to good relationships and defining what is a 'problem'.

So, who's problem is it?





Good Pet Behaviour

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