

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2007-2008

President

Kristen White, CVT
president@svbt.org

President-Elect

Amanda Eick-Miller, RVT
presidentelect@svbt.org

Past President

Tara Lang, BS, RVT
pastpresident@svbt.org

Treasurer

Julie Urban, BA, LVT
treasurer@svbt.org

Recording Secretary

Shannon Trouba, LVT
recordingsecretary@svbt.org

Corresponding Secretary

Charlotte (Renee) Harris, RVT
correspondingsecretary@svbt.org

Members at Large

Lori Tyler-Ochsner, LVT
memberatlarge1@svbt.org

Monique Feyrecilde, RVT
memberatlarge2@svbt.org

ACVB Liaison

Andrew Luescher, DVM, Ph.D., DACVB

Advisory Panel

R.K. Anderson, DVM, DACVB
Wayne Hunthausen, DVM
Karen Overall, VMD, PhD, DACVB

Newsletter Editor

Sheri Church, LVT
vettech03@juno.com

scholarship@svbt.org
contactus@svbt.org

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

My first experience going to the annual AVMA conference was this year, and what an experience it was! It is very exciting for me to be president of such a great organization and I want to share my excitement with as many people as will listen to me. For the first time I got to meet all of the people that have written the books in my behavior library, all of the people I look up to. I want to extend a special thank you to Ginny Price, one of our founding members. It is because of her that I have taken the road I have in my career. She is responsible for sparking my passion for behavior. I want to spread this same passion to others! If every member does something as small as telling

one person a week about the SVBT it can only help to increase our numbers and spread the word that we are out here!

I want to share with you an experience I had this weekend. I had a client call about his eight-month-old German shepherd, Ruger. He had just picked Ruger up from “training” and had some concerns. The first phase of this dog training program is to drop your dog off for 10 days and the owners may not come see the dog at all. He said that the training facility called him about a half hour prior to him picking up his dog to tell him that his dog wasn’t doing well and they wanted to take him to their veterinarian. The owner was told that Ruger had discharge coming out of his eyes and nose and he was lethargic. Once they arrived to pick up Ruger they decided to take him to their own veterinarian (our clinic), the owner of the training facility said they should tell their vet that Ruger’s neck will be sore because of the type of training they do. Our vet was already gone for the day and the client wasn’t sure if he should go to emergency or not. They live close to my house so I told them to stop by (we ended up taking Ruger up to emergency together). If you put ANY pressure on Ruger’s throat he started coughing and was coughing so much he was vomiting. He lost 10 pounds in 10 days, had trauma to his trachea, liquid diarrhea (and coccidia), a raging upper respiratory infection and was dehydrated. The owners were obviously extremely distraught over the condition they got their dog back in! On top of that, the first

10 days cost them \$1250! Ruger is receiving treatment and getting better by the day.

I find it absolutely amazing that there are still places out there that “train” dogs using these archaic methods. Pet owners think they are doing the right thing for their dogs and then things like this happen. This is where we, as behavior technicians, can really help. We need to help our clients choose proper trainers by teaching them the right questions to ask. Many of these places are very good at advertising that they use positive methods (or hiding that they don’t), but when you dig a little deeper you find out otherwise. I challenge you to develop a hand

out for your practice on how to choose a trainer. Then go one step further, and develop a list of recommended trainers. When you develop this list know that word of mouth, and referrals from your clients is not enough. You must visit facilities in your area and sit in on classes. If the trainers don’t want you to sit in to evaluate their classes, ask WHY? There is really no logical reason they would say no. Don’t set up a specific time or class, if possible make surprise visits to several classes. Let’s work together to prevent more clients from making the same mistake Ruger’s owners did.

Kristen White, CVT
SVBT President

If every member does something as small as telling one person a week about SVBT it can only help to increase our numbers and spread the word that we are out here!

SVBT Amendment Change

The following Amendment was voted on at the annual meeting and passed.

Members at Large: Two (2) year terms—There shall be two (2) Members at Large. Terms will be staggered such that each Member at Large position will be elected on alternating years, beginning with one (1) Member at Large position increasing to two (2) year term for 2007-2008 election, and the other Member at Large position increasing to two (2) year term for 2008-2009 election.

Lori Tyler-Ochsner will be the first Member-at-Large to serve 2 terms. The other MAL position will become a 2-year position after the election for the 2008-2009 year.

SEMINAR REVIEW

“Cujo Meets Pavlov”

Presented by **Dogs of Course**, July 29th 2007 · Held at **Clicking with Canines**, Endicott NY

Seminar reviewed by: Lori Tyler-Ochsner LVT

Day seminar in using classical conditioning to treat leash reactivity in dogs

Kathy Sdao is a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB) associate. Her background is training marine mammals and now she owns a behavior consultation business. For a full biography, see http://www.apdt.com/conf/speakers/bio_sdao.aspx.

This day-long seminar was aimed toward professional dog trainers, veterinarians, veterinary technicians and even the dog owning public was encouraged to attend.

The morning began with an excellent review of both classical and operant conditioning (to remind us what we are not using for this technique). She references Jean Donaldson's bite threshold definitions (from Culture Clash) and aggressive dog categories (from Fight!) to show how to identify reactive/aggression triggers and which categories of dogs can be helped with classical conditioning.

By the afternoon (and 3-4 hours of theory later), we were ready to learn the technique. The technique boils down to changing the emotional response (to the other dog in this case) by using classical conditioning.

The technique, in a nutshell, is to identify the dog's triggers to the reactive behavior and in a controlled environment, pair an unconditioned stimulus (the best dog treat your dog has ever had) with whatever the dog has an issue with (another dog walking on the other side of the street). Once the two are paired, the dog will exhibit the same response to the dog walking on the other side of the street as he does his favorite treat. Basically, the dog is set up either in a controlled setting with a known dog and handler or in a public place where the “other dog traffic” will be predictable. Once the dog starts to show a reaction toward the other dog, immediately “the bar is open” and treats keep coming. Once the other dog is out of range, “the bar closes” and treats abruptly stop.



There are many rules to this procedure. Timing is of course an issue, and treats need to be present after the dog's trigger appears. Special treats are to be used for this exercise and not at other times, and they should be the dog's absolute favorite. The dog is to be given treats

no matter what his behavior at the time of the presence of the other dog (there are no consequences in classical conditioning!! So, it doesn't matter if the dog is growling - you are not rewarding the growling per se). During this training, the dog cannot be exposed to the trigger without the presence of the unconditioned stimulus - so very strict control of the dog's routine and environment must be observed to make sure that he never encounters the trigger (this can be difficult for some owners and some situations).

Of course, using classical conditioning to change an emotional response is not new information. In the veterinary setting, we do this all the time when we use cheese or peanut butter in the exam room and during puppy socialization. Since most of us use operant conditioning as a way of life, I think many dog trainers tend to put classical conditioning on the back burner or forget about it completely. This seminar does remind trainers to remember to use all their tools- not just “antecedent, behavior and consequence” to make changes for their clients. 🐾

FREE STUFF!

Interested in receiving free books, DVDs, and other fun products? Love to write? Wondering what the catch is? After you have read, watched, or tested the free products, I need you to write a review for the newsletter. We are forming two groups that will receive free items to review. Sound enticing? Keep reading!

The Book/DVD Review Group OR The Product Review Group

Members may be a part of one or both review groups. Interested members may send an email to the newsletter editor including their name, address, and SVBT member number. The newsletter editor will keep a database of review group members. New review group members may join at any time, but will be placed

at the end of the list. When products are available to review, the editor will begin contacting members via email.

Everyone in the review group will get an equal chance to receive product. If a member declines or is not interested in the particular review item, it will be offered to the next member on the list. If you have declined a product, you will be offered again when your name comes up in the rotation. Review participants are expected to write a professional review for the newsletter. Review deadlines will be set by the newsletter editor.

When multiple copies of items are available to be reviewed, one person may be in charge of writing the review. This may be the newsletter editor or a member that has volunteered. Remaining members will be responsible to fill out their product review forms and send them to the product review author for data compilation in a timely fashion. The newsletter editor will provide participants with due dates.

Reviews will be printed in the newsletter, posted to the SVBT forum, and made available to the companies that supplied products (Dogwise, Premier, etc.).

Members that have received free product, but do not give the newsletter editor a professional, written review, will be removed from the review group list.

Are you excited to join one (or both!) groups and write reviews for the newsletter? Have a creative name for either of the review groups? Send an email to the newsletter editor at vettech03@juno.com. I look forward to hearing from you! 🐾

Do you buy books or products from Amazon? Donate to the SVBT at the same time! Use the AMAZON link on the website or forum and the SVBT gets 10% back!



Normalizing Passive Cruelty: The Excuses and Justifications of Animal Hoarders

Maria Vaca-Guzman – Tufts School of Veterinary Medicine, North Grafton, Massachusetts, USA
Arnold Arluke - Department of Sociology, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA

Part Two, continued from last issue:

Victims of the System

A popular method to lessen the negativity of adverse labeling is to discredit the source of criticism. The individual shifts the focus of attention from his own deviant acts to the motives and behavior of those who disapprove of his actions. Thus, by changing the subject of the conversation from the bad performance to the reactions of others, the wrongfulness of the behavior is more easily repressed or lost to view (Sykes and Matza 2002). Many hoarders used this type of justification. The most common way was to claim that officials and/or animal groups intervening in cases had personal vendettas against them. In other words, they believed that the whole “system” was against them. In a case where more than 150 dogs, 14 cats, three monkeys and a pregnant pot-bellied pig were discovered living in squalid conditions, the hoarder denied that the animals were improperly cared for and charged that the local humane society and police were harassing her family without reason. She claimed the police bruised her wrist and breasts and treated her elderly mother with no respect. “For 12 hours I sat in jail, treated like a criminal,” she said. In addition, a hoarder of 33 dogs complained: “I’m sick and tired of this harangue. For doing something good I am getting nailed and being treated as a common criminal.” Some of his acquaintances expressed similar sentiment. In fact, an anonymous donor posted the hoarder’s bail from jail and expressed that “he loves animals and thinks what [the hoarder] does is wonderful. He feels he’s been a victim of the system.” Hoarders also used the victim justification when they claimed to be the target of a conspiracy against them, perhaps even demanding compensation for damages suffered. For instance, in a case in which almost 200 emaciated dogs were confiscated from a Georgia home, the hoarder alleged the real reason for the seizure of her dogs was “bad blood” between the officer in charge of the county’s animal services and her. The hoarder also accused officers of damaging her pens and costing her money because she had no other source of income than selling the seized dogs. In another case, after winning “conditional” approval to have two of her dogs back, the hoarder of 19 seized dogs said, “They [animal control officers] want to come up once a month and tell me how to feed my dogs. I’m a United States citizen. They’re treat-

ing me like a criminal. Don’t you think that’s horrible? I can’t understand why the county is always after me.” Additionally, in a case in which 465 neglected felines were found living in a six-room “no-kill shelter,” the “rescue director” thought the investigation was a personal vendetta against her. “She [referring to the animal cruelty investigator] is challenging and attacking my shelter. We are not hoarders, we do adopt our cats out,” she argued. And in a case where 53 diseased and neglected dogs were seized after being found kept in cages, the owner argued: “They had no right to take my dogs. It was a total setup. They just made up this thing, it’s not true. They stole my property. They took my dogs away from their home. They are liars and thieves as far as I am concerned.” In such instances, hoarders deny accusations against them and attribute the problem to personal spite against them.

Excuses

Excuses accept the negativity of a performance, but deny or deflect full responsibility for the act (Scott and Lyman 1968; Alonso 1985). Claiming lack of responsibility for “bad” actions sharply reduces the effectiveness of disapproval (Sykes and Matza 1957). This lack of responsibility is typically attributed to extenuating circumstances relevant to the bad performance. The excuse-maker admits the negative connotation of the performance, but continues with a series of “yes, but...” verbalizations to deflect responsibility (Snyder 1985). Hoarders excused themselves in 65 of the 116 cases we analyzed. As seen in Table 1, there were six types of excuses, including appealing to the difficulty of the task, defeasibility (not being fully informed or lacking free will), scapegoating, lack of intentionality, self handicapping and appealing to accidents. We found that 16 cases appealed to the difficulty of the task (24.6%), six cases appealed to defeasibility (9.2%), ten cases used the scapegoating type of excuse (15.4%), four cases appealed to lack of intention (6.1%), nine cases used the self-handicapping technique (13.8%) and 20 cases appealed to accidents (30.8%).

Difficulty of the Task

If the task is sufficiently challenging, the excuse-maker reasons and expects others to reason as well that anyone would do poorly on it. By demonstrating that

most people would do the same thing in his situation, the individual’s responsibility is lessened. Hoarders using this excuse recognize that it is unacceptable to own so many animals and that, as a result, they have neglected them, but claim that others would have behaved similarly because of the difficulty of the task. More specifically, many hoarders claimed that they became “overwhelmed” or that the number of animals “proved too much for them.” News reports often mentioned how many animals hoarders initially owned, as well as their good intentions and kindness towards them. The reports also may contain an explanation from the hoarder, a friend, or relative about how the collection “started snowballing” or “got out of hand.” For instance, in a case in which 27 cats were discovered in a squalid trailer, the hoarder explained that he started by rescuing three kittens and that they started breeding. After claiming he was not a hoarder, and that he only wanted to find the cats good homes, he noted: “It [the situation] just got a little out of hand. I’m just a good person whose heart was bigger than my abilities.” In another case, where a woman was discovered living with 96 cats, nine dogs, six mice, a turtle, and a rat in filthy conditions, a neighbor commented that the hoarder seemed to be trying to do the right thing, but the situation got out of hand. “It is a shame. She was trying to make an effort. I think she wanted to do the right thing and maybe got overwhelmed.” In addition, an article covering the case of a couple who hoarded 96 dogs and cats in a three-bedroom home reported that the hoarders provided a loving home for the animals, but that things had gotten “out of control” after breeding the dogs over a number of years. The woman explained that because they could not afford to spay or neuter them, their dogs began to multiply. She also said that friends gave them more dogs. In some cases, hoarders claimed that they became overwhelmed without providing details about how and when the situation got out of control. For example, in a case in which 24 live animals and five dead cats were found in a soiled home, the hoarder stated that he tried to take care of the animals, but their upkeep proved too much for him. Additionally, in a case where the police removed 105 cats and 22 dogs, neighbors maintained that the hoarder was a “kind person who just got overwhelmed.” Moreover, a hoarder of 72 sick cats that

Hoarders, from pg. 3

were confined in a small barn was defended by her attorney by stating, "It was just too much with 72 cats for her to be in a strict time schedule, but she didn't do intentional acts based on the animal cruelty statute." This type of excuse implies that hoarders who employ it are "sane" because they acknowledge that they have too many animals and that they are poorly kept. By claiming that they became overextended, hoarders recognize the inappropriateness of their behavior. This insight into the rationality of their behavior does not seem to be present in hoarders that utilize other types of accounts, especially those who totally deny wrongdoing, those who claim to be victims of the system, and those who employ some of the strategies described below.

Defeasibility

Another defense is to claim that one is not fully informed or that one's "will" is not completely "free." Thus, an individual might excuse himself from responsibility by claiming that certain information, which would have altered his behavior, is not available, or that available information misrepresents the facts. Alternatively, an individual might excuse himself by claiming interference with his "free will," due to duress or undue influence. Finally, both will and knowledge can be impaired under certain conditions that constitute a mitigation of responsibility, such as intoxication or temporary insanity (Scott and Lyman 1968). Hoarders lessen their responsibility by using this kind of excuse. One way they do this is to invoke some restraint on their free will, although only a few cases did this. A hoarder of 90 cats, explained, "I got so close to my baby cats that I couldn't give any of them away." Another hoarder explained that he ended up having 88 dogs because spaying and neutering them "didn't work out" and because after the puppies were born "it was impossible to give them away." He added, "They are not just animals, they have a soul." In another case, where 68 cats and dogs were discovered living in squalid conditions, the officers involved in the case said that the hoarder ap-

peared to be someone who loved animals and could not turn away a stray. Additionally, a hoarder of 200 cats was excused by a local humane society representative and by the sheriff, who stated: "These things escalate over a period of time. Hoarders like [the hoarder in this case] are not trying to abuse the animals. Hoarders just keep collecting and can't seem to get rid of the cats and kittens." These examples suggest that hoarders' actions are driven by a mysterious force, often referred to by them or by the media as "extreme love." Thus, these hoarders recognize that what they have done is wrong, but they claim not to be fully responsible because their love for the animals obscured their free will. Less frequently, hoarders make an appeal to defeasibility by citing a lack of knowledge. In one case, a woman found living in filth with sixteen non-vaccinated dogs alleged that she did not know that she needed a license to have that many animals in her house. She said that her dogs had no vaccinations because they were indoor dogs and that county officials told her she only needed to have three of her dogs vaccinated for rabies. In another case, in which over 100 emaciated and 50 dead cats were found in a home, the hoarder was described by animal advocates as a woman who often did not know when to draw the line when taking stray animals. An old friend said: "I know how much she loved animals. She is an animal lover through and through."

Scapegoating

Scapegoating is a discrediting strategy by which people shift blame and responsibility away from themselves to a target person or group. By scapegoating, hoarders allege that their questioned behavior is a response to the behavior or attitudes of another (Scott and Lyman 1968). They do this by blaming people that bring unsolicited animals to them, people that lose or abandon their pets, and the community in general for not helping homeless animals. In this sense a hoarder, whose 18 animals were captured after being found living in filth, explained that many cats had been left at her place by acquaintances when they could not breed them. "What can I do when just-born babies are left at your doors?" Moreover, a rabbit hoarder said she began with one animal and over the years wild rabbits began visiting through the fence. She added that unwanted pets started showing up in her yard, as well, especially after Easter. Additionally, in a case where 63 live and 30 dead cats were found in a "shelter," a volunteer expressed: "There was no ill treatment of animals there [at the shelter]. Those animals were

loved. They were fed and watered every day, not thrown out like the people who are the reason why they are there do." Furthermore, a hoarder of 32 cats and two dogs explained: "If only other people would take care of them [cats], I wouldn't have to." She added: "I felt I was doing the city a favor. Those were 32 cats who weren't getting pregnant and spreading disease in our area." Finally, a hoarder of about 90 dogs claimed to be doing the county a favor by taking in dogs because there was no animal control facility in the area. Excuse-makers also engage in more concrete blaming tactics by pointing to a precise subject whom they consider responsible for the bad performance, instead of making a global accusation. Only two hoarders claimed that another person was actually responsible for the animals. For instance, the lawyer of a hoarder of 39 sick cats explained that the animals were not hers, but her sister's, therefore claiming that the hoarder should not be held responsible for the neglect.

Lack of Intentionality

Research suggests that intended actions, if they have negative outcomes, are perceived as being worse than unintended actions (Rotenberg 1980). Similarly, people are held as being more accountable for negative actions that are foreseeable as compared to those actions that are unforeseeable (Shaw 1968). Hoarders also used this excuse to lessen their responsibility for charges of animal neglect by claiming there was no intention to do so. Typically, hoarders claimed they did not mean to harm animals, but were just trying to help them. One hoarder of exotic animals, who was living with crocodiles, turkeys, wolves, spiders, reptiles, a miniature horse, a lynx, a mountain lion, and an emu, and was surrounded by filthy bags of fecal matter, carcasses and cockroaches, said he was a well-intentioned man with a broken dream. "I have nothing left," he said after his animals were seized. "I made some mistakes but I did what I thought was right at the time," he added. The hoarder claimed he was months away from opening his own living museum. In another case, 34 dead and sick cats were found in a home including seven kittens in the freezer. A friend of the cat hoarder remarked: "She taught me a lot about cat breeding, she loved those cats. I don't think she was intentionally cruel to those cats." Although only a few cases explicitly claim a lack of intention, the vast majority appear to excuse their behavior in the same manner, even if they do not say "I didn't mean it." Behind every other account hoarders use to defend their behavior, there is always the implicit assumption that they

Hoarders, continued on pg. 5

Are you going to a conference and plan on hanging out with other SVBT members? Take a picture having fun and send it to the newsletter editor to put in the newsletter! Make sure to include the member names with the photo.



Hoarders, from pg. 4

did not mean to harm the animals. Every type of excuse, as well as the Good Samaritan justification, contains the assumption that their behavior or its results were not intentional. In this sense, intentionality may be defined as a determination to act in a certain way with full consciousness of the nature of one's act and its consequences. Thus, every type of excuse used by hoarders contains the supposition that they were not determined to harm the animals, and that they were not fully aware of the consequences of their acts; instead, hoarders were trying to care for the animals. Similarly, the core idea of the Good Samaritan justification is that the hoarder is an animal rescuer; thus, the lack of intentionality to harm the animals is implicit in this type of account.

Self-handicapping

Another excuse used by individuals to lessen responsibility for a poor performance is "self-handicapping." According to Jones and Berglas (1978, p. 406), self-handicapping is "any action or choice of performance setting that enhances the opportunities to externalize (or excuse) failure and to internalize (reasonably accept credit for) success." In other words, their own limited abilities make them not fully responsible for their bad actions; if they were free of disabilities, they would have performed better. Some hoarders employ this type of excuse. One way was to cite physical or mental problems that caused poor treatment and accumulation of animals. For instance, in a case in which two hoarders (mother and daughter) were found living with 80 dogs, 65 chickens and ducks, and 14 rabbits in a trailer, the daughter explained she had obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), "but it is not as bad as hers," she claimed, referring to her mother. She also told reporters that she takes medication for her OCD, depression, and fear of people. In another case, a hoarder of 36 horses, 32 dogs and ten donkeys was defended by her attorney who claimed: "My client is mentally ill. She is a homeless person, she was mentally ill at the time this took place." In another case, a horse hoarder was excused by his brother when the latter explained that his sibling suffered from lupus and back problems that made it difficult for him to care for the horses. Similarly, a dog hoarder charged with animal cruelty after 30 dogs were found starving or dead at her home, told investigators that she had been ill and did not have enough time to properly care for the animals. Other self-handicaps include economic deprivation to excuse behavior, claiming that lack of money prevents them from properly caring for so many animals. In this way, a hoarder of 164 dogs claimed to be a dog breeder and to sell

the dogs to supplement her low, monthly disability income. She explained that she had been unable to sell many dogs over the past year because of poor health and the high cost of ads, although she maintained that she still took good care of the dogs. In a case in which 53 dogs and nine cats were discovered living in a broken down, feces-ridden home, the owner said she received disability payments and used most of them to clean and feed the pets. She explained that unsanitary conditions in her home came about over several years. "With what little bit I live on, of course, I take care of my babies first. And then I do what ever else I can with the help of the church." A friend of the hoarder defended her as well. "The only thing that lady is guilty of is just loving animals," he said. "It just got out of hand because she had breast cancer." He also claimed to often help the hoarder with repairs on her home, but his own personal problems had kept him away for the past three months.

Appealing to Accidents

Another way to excuse a poor performance is to attribute it to external unforeseeable circumstances. This kind of account lessens the responsibility of the excuse-maker by attributing blame to an unpredictable event that causes horrendous conditions. Hoarders often claim to be victims of circumstances that cause their animals' poor conditions. By diverting attention from the bad performance, they lessen or even eliminate responsibility for their action. The alleged accidents include personal jams, unanticipated logistic or administrative problems, weather conditions, or any other unforeseeable event. For one, some hoarders point to problems with spouses or partners to excuse their behavior. For instance, a cat hoarder claimed that he had 39 in his room because his girlfriend left him a couple of weeks before, and he had been unable to continue caring for the cats. He said, "I love the cats. I adore them. I've been with them their whole lives. I can trace them back to four females." Moreover, in a case in which 400 dead or malnourished cats were discovered in an abandoned home, the hoarder explained he had tried his best to care for the cats after his wife died. "I felt she was more important than those animals, but I did go there and did feed them," he noted. Other hoarders mentioned they had an ambiguous "problem" without engaging in specific details about how it led to the neglect of animals. For instance, a cat hoarder discovered living with 67 dead cats and dozens of other neglected felines told authorities she had personal problems that kept her from at-

tending to the animals. In another case, a woman charged with 26 counts of animal cruelty for neglecting her horses, dogs, cats, and birds maintained she had never abused her animals and that her horses were naturally skinny. She acknowledged that some of the cages were dirty and attributed this to some "problems" she was going through. Other "accidents" often alleged by hoarders, such as logistic and administrative problems or other unexpected events, are illustrated by the following cases. In one instance, when more than two dozen hungry and thirsty dogs were discovered alone in a home, the owner explained she had not intended to be gone for five days, but was in jail for a traffic conviction. In another case, a ferret hoarder who was discovered living in filth with 235 ferrets insisted that the animals became ill in transport and that they were all healthy in her care. A similar case involved 171 dogs in a trailer going from Alaska to Montana. The hoarder blamed an overnight delay at the border for the dogs' grim shape. Additionally, a hoarder of 24 exotic birds, 20 dogs and 6 cats, who had his animals seized due to their poor condition, explained he had problems with the heat and water but the animals were well cared for. Even more, in a case in which a kennel operator was charged with neglect of her dogs (after 4 wounded pit bulls were found surrounded by excrement in a garage with no light or ventilation), her lawyer explained that the dogs created the "mess" while the owner was sleeping or away from the house. A few cases fail to mention special circumstances and only focus on how the excuse-maker has done better. Mentioning good performances implies the existence of an accident; reference to those situations in which the subject has acted properly sets a favorable precedent. A poor performance is more likely to be regarded as an accident because it is considered to be atypical behavior, given that the subject is known to otherwise perform well. The cases analyzed here indicate that this is done more often by third parties than by hoarders. For instance, in a case where 19 dead Golden Retrievers and 11 other severely malnourished dogs were found in a home, a friend and former client described the hoarder as a well known and respected dog breeder and trainer. "It floors me what happened," she said. Additionally, in a case in which 50 dogs were found in a hidden puppy mill at the back of a pet grooming store, a former client expressed her surprise by stating, "They did such a good job and took care of them [animals], but when we were called now [and announced the discovery], we stood there and said, What?!!" A neighbor also mentioned,

Hoarders, continued on pg. 6

Hoarders, from pg. 5

"The first time I came walking out here, he [hoarder] walked over and introduced himself and he seemed like a great guy." By using this tactic, hoarders suggest that unlike their poor performance in one situation, there are other places where they have performed well. Thus, the "questioned" subjects imply they should be held less responsible for a single bad performance in this particular situation. They seem to think they have earned some sort of "credit" for their good behavior in other areas of their life, and that this allows them to perform poorly in other situations without being held fully responsible for their behavior. Another example is the case of a dog hoarder who was discovered living with 100 emaciated dogs. Although the hoarder was not interviewed, many friends and relatives spoke about him. They employed more than one type of excuse in doing this. In fact, a police officer who knew the hoarder stated: "I don't think he intentionally hurt a single one [of the dogs]." Other animal rescuers asserted: "We think he was simply overwhelmed. One man can't take care of 100 dogs." The intentionality argument suggests that the bad performance was very unusual for the hoarder. If the hoarder had acted intentionally, then he certainly would not have behaved this way. The "overextended" argument was also used by suggesting that others would behave in a similar fashion under the same difficult circumstances.

Discussion

As reported in the news, hoarders and those speaking on their behalf resort to various accounts or neutralizing techniques to construct or maintain positive self-images.

Some used justifications to explain their performances, including denial, being a Good Samaritan, and professing to be victims of the system, while more used excuses, including attributing their poor performances to external events, appealing to defeasibility, scapegoating, and self-handicapping. The majority of hoarders tend to stick with a strategy of using a single type of justification or excuse. In fact, we found only two cases in which hoarders mixed types of excuses, and no cases when they mixed types of justifications. Moreover, we found only two cases that combined both excuses and justifications in the same account. Only rarely did hoarders appeal to a "laundry list" of excuses, or both excuses and justifications, to explain their behavior. It is not surprising that hoarders more often excused rather than justified their behavior. Since these cases are so grotesque and animal emaciation is so evident, hoarders may consider it easier to accept the wrongfulness of the be-



havior and deny responsibility for it, than to deny the wrongfulness of the behavior and accept responsibility for it. Also, by making accounts more credible, hoarders enhance their effectiveness as tools to create respectability. It is also not surprising that a few hoarders used multiple excuses, or combined excuses with justifications, as they apparently tried to shore up their accounts. To illustrate the use of multiple excuses, take the above-mentioned case of the woman claiming to suffer from OCD. When approximately 160 animals were found living in her trailer, she claimed to have an obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression, and fear of people. She also mentioned her mother would not let her get rid of some of the animals. In this case, she uses self-handicapping to excuse her behavior and a coercion based tactic ("her mother wouldn't let her get rid of some animals"). The former suggests that the bad performance in the given situation is very unusual for the hoarder. Because her disorder seems to be what makes the hoarder act this way, it is implied that she would have behaved differently if she were not ill. On the other hand, the coercion-based tactic employed seeks to demonstrate that people would have proceeded similarly in the same situation. To illustrate the use of both excuses and justifications in the same account, note the case of 24 live and four dead St. Bernards that were found in a home: The hoarder said she ran a St. Bernard rescue operation and had not gotten around to burying the dead dogs because she suffered from depression. Firstly, the hoarder attempts to shed some positive light on her performance by claiming to be an animal rescuer. Secondly, she uses the self-handicapping type of excuse by asserting she suffers from depression, attempting to lessen her responsibility for the performance in question. It appears here that the hoarder recognizes the wrongfulness of the act, while acknowledging her responsibility for it. Therefore, she needs to engage in both tactics to manage the stigma of being seen as cruel. Shoring up their accounts suggests the potential protective benefits of neutralizing techniques. Hoarders' esteem would be threatened if they accepted the opinions of experts and others critical of their neglect of animals, home, family, and self. Because animals and their care are an important identity-creating device for hoarders, seeing themselves as a failure in this regard would likely be devastating. In this sense, justifications and excuses are necessary illusions (Snyder and Higgins 1988) that shield or prop up their sense

of self by helping them soften the blow of any critical voice or audience. That hoarders draw upon multiple excuses and justifications, then, may give them such added protection. Psychological benefits are not the only protective consequences of justifying and excusing hoarding. Hoarders also can benefit from neutralizing techniques in another way; if used successfully, there are secondary health benefits. At the same time that hoarder's behavior is very unhealthy for animals, their accounts may be physically healthy for them to create and use. Orbach et al. (1994), for example, note that failure to engage in accountmaking can lead to chronic problems, including psychosomatic illness. While certainly not an argument to encourage or allow hoarding to continue, if true, understanding such secondary gains provides insight into the many consequences that accounts have for those who create them. Of course, future research must assess the impact and effectiveness of these neutralization techniques, since determining this is beyond the scope of the present article. Do hoarders genuinely believe their accounts and do these accounts buttress their self esteem and health? It also is important to assess the effectiveness of these accounts among hoarders' external audiences. Jordan (1989) maintains that even skeptical listeners are normally reluctant to challenge or deny directly what an excuse-maker says. Snyder and Higgins (1988) concur, noting that the audience "collaborates" with an excuse-maker to keep his self-esteem intact. In this respect, to what extent, if at all, do others support hoarders' accounts? Finally, some readers might find it unsavory to focus on the effectiveness of these accounts. It is important to recognize that they are harmless if this were their only consequence. Unfortunately for hoarders, their accounts stand in the way of future "recovery" by allowing them to overlook what is often extreme neglect of animals, people, and property. By justifying or excusing their behaviors whenever challenged, hoarders continue to avoid the problems they create. However, authorities and experts who seek to manage these problems would do well to understand hoarders' logic and thinking. By doing so, they can enhance their dialogue with hoarders and develop more sensitive treatments for them.

Acknowledgments

This study was supported by the Kenneth A. Scott Charitable Trust. The authors thank Gary Patronek for his comments and suggestions.

Note

In the interests of privacy, the authors have not provided citations for quotations relating to specific hoarders.

References available by request from the editor. 🐾

Reprinted Abstracts from the AAH-ABV

The following abstracts are being reprinted with the permission of their authors. They originally appeared in the Volume 19 Summer 2007 newsletter from The American Association of Human-Animal Bond Veterinarians. You can visit their website at www.aah-abv.org.

Maintaining Quality of Life at the End of Life

Alice Villalobos DVM - Animal Oncology Consultation Service and Pawspice Care Clinic, Woodland Hills, Dana Point, Hermosa Beach, California
dralicev@aol.com, pawspice@msn.com

There is a clear need for our profession to organize and improve quality of life evaluation. The public is demanding more home care for their aging, ailing and terminally ill pets. The pet owning public is requesting that our profession do more to help provide end of life care services in the form of pet hospice or Pawspice. How can our profession respond to this need? Most geriatric animals have concurrent conditions. Diseases such as osteoarthritis might have appeared in their senior years and generally worsen with time to cause the pet's slow demise. When a companion animal is burdened with cancer and its related treatment issues, quality of life is threatened.

What point should the caregiver abandon hope for their pet's survival? Veterinarians are frequently asked, "When is the right time to euthanize my beloved pet? How will I know?" A Quality of Life scale may help everyone, especially those in denial, to look at issues that are difficult to face. Caretakers can use this itemized scale to ask themselves if they are able to provide enough help to maintain their pet in the proper fashion at the end of life.

Pets have basic needs and desires that should be recognized and respected. If we can maintain these basic desires at a satisfactory level of comfort, then we can feel justified in preserving the life of the ill pet during the steady decline toward death. The goal in proposing this Quality of Life Scale is to provide a useable guideline so that pet owners can maintain the pet's quality of life and a rewarding relationship that nurtures the human animal bond. This straightforward Quality of Life scale will relieve guilt feelings and engender the support of the veterinary team to actively help in the care and decision making for end of life care patients.

Visit the SVBT forum (articles link) to read the full paper from Dr. Alice Villalobos! You can also find information about her new book *Canine and Feline Geriatric Oncology: Honoring the Human-Animal Bond*.

Abstracts, continued on pg. 8

MEET THE MEMBERS

Sheri Church LVT

Newsletter Editor



I graduated from Baker College in 2003 with an AAS in veterinary technology. I am currently employed as a licensed veterinary technician for West Michigan Veterinary Service in Coopersville, MI. WMVS is a mixed animal practice

and our days are sometimes filled with seeing quite a variety of animals! In the near future, I hope to start puppy and kitten socialization classes at our clinic.

I became interested in behavior when I attended the Western Veterinary Conference (WVC) in February 2006. I think I went to every behavior lecture! In the spring of 2007, I had the honor of attending Purdue's DOGS! Course after winning the SVBT scholarship (by the way...I highly recommend this conference!). I find all aspects of behavior very interesting, and I am always looking for conferences to attend and books to read.

Last spring, I started working towards a bachelor's degree in veterinary

technology from St. Petersburg College. I guess you can say that I love to learn! If I am not working, I can sometimes be found with my nose in a book or journal (behavior related of course!), working on *The Behavior Perspective*, playing in the

garden, or trying to teach my dog (Hemi) something new with the clicker. I am getting ready to take Hemi through a variety of obedience and clicker classes, and I am hoping that we will be able to pass the AKC Canine Good Citizen test. I live in Twin Lake, MI with my husband (Jason), one dog (Hemi), four cats (Shorty, Tinkerbelle, Pocono, & Greg Zipadelli), and two bunnies (Crunch & Munch).

I look forward to serving as the newsletter editor!

Have a creative name for this column? Submit your ideas to the newsletter link on the new SVBT forum!



L-R: Tara Lang, Donna Dyer, Linda Campbell & Cassandra Vong at the 2007 AVMA/SVBT Meeting.

Congratulations to the University of Georgia scholarship winner, Danielle Simmons CVT! A special thank-you to Dr. Sharon Crowell-Davis for the support of the SVBT and offering this scholarship!



2007 UGA Scholarship Winner Danielle Simmons, CVT

Essay Question: "What are some ways a credentialed technician can make a difference in preventing behavior problems in pets?"

There are many ways in which a credentialed technician can make a difference in preventing behavior problems. As I see it, they all essentially come down to education. From the very first appointment, it is the technician's responsibility to educate the client on proper pet care. This concept goes much further than heartworm preventative and dental care. All of the health-care topics are important, but they don't amount to much if the pet is euthanized due to behavior problems.

Behavior is a topic that should be addressed from the very first visit and every visit thereafter. This is especially crucial to new puppy and kitten appointments. If we stress from day one, the importance of proper socialization, we can prevent countless behavior issues down the road. So many behavior problems, particularly in dogs, can be attributed to lack of socialization. If we explain how and when to expose their pet to new things, as well as the importance of a quality puppy or kitten class, we can prevent so much of this. This is a very simple way to make a great impact in the lives of the pet and the owner, and you don't have to be a behavior expert to do it.

If you take this concept one step further, the technician can investigate local trainers and classes so they are able to give more concrete recommendations. The

technician can interview trainers and visit classes. They can take the classes with a pet of their own. If the right situation is available, the technician can even volunteer to assist the instructors in such a class. All of these things will help the technician to make informed recommendations to clients. It would be irresponsible to recommend a class or a trainer whose methods you are not familiar with.

The next point within the umbrella of education is to actually hold classes. The simplest and most beneficial would be puppy socialization classes. To hold classes, you should have a bit more in depth knowledge of behavior and development. Once you do, you will need to do some research on curriculums. Then, get started. Once you have puppy socialization classes started, you can think about other classes, such as kitten classes, basic obedience classes, and so on.

If the credentialed technician has an advanced knowledge of behavior, they can consult with clients about behavior issues. Since we want to incorporate behavior into all of our veterinary visits, we should include behavior questions in the history we take. By asking the right questions we will have the opportunity to uncover problems in their earliest stages, often preventing them from becoming serious issues.

There is so much continuing education available, such as through the Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians, that it is not difficult for the credentialed

technician to take their knowledge to the next level. In my own experience, once you start learning about behavior, you will not want to stop. The more you know, the more of an impact you, the credentialed veterinary technician, can have on the lives of your clients and your patients. Isn't that why many of us are in this field in the first place?

Danielle Simmons is a CVT and the Head Technician at Abington Veterinary Center in Clarks Summit, PA. At her job she tries to improve the quality of her



patient's lives through her two professional passions, anesthesia and pain management, and of course, behavior. She lives in Nicholson, PA with her husband Ben, and their five dogs, including Samantha, her 10-year-old American Eskimo who currently competes in agility, and Floppy, her 3-year-old Lab cross whom she adopted as a behavior project. Danielle and Ben also have three cats and a horse. Danielle is a member of NAVTA, SVBT, and currently serves on the board of the Pennsylvania Veterinary Technicians Association where she will serve as Vice President in 2008.

Abstracts, from pg. 7

What Do We Mean by Quality of Life?

Franklin D. McMillan, DVM, ACVIM (SAIM)
Best Friends Animal Sanctuary

The strong intuitive sense that quality of life (QOL) is straightforward and "everyone knows what it means" is a bit of an illusion. If one asks a pet owner to evaluate her animal's QOL she will almost invariably undertake the task with not a single question as to what exactly they are supposed to be evaluating. They just know. Ask any veterinarian to evaluate a patient's QOL and he or she feels no need to ponder what he or she is looking for. But because in veterinary medicine QOL is used as a guide for life and death euthanasia decisions—literally who lives and who dies—it is of the greatest importance that we try to move beyond "gut-level" and intuitive assessments of QOL.


In animals, QOL has been used synon-

ymously with welfare and well-being by many writers. Scientists are very reluctant to use the term 'happiness' in animals, yet by many accounts there seems to be a form of happiness in animals. Quality of life, like happiness, currently defies precise description. QOL is a personal, private, subjective experience, has no 'normal,' 'average,' or any other frame of reference, lacks any units of measurement, and means different things to different people.

In humans QOL is considered strictly a view from within; it is not an external evaluation of how others judge a person's life, but how that person feels about the circumstances and events making up his or her own life and what they mean to that person and that person alone. In animals, QOL is not restricted to what kind of housing the animal has, the type of food he gets, the

luxuriousness of her bed, the number of walks he gets per day, what size of yard she has to play in, whether he goes to doggie day care or stays home alone all day, or whether she has animal companions to play with.

QOL is individualized; unique sets of preferences, desires, and needs, lead each individual—animal or human—to assign different values to the vast array of events and conditions in his or her life. The experience of QOL is dependent upon what matters to that individual animal.

So what do we mean by quality of life in animals (and well-being, welfare, happiness, and life satisfaction)? It can best be understood as one's level of enjoyment of life. This assures that the perspective comes from within—from the animal's point of view—not from outside, judged by someone else. 



UPCOMING CONTINUING EDUCATION EVENTS

Check the new forum for the most
up-to-date CE information!

Preventing and Treating Behavior Problems in Small Animals

October 20-21, 2007

University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia

14th Annual APDT Educational Conference and Trade Show

October 24-28, 2007

Portland, Oregon

Veterinary Technician Seminars-Fall 2007 Various dates and locations

visit www.vettechseminars.com/index.html
for more information.

2nd Annual Solving Canine Behavior Problems

November 3-4, 2007

Cornell University, Ithaca, New York

DOGS! & CATS Course

November 30-December 2, 2007

Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana

North American Veterinary Conference

January 19-23, 2008

Orlando, Florida

Western Veterinary Conference

February 17-21, 2008

Mandalay Bay Convention Center,
Las Vegas, Nevada

Editor's Bark

First of all, I would like to thank Amanda Eick-Miller for the nice things she had to say about me in the last newsletter. I certainly have a lot to live up to! ;) Amanda and all of the past editors have done a wonderful job, and I hope I can continue to put together an excellent newsletter that will benefit SVBT members.

You will notice some new things as I start to experiment with the newsletter. Don't worry...there won't be huge changes! We will try out some new columns and bring some old ones back. I hope to make available more book, DVD, and product reviews and I will be forming two different groups that will be responsible for these reviews. If you are interested in receiving cool free stuff and love to write, be sure to check out the rest of the newsletter.

Networking is an important part of veterinary medicine! To help us get to know each other, there will be a new "Meet the Members" section. If you have a creative name for this section, make sure to post your suggestions in the 'newsletter' link on the new SVBT forum. I decided to set a good example and have submitted a bio about myself for this newsletter. If you would like to submit a bio about yourself, please send me an email.

In past newsletters, there was an "Ask the Expert" column and I am hoping to start this again. If you have a question that you would like answered by an expert, please send me an email.

Lastly, October 14-20, 2007 is National Veterinary Technician Week (NVTW). How will you be spending this special week? Many of us think about doing something to promote our profession, but never get around to doing it. NVTW is the perfect time! Speak at local schools, write articles for the newspaper, and make your clients aware of who you are and what you do! You could put together a short behavior presentation and speak at a local veterinary technology program...I'm sure they would love and appreciate it! This would be a great time to introduce them to the SVBT and the benefits of student membership!

I hope you enjoy my first newsletter and have a 'purr-fect' fall!

Sheri Church, LVT

Cornell's College of Veterinary Medicine is offering its 2nd Annual Solving Canine Behavior Problems Course November 3-4, 2007

Our very own Marcia Ritchie, LVT, CPDT will be speaking and they are offering a generous \$100 discount to SVBT members. Include your member number when you register for the discount.

Visit the new SVBT forum for a copy of the brochure.

DOGS! & CATS



Do you know a veterinarian that is interested in behavior? Purdue's **DOGS! & CATS Course** will be held on November 30-December 2, 2007. This course is limited to veterinarians and veterinary technicians accompanying veterinarians. They encourage participation of veterinarian/veterinary technician teams. Registration cost is the same for a veterinarian alone and for a veterinarian/veterinary technician team.





Editor
Sheri Church LVT
4956 Cady Rd.
Twin Lake, MI 49457
Phone: 231-828-4939
Email: vettech03@juno.com

**Membership
Information:**
www.svbt.org

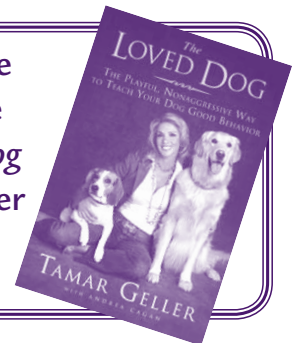
What's Inside This Month's "The Behavior Perspective"

President's Message	1
Seminar Review	2
Free Stuff!	2
Normalizing Passive Cruelty - The Excuses and Justifications of Animal Hoarders	3
Reprinted Abstracts	7
Meet the Members.....	7
UGA Scholarship Winner	8
Continuing Education Events	9
Editor's Bark	9
Solving Canine Behavior Problems Course	9
DOGS & CATS Course.....	9



Check out the new
SVBT forum at
svbt.org/members/forum/index.php

Congratulations to Monique Feyrecilde RVT! She was the lucky winner of *The Loved Dog* by Tamar Gellar. Look for her review in a future edition of *The Behavior Perspective!*



SURVEY

What other behavior, veterinary, or professional associations are you a part of? Log onto the new SVBT forum at <http://svbt.org/members/forum/index.php> to take part in this survey! The survey will be in the newsletter link. Results will be printed in the next newsletter.

