

Module 2 – Care and welfare of domestic animals

Small animal behaviour

Video 1 : Dogs – senses and body language

Dr Rebekah Brown

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VETS30030 / VETS90122

Outline of small animal behaviour learning sessions



Faculty of Veterinary
and Agricultural
Sciences

Dog behaviour

- 1. Sensing the world and communicating feelings**
2. Preventing behavioural problems in puppies
3. Behavioural husbandry of dogs

Cat behaviour

4. Sensing the world and communicating feelings
5. Preventing behavioural problems in kittens
6. Behavioural husbandry of cats

Dogs and cat behaviour

7. Introductions
8. Managing undesirable behaviours

Intended learning outcomes – Dog behaviour



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1. Explain how a dog's sensory experience of the world may influence its behaviour
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Small Animal Behaviour and Communication

- Consider the quality of sources for relevance and reliability
- Some references and extra sources available in the Helpful Resources



Wikimedia commons

What is behaviour?

- **Animal behaviour** includes all the ways animals interact with other organisms and the physical environment.
- Behaviour is always influenced by the animal's emotional state and the context
- Determined by
 - Genetic predisposition
 - Learning
 - Environment



Westend61.de



Popsugar.com

Importance of vets understanding animal behaviour

- Safety of humans and animals
- The Human-Animal Bond: 'The human-animal bond (HAB) is a mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between people and animals... **The veterinarian's role in the human-animal bond is to maximize the potential of this relationship between people and animals.**' (American Veterinary Medical Association)
- Ensure we are aware of the potential emotional and behavioural impacts of our diagnostic and treatment actions

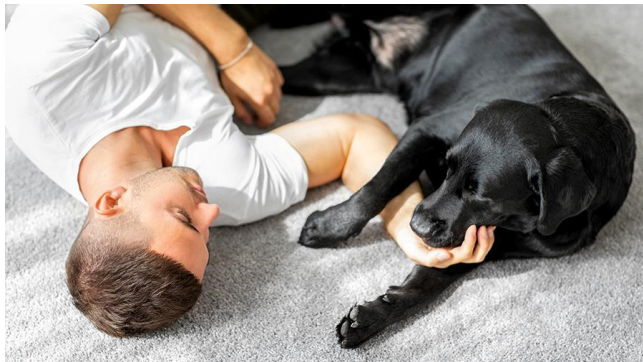


Image:StripHair.com



Image:bdcwire.com



Image:wideopenpets.com

A dog's sense of the world - smell

- Sense of smell is 10,000-100,000 times stronger than humans (varies with breed)



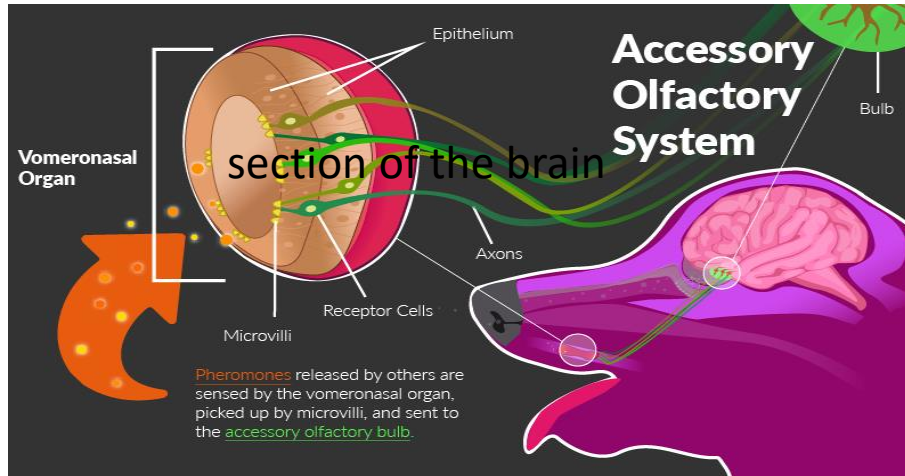
Image:yourpurebredpuppy.com



- Pups are born with eyes and ears sealed shut so smell and touch are their only guide for 2-3 weeks

A dog's sense of the world - smell

- Dogs have an accessory olfactory system in addition to main olfactory pathways
- The **vomeronasal organ** (two fluid-filled sacs at the base of the nasal cavity) is key. It detects scents from **pheromones** (chemical substances that transmit information between animals of the same species).



<https://www.petpooskiddoo.com/blog/how-is-a-dogs-sense-of-smell-different-from-ours-and-why/>

- Signals from the vomeronasal organ go to the amygdala, which handles instinctive emotions – fear, aggression, sexual urges

A dog's sense of the world - smell

- Pheromones secreted mainly in urine but also from anal sacs onto faeces as they defaecate
- Pheromones indicate age, sex, repro status, possibly level of excitement at the time of secretion



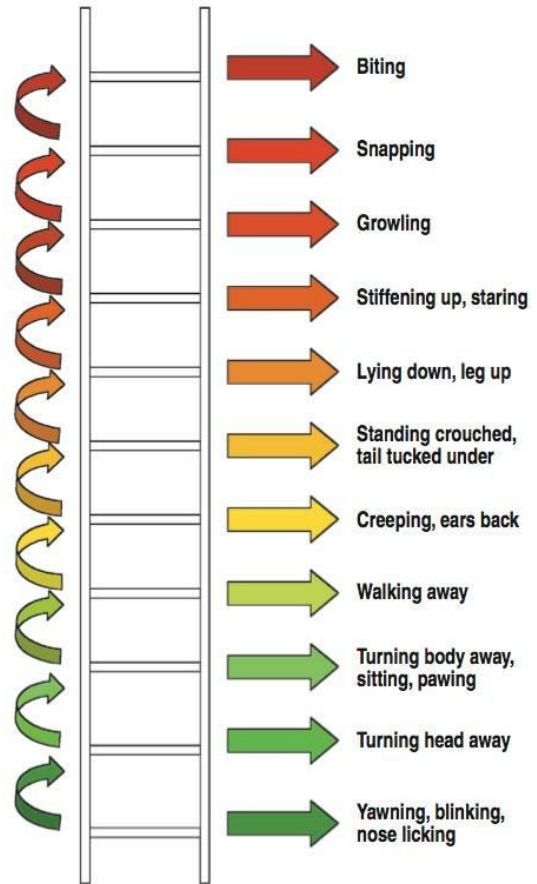
Canine body language

Anatomy	Relaxed	Stressed
Face	Soft, loose mouth	Skin taut; wrinkled brow; lips pulled back
Eyes	Almond shape; normal pupils; soft eye	Dilated pupils; hard eye; whale eye
Ears	Soft, loose; forward or midway on heads	Far forward; out to the side; flat against head
Spine/ Posture	Flexible neck to tail	Rigid
Tail*	Level with topline; slightly above or below; wagging	High above topline; tucked; wagging
Mouth	Mouth open; lips-long, soft	Mouth closed; lips-short, tense; snarl; lip lift; bite

*Curly, docked tail - evaluate in light of what is typical for that breed

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The Ladder of Aggression



How dogs communicate their feelings – anxious behaviours video



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4CQoPPYmveQ>

Canine body language – tails

- Position
- Wagging?
- Types of wagging



<http://www.dogzone.com/images/breeds/beagle.jpg>



<https://www.advantagepetcenter.com/>

Test your interpretation of tail wags



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZFq1Jk0w2EM>

Summary

- Animal behaviour is multifactorial but the animal's emotional state and the context are significant
- As vets, we need to be aware that our actions may result in the development or worsening of behavioural issues
- A dog's behaviour can be altered by what it smells in the world around it, with pheromones being especially important
- Pheromones induce instinctive emotions such as fear
- Identifying which rung of the ladder of aggression a dog is on is important for safety
- Tail wagging can have multiple meanings



His face exuded calm, but his tail betrayed him.

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Video 2 : Dogs – preventing development of behavioural problems - puppies

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Intended learning outcomes – Dog behaviour



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Development of behaviour problems

- Genetic – poorly understood
- Learned through negative experiences
 - Lack of prior experience resulting in fear or anxiety
 - Experience elicits fear or anxiety due to previous event e.g. revisit to vet after bad experience



<https://www.ellevetsciences.com/>

Prevention of behaviour problems

- 1 Selection of an appropriate pet
 - Not covered in detail in this subject
- 2 Appropriate socialisation
 - Covered in next slides and in case study
- 3 Appropriate stimulation throughout life
 - Covered in next video
- Extra resources available in the Helpful resources folder (not examinable)
 - Marder and Duxbury 'Obtaining a Pet: Realistic Expectations'
 - Dr Kersti Seksel 'Preventing behaviour problems in puppies and kittens' has more detail as well as information for managing common preventable problems

Developmental periods

- Neonatal 0-12 days – only senses are smell and touch
- Transition 13-20 days – Eyes and ears open but function poorly. Tail wagging begins.
- Socialisation 3-12 weeks – discussed below
- Juvenile – 12 weeks to sexual maturity
- Adult - from sexual maturity
- Senior – from about 8 years



<https://www.dogzone.com/articles/puppies/stages-of-puppy-development/>



Puppy socialisation – preventing fear developing

- Experiences during the socialisation period have a disproportionate impact
- Whenever possible, remove animals when they are having a bad experience
- Lack of exposure to a particular situation during this period predisposes to fear and anxiety of the stimulus later in life



Image:Petbarn



Image:countryliving.com

Prevention of behaviour problems – early intervention

- 12 week vaccination (usually the first with the new owner) should focus a lot on behaviour as well as healthcare
- Should be at least a 30 minute consult and include a puppy information pack with behavioural advice
- REALLY important for the pup to enjoy the experience



https://www.petmd.com/dog/puppycenter/health/evr_vaccines_and_your_puppy

Puppy socialisation – puppy pre-school

- Socialise the puppy so that it develops into an obedient and enjoyable pet.



Image:brunkerroadvets.com.au

Puppy socialisation and owner information – non-procedure visits

- Alternative to puppy classes where attending those is not possible or in addition to the classes



<https://www.northcotevet.com.au/puppy-training-school-with-a-vet-clinic-in-melbourne/>

Puppy socialisation advice – see checklist in readings

- Unfamiliar people of different sizes, genders and wearing different clothes
- Children
- Unfamiliar dogs
- Other animal species e.g. cats
- Different surfaces
- Different weather conditions
- Man-made objects and sounds e.g. brooms!



<https://www.akc.org/expert-advice/puppy-information/introducing-puppies-to-senior-dogs/>

Puppy socialisation advice – children

- Children are unpredictable
- Provide a safe spot for the dog that the child cannot access
- Owners must recognise when to move the child away



Akc.org

Puppy socialisation advice – children

- OWNERS MUST SUPERVISE
- Teach child how to talk and move around the puppy
- The puppy chooses whether to approach and can back away if it wants to



Behavioural husbandry for puppies – learning to be alone

- Puppies have often never been alone before
- Gradual movement away from bed, room, house
- Can use a crate during this process
- Leave it something yummy and time-consuming to eat



<https://www.kongcompany.com/blog/training-at-home>

Dog crates

- Provide a safe space for the puppy/adult dog
- Allow safe transport
- Allows easy confinement if required e.g. after a surgery

BUT

- Dogs should not be crated for long periods e.g. a work day
- Crates are not for punishment – it should have a positive association



<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/why-and-how-should-i-crate-train-my-dog/>

Summary

- Fear and anxiety are common underlying emotions in aggressive dogs
- During the socialization period (3-12 weeks of age) it is very important to give the puppy a wide range of experiences
- The 12 week puppy consult is a key opportunity to introduce owners to behavioural concepts and ensure that the puppy has a positive experience
- Puppy pre-school is very beneficial
- Introduction to children and spending time alone are important



It is
called a
good dog
pocket.



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Video 3 : Dogs – behavioural husbandry for adult dogs

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Behavioural husbandry

- Behavioural husbandry - actions that owners can take to maximise the chances of their animal having good psychological wellbeing and behaviour
- General responses to poor behavioural husbandry
 - Exacerbation of other behavioural conditions e.g. separation anxiety, FAS
 - Development of stereotypic or compulsive behaviours



Behavioural husbandry – key aspects

- Adequate physical exercise
 - Lack – inappropriate overactivity and poor manners e.g. jumping up
- Adequate resources
 - Lack – resource guarding behaviours
- Social requirements
 - Lack – fear due to lack of social experience, over-reacting when has chance for social interaction
- Positive experiences (social and non-social)
 - Lack – over-reaction to any experience



Behavioural husbandry – physical exercise

- Varies a lot with age, breed and health (0-2 hours/day)
- Walks the most common way of exercising dogs – often involves other social and non-social experiences.
- Running dog while owner runs or cycles – great cardiovascular but less enrichment
- Duration/frequency of walks affected by:
 - Owner time availability
 - Behavioural issues while walking – pulling, overreaction to other dogs, reliability of recall



<http://leemakennels.com/blog/dog-behaviour/dog-training-dog-behaviour/seven-steps-to-off-leash-reliability/>

Behavioural husbandry – resources

- Can be tangible, such as food and water, or intangible e.g. fun, comfort, stimulation
- Dogs find different resources more important than other dogs and at different times
- Providing enough of the desired resources at the desired time, particularly with physical objects in multi-dog households, can help



https://dogs.thefuntimesguide.com/two_or_more_dogs/

Behavioural husbandry – social requirements

- Dogs are a social, pack species and like to socialise with both dogs and humans
- Affected by different factors:
 - Behaviour
 - Inside vs outside housing (behaviour, coat type)



<https://www.thrivingcanine.com/blog/2014/06/25/top-ten-rules-dogs-house>

Behavioural husbandry – positive experiences (social)

- Meeting new dogs/people
 - Playing with dog and human friends
 - Positive training
 - Companionship
-
- Important factors:
 - Temperament of dog (enjoying social interaction)
 - Age of dog
 - Behaviour (manners) of dog
 - Time



Image:dogtime.com

Behavioural husbandry – positive experiences (non-social)

- Chewing/licking
 - Bones, toys etc
- Chasing/attacking games
- Other environmental enrichment that provides interest e.g. sand



Image: Pinterest

Behavioural husbandry in a consult

- Include social details on patient records
- Encourage all dogs to walk into the consult room rather than being carried or dragged
- Offer every dog food as it enters the consult room
- Consider examining anxious/fearful dogs outside



<https://fearfreepets.com/why-this-veterinarian-examined-a-dog-outside-the-clinic/>

Behavioural husbandry in a consult

- Notice and reward good behaviour
- Be aware of the language you use in communicating with the patient during a procedure
- Do the least pleasant procedure last and ideally near an exit point



Summary

- Behavioural husbandry - care that supports animals' interaction with their physical and social environment
- Key aspects are exercise, resources, social opportunities and positive experiences
- Behavioural husbandry awareness is also important in consults

