

Analyzing and Modifying Canine Aggressive Behavior

Saturday, September 15th and Sunday, September 16th, 2007

Presenters:

Suzanne Hetts, Ph.D., Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist

Nancy Williams, M.A, RVT, Associate Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist

Held at Ted Terroux's Canine College

9797 W. Colfax Ave. Lakewood CO

SATURDAY AGENDA

(subject to minor adjustments!)

Saturday, September 15th

5pm – 6:15pm –

Observations and Interpretations of Aggression and other Agonistic Behaviors

A combination of lecture and videos will be used to illustrate the complexity of canine communication associated with aggressive behavior. No matter how experienced you are, you'll be surprised to learn how much of canine communication is overlooked.

6:15 – 6:30 break

6:30 – 7:30

Overlooked Medical Influences on Aggression: the importance of working with veterinarians

Case examples of medical problems mis-labeled as behavior problems and examples of material presented by veterinary behaviorists at the AVMA meeting this past July in Washington DC will demonstrate why veterinary involvement is crucial to thoroughly evaluate aggression and other behavior problems. Non-medical factors influencing aggression will also be touched on in this section and throughout the workshop including breed and other genetic influences, socialization, environmental experiences, gender and spay/neuter status.

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SUNDAY AGENDA

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Sunday, September 16th

Material covered Saturday will not be repeated. Sunday's material will build from what attendees learned Saturday. We strongly encourage attendance on Saturday evening.

9 – 9:15am – Welcome, Introductions, Necessities

9:15 – 9:30 – Goals for the day

Do not expect a “typical” workshop on aggression. You’ll see demonstrations and videos of groundbreaking research, the creative and humane use of non-painful training tools and techniques to modify aggressive behavior, develop realistic expectations about assessments and outcomes, and learn the value of a team approach through appropriate and timely referrals.

9:30 – 10:30 – Risk Assessment and Behavior Assessments

Making decisions and predictions about how likely a dog is to bite or hurt someone is not a simple process and has legal implications. Learn the difference between a “temperament test” and an assessment of behavior, and to what extent each category might be considered a valid or reliable tool. Assessments must make ethological sense and their limitations must be clearly understood. Learn the implications of the fact that bite likelihood is a function of more than the dog’s behavior, and assumption of risk creates different issues for family owned dogs compared to those in shelters or foster care. Information about the dogs we’ll be working with in the afternoon will be used as case examples.

10:30- 10:45 Break

10:45 –11:15 Risk Assessment and Behavior Assessments, continued

11:15 – noon

Heart Rate Monitoring And Aggression –New Research With Practical Applications

Workshop attendees are in for a treat as Nancy Williams presents her pioneering work on heart rate and aggression, demonstrates a practical method for doing so that will be used during the afternoon’s work with dogs, and explains the implications this research has for evaluating and understanding dog behavior and the appropriate implementation of behavior modification techniques.

12noon – 1pm LUNCH

1pm – 2:15pm - **Behavior Modification Techniques for Aggression**

Aggressive behavior is arguably the most complex behavior problem commonly seen in dogs. Simple “positive” training techniques, such as rewarding alternative behaviors, that may work well for other problems are rarely sufficient *by themselves* to manage and/or change aggressive behavior. Violence, pain and “dominance techniques” are not the solution either for many reasons, not the least of which is that most aggression problems are not motivated by “dominance” challenges. This section will present an overview of both operant and classical conditioning techniques that will be used in the afternoon’s work with dogs.

2:15 – 2:30 Break

2:30 – 4:15 – **Hands On Work With Dogs**

All dogs have been pre-screened and evaluated by both Suzanne and Nancy. Dogs that have inflicted injury are NOT appropriate for this type of workshop and will not be present. All dogs will be safely restrained at all times and some may be muzzled. Anyone who brings a dog that has not been pre-approved will be asked to remove the dog from the premises.

4:15 – 4:30 **Wrap-Up and Closing**