

# Handling Problem Behavior & Mistakes: Human & Animals



This document contains the notes for all the topics planned for discussion at the Ranch seminar: *Handling Problem Behavior & Mistakes: Humans & Animals*. Please note that Ken constantly updates his seminar presentations to reflect current science knowledge and best practices, thus these notes may not be exactly the same as what you will see live. Additionally, the benefit of attending a live seminar is the flexibility it affords Ken to adapt to questions and attendee interests – for those and other reasons, topics may be added or deleted at the last minute.

## Personal Philosophy

### Introduction

- CEU's
- Housekeeping
- KR Background
- Personal Philosophy

### Define Training

- Training = Teaching

### Cornerstones of Animal Care

- Health Care – VETERINARY PROGRAM
- Nutrition – FOOD & VITAMINS
- Environment – INCLUDES SOCIAL STRUCTURE
- Behavior Management – TRAINING & ENRICHMENT

### Primary Reasons for Training

- Physical Exercise
- Mental Stimulation
- Cooperative Behavior
- Animal Welfare – These things all directly benefit the individual animal and assure that animal welfare is the top priority

### Secondary Reasons for Training

- Education
- Research
- Conservation
- Entertainment
- Work Animals
- Sport
- The list goes on . . .

### Philosophical Foundation

- Laws of learning apply to all animals
- I am first and foremost a practitioner – but I also believe in the importance of the science
- Training is not a luxury – it is a key component to good animal care

## Problem Solving

As a consultant, Ken is frequently called upon to resolve training challenges. These have ranged from problematic zoo animals to difficult working dogs to the more common pet challenges. In every case, he utilizes a problem solving flow chart or matrix that guides him and his clients to an effective solution. He will share that process with participants and use one or two cases studies to demonstrate how to use the tool effectively.

### Overview

- Why start with problem solving
- Focus on a single system
- Follow through and documentation
- Look for the system that is right for you.

### Problem Solving Systems

- Objective examination of problem
- Challenges common assumptions or perceptions
- Improves communication, input, and buy-in
- Treats cause not symptoms
- It is solution oriented
- Documents process

### Many Formal Systems

- Pryor – *Don't Shoot the Dog*(1999)
- AZA – Hypothesis system (MacPhee, Skurski, & Insalaco, 2007)
- White – Systematic process (2010)
- Ramirez - I will share today (1999)
- The key is having a systematic process

### Planning

- Identify the problem
- Determine the cause
- Consider the balance of reinforcers vs. punishers (motivation)
- Implement a plan
- Constant monitoring

### Identify the Problem

- Not as easy as it sounds
- Break behavior into parts – behavior is complex
- Only certain parts usually need fixing
- Document first occurrence of problem
- Look for patterns

### Investigating the Problem

- Meet to discuss ASAP
- Outline symptoms of problem
- Examine records
- Review “causes” checklist: hypothesis
- Evaluate motivation

### Accepting Responsibility (Martin)

- Labels – Get in the way of finding solutions
  - He's phobic
  - She hates men
  - He has a terrible history with...
  - There's no time to fix this
  - The excuses (labels) are endless
- Trainers feel this absolves them of responsibility
- Shift thinking: not what's wrong with the animal, but why can't I train it?

### Determine the Cause (Desmond & Laule, 1985)

- Environmental
- Social
- Psychological
- Physical
- Trainer
- Session use
- Regression
- Desensitization

### Implementing a Plan

- Determining the cause is not always possible
- Knowing the cause may not present immediate solution
- Use of behavior analysis – advanced training concepts at work
- Methods of untraining undesirable behavior

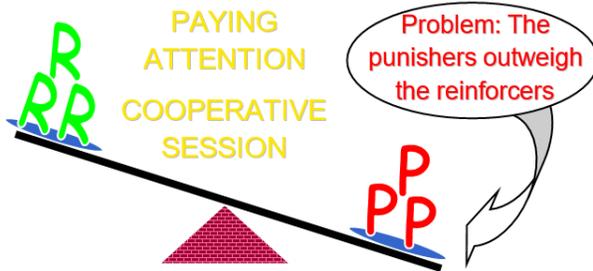
### Behavior Analysis

- Determining balance of reinforcement
- Increased behavior – What's the reinforcement?
- Decreased behavior – What's the punisher?
- Most critical use of understanding reinforcers vs. punishers (+ & -).

### Balance of Reinforcement

- **PROBLEM:** Your dog refuses to participate in the evening training session in the park, instead the dog spends entire session pulling at his leash barking at the other dogs in the park.
- **ANALYSIS:** You may choose to focus on either:
  - Desired behavior – Participating in the session has decreased – been PUNISHED
  - Unwanted behavior – Barking at the other dogs and pulling on the leash has increased – been REINFORCED

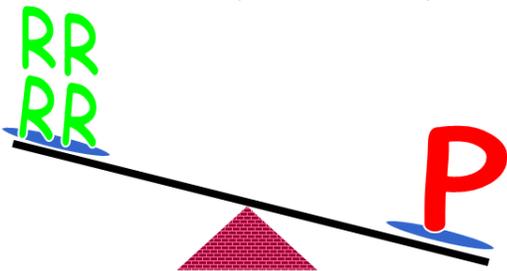
- Identify potential reinforcers and punishers



- Strengthen reinforcers



- Even more important, remove punishers



- Results: balance of reinforcement and true motivation revealed

#### Understanding Motivation (Sullivan, 2003)

- Animals seek to control their environment
- Selfishness – “What’s in it for me?”
- Consequences are reinforcing or punishing (seldom neutral)
- Past consequences create motivation for behavior
- Reinforcing & aversive stimuli are present in every environment
- Animals select stimuli that are important to them (not the trainer)
- Mix of these things creates an overall motivational balance
- Our ability to control that balance impacts whether or not an animal learns
- Dependant on animal’s perception and internal state
- Behavior is only indicator of internal state

### Setting Priorities

- Before you implement a plan, determine where solving it fits into your priority list.
- Does your list = the institutional list?
- A problem that is too low on the priority list may not be easily solved.
- Are you willing to sacrifice something to fix the problem?

### Untraining Undesirable Behavior (Pryor, 1999)

- “Shoot the Dog”
- Punishment
- Negative reinforcement
- Extinction
- Put the behavior on cue
- Train an incompatible behavior (DRI)
- Shape absence of behavior (DRO)
- Change the motivation

### Constant Monitoring

- Keep good records
- Problem behavior may be gone, but it is not forgotten

### Problem Solving Summary

- Identify the problem
- Determine the cause
- Consider the balance of reinforcers vs. punishers (motivation)
- Implement a plan
- Constant monitoring

### Case Study

- Share use of this system through a case study

### References

- Desmond, Tim and Laule, Gail, 1980. *Active Environments Training Manual*.
- MacPhee, M., Skurski, M. & Insalaco, E., 2007. *Problem Solving in Curriculum for Professional Training Program, Animal Training Applications in Zoo and Aquarium Settings*. Association of Zoos & Aquariums, [www.aza.org](http://www.aza.org).
- Martin, Steve, 2007. *Motivation and Relationships in Curriculum for Professional Training Program, Animal Training Applications in Zoo and Aquarium Settings*. Association of Zoos & Aquariums, [www.aza.org](http://www.aza.org).
- Pryor, Karen, 1999. *Don't Shoot the Dog*. Bantam Books, New York, NY.
- Ramirez, Ken, 1999. *Animal Training: Successful Animal Management through Positive Reinforcement*. Shedd Aquarium Press, Chicago, IL.
- Sullivan, Tim, 1994. *Understanding Motivation in Conference Proceedings of the Animal Behavior Management Alliance*.
- White, Steve & Jen, 2010. *Problem Solving in Curriculum for Clicker Expo*.

# Aggression Reduction Strategies

This class will explore the causes of aggression and techniques for reducing it. This will be a broad overview of the concept and will assist in directing attendees to appropriate resources for solving aggression problems.

---

## A Natural Phenomenon

- Aggression is part of an animal's natural repertoire
- Aggression can help an animal cope with:
  - Fear
  - Nervousness
  - Dominance
  - Sexual activity
  - Protection of young
  - Illness
- Aggression usually falls into three categories:
  - Reactive
  - Innate
  - Learned

## Go Back to Basics

- Remain calm – emotion clouds good judgment
- Looking at it from operant perspective
  - Success is reinforcing
  - Failure is aversive
- Recognition of these basics can prevent an aggressive situation from escalating

## General Rules about Aggression

- Animals that have the opportunity to aggress, will do so more often. (*Johnson, 1972*)
- Use of punishment or aversive control will cause aggression. (*Kazdin, 1984*)
- Aggression can be shaped by accidental reinforcement – also deliberately. (*Skinner, 1963*)
- Animals may initially respond more favorably to a consistent environment, condition changes slowly and positively. (*Turner, 1999*)
- An animal that is food deprived will aggress more readily. (*Staddon, 1977*)
- Most all animals have some degree of aggressive repertoire. (*Lorenz*)

## Turner's rules on reducing aggression

- Understand scenarios
- Recognize precursors
- Use of DRO & DRI
- Stop it before it starts
- Keep records

## Dangerous situations (a few examples)

- Poor separations

- Numerous incorrect responses to S<sup>D</sup>s
- Feeding only one animal in a group
- Use of aversive control (punishment)
- A change in reinforcement contingencies
- Disruption of sexual activity (season)
- Pushing an animal too far or too long
- Every species and situation is different

#### Precursors

- Behavioral response announcing that aggression is imminent
- Learn precursors for your species
- Know precursors for individuals
- Have a list in advance of being in a situation
- Don't suppress precursors or you'll have "flash aggression"

#### Redirection

- Best option for dealing with aggression
- DRA – Differential Reinforcement of Alternative responses
  - DRI – Differential Reinforcement of Incompatible Behavior
  - DRO – Differential Reinforcement of Other Behavior
  - DRL – Differential Reinforcement of Lower intensity behavior

#### Intervention

- Trainer directed aggression
  - Prevention a key
  - Intervention a must
  - Redirection best
- Animal directed aggression
  - Choices not as clear
  - Healthy social behavior & dominance

#### Closing Thoughts

- This is only one approach to dealing with aggression
- Aggression is serious, make sure you know what you are doing
- Get more experienced help if you need it

# Aggression Treatment and Context

## Course Description

Dealing with reactive dogs, handling aggression, and working through problems with highly sensitive animals can be a challenge for even the very best clicker trainers. Over the years, many creative trainers have presented various alternatives to handling aggression and reactivity problems. The explosion in the number of approaches, combined with an array of new nomenclature, is often confusing for trainers seeking to choose an approach for themselves or to recommend to others. Today, some of the most discussed approaches include, but are not limited to, Counter Conditioning, Constructional Aggression Treatment (CAT), Click to Calm, Behavioral Adjustment Training (BAT), the “Look at That” game (LAT), and a host of others. How do these varied treatment approaches compare? What common or distinct scientific principles are being employed? Are certain plans better for certain situations than others? This Session is designed to help you sort out the choices. It will explore the science underlying the approaches, look at their known efficacy, and help you see what these approaches share, as well as their differences, so that you can make informed choices. Attendees at this Session will also learn to ask the right questions and listen/look for thoughtful answers to be well-prepared when the next approach makes its way forward.

## Overview

- Goals and desired outcomes of class
- Nomenclature, science, and practical application
- My approach to aggression reduction
- A review of popular techniques
- An objective comparison/evaluation

## Goals

- Share my approach to aggression reduction
- Most practical procedures worth keeping in the tool box
- Aid in understanding why each works
- Better enable trainers to determine tool right for them
- Share resources for learning more and improving skill at application
- This course is NOT the answer or explanation for specific problem solving it is meant as a starting point for determining the tools you might choose to use

## Nomenclature

- First stumbling block is often terminology
- Many practical trainers don't have scientific background
- Teachers searching for best way to explain a concept use new terms and words to connect to their audience
- In field, we combine techniques creating hybrid concepts that don't have a scientific name
- When we talk about an idea, we get lost in the nomenclature
- I will share my perspective, my understanding, and direct you to resources

What is Aggression?

- Even trying to define the topic creates concerns for what we call it
- Today, I am referring to any type of unwanted agonistic behavior
 

Reactivity	Biting
Resource guarding	Barking
Possessive behavior	Growling
Protective behavior	Lunging
- Diagnosis, Causes & Triggers are important in dealing with aggression, however those are dealt with in more detail in the individual procedures we will discuss and beyond the scope of this short seminar.

Sorting through the Confusion

- At first glance, scientific terms, practical procedures, and hybridized names are all given equal place in the list of options – this is where the confusion begins
 

CAT	DRI	Habituation
Operant Conditioning	BAT	DRO
Click to Calm	Flooding	Counter-conditioning
Classical Conditioning	DRL	U-Turn
Abandonment training	Look at That	Negative reinforcement
Train incompatible behavior	Positive punishment	Shape behavior absence
Correction	DRA	Negative punishment
- This partial list, gives the impression that all are equal or similar – but they are not
- Three separate types of terms in that list
  - Broad scientific approaches to learning
  - Scientific principles
  - Practical procedures, strategies, or descriptions
- My attempt to better organize the terms is in the chart below (explained in more detail throughout seminar). The chart is not a comprehensive list of aggression treatments or terms, just the ones that will be discussed in this seminar

<b>Science of Learning</b>	Operant Conditioning	Classical Conditioning
<b>Proven &amp; Tested Scientific Principles</b>	Reinforcement Punishment Redirection (DRI, DRO, DRL)	Habituation Counter conditioning Flooding
<b>Practical Applications &amp; Strategies</b>	CAT Click to Clam BAT Abandonment Training	Look at That
	Watch Me U-Turn Recall	

## Broad Learning Approaches

- Classical Conditioning
  - Pavlovian Conditioning
  - Respondent Conditioning
- Operant Conditioning
  - Skinnerian Conditioning
  - Instrumental Conditioning
- All animals learn both ways all the time – we may consciously choose to use one, but animals are still learning in both manners. Thus the observer of our training may choose to focus on a different aspect of what they see our animal doing.

## Scientific Principles

- Concepts tested and named in operant and classical labs (Chance 2009; Kazdin, 2001)
- Desensitization techniques
  - Habituation
  - Counter-conditioning
  - Flooding
- Consequences to behavior
  - Punishment (positive, negative, primary, secondary, etc.)
  - Reinforcement (positive, negative, primary, secondary, etc.)
- Redirection techniques – Differential Reinforcement of Alternative behaviors (DRA) which include:
  - DRI – differential reinforcement of incompatible behavior
  - DRO – differential reinforcement of other behavior
  - DRL – differential reinforcement of lower intensity behavior
- There are many others, these are just a few of the examples we will focus on in our discussion today

## Procedures & Strategies

- Each trainer who must deal with aggression finds a way to apply the science and a way to describe it to others.
- Most use one or more of the previously listed scientific techniques
- A few popular examples:
  - CAT - Constructional Aggression Treatment (Rosales-Ruiz, Snider)
  - Click to Calm (Parsons)
  - U-Turn (McConnell, London)
  - BAT – Behavior Adjustment Training (Stewart)
  - Abandonment Training (King)
  - Look at That (McDevitt)
  - Train an incompatible behavior
  - Watch Me
  - Recall
- Each is a way that a skilled and talented trainer has operationalized the science to deal with aggression

### Aggression Management (Donaldson)

- In general there are 4 primary ways of dealing with aggression
- Treatment requires that something must be changed:
  - Consequences = operant
  - Associations = classical
  - Access = management
  - Brain chemistry = medication
- We will focus primarily on training options today (consequences & associations)

### Aggression Management (Ramirez)

- All animals have aggressive repertoire
- Helps animals cope with a variety of life's challenges
- Develops in 3 main ways
  - Reactive
  - Genetic
  - Learned
- Learning principles always at work
  - Success is reinforcing
  - Failure is aversive
  - Keeping these basic facts in mind will aid in aggression reduction or in choosing an appropriate training plan
- Always have an aggression reduction strategy in place

### Rules for Aggression Reduction (Turner & Tompkins, 1999)

- Understand scenarios
- Recognize precursors
- Use Redirection and/or Apply appropriate training strategy
- Stop/Avoid it before it starts
- Keep records

### Punishment

- There are many traditional approaches to dealing with aggression that use punishment
- By definition, and if properly applied, punishers will decrease behavior (Chance, 2009; Kazdin, 2001)
- There are a number of studies that also point out the risks, challenges and fallout of punishment (Sidman, 1989).
- Punishers will not be discussed today, because I avoid their use and prefer not to advocate for their use
- Skilled trainers need to understand punishment and its applications – it is something that exists in every trainer's toolbox, but I would like to think it is in that spare tool box that is collecting dust on the shelf.

### Classical Conditioning

- Many excellent trainers employ classical conditioning techniques (Sdao, Reid, McConnell, Donaldson).

- Desensitization, Habituation, and Counterconditioning have all been studied, tested, used and written about on numerous occasions.
- Many uses do not have specialized names or unique operationalized procedures that are controversial or debated.
- They are effective, powerful techniques that work.
- As positive reinforcement trainers, we frequently look for operant tools, but we should not ignore nor forget about classical conditioning
  - Operant conditioning (Response-Reinforce) – Animal reinforced for giving correct response.
  - Classical conditioning (Stimulus-Stimulus) – Animal learns a new pleasant stimulus will replace or follow an unwanted or disliked stimulus – no specific task required
- Resources
  - See resource list at end: Donaldson, Jean (1996; 2002; 2004; 2008); McConnell, Patricia (2005); Reid, Pamela (1996); and Sdao, Kathy (2009).

#### Look at That Game (McDevitt, 2007; 2009)

- Counter conditioning procedure
- Teaches dog to look at “trigger” or cause of concern
- Changes emotional response to trigger by converting trigger into a positive event
- Doesn’t compete with the desire to orient toward offending dog/person/object, allows it and reinforces it
- With time, animal relaxes around trigger and actually does pay more attention to trainer so that it can get its reinforcement.
- Not a complete strategy on its own, must be used in conjunction with other tools

#### Look at That Analyzed (Ramirez)

- Science
  - A classical counter conditioning procedure, but it is operationalized to gain control of and get a desired behavior
- When to use it?
  - In any scenario prior to the animal having an intense reaction to the potential trigger. Obviously the “Look at That” game will have had to be trained first so that it is a behavior in your animal’s repertoire.
- Disadvantages
  - Can only function if you take time to train it below threshold (which is true of most techniques) – but otherwise, very few disadvantages
  - Not a standalone strategy in most cases, usually good to be able to follow it up with other tools, part of a bigger plan or program.
- Advantages
  - Changes animal’s perception (emotional response) of problem situation. Excellent tool that can be used in so many different situations once trained.
- Resources
  - McDevitt, Leslie (2007) and (2009). See Resource list at end.

### CAT (Rosales-Ruiz & Snider, 2007)

- Constructional Aggression Treatment
- A negative reinforcement procedure
- Appropriate (relaxed or polite) behavior will cause offending dog/person to leave
- Distance from offender is the reinforcer
- Set-up to allows animal to learn quickly with multiple repetitions
- Trigger and context must be known and understood

### CAT Analyzed (Ramirez)

- Science
  - Operant technique focusing on negative reinforcement
- When to use it?
  - Useful when animal will or must be exposed to situation or trigger unavoidably on a regularly and frequent basis.
  - Must be able to set up the situation and control trigger during training.
- Disadvantages
  - Exposes animal to undesirable situation for continued periods of time during training (which is why I advocate this technique when the animal will face these situations anyway)
  - Treatment is context specific, thus must be retrained in new context (although this is true of most treatments).
- Advantages
  - When timed and set up correctly will work relatively quickly
  - Treats the root source of the problem
- Resources
  - Rosales-Ruiz, Jesus and Snider, Kellie (2009). Rosales-Ruiz & Rentfro (2009). Snider (2017). See resource list at end.

### Click to Calm (Parsons, 2005)

- Clicking for any minimal reduction, improvement, or absence of aggression; shaping toward a more desired behavior.
- Operant redirection procedure
- Concurrent, gradual counter-conditioning taking place which eventually changes emotional response
- Trainer focuses on any reduction in aggressive behaviors, clicks and treats
- Form of redirection referred to as DRL, DRO, and DRI – Differential Reinforcement of Lower intensity behavior, Other behavior, and Incompatible behavior.

### Click to Calm Analyzed (Ramirez)

- Science
  - Integrated operant redirection strategy. DRL, DRO, and DRI (differential reinforcement strategies) that also capitalizes on classical conditioning effects of counter-conditioning.
- When to use it?

- When animal's reaction is so intense or so overly rehearsed that trying to work below threshold is difficult or impossible. Can also be useful tool when you do not have ability to control trigger (which is not an option with other techniques).
- Disadvantages
  - You are still, in many cases, reinforcing undesired behavior (although at a lower level of intensity)
  - Can be time consuming, not a quick fix (but aggression seldom is).
- Advantages
  - When shaped properly, can be a long-term and permanent fix to problem, completely changing animal's response to a specific trigger or type of trigger. Due to its integrated approach, goes beyond simple redirection.
- Resources
  - Parsons, Emma (2005). See resource list at end.
  - Parsons & Robitaille (2011). See resource list at end.

### Train an Incompatible Behavior

- A group of operant procedures have been operationalized by many skilled trainers that focus on training an incompatible behavior.
  - "Watch-Me" – Many trainers teach their animal to look at them on cue when a trigger presents itself. In some cases, on a verbal cue or in other situations to simply react to a distraction or trigger by looking at the trainer. In both cases this earns the animal reinforcement
  - U-Turn – Patricia McConnell and Karen London describe a behavior in which the dog is cued to do an about face and move in the opposite direction away from the trigger, which earns immediate reinforcement.
  - Recall – Many trainers will teach the animal a signal that means immediately return to the trainer, which receives high value reinforcement.
  - There are many other incompatible behaviors that trainers teach; these are just a few examples and ones that are often referenced as techniques for dealing with aggression.
- In each case, the goal is to teach the animal a behavior that they can do instead of being aggressive, a behavior that is incompatible with barking, biting, lunging, or showing other signs of aggression.
- There is an element of classical conditioning taking place, but initially only in how they respond to the cue, not in a change to the emotional response to the trigger. Over time – the response to the trigger may be altered if timing of the incompatible behavior cue is properly used.

### Watch Me/U-Turn/Recall Analyzed (Ramirez)

- Science
  - Operant redirection procedure referred to as DRI (differential reinforcement of incompatible behavior).
  - Classical conditioning is also taking place, but not the primary force at work initially. (O'Heare, 2007)
- When to use it?

- Anytime a trigger or situation presents itself, that the animal notices, but prior to the animal reacting adversely to the trigger.
- Disadvantages
  - Does not, on its own, relieve the underlying cause of the fear, anxiety, or aggression.
  - Not a standalone strategy in most cases, usually good to be able to follow it up with other tools
- Advantages
  - Useful in the moment to initially interrupt or stop a reaction and move the animal toward a more favorable response.
  - Focuses on what you want rather than what you don't want.
- Resources
  - See resource list at end Parsons & Robitaille (2011); McConnell, Patricia and London, Karen (2009); O'Heare (2007); Pryor, Karen (1999); and Ramirez, Ken (1999).

#### BAT (Stewart, 2010)

- A procedure that combines LAT with DRI and negative reinforcement
- Although similar to CAT differs in several significant ways
- My personal investigation indicates that it is an effective tool that works.
- Yet another example of a skilled trainer taking a procedure and operationalizing in a way that works in their system or environment.

#### BAT Analyzed (Ramirez)

- Science
  - Operant & Classical technique using counter conditioning, followed by DRI, followed by negative reinforcement, followed at times by positive reinforcement.
- When to use it?
  - In real world scenarios where you can set-up the environment or be reasonably sure of the distractors and options in that environment
- Disadvantages
  - Requires experience and good knowledge of animal to know when to move from one step to the other and which options to choose.
  - Treatment is context specific (this is true of most treatments).
- Advantages
  - When timed and set up correctly will work relatively quickly
  - Treats the source of the problem by giving the animal what it desires – distance
- Resources
  - Stewart, Grisha (2010, 2011, 2016). See resource list at end.

#### Abandonment Training (King, 2004)

- Example of one of many very specialized tools for specialized situations
- When trigger appears and your dog exhibits inappropriate behavior, trainer drops leash and immediately leaves dog and training area. An assistant has your dog on a separate long loose line to prevent dog from interacting with trigger or getting in trouble.

- In some versions of this training, the trainer will return and reinforce when dog stops exhibiting inappropriate behavior.
- Works primarily with dogs who's inappropriate behavior is a type of "owner resource guarding"

#### Abandonment Training Analyzed (Ramirez)

- Science
  - Operant procedure using negative punishment, commonly called a "time out"
- When to use it?
  - Unique procedure that is only designed for a specific type of dog in a situation where the owner/trainer is the main or predominant reinforcer.
- Disadvantages
  - Only useful for very specific situations and animals
  - Focuses more on unwanted behavior than desired behavior
- Advantages
  - Results should be relatively quick when used with the right type of dog and situation.
  - Note: Just one example of good, but very specific tools. Always look at tools and understand their intended use.
- Resources
  - King, Trish (2004). See resource list at end.

#### Summary

- Every technique discussed works and has been proven effective if used correctly and understood by the trainer
- All aggression treatments are advanced – require skill and understanding to use properly – there is no "quick fix"
- It is easy to go wrong and apply a technique poorly – getting an unwanted result, which is why there is so much controversy about many techniques. Too often, criticism is leveled at particular methods due to mistakes in the application of a technique.
  - Poor observation by trainer – not seeing or recognizing the pertinent behavior
  - Poor timing of click and/or reinforcement
  - Sequence of execution is off
  - Working at too high a level of arousal
- Almost every technique requires set-up, a thoughtful training plan, and working below threshold using gradual approximations.
- Selecting the right techniques should be based on multiple factors:
  - Individual animals training history
  - Type of trigger
  - Specific circumstances or situation
  - Experience level of the trainer
  - Personal ethical hierarchy

## Final Thoughts

- Keep an open mind when looking at aggression reduction strategies
- I don't believe that any one technique is the answer to every aggression problem or situation
- Good trainers keep many tools in their tool box and understand how to use them all, even if some are seldom used.
- Understand the science being used in any tool - it will help you recognize the intended mechanism at work and enable you to compare it to other procedures already out there.
- Learn as much as you can about a tool – look at the resources available to determine which most closely fits your training situation, style, and skill.

## Resources

- Chance, Paul (2009). *Learning and Behavior*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Wadsworth Cengage Learning, Belmont, CA.
- Donaldson, Jean (1996). *The Culture Clash*. James & Kenneth Publishers, Berkeley, CA.
- Donaldson, Jean (2002). *Mine! A Practical Guide to Resource Guarding in Dogs*. Kinship Communications, San Francisco, CA.
- Donaldson, Jean (2004). *Fight! A Practical Guide to the Treatment of Dog-Dog Aggression*. Kinship Communications, San Francisco, CA.
- Donaldson, Jean (2008). *Canine Fear, Aggression, and Play*. Video produced by PavSki Educational Resources, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada.
- Kazdin, Alan (2001). *Behavior Modification in Applied Settings*, 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. Waveland press, Inc., Long Grove, IL.
- King, Trish (2004). *Abandonment Training*. Produced by Tawzer Dog Videos, Eagle, ID.
- McConnell, Patricia (2005). *The Cautious Canine: How to Help Dogs Conquer their Fears*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. McConnell Publishing, Ltd., Black Earth, WI.
- McConnell, Patricia and London, Karen (2009). *Feisty Fido: Help for the Leash-Reactive Dog*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. McConnell Publishing, Ltd., Black Earth, WI.
- McDevitt, Leslie (2007). *Control Unleashed: Creating a Focused and Confident Dog*. Clean Run Productions LLC, South Hadley, MA.
- McDevitt, Leslie (2009). *Control Unleashed: A Foundation Seminar*. Video produced by Clean Run Productions LLC, South Hadley, MA.
- O'Heare, James (2007). *Aggressive Behavior in Dogs: A Comprehensive Technical Manual for Professionals*. DogPsych Publishing, Ottawa, Canada.
- Parsons, Emma (2005). *Click to Calm: Healing the Aggressive Dog*. Sunshine Books, Waltham, MA.
- Parsons, Emma and Robitaille, Julie (2011). *TACT – Touch Assisted Clicker Training: A Training program for Dogs that Are Fearful or Reactive Toward People*. Video produced by Clean Run Productions, LLC, South Hadley, MA.
- Pryor, Karen (1999). *Don't Shoot the Dog*, revised edition. Bantam Books, New York, NY.
- Ramirez, Ken (1999). *Animal Training: Successful Animal Management through Positive Reinforcement*. Shedd Aquarium Press, Chicago, IL.

- Reid, Pamela (1996). *Excel-erated Learning: Explaining in Plain English How Dogs Learn and How Best to Teach them*. James & Kenneth Publishers, Oakland, CA.
- Rosales-Ruiz, Jesus and Snider, Kellie (2009). *Constructional Aggression Treatment: C.A.T. for Dogs*. Video produced by Tawzer Dog Videos, Eagle, ID.
- Rosales- Ruiz, Jesus and Rentfro, Angela (2009). *Fearful to Friendly: F2F, Constructional Fear Treatment for Cats*. Video produced by Tawzer Dog Videos, Eagle, ID.
- Sdao, Kathy (2009). *Does the Name Pavlov Ring a Bell*. Video produced by Tawzer Dog Videos, Eagle, ID.
- Sidman, Murray (1989). *Coercion and its Fallout*. Authors Cooperative Inc., Publishers, Boston, MA.
- Snider, Kellie (2017) *Turning Fierce Dogs Friendly*
- Stewart, Grisha (2010). *Behavior Adjustment Training for Fear & Aggression*. Video Produced by Tawzer Dog Videos, Eagle, ID. Note: There are several other videos also available on BAT.
- Stewart, Grisha (2011). *Behavior Adjustment Training: BAT for Fear, Frustration, and Aggression in Dogs*. Dogwise Publishing, Wenatchee, WA.
- Stewart, Grisha (2016). *Behavior Adjustment Training 2.0*. Dogwise Publishing, Wenatchee, WA.
- Turner, Ted and Tompkins, Chuck (1999). “Aggression Reduction Techniques,” in *Animal Training: Successful Animal Management through Positive Reinforcement*, edited by K. Ramirez. Shedd Aquarium Press, Chicago, IL.
- Parsons, Emma (2005). *Click to Calm: Healing the Aggressive Dog*. Sunshine Books, Waltham, MA.
- Parsons, Emma and Robitaille, Julie (2011). *TACT – Touch Assisted Clicker Training: A Training program for Dogs that Are Fearful or Reactive Toward People*. Video produced by Clean Run Productions, LLC, South Hadley, MA.
- Pryor, Karen (1999). *Don’t Shoot the Dog*, revised edition. Bantam Books, New York, NY.
- Ramirez, Ken (1999). *Animal Training: Successful Animal Management through Positive Reinforcement*. Shedd Aquarium Press, Chicago, IL.
- Reid, Pamela (1996). *Excel-erated Learning: Explaining in Plain English How Dogs Learn and How Best to Teach them*. James & Kenneth Publishers, Oakland, CA.
- Rosales-Ruiz, Jesus and Snider, Kellie (2009). *Constructional Aggression Treatment: C.A.T. for Dogs*. Video produced by Tawzer Dog Videos, Eagle, ID.
- Rosales- Ruiz, Jesus and Rentfro, Angela (2009). *Fearful to Friendly: F2F, Constructional Fear Treatment for Cats*. Video produced by Tawzer Dog Videos, Eagle, ID.
- Sdao, Kathy (2009). *Does the Name Pavlov Ring a Bell*. Video produced by Tawzer Dog Videos, Eagle, ID.
- Sidman, Murray (1989). *Coercion and its Fallout*. Authors Cooperative Inc., Publishers, Boston, MA.
- Stewart, Grisha (2010). *Behavior Adjustment Training for Fear & Aggression*. Video Produced by Tawzer Dog Videos, Eagle, ID. Note: There are several other videos also available on BAT.

- Stewart, Grisha (2011). Behavior Adjustment Training: BAT for Fear, Frustration, and Aggression in Dogs. Dogwise Publishing, Wenatchee, WA.
- Stewart, Grisha (2016). Behavior Adjustment Training 2.0. Dogwise Publishing, Wenatchee, WA.
- Turner, Ted and Tompkins, Chuck (1999). “Aggression Reduction Techniques,” in Animal Training: Successful Animal Management through Positive Reinforcement, edited by K. Ramirez. Shedd Aquarium Press, Chicago, IL.

# Handling Animal Mistakes Positively

## Course Description

Your dog makes an error; he doesn't do what you expected. How should you respond? Positive reinforcement trainers will go out of their way to avoid punishment. However, is a well-timed "no" still considered a punisher? How about a kindly trained "oops" to let the dog know he should change his behavior? What options are available to the well-intentioned positive reinforcement trainer? In this Session, Ken Ramirez will present the various techniques used to deal with incorrect responses and share the science and practical applications for each tool. These may include time outs, no reward markers, delta signals, least reinforcing stimulus, and others. Ken will explore the varied applications of redirection and share his preferred approach to get an animal back on the desired path. Join Ken for this useful session about how to deal with mistakes or unwanted responses from your animal in an effective and positive manner.

## Instructor Notes

This seminar attempts to cover many topics including some that I do not normally use, but are popular with some trainers. The goal is to present the science behind the techniques followed by my opinions regarding practical application. The seminar will thus be combined with science fact and practical opinion – I will clearly define and identify when I am speaking about one or the other.

---

### Introduction

- Why this topic is important
- Choosing the right tools & technique
- Popular but aversive techniques
- Positive alternatives
- Using redirection

### Importance of this Topic

- Traditional approach to animal mistakes is to punish
- Punishment techniques certainly work
- But there are various reasons why we want to avoid punishers
- But are reinforcement techniques as effective?
- Which are the best positive options?

### Untraining Undesirable Behavior (Pryor, 1999)

- "Shoot the Dog"
- Punishment
- Negative reinforcement
- Extinction
- Put the behavior on cue
- Train an incompatible behavior (DRI)
- Shape absence of behavior (DRO)

- Change the motivation

### My Approach Today

- Changing motivation my preferred long-term approach – but not always possible in the moment
- Focus on immediate response options
- Examine science behind each tool
- Share my opinion regarding practical application of each tool

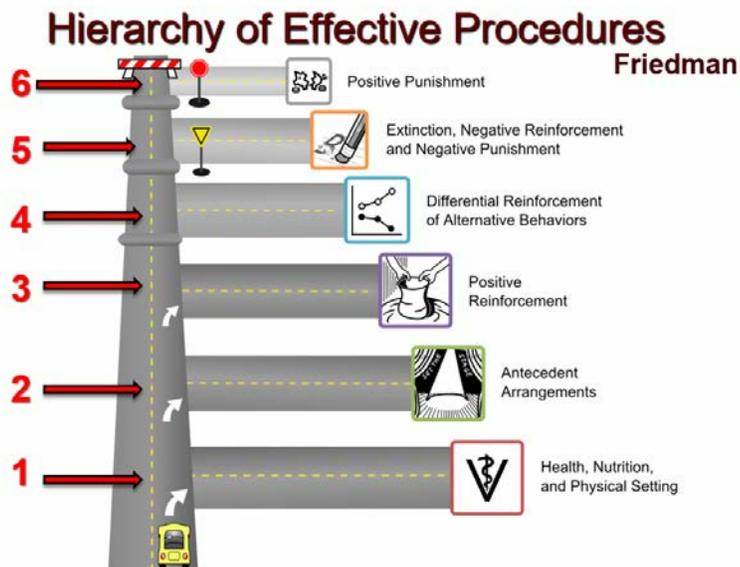
### Positive Reinforcement Training

- What does that mean?
- Are aversives never present?
- If aversives are used, are you no longer a positive reinforcement trainer?
- Hierarchy of effective procedures (Friedman)

### Hierarchy of Effective Procedures

A positive reinforcement trainer only gets to punishment if all other options have been exhausted. (Friedman, 2008)

- Medical, Nutritional, & Physical needs are met
- Antecedent Arrangements are considered
- Positive Reinforcement utilized
- Redirection, Alternative Response training, Regression considered
- Extinction, Negative Reinforcement, or Negative Punishment
- Positive Punishment is last resort



The reason trainers feel compelled to move further down the hierarchy ladder is usually because their use of reinforcement options are not as robust or they have not explored those options as thoroughly.

## No Reinforcement Markers (NRM)

- Varied definitions and uses in practice
- Most common use: it marks the moment animal makes a wrong or incorrect move
- Functions the opposite of a clicker
- Conditioned punisher (Chance, 1999)
- Few skilled trainers can use them well

## NRM Varied Uses & Applications

- NRM
  - “No” or “Wrong”
  - Marks incorrect response
  - What about a very passive “oops”?
    - “It is just information to the animal”
    - “Hard to be mean or vindictive when you say oops”
    - “My animal responds well to it”
  - If it decreases future occurrences of the preceding behavior, it is a punisher
- Warning Signa;
  - “Last Chance”
  - Warning prior to application of an aversive stimulus (a more severe one)
  - Effective, but can become the new cue to the behavior (car lights)
  - This can function as a punisher: however, in many cases, since it does not decrease the frequency of future behavior is it just a cue? Or is it a cue that is also a weak punisher?
- Interrupter – What if it just stops behavior in the moment but it doesn’t change future behavior?
  - Certainly, kinder and probably not inhumane
  - Still aversive for most animals in most contexts
  - If interruption then moves animal away from something it desires, it’s an aversive (perhaps a mild one).
  - Thus, it is a weak or ineffective punisher in many cases (it is redirection)
- What about a “Stop” cue?
  - Growing question among R+ trainers
  - If a trained cue means “stop” or “freeze,” and that action is reinforced, you are then using a form of redirection – not an NRM
  - Redirection will be discussed later
  - It’s not the word “NO” that matters, what matters is the effect it has on behavior.

## NRM Final Thoughts

- Never used one, don’t plan to
- Serves as a punisher
- Many will inadvertently condition one
- Can assist in shaping behavior if timing perfect, but can also create frustration
- Only skilled and disciplined trainers can use well

## Time Outs

- Definition – Removal of opportunity for reinforcement (Kazdin, 1994)
- Standard application:
  - When animal exhibits inappropriate behavior, trainer leaves training area or turns back on animal making reinforcers unavailable. Length of time out not defined and varies greatly from trainer to trainer.
- Scientifically speaking it is a negative punisher

## TO Challenges with Use

- It is a punisher and has the same baggage associated with most punishers
- If not timed properly, will punish wrong behavior
- Does not assist animal in knowing what behavior is desired
- Only effective if animal is reinforced by your presence or your reinforcers
- Overused by many trainers

## TO Science & Opinion

- Properly used, it will punish behavior
- Scientific literature plentiful regarding time outs (Kazdin, 1994)
- I would avoid them in all but the most specific situations
  - Animal giving you a timeout.
- Ending a session to take a break or manage frustration is not a technical time out; you are making a management decision not applying a training technique.

## Negative Reinforcement

- Definition: Removal or avoidance of an aversive stimulus increases frequency of a behavior
- 2 ways of looking at negative reinforcers
  - Avoidance – threat of aversive removed
  - Escape – aversive is removed
- Theoretically there is always a punisher opposite every reinforcer

## Understanding Negative Reinforcement

- Concepts that work
  - Alarm Clock
  - Police on side of road
  - Negative Reinforcement: when used by professionals in the right manner can be a humane and effective choice
- Reinforce rather than punish

## Negative Reinforcement Science & Opinion

- Science on negative reinforcers is plentiful
- Aversives are a part of R-
- Preferable flip side to punishment
- Biggest issues
  - Overuse of aversives can cause frustration

- Severity of aversives hard to control for many
  - Inappropriate use can be inhumane
- Skilled trainers can use R- effectively

## LRS

- Least Reinforcing Scenario/Stimulus (Scarpuzzi, 1991)
- Designed as most positive approach to incorrect responses
- 2-3 second neutral response
- Goals:
  - Step towards extinction
  - Effort to provide the least reinforcing consequences without causing frustration
  - Giving animal immediate opportunity to earn reinforcement afterwards

## LRS Practical Applications

- Proper Use
  - Brief and immediate
  - Looking for calm response (acceptance)
  - Immediate, easy opportunity for new reinforcement
  - Not truly neutral, but an effort to provide least reinforcing option
- Challenges
  - Not a fixed posture
  - Not related to eye contact
  - Don't be tempted to extend length
  - Don't turn it into a timeout
  - Refrain from emotional response
- Why it works
  - Due to positive history
  - Rhythm of reinforcement is interrupted
  - Opportunity to continue and earn more reinforcement present
  - Behavioral momentum – is at work, animal is reengaged which helps get the behavior later when requested, in most cases

## Assumptions as we Examine the LRS (Friedman & Ramirez)

- If an animal something wrong repeatedly, the error needs to be analyzed
- We take responsibility for animal's error
- We want to use procedures that are least intrusive – or that give the animal the most control
- We want to see a reduction or elimination of frustration behavior (caused by too low a rate of reinforcement)
- We want to keep the animal engaged
- You work in an R+ environment and want a trusting relationship with an animal
- All training should give the animal three things:
  - Clear information
  - Control over reinforcers
  - Control over escape from aversives

- Animals are in a dialogue with trainer to choose to participate or not – they have the choice
- Training (including the use of specific procedures like the LRS) is a dynamic process that requires dialogue between trainer and learner. Recipes are only useful for the beginner and not the long-term effective management of behavior.

#### Analysis of the LRS (Friedman & Ramirez)

- A<sub>1</sub> – Cue
- B<sub>1</sub> – Incorrect response
- C<sub>1</sub> – Micro-pause to keep from reinforcing
- A<sub>2</sub> – Pause cues pre-trained CAB
- B<sub>2</sub> – Animal gives Calm Attentive Behavior
- C<sub>2</sub> – Reinforce, New Cue, or Repeat Cue
- C<sub>1</sub> and A<sub>2</sub> are happening together or in quick succession and this is the LRS, what makes it unique from any other procedure

#### Unique Aspects of the LRS (Friedman & Ramirez)

- Having animal return to a default behavior, (stationing→CAB), is critical for success.
- Includes a reinforcement opportunity as part of protocol (unlike TO's, NRM's, and EXT).
- Animal must be looking to you for feedback, otherwise must use other tool.
- Most useful in maintenance of behavior
- Useful tool for new or inexperienced trainers

#### LRS Final Thoughts

- Proven practically in many settings
- Most positive reinforcement trainers use it naturally
- Designed as structured way to ignore un-wanted behavior (to teach young trainers)
- Sets the animal up for success with the use of behavioral momentum to “keep animal in the game”

#### LRS Discoveries (Friedman & Ramirez)

- My use has evolved over the years, it gets shorter and shorter.
- Discovered many similar approaches used by good trainers
  - Most have never heard of LRS
  - Their protocol has similarities and ABCs are the same
    - Sarah Silverman – Take a step to the side
    - Susan Garrett – “Screw up Cookie”
    - Kay Laurence – Just move on

#### DRA - Redirection Techniques

- Alternate response training
- Differential Reinforcement of \_\_\_\_\_ (Alternative responses)
- DRI (Incompatible behavior)
- DRO (Other behavior)
- DRL (Lower intensity/rate behavior)

### Alternate Response Training

- Differential reinforcement is at heart of most training (Kazdin, 1994; Chance, 1999)
- Could be said to be part of every shaping decision
- DRA strategies developed to assist in focusing problem solving
- Gives animal alternative to undesired behavior
- Gives trainer something to reinforce (while combined with extinction)

### DRI

- Train incompatible behavior in place of undesired behavior
- Active form of alternative response training (Ramirez, 1999)
- Excellent technique for dealing with aggression
- Useful for many types of problem behavior

### DRO

- Reinforce any behavior other than unwanted behavior
- Shape absence of behavior (Pryor, 1999)
- Passive form of alternative response training (Ramirez, 1999)
- Useful for resolving unwanted behavior taking place outside of a session

### DRL

- Reinforce desired change in intensity of behavior
- First used with self-injurious behavior with children
- Technique employed in *Click to Calm* (Parsons, 2006)
- Shaping away from unwanted behavior
- Requires greater skill than other DRA; still reinforcing unwanted behavior

### DRA Final Thoughts

- Scientifically solid technique (Kazdin, 1994; Chance, 1999)
- Don't let acronyms and initials scare you away
- Every trainer uses differential reinforcement regularly
- Focused types of DRA assist in problem solving
- One of the most useful tools for any trainer

### Choosing the Right Tools

- Finding positive alternatives gets easier with practice
- Focusing on desired behavior – keeps you focused on reinforcement
- Understanding the science assists in making the right choices
- Read about the tools and ask others. Use what works for you!

### Personal Note

- I have trained animals for over 35 years and seldom found the need to use aversives or punishers
- Using positive choices has always been most effective and they create better relationships and happier, healthier animals.
- My opinion is just one way of looking at the application of these principles.

## References

- Chance, Paul. (1999) *Learning and Behavior, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Brookes/Cole Publishing Company, Pacific Grove, CA.
- Friedman, Susan G. (2008). What's Wrong with this Picture? Effectiveness is not Enough in *Good Bird Magazine*, Vol 4-4; Winter 2008.
- Kazdin, Alan E. (1994). *Behavior Modification in Applied Settings, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition*. Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, Pacific Grove, CA.
- Parsons, Emma. (2006). *Click to Calm: Healing the Aggressive Dog*. Sunshine Books, Waltham, MA.
- Pryor, Karen. (1999). *Don't Shoot the Dog*. Bantam Books, New York, NY.
- Pryor, Karen. (2009). *Reaching the Animal Mind*. Scribner, New York, NY.
- Ramirez, Ken. (1999). *Animal Training: Successful Animal Management through Positive Reinforcement*. Shedd Aquarium Press, Chicago, IL.
- Scarpuzzi, M.R., Lacinak, C.T., Turner, T.N., Tompkins, C.D., & Force, D.L. (1991). "Decreasing the Frequency of Behavior through Extinction" in *Animal Training: Successful Animal Management through Positive Reinforcement*, ed. K. Ramirez 1999, Shedd Aquarium Press, Chicago, IL.

# Avoiding Common Trainer Errors and Traps!

Ken Ramirez

## Course Description

Training is easy! Very straightforward and easy to do – at least when reading about it in a book! After all, isn't it as simple as "reinforce desired behavior and ignore unwanted behavior."? If that's true, why do so many trainers find themselves uncertain how to get out of a training hole or around a behavioral roadblock?

When teaching training skills, most instructors naturally focus on what to do, rarely on what not to do. Recipes tell you what ingredients to add not which ones to avoid. Driving directions focus on what route to take and where to turn, they seldom indicate "bad parts of town" or "dangerous roads or alleys." However, wouldn't we all benefit from knowing the risks, common errors, and frequent missteps of those who have made those mistakes? Ken has been there and made his fair share of mistakes and he's eager to share them with you!

This seminar will focus on some of the most common mistakes and short-cuts trainers take and the reasons we are often tempted to go in the "wrong direction." Nearly two dozen common mistakes and solutions will be discussed from "looking for the quick fix" to a problem to a trainer's desire to ask for a behavior "just one more time" or "use a behavior before its training is complete." Additionally Ken will examine some of the myths and other common beliefs or misunderstandings about training – exploring where those beliefs or sayings developed and how they can cause our training to get off track. Examples range from the overly used "you can't teach an old dog new tricks" to the more serious belief that a "dog is just a domesticated wolf" or the simplified saying "the click ends the behavior."

Ken will explore how often training gets messed up because of some seemingly simple missteps or a misunderstanding about an often-stated saying. The goal? Help attendees learn from the mistakes Ken himself has made as well as get his perspectives on why we are so tempted to go down that ill-fated road or believe that famous quote and help keep you from making these errors yourself.

---

## Introduction

- Genesis of this topic
- Myths & Mantra
- Common trainer mistakes or missteps
  - Why we make them
  - How to avoid them
- Considerations & Discussion about each

## Why Focus on Errors?

- Positive Reinforcement trainers focus on desired behavior
- Not being aware of pitfalls makes it more likely to fall into them
- Awareness assists in prevention
- We all make them – sometimes for good reason

## Myths & Sayings

- Just because they are common, doesn't make them true

- You can't teach an old dog new tricks
- Based in fact but not meant as law
- Sayings taken to extremes
- Descriptive information taken too literally
- Give thought to these rather than embrace them so strongly

#### Dog = Wolf

- Dogs are just domesticated wolves
- Based on fact but taken too literally by many
- We can learn a lot about dog behavior by studying wolves
- But not everything is directly transferable to how we train
- Very little is the same regarding natural social behavior and learning (Wynne 2012)
  - Use wolf knowledge as reference not law

#### R+ = No Rules

- Positive reinforcement means animal can do anything they want – there are no rules and no discipline
- Misconception or argument used by many who oppose or don't understand positive reinforcement training
- Rules make positive reinforcement stronger and more effective.
- Discipline does not equal punishment

#### Reinforce for Position

- Click for behavior, reinforce for position
- Excellent concept, sometimes taken too literally
- Click for behavior if it is your marker
- Reinforce for position
  - if position is critical or important
  - but there are lots of methodologies for where to reinforce
- Too often we hear "Always X" or "Never Y" – very little is truly always or never.

#### Click Ends Behavior

- The click ends the behavior
- Theoretically true, depending on how marker is trained
  - Clickers used as other signals
  - Meant it talking about discreet behavior
- But behavior continues after the click, animal keeps behaving and doing things
- Trainers can't forget that and must be aware of that when they reinforce
- Always pay attention to behavior, whenever it occurs

#### NLIF

- Nothing in Life is Free
- Good concept in theory but often taken to extremes
- Kathy Sdao's book really explores this topic in detail – it is worth a read
- Strict adherence to this concept does not always put animal needs first

### Breed Prejudice

- Breed specific beliefs regarding behavior and intelligence
- Intelligence still being studied – but not a true measure of trainability
- Certainly we should be aware of an animal's physical limitations
- We often limit animals by our own beliefs and misconceptions
  - Not built for agility
  - It's an aggressive breed
- Abolish breed prejudice!

### Leader of the Pack

- Be the Leader of the Pack
- Derived originally from wolf analogy
- Personal philosophy – don't want my animals to perceive me as a conspecific and rarely believe that they do
- What type of leader do you want to be?
  - Dictator or Peacemaker
  - Demand submission or encourage cooperation
  - Punisher or a reinforcer

### Common Trainer Mistakes

- Developed years ago in teaching most common mistakes when training medical behaviors
- Many arise when there is pressure to train – urgency to complete a behavior
- Later realized that same errors are made in many situations by most trainers
- Sometimes we knowingly take the shortcut or ignore best practice
- Started with a dozen, but list grows each year

### Quick Fix

- Looking for the quick fix – a fast, easy resolution
- This desire causes us to take short cuts
- It is the reason people want to use punishment
- In general people don't like to put time into finding solutions
- Thinking training is magic as opposed to science

### “Animal Knows”

- The animal “knows” what I want
- He should know that behavior by now
- He's just messing with me (mad at me, etc.)
- Animals make mistakes for a reason, we say these things to make us feel better
- Go back to basics
  - Timing
  - Criteria
  - Reinforcement

### Power of the Click

- Forgetting the power of the click
- Not using one with finished behaviors that need strengthening
- Using it poorly without thinking (particularly problematic with new or non-trainers)

- Assuming it is not needed

#### Ongoing Desensitization

- Desensitization is never complete
- No animal can be desensitized to everything
- We must always be aware that training never ends – it is an ongoing process
- Animal sees the world different than us – we assess their comfort based on their behavior
- They will indicate to us when we have pushed them to far or they need more desensitization

#### Getting Greedy

- Pushing a behavior longer than is appropriate
- Asking too many times for a behavior
- Wanting more from your animal than you have actually trained
- Plan ahead and don't get ahead of yourself

#### Learning Never Ends

- Forgetting that learning is always taking place
- Animals learn 24 hours a day
- Not just when you have treats and a clicker
- Be aware of passive learning (non-formal training)
- It is outside of training that most problem behaviors are learned

#### It's in the Details

- Not paying attention to details
- We tend to look at the big behavior picture and not focus on the small but important aspects of behavior
  - Calmness - Tension
  - Focus
  - Distribution of weight
- Experienced trainers refine and improve behavior by watching the small things

#### Predictable Patterns

- We are creatures of habit and often develop predictable patterns of behavior
- Inadvertent cueing examples
  - Body language: Hand in pouch becomes marker
  - Words: "Good boy" becomes prompt or crutch
  - Other noises: Gasp (sigh) becomes an NRM
  - Behavior patterns: Sequence creates chain
- Be aware of patterns and what animals actually perceive and actually learn

#### Two's a Crowd

- Using too many trainers for one task
- Urgency to get a behavior completed can necessitate multiple trainers
- Behaviors needed daily may also require multiple trainers
- But even the best trainers will view behavior and progress differently
- Multiple trainers does not set an animal up for success

### Lack of Communication

- Key in working with multiple trainers
- Also problem in maintaining existing behaviors
- Often indicates a lack of shared goals and priorities
- A necessity in families, organizations, roommates, etc.

### Lack of consistency

- As just described this can occur due to communication gaps or simple lack of attention to details
- Also occurs for other reasons
  - Competition between roommates, spouses, co-workers (inadvertent or on purpose) – their way is best
  - Different expectations of the animals
  - Variable cues

### Not My Fault!

- Making excuses for behavior problems – not accepting responsibility
- We put labels on animals (Martin, Steve)
  - He's reactive
  - She hates men in uniforms
- My spouse let's her get away with it
- Change your thinking. Not "What's wrong with the animal?" but "Why can't I train it?"

### Using a behavior before it is complete

- Desire to use a behavior before all approximations are completed
- For simple behaviors, this creates sloppy behavior
- For difficult behaviors, it can break down trust and make the behavior harder to complete
- If behavior is not complete don't be in a hurry to use it

### Giant Steps

- Taking approximations that are too large
- We are in a hurry to complete the behavior
- We believe our animal does not need the smaller steps
- We are too cocky about our own training skill
- Moving quickly is not bad, but skipping steps does not give the animal as solid a foundation

### What's in a Relationship

- Misunderstanding the role of relationships in training
- Defining a relationship
  - Science shies away from concept
  - Relationships = a strong reinforcement history
- Restraint and medical exams
  - Should trainer do it?
  - Better to use a stranger?

### Overestimating Relationship

- My animal loves me! My very presence is reinforcing!
- Relationships are unquestionably key to successful training
- However, too many trainers depend on it without looking at whether or not it actually reinforces specific behavior.

### “My animal loves...”

- Making assumptions about what an animal likes
- An easy trap for all trainers to fall victim to
- Reinforcers strengthen behavior an animal may not necessarily like them
- Reinforcers are context specific – expectations are developed during the training process
- Make sure your reinforcers are effective

### Oops!

- Inadvertently conditioning a NRM
- Unless we control our reactions when mistakes happen, they may learn a cue that means “no”
- This is a conditioned punisher and can create frustration or problems
- Often is a problem without trainer’s awareness

### Jumping to Conclusions

- Be careful about making assumptions when watching other trainers work with their animals.
- The You-Tube phenomenon – many people are introduced to clicker training through the internet – not all resources are good resources
- “I know best” phenomenon – We are sometimes too quick to judge what we see other trainers do.

### Training is Easy

- Assuming that ALL training can be done by anyone
- Training is straight-forward and suitable for everyone
- However, there are limits to what a beginner or novice can accomplish
  - Training beyond your skill level
  - Using tools before your animal is ready
  - Not seeking advice when you are in over your head

### Final Thoughts

- My lists today are just food for thought
- Don’t take them all literally
- Short cuts are sometimes necessary, if you must take one, do so with your eyes wide open- with knowledge and understanding
- Awareness of the challenges and pitfalls of making a mistake, believing a myth or holding on to a sacred cow will better prepare you for the likely outcomes
- These are reflections from my own experiences and errors – this was not a scientific look at training
- Hopefully you found a few of these topics useful

## **Quick List of Common Mistakes**

### Myths & Mantra (7)

- Dogs are just domesticated wolves
- Positive reinforcement training means no rules and no discipline
- Reinforce for position
- The click ends the behavior
- Nothing in life is free
- Breed Prejudice
- Be the Leader of the Pack

### Mistakes (19)

- Looking for the quick fix
- The animal “knows” what I want
- Forgetting the power of the click
- Desensitization is never complete
- Pushing a behavior longer or further than is appropriate
- Forgetting that learning is always taking place
- Not paying attention to the details
- Developing bad habits and predictable patterns of behavior
- Using too many trainers for one task
- Lack of communication
- Lack of consistency
- Making excuses for behavior problems - not accepting responsibility
- Using a behavior before it is completely trained
- Taking approximations that are too large
- Misunderstanding the role of relationships in training (good & bad)
- Making assumptions about what an animal likes
- Inadvertently conditioning a No Reward Marker
- Making assumptions when watching other trainers work with their animals
- Assuming that all training can be done by anyone

# **Consulting Skills**

## **Wanted: Animal Training Consultant: Those Good with Animals Need not Apply!**

Ken frequently likes to tell people that a successful animal training consultant doesn't need to be good with animals! He says this in jest, because animal skill are certainly required to be a training consultant, but this seminar will look at those other skills that frequently trip up good trainers, including people skills and organizational abilities. Ken will share stories from his consulting practice to give the attendees pointers and suggestions that will assist them in being better trainers.

### Introduction

- People Skills
- Identifying Problem
- Discussing Priorities
- Speaking Client's Language
- Accepting Responsibility
- Finding Acceptable Behavior
- Problem Solving Flow Chart
- Consistency
- Positive Reinforcement for People

### Over-riding Principles

- General principles apply in all training situations.
- Consultants need these skills from the start
- Managers and supervisors would be better trainers if they kept these in mind
- Zookeepers could accomplish so much more
- Pet owners would get so much further
- The animals are the easy part!

### People Skills a Must

- I love animals but hate people
  - Won't work for trainers
  - Doesn't work for veterinarians
  - Can't work for consultants
- Organization skills
- Motivational skills
- Training skills – teaching
- Develop trust

### Identifying the Problem.

- Does everyone in the household or staff see the same problem?

- Do they agree that it is indeed a problem?
- Get everyone to agree – or you may be fighting a losing battle
- Be the ultimate negotiator

Case Study: Marital Discord

#### Setting Priorities

- Before you implement a plan, determine where achieving it fits into your priority list.
- Does your list = everyone else's list?
- A problem that is too low on the priority list may not be easily solved.
- Are you willing to sacrifice something to fix the problem? Change is necessary.

Case Study: The Seagull Dilemma

#### Speak their Language

- Make it easier for client to relate to
- Use examples closer to home or within their realm of understanding
  - Use examples with similar species
  - Use similar type of dog
  - Similar situations
- Don't demean what they have done

Case Study: Macho Factor

#### Unlearn Long Held Truths

- Beliefs, half truths, myths and excuses get in the way of finding solutions
  - He hates children
  - He's bonded with my spouse
  - It's a common problem with this breed
  - My father in law feeds him when we're not here
  - There's no time in my schedule to work on this
- Help them to accept responsibility (Martin)
- Shift their thinking:
  - Instead of "what's wrong with the animal?"
  - Ask "why can't I train it?"

Case Studies: "It's Always Been that Way"

#### Find Acceptable Behavior

- Everyone focuses on unwanted behavior
- What behavior would they like to see?
- Client may need guidance – they never thought about it like that

#### Case Studies: Finding What they Want

#### Problem Solving Process

- Have a formalized process (flow chart, a set of questions, a matrix, or set of rules)
  - Karen Pryor (Don't Shoot the Dog)
  - Susan Friedman (Hierarchy of Effective Procedures)
  - Steve & Jen White (DIP IT)
  - AZA & Disney (Hypothesis System)
  - Ken Ramirez (Balance of Reinforcement Approach)
- Guides questions
- Assists client in doing it themselves
- Helps in understanding plan

#### Consistency

- Make sure everyone agrees on plan
- Make sure everyone approaches training the same
- It's about the animal not our own ego
- Consultant may not see this so you have to make a preventative strike

#### Case Study: "My Way's Better"

#### Positive Reinforcement for Client

- Understand what motivates them
  - Their spouse
  - Making their boss happy
  - Bottom line \$\$\$
  - Time savings
  - Their neighbors (peer pressure)
  - A clean house
- Help them get something out of it
- Stroke their ego
- Gain their trust and don't betray it

#### Case Study: Boss is my Roadblock

## Final Thoughts

- A behavioral consultant does need to understand training and behavior, without it you will certainly fail
- However, the best trainers in the world often fail as consultants or leaders in their area because they lack the requisite other skills:
  - People (talking, motivational, training)
  - Observational (assessment, big picture, reading between the lines)
  - Organizational (a systematic approach, record keeping, teaching)