

Most Common Behavior Problems Presented to the Veterinary Clinic

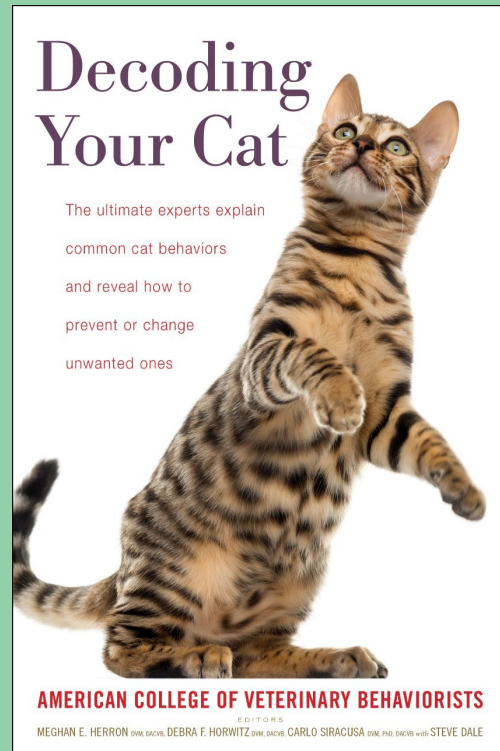
Wailani Sung, MS, PhD, DVM, DACVB



CVM Veterinary Conference



WRITTEN BY THE LEADING EXPERTS FROM THE AMERICAN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY BEHAVIORISTS



Decoding Your Cat

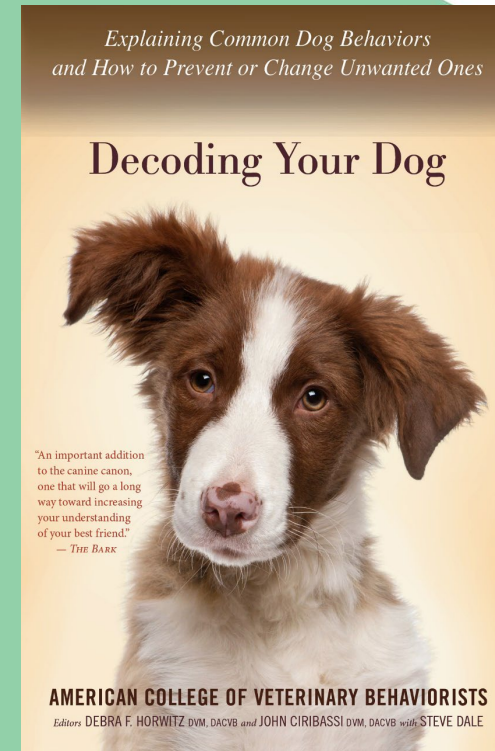
The ultimate experts explain
common cat behaviors
and reveal how to
prevent or change
unwanted ones

AMERICAN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY BEHAVIORISTS

EDITORS
MEGHAN E. HERRON DVM, DACVB, DEBRA F. HORWITZ DVM, DACVB, CARLO SIRACUSA DVM, PhD, DACVB with STEVE DALE

To learn more, visit:

hmhbooks.com/shop/books/Decoding-Your-Cat/9781328489906



Explaining Common Dog Behaviors
and How to Prevent or Change Unwanted Ones

Decoding Your Dog

"An important addition
to the canine canon,
one that will go a long
way toward increasing
your understanding
of your best friend."
— THE BARK

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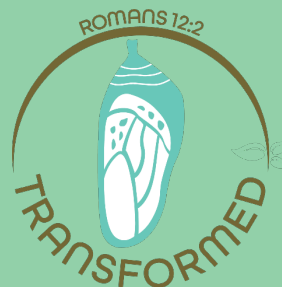
EDITORS DEBRA F. HORWITZ DVM, DACVB and JOHN CIRIBASSI DVM, DACVB with STEVE DALE

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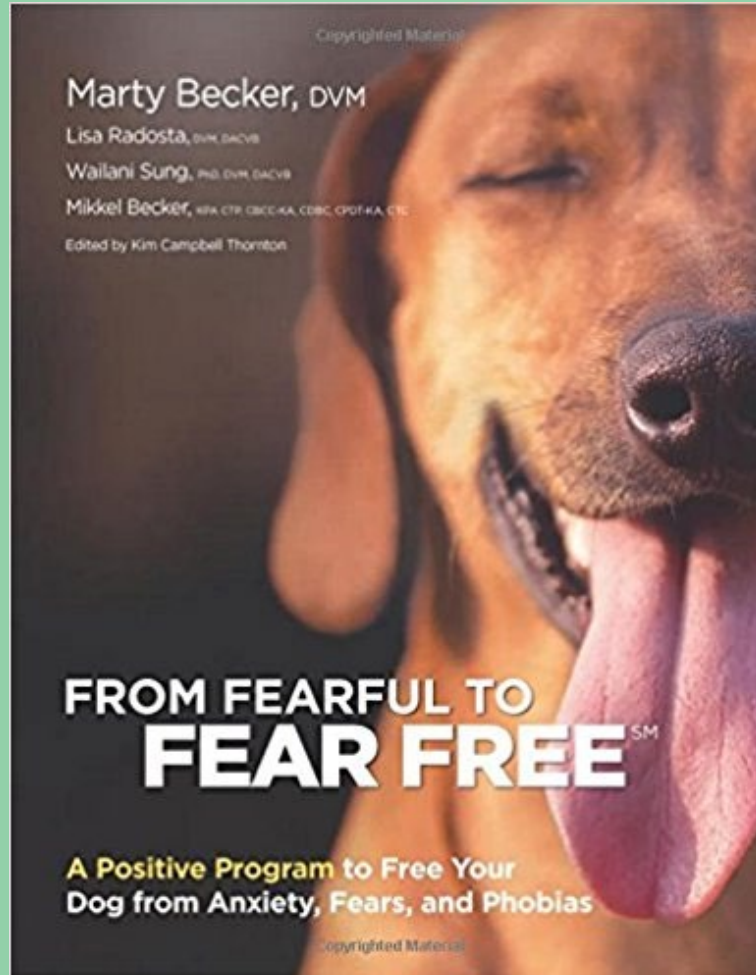
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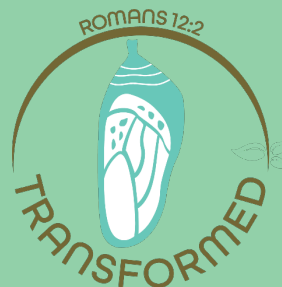
Recommended Reading for Clients & Staff



<http://amzn.to/2mCT3ZQ>



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Most Commonly seen Behavior Problems



Canine

- Fear/Fear related aggression
 - towards people and dogs
- Generalized anxiety
- Separation anxiety

Feline

- Fear/Fear related aggression
 - towards people and feline housemates
- Generalized anxiety

Fear



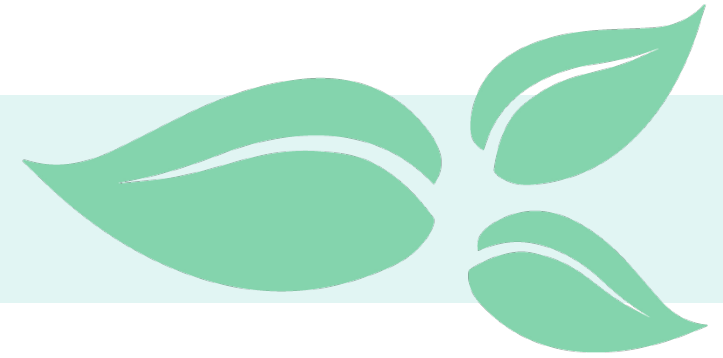
- A response to a perceived threat
- Increased likelihood to develop fears and fear related aggressive behavior due to genetics and lack of socialization.
- Slow or unable to accept new people/animals
- Increased reactivity towards strangers, animals, noises, situations, etc.
- Unable to settle in new/unfamiliar environments



Fear-related Aggression

- Occurs when the pet perceives he is being threatened and his warning signals are being ignored.
- Aggressive behavior is on a continuum of a normal spectrum of behavior.
- Can be directed towards another animal or person.
- Functions to keep away the threatening stimulus
 - distance increasing behavior

Generalized Anxiety



- Anxiety - Anticipation that a threat or negative stimulus will occur
- Based on previous experiences
- Also influenced by genetics and inadequate socialization
- Can be exhibited towards people, other animals, situations, environments, noises, etc.
- Triggered by recent changes: moves, roommates, work schedule

Potential Risks for Separation Anxiety



- Shelter, rescue, and mixed breed dogs
- Early age acquisition and traumatic experiences
- Some breeds - genetic polymorphisms
- Owner attachment style (avoidant)
- Exercise and attendance at obedience classes may be protective against the development of SA

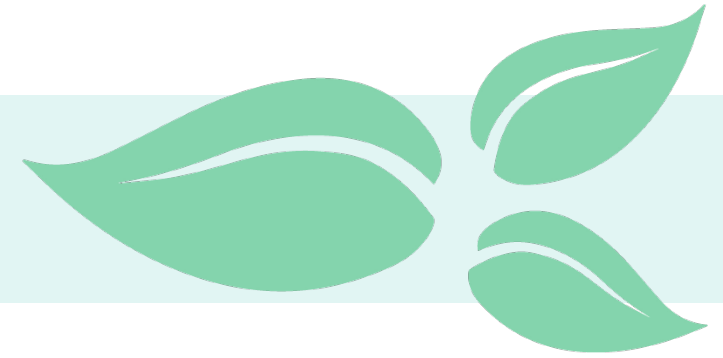
Menenes et al. (2021) JAVMA: Review of epidemiological, pathological, genetic, and epigenetic factors that may contribute to the development of separation anxiety in dogs



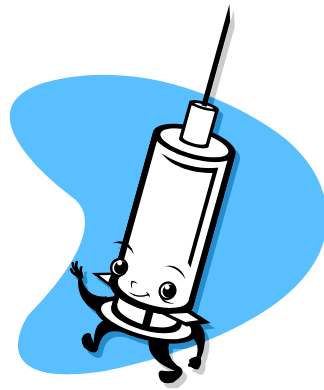
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Medical Work up



- General chemistry panel, CBC, electrolytes, T4
- Fecal exam
- Urinalysis
- Neurologic examination





Taking the Behavioral History



Obtaining a Behavior History



- Determine the underlying motivation for the behavior
- What triggers the incidents?
- When does the behavior occur?
- How often does the behavior occur?
- Does it occur in the presence/absence of the owner?
- What body language does the pet exhibit?

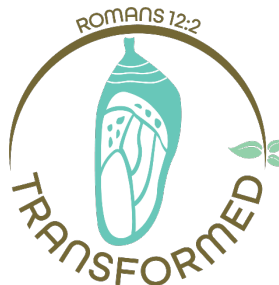
Diagnosis of Separation anxiety



- Really important to obtain a good detailed history
- Need to be clearly determine the dog is anxious due to owner's absence and not in response to another trigger
- Record behavior as owner prepares to leaves and in the owner's absence
- Clinical signs manifest within the first 10-20 minutes after the owner's absence



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Rule outs for Separation Anxiety



Destructive behavior

- Doors and windows
- Personal items – clothes, books, furniture
- Occurs soon after owner leaves

Housoiling

- Occurs soon after owner leaves
- Either urination, defecation or both

Vocalizations

- Crying, whining, howling and barking
 - Can occur for 10-15 minutes
 - Intermittently until the owner returns
 - Constant until the owner returns



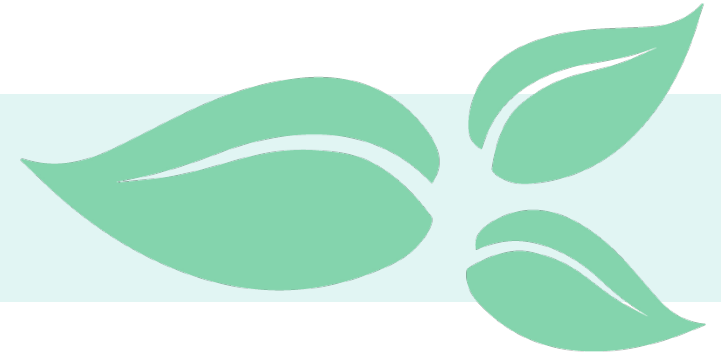
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Treatment Avoidance Safety

Management: Avoidance



Avoid all situations that typically elicit aggressive or fearful behaviors

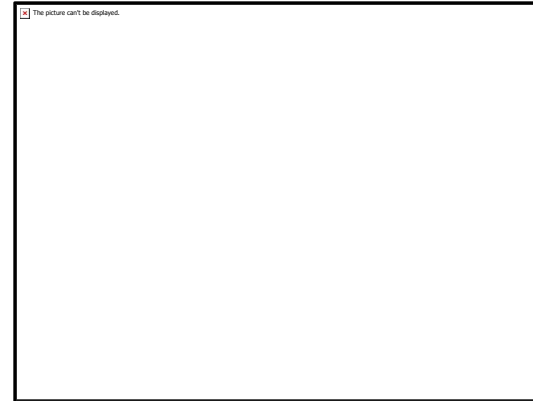
- Remove before visitors initially approach property
- Do not allow your dog off leash in certain situations
- Supervise your dog around children and other individuals
- Keep unfamiliar individuals from attempting to pet your dog
- Avoid crowded areas, direct approaches from family members & strangers – cross the street or stand aside to allow the other party to pass

Management: Avoidance



Avoid all situations that typically elicit aggressive or fearful behaviors

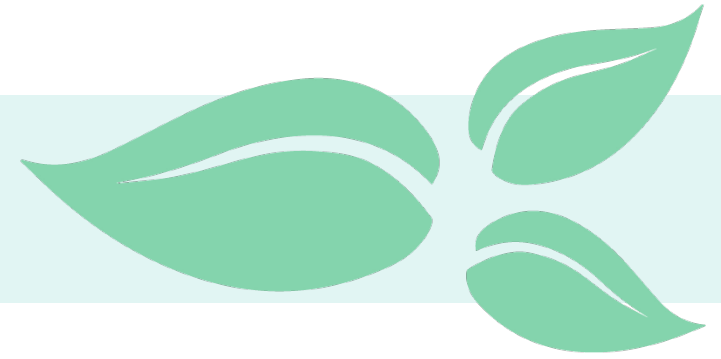
- Use of Thundercap
- Close the window
- Close the blinds/curtains
- Place in another room when visitors are present
- Confine in separate part of the house from other family members or animal housemates



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Management: Avoidance



Avoid threatening gestures

- Direct eye contact
- Leaning over the pet
- Reaching for the top of the pet's head

Reduce the threat:

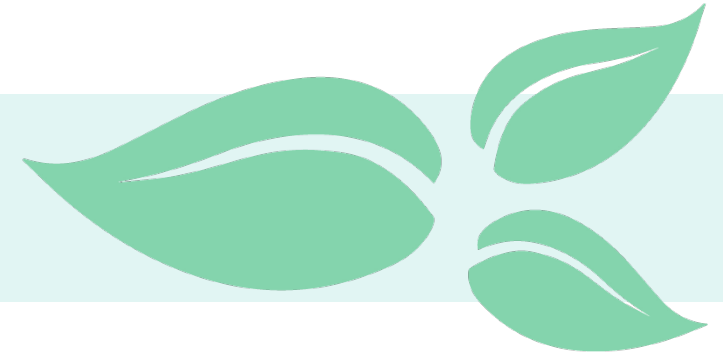
- Stand facing sideways
- Reach towards the pet under the chin and towards the chest



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Management: Avoidance



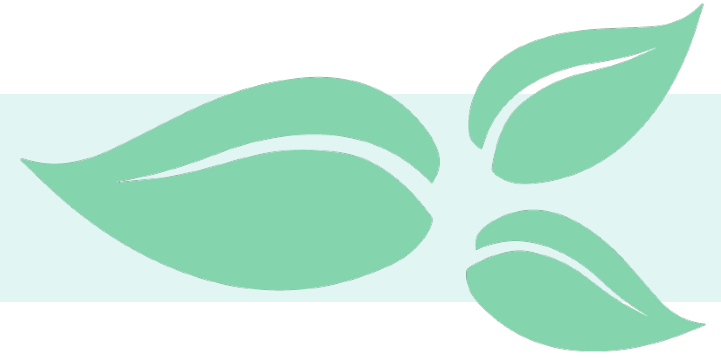
- Remove items (food, toys, etc.) that trigger the undesirable/inappropriate behavior around certain people/animals
- Feed in separate rooms
- Do not touch the pet while they are eating
- Offer high values treats in confined locations



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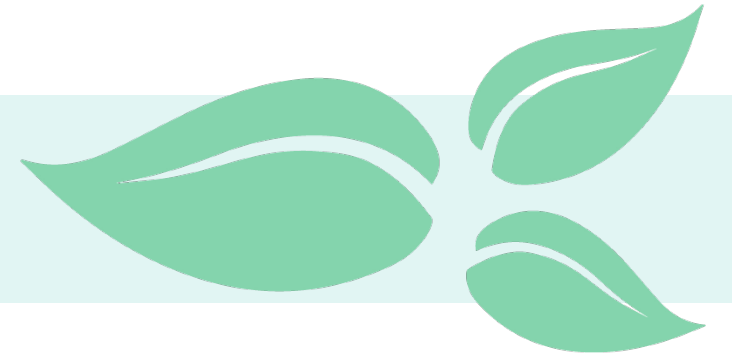
Management: Safety



Confinement through the use of closed door, pet gates, tethers, exercise pen or crate/kennel.



Management: Safety



- Use of basket muzzle
- Use of head collar, harness and double ended leash



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Management of Separation Anxiety

Management of Separation Anxiety

Do not leave dog alone at home!

- Work from home
- Take dog with owner as often as possible
- Petsitters, dog walkers, daycare - \$\$\$
- Another dog or pet

Confinement may help limit destruction

- Does not resolve the problem



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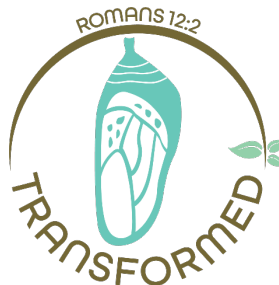
Management of Separation Anxiety



- Use of white noise maker to mask outside noises
- Also play calming classical music, Reggae music or recorded books
- Alter their pre-departure routine



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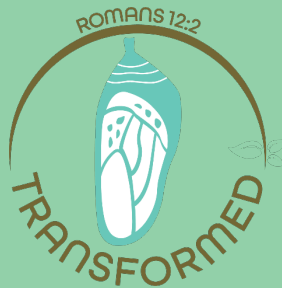




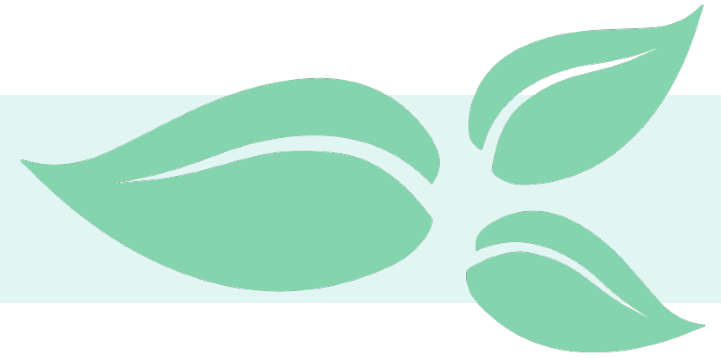
Management of Feline Aggression



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Management



Shelter subordinate cats for Intraspecies aggression

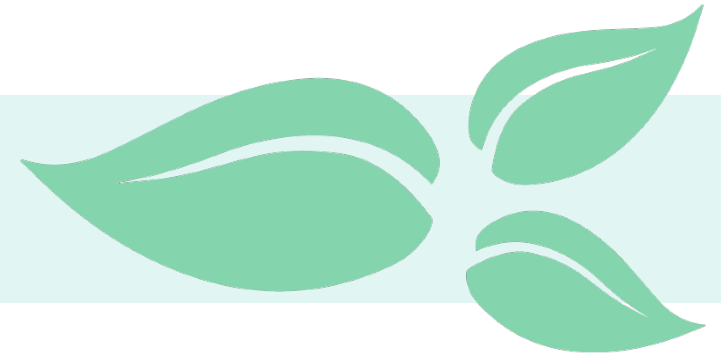
- Provide multiple hides
- Provide a cat tree
- Offer multiple litterboxes
- Offer multiple beds, toys and feeding stations



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Management



Safety measures for Human directed aggression

- Physical barriers
 - closed doors
 - double stacked pet gates
 - towels, blankets, pillows
 - Cardboard shield
- Use of deterrent (last resort)
 - Compressed air
 - Citronella spray

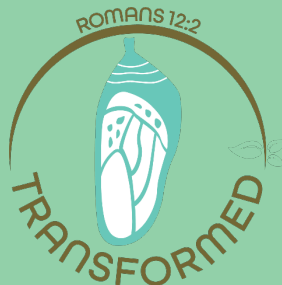


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Treatment Training



Do not use Positive Punishment



- Do not condone the use of physical punishment or harsh physical corrections.
- Do not recommend the use of choke, prong or shock collars.
- These techniques can exacerbate the pet's behavior problem and can increase the pet's level of anxiety or aggression.
- Heron et al. found that dogs with aggressive behavior had increased incidents of aggression directed towards the owner or other family members.
- Consider your liability in recommending punitive techniques.



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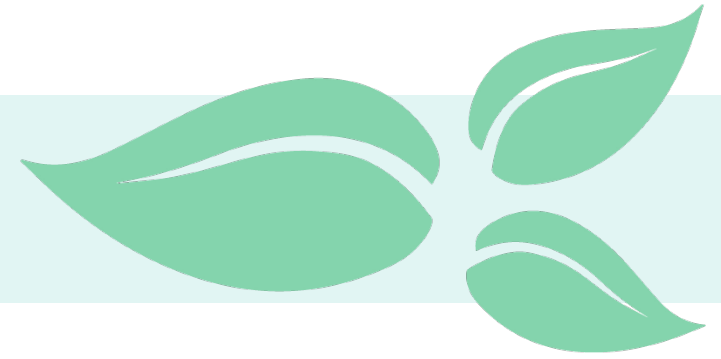


Positive Reinforcement Training Methods



- Increased self-control
- Increased confidence
- Increased trust in People
- Decreased fears and anxiety

Training



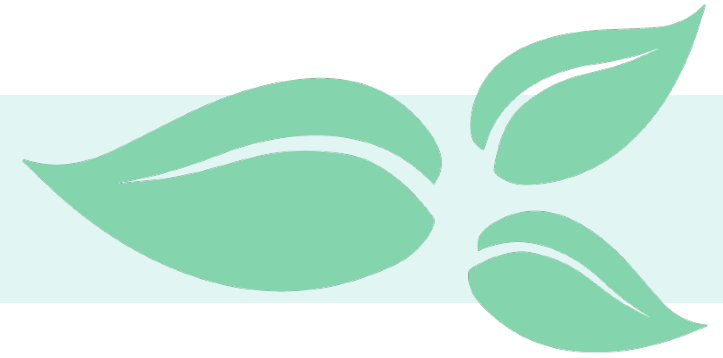
- Sit/down-stay-relax
 - Use behavioral cues and rewards to condition a positive “happy” mental state
- Foundation behaviors
 - Look
 - Touch
 - Turn
 - Find it



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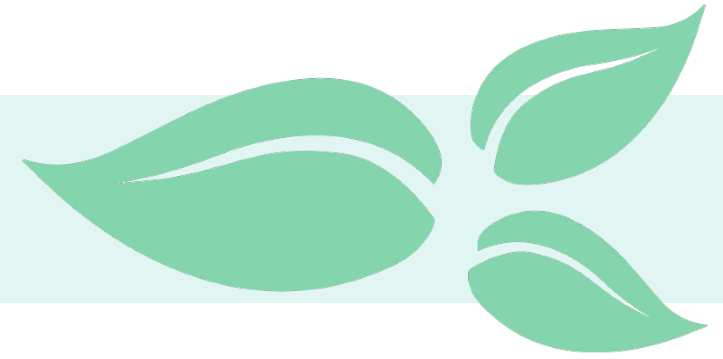
Alternate Behaviors



Distraction and Redirection

- Teach alternate behaviors that the owner wants the pet to perform
- Reward every single correct response
- Aim for 80-90% and then add in distractions
- Owners should be prepared and pre-emptively redirect their pets when triggers occur
 - Pet replaces undesirable/inappropriate behavior with the desired behavior

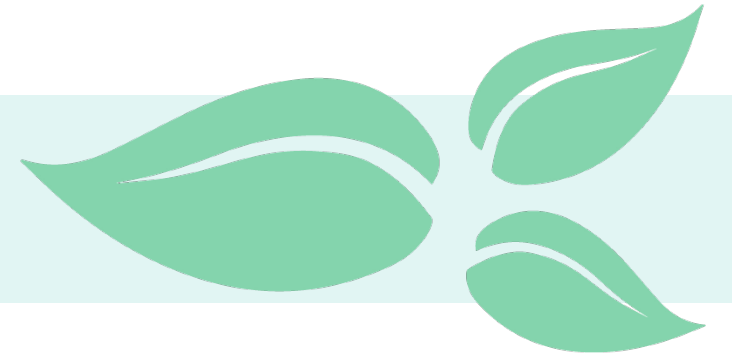
Alternate Behaviors - Cats



Use Clicker training to teach:

- Touch
- Go to Mat- specific location
 - Go to Carrier
 - Go to Tree

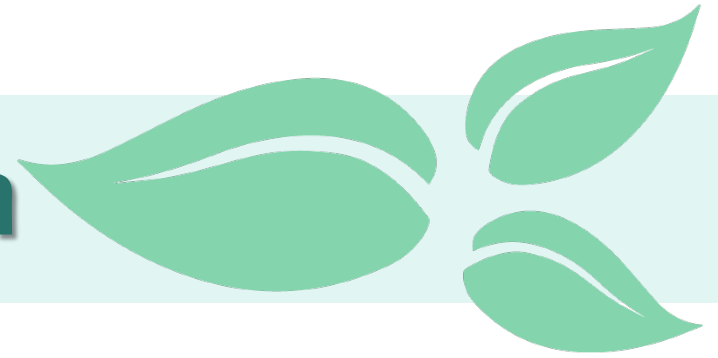
Training Cats





Treatment Behavior Modification

Desensitization



- The pet is exposed to the fear-evoking or aggression-evoking stimulus at a level that does not elicit fear or any other negative responses.
- Stimulus exposure proceeds at such a gradual level that the response is not elicited.
 - Start at a distance where the pet can see/hear the stimulus but is far enough away he does not get agitated.

Counterconditioning



- During gradual controlled exposure exercises, counter-conditioning techniques can be used to reverse previous negative responses by associating that stimulus with a different, more appropriate response
- Can use food rewards, petting, praise, toys or play session.
- Ask the pet to listen and respond to your behavioral cues before she is given the reward.



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DSCC



Advantages

- Minimal risk of adverse outcomes
- Safe and effective, if done correctly
- Promotes positive interactions and associations

Disadvantages

- Desensitization takes time and patience
- Flooding:
 - involves forced exposures to a fear-evoking stimulus until there is an eventual decrease in the fear response
 - risk of injury to pets and handler
 - high level of stress for the pets
 - inability to use the technique effectively



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DSCC – Control Exposures



- Gradual approaches towards
 - Strangers
 - Other animals
- People/animals approaching the patient
- Visitors entering the house
- Being reached for/petted
- Being handled

Behavior modification - Separation Anxiety



Independence training

- Extended stays

Extinguish pre-departure cues

Gradual departure exercises



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Natural Supplements



Natural Supplements



Canine/Feline

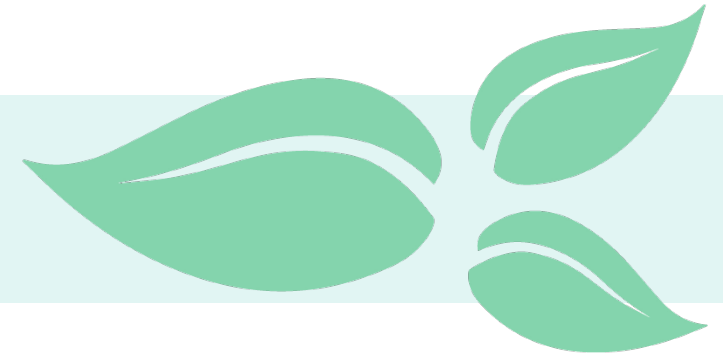
- Dog appeasing pheromone/Feline pheromones
- Alpha casozepine
- L-theanine
- L-tryptophan
- Probiotic



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Solliquin



1) L-theanine (green tea extract)

Promotes calm brain waves (alpha waves)
Increase GABA, dopamine and serotonin

2) Alpha lactalbumin (L-tryptophan)

- Amino acid precursor that provides the brain with more materials to make more serotonin
- Improves cognitive performance in stressed patients

3) Phellodendron amurense

- Extracts contain berberine which has anxiolytic effects similar to diazepam and buspirone

4) Magnolia officianalis

- Binds to GABA receptors



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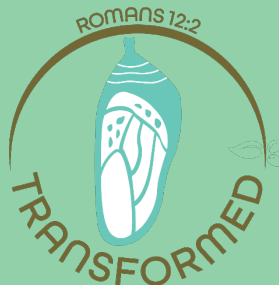




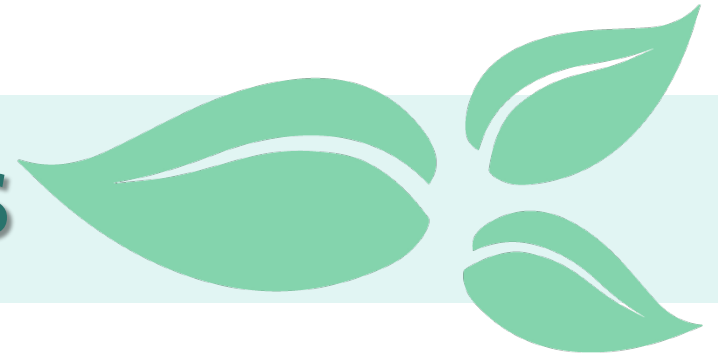
Behavioral Psychopharmacology



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FDA Approved Medications



Two FDA approved product for treating Separation anxiety

Reconcile



Clomicalm



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Medication Options



No FDA approved drug in treating generalized anxiety and aggression in pets

- Drugs that have been used off label:
 - Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors
 - Tricyclic antidepressants
 - Trazodone
 - Gabapentin
 - Clonidine

Maintenance Medications



SSRIs

- Blocks serotonin re-uptake at the presynaptic neurons
- May increase post-synaptic receptor sensitivity
- Some inhibition of hepatic enzymes and can elevate the blood levels of other drugs when used concurrently

TCA's

- Affect 5-HT, NE, ACh and histamine
- Most potent inhibitors of 5-HT uptake
- Metabolites are more potent inhibitors of NE uptake
- No antidote for toxicity



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Maintenance Medications



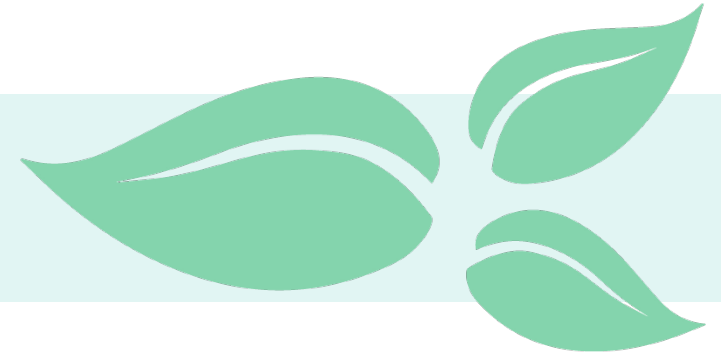
- Fluoxetine (Prozac)
 - Dog: 1-2 mg/kg PO QD
 - Cat: 0.5-1.5 mg/kg PO QD
- Paroxetine (Paxil)
 - Dog: 1-1.5 mg/kg PO QD
 - Cat: 0.5-1.5 mg/kg PO QD
- Sertraline (Zoloft)
 - Dog: 1-4 mg/kg PO QD
 - Cat: 0.5-1.5 mg/kg PO QD
- Clomipramine (Anafranil; Clomicalm)
 - Dog: 1-3mg/kg PO BID
 - Cat: 0.25-1.3 mg/kg PO SID



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Side Effects



SSRIs

Side effects:

- Initial Sedation and lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea, diarrhea
- May lower seizure threshold
- May alter blood glucose levels
- Use with caution in patients with hepatic disease

TCAs

Side effects:

- Initial marked sedation and lethargy
- Anticholinergic effects (dry eyes and mouth, constipation, urine retention, mydriasis)
- GI upset
- Decreased seizure threshold
- Decreased cardiac conduction (tachycardia, arrhythmias)
- Testicular hypoplasia
- Changes in blood glucose levels



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Short-Acting Medications



- **Trazodone** - Serotonin 2A antagonist, serotonin reuptake inhibition
 - Canine Dose: 2-7 mg/kg BID(-TID); do not exceed 15mg/kg daily dose
 - Feline Dose: 50-100 mg per cat
- **Gabapentin** - Anticonvulsant/Neuropathic Pain Analgesic
 - Canine Dose: 10-30 mg/kg BID-TID
 - Feline Dose: 50 – 100 mg per cat
- **Clonidine** - Alpha 2 agonist
 - Dose: 0.01-0.05 mg/kg BID-TID



Plan of Action: Mild Fears and Anxiety

Situational and short term

- Trazodone +/- NS
- Clonidine +/- NS
- Gabapentin +/- NS

Maintenance – prolonged occurrence

- Natural supplement
 - Solliquin
- Medication
 - SSRI
 - TCA

Plan of Action: Moderate cases



- 1) Maintenance Medication (SSRI, TCA)
- 2) Adjunctive:
 - Trazodone
 - Clonidine
 - Gabapentin
 - Natural Supplement (Solliquin, l-theanine, pheromones)

Moderate-Severe Fear, Anxiety & Aggression



Multi-Modal Approach

- Polypharmacy

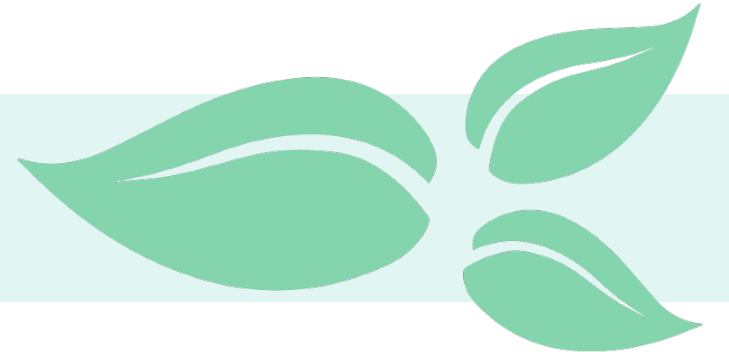
Referral to Board Certified Veterinary Behaviorist (DACVB)

- <https://www.dacvb.org/>



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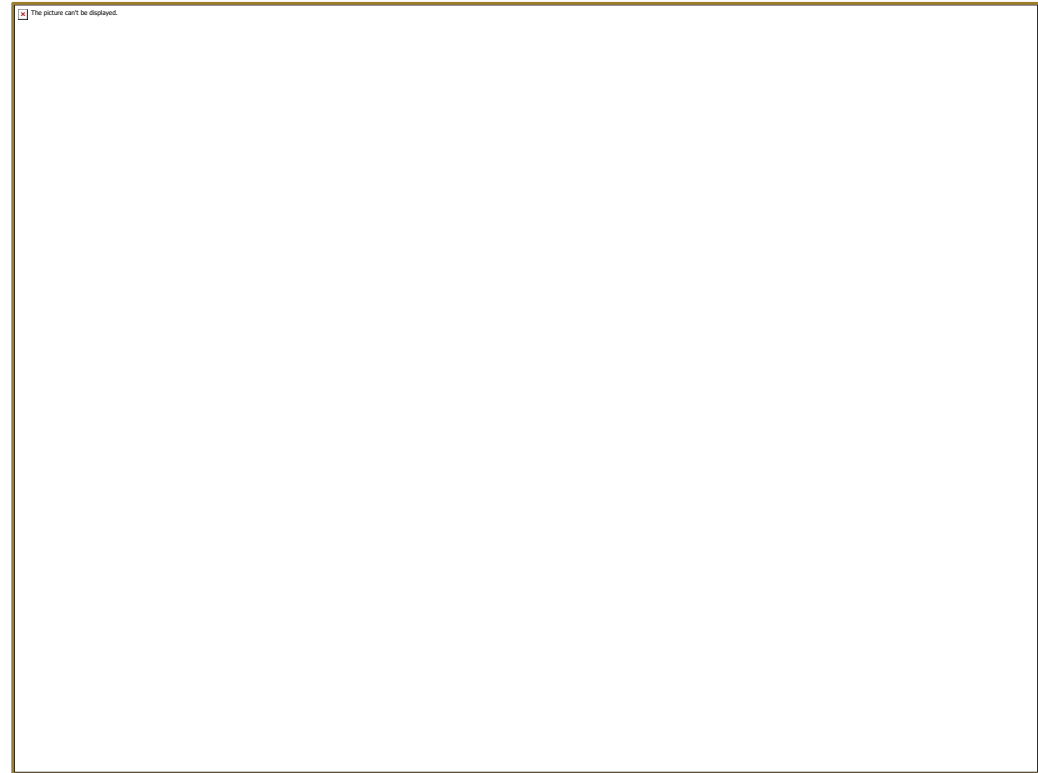




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