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Destructive Dogs & Cantankerous Cats



Cantankerous Cats

No, this is not about kitty bootcamp! If training your cat to sit, stay and heel is your goal, perhaps you should get a dog. This is for all of us who would be happy training our cats to just use the little box instead of our comforter, closet or shoes. This is for owners who would be happy training their cat to use the scratching post instead of their stereo speakers. Before we start training our cats to do something or not do something, we need to look at how cats learn. They learn by experience. If the experience is good they will want to repeat it, if it is bad they will try to avoid it in the future. The key to training is to make whatever you want your cat to do is exceedingly rewarding and pleasurable. Whatever you don't want your cat to indulge in must **never** be rewarding or fun, in fact, it must be unpleasant. *Reprimands do not work.* If you catch the kitty in the act, and punish him, he will only misbehave when you are not there. If you punish him later, he will not associate the punishment with the crime.



Lets look at a few common examples:

Scratching furniture & drapery &...Scratching and climbing are highly enjoyable feline activities and are part of the essence of being a cat. Since your cat wants and needs to scratch, provide her with a variety of scratching posts and show her to use them. As a temporary measure you may need to enclose the kitty in a room where they can do little damage, if they are already using everything in the house as a scratching post. If your cat has a single favorite scratching site, try covering it with netting or loosely woven fabric. Cats do not like to snag their claws. Whether you are trying to prevent or cure a scratching problem, the single most important thing you can do is praise and reward your cat for scratching and climbing her post. If your cat is initially not interested in them, its up to you to show her how much fun they can be. Rub the post with catnip. Put her favorite food treats on some of the platforms. Attach toys so they dangle down enticingly. Physically putting your cat's paws and gently rubbing them will transfer some scent to the scratching post helping to identify it as hers and usable. The key word is "gently" and if she resists, stop before she begins to fight. If you catch her scratching anything other than her post, immediately startle her with a blast of water from a plant sprayer or shake a empty coffee can with a few coins in it. She will soon realize that unpleasant things happen when she tries to scratch the furniture, and remember how wonderful her scratching post is.

Aggressive behavior and biting: It is normal for kittens to bite and scratch. If you touch your cat in a sensitive area, he may bite as a way of telling you to "quit it" There is a fine line between pleasurable petting and irritating handling. Teach your cat to enjoy being handled so he doesn't feel threatened or aggressive. Begin by handling him in ways he finds pleasurable. Use plenty of praise, reassurance and the occasional food treat. Work slowly and gradually increase the area of his body being stroke. Gradually increase the time of contact required for a food treat Your cat will happily learn to tolerate prolonged contact in these areas. Even though you provide your cat with all his meals, his instinct to hunt still exists. Therefore, it is essential that you provide and outlet for this behaviour or you cat will practice on you. Tie a toy onto a string and drag it in front of your cat. Toss catnip toys or crinkly toys for your cat to pounce on. If your cat becomes overly excited, stop the play session. If he begins to bite and scratch, immediate scream "ouch", stop the play, and walk away. Curtailing a play session is extremely potent punishment. If your cat attacks you in play or daily life, be prepared with a plant sprayer. A few repetitions of the attack-spray sequence should convince him to attack his toys and not you.

Veterinary Solutions Some problems need some medical intervention or may even have medical causes. **Sudden onset of aggression** can mean thyroid problems, and a **sudden disinterest in the litterbox** may mean a urinary infection. Sometimes new surroundings or new family members increase stress and lead to **bad behaviour**. Stress relieving pheromones, invisible to human eyes and noses, can help relive some of the tension and return some calm. With **scratching**, as mentioned in the article above there are **other solutions like Soft Paws**. We can apply soft acrylic nail covers to your cats nail to prevent destruction of furniture. Depending on the cat, they can last up to 3 months. The option of declawing is also available, but is our last choice. Being a surgery requiring full anaesthetic and amputation of the first digit of each toe in the front paws, it is both costly and requires healing time and special care. This is an option that needs to be discussed with the doctor, and other options explored in order to make the best decision for your pet and your family.

Destructive Dogs



Dogs are social animals and without proper training they will behave like animals. They will soil your house, destroy your belongings, bark excessively, dig holes in your yard, fight other dogs and even not tolerate you touching them for nail trims and ear cleanings. Obedience training and socialization is one of the best things you can do for your dog or puppy and yourself. Obedience training is also an easy way to establish the social hierarchy. When your dog obeys a simple command of “come” or “sit” she is showing compliance and respect for you. Some people debate whether it is possible to train puppies or an old dog new tricks. The answer is YES! Whatever the age of the dog, begin training now. Enroll in a local dog obedience class to learn the basics. Then most teaching and training can and should be done at home. Keep the training sessions short and sweet. Try to integrate training into your daily routine. Keep food rewards in a zip-lock bag in your pocket and have the dog “sit” before you enter a room or “down” when you get dressed, as most puppies and many dogs follow us around during the day. Little rewards throughout the day make learning fun!

The MOST important aspect of training is to reward your dog for good behaviour. The more times he is rewarded the quicker he will learn. Therefore, it's essential you set up situations repeatedly in order for your dog to get the practice at doing the right thing. Whenever you feel the need to reprimand your dog, immediately show him what you want him to do, then reward him for getting it right. If you catch him chewing on the furniture, tell him “off” and immediately direct him to his own chew toys. Praise him when he chews on them. Never slap, kick, spank, or strike your dog. This type of inappropriate punishment always creates more problems and usually makes existing problems worse. Not only will you have a barking, chewing dog, but one that is leery, hand-shy, and fearful and aggressive.

See some examples below, and if they pertain to you, ask for the separate “How To” training sheet on each topic.

Barking: Barking is perfectly natural for a dog, however, endless barking howling and crying is not acceptable behaviour. The first step in obtaining peace is to realize that lots of barking is caused by the dog being lonely, bored, frustrated or frightened. These are all situations that you can help alleviate. A well-exercised happy dog is more likely to sleep all day while you are not at home. Spend time playing with, exercising and training your dog. If your dog lives in the backyard most of the time, she probably needs “social exercise”. Having a large yard is not equal to having a well exercised dog. She needs walks around the neighborhood, so she can investigate all the sounds and smells that tantalize her during the day. Bring her into the house when you are home, she needs to feel part of the family. Most dogs have no clue if barking is good or bad. Sometimes he is ignored (owner is in a tolerant mood), other times encouraged (someone at the door) and sometimes he is scolded (owner has a headache) Humans are consistently inconsistent. **See separate “How To” training sheet**



Come when called To many dogs the command to “come” means, “quick run the other way”. There are countless examples of how the owner trains the dog not to come by unintentionally punishing the dog when it does come. Every time the dog is called to engage in an activity that he doesn't enjoy he is learning that the command “Come “ is bad news. The worst practice the owner can engage in is letting their dog off leash and unattended. In fact, it is always the owner who ruins the fun by ordering the dog to “come” and then promptly puts the leash on and he goes home. Or the owner now frustrated that the dog would not come when called, feels the need to punish the dog. Next time the dog will take even longer to come, because the end result is negative. Dogs are always learning whether we intend to teach or not. In order to correct this type of behaviour the owner must first be aware of how he is unintentionally training undesirable behaviors in the dog. One or two instances of punishing the dog for “coming” can undermine weeks of formal training. Owners must learn to incorporate positive training into the dogs daily routine.

See separate “How To” training sheet

Submissive urination: This is a normal way for dogs and puppies to demonstrate submissive behaviour. It occurs frequently with young puppies who have not yet learned and perfected other social skills and means of showing respect. Submissive urination in adult dogs is usually a sign of insecurity. Often un-socialized and abused dogs will submissively urinate. Submissive urination may be present in overly sensitive or mistreated dogs as they feel the need to constantly apologize. When your dog urinates in this manner, it's best just to ignore him. If you try to re-assure him, he will interpret it as praise for urinating and will urinate more. If you scold him, he will feel an even greater need to apologize and urinate more. Treatment of submissive urination must be directed to building your dog's confidence and socialization skills, while showing him other ways to demonstrate respect. The quickest way is with basic obedience training and exercises. A dog that can earn praise by obeying a simple routine of “Come, Sit, Shake paw” will soon develop self esteem and confidence.



Veterinary Solutions Some problems may need medical intervention. A dog with phobias or separation anxiety may be helped with medications or products from your veterinarian.

D.A.P is an all natural pheromone based product which helps to reduce anxiety. It comes in both a spray as well as a plug-in model and spreads the scent that only the dog can smell throughout the home.

Medications which also help relieve anxiety may be appropriate, and may result in the ability for the dog to accept training steps to resolve issues by lowering the level of anxiety and giving the dog the ability to focus. These do need to be monitored by your veterinarian and occasional bloodwork may be required if long term use is indicated.