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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Another year has flown by! We have some exciting conferences coming up in 2008, starting with the North American Veterinary Conference in Orlando, Florida, January 19-23. Right around the corner is the Western Veterinary Conference in Las Vegas, Nevada, February 17-21. We are going to have a small table at the technician fair on February 20, so stop by and visit!

We are working hard, getting our name out there, and recruiting members. We have a lot of new members signing up going into our second publication of the year and I would like to welcome you to this great organization! I can remember years ago, going to a behavior lecture at a conference and the room being less than half full. In recent years I have had to sit on the floor because the room was packed! More and more veterinarians and technicians are becoming aware of the importance of behavior, educating themselves, and bringing it into their practice. If you work at a practice with a doctor that is hesitant about offering behavior services of any kind, get on the forum and talk to your fellow members! Many of us either developed, or helped develop programs, and are happy to pass along our knowledge as well as our successes and failures. For all of the new members, a great way to get involved is to participate on a committee. For all of our professional members it is time

for our executive board nominations! Part of what keeps us moving forward is new members to the board adding fresh perspectives and ideas. So whether your participation in the SVBT is small or large, I do encourage you to participate. There are times in all of our lives when we have more time than others, but nothing ventured, nothing gained!

Going back to the last newsletter, I want to give everyone an update on Ruger, the German shepherd. I saw him this week and he is doing GREAT! It was a long, almost heartbreaking journey though. The owners were frustrated with his constant diarrhea and some of the behaviors he had developed, such as shadow chasing and submissive urination. To my dismay, they contemplated euthanizing him. We have to remember that we not only help animals, we help people too. It is our job to guide them and support them. Fortunately, they stuck it out and I am happy to report that while he still stares at lights and shadows some, all of his other behaviors and medical problems have straightened out and they are once again a happy family (which is good, because I didn't need another German shepherd!).

Kristen White, CVT
 SVBT President

The APDT Announces Award Winners for 2007

Awards Program Recognizes Individuals for Excellence in Dog Training

The award recipients were announced by The Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) during the organization's Annual Conference and Trade Show held in Portland, Oregon this past October. Recipients are selected based upon criteria established by a committee composed of volunteer APDT members.

The Central Life Sciences Comfort Zone Veterinary Technician of the Year recipient for 2007 is **Lori Tyler-Ochsner, LVT**. Lori is a Licensed Veterinary Technician and the Director of Behavior Services at Lake Road Animal Hospital in Newfield, New York. Lori's natural ability with dogs and cats led to her career in veterinary medicine. She has been a Licensed Veterinary Technician for 11 years and her focus is on the human/animal bond. Through her company, Muddy Paws Dog Training, she also teaches adolescent manners classes and specializes in unruly adolescent behavior.



Congratulations Lori!

Editor's Bark

By the time you read this newsletter, the holidays will be done and we will be into the new year. I hope everyone had a great holiday season! As you finish putting the decorations away and sample the last of the holiday goodies, did you take time to make any goals or resolutions for 2008? I know we tend to make the same ones every year, maybe it's lose a few pounds, join the gym, spend less/save more money, etc. Unfortunately, we may lose track of our goals and resolutions by February and tell ourselves "maybe next year".

How many of those "maybe next years" will pass you by? I challenge you to make some personal and professional goals for yourself and work hard to achieve them. Perhaps you will write an article to be published in the newsletter or a veterinary journal. Maybe you will advance your knowledge and attend some continuing education. Want to learn more about dog training and sharpen your training skills? Enroll in a class...it can reward you in so many ways! Is it your dream to get a higher degree? Stop dreaming and go for it!

I encourage you to promote the veterinary technology profession while achieving your goals.

Promoting the profession can be as simple as educating your clients, speaking at local schools, or providing clinic tours. Maybe you will mentor a veterinary technician student or a newly graduated technician. How about giving behavior lectures to veterinary technology students? This is often an overlooked part of their education. Educate them on the importance of continuing education and being active in their state, national, and other professional associations. After all, the success of these associations depends on their members.

What about including the SVBT in your list of goals? Consider the original goals of the founding members. Let's work hard and make them proud! Promote the SVBT when you meet other professionals. Have you considered being apart of a committee or running for office? Don't be scared—you don't have to be an expert to do any of these things! Imagine what you will learn in the process of helping the group! It has been said before, and I am sure it will be said again: the SVBT can only be as good as we make it, so let's make it GREAT!

Don't let another year pass you by!

Sheri Church, LVT

Welcome New SVBT Members!

Rhonda Aja	Cedar, MI	Anna Hall, RVT	Staten Island, NYC, NY	Jennifer Pederson, LVT	West Fargo, ND
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Teresa Cox	Perryville, MD	Cori Kwasny	Tucson, AZ	Suzzy Sasak	Strongsville, OH
Julie Defler	Washington, DC	Anna Lanford, LVT	Clio, MI	Gillian Shippen, Cert 5	South Australia
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Maria Doversberger	West Lafayette, IN	Katie Loesch, CPDT	Palm Beach Gardens, FL	Tracy Spangler, LVT	Shippensburg, PA
Susan Downes	Brooksville, FL	Rhonda Lofton, LVT	Ozark, MO	Samantha Sprague	Howell, MI
Elizabeth Drennan	Grass Lake, MI	Angela Logsdon, LVT	Redford, MI	Valerie Squire, RVT	Bakersfield, CA
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Johanna Fiskback	Monterey, CA	Tosha Mallery, CVT	Glendale, AZ	Heather Uplinger, LVT	Tonawanda, NY
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Angela Frye	Fayetteville, NC	Jennifer Masters, RVT	Mayetta, KS	Erica Voltz, CVT	Volant, PA
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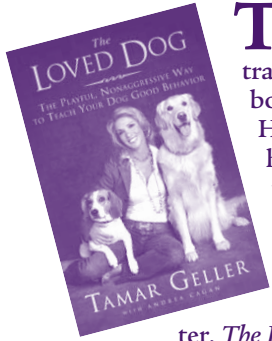
BOOK REVIEW

Review by: Monique Feyrecilde, RVT

“The Loved Dog: The Playful, Nonaggressive Way to Teach Your Dog Good Behavior”

Tamar Geller with Andrea Cagan

Simon Spotlight Entertainment, 2007. 216pp, (16pp color photos), hardcover, ISBN 978-1-4169-3814-9



Tamar Geller, owner of The Loved Dog training, daycare and boarding facility in Hollywood, California has summarized her training program, called Play-Training, in her first book. Sharing the name of her training center,

The Loved Dog is a stepwise guide to following Tamar's training instructions from start to finish. Punctuated with anecdotes about celebrity clients and Tamar's history serving in the Israeli army, *The Loved Dog* is not only a training manual, but also a thoughtful retelling of how Tamar entered the world of training and caring for dogs and their people.

As a child in Israel, Tamar was subjected to inhumane treatment herself. Escaping the brutalities of her childhood when she served in the Israeli army (mandatory for all Israeli citizens at age 18), she spent time at a wilderness research center. Enter Zev, a wolf researcher in the deserts of Israel. Tagging along with Zev during predawn research excursions, Tamar's fascination with wild canine behavior was burgeoning. Her observations about how the wolves taught one another appropriate social behavior, signaling between pack members and play rituals to prepare pups for adulthood formed her opinions about how companion dogs could, and should, be trained to be ideal members in a human "pack." Fueled by the experiences of her abusive childhood, Tamar set out to prevent inhumane training methods from being applied to dogs in hopes of sparing those dogs emotional distress similar to what she endured as a child.

The Loved Dog begins with Tamar's explanation of the 7 critical needs of every dog. The 7 needs she proposes are sense of security, companionship, understanding the hierarchy, surprises/excitement, food and exercise, mental stimulation, love and connection. She uses simple language and clear examples to illustrate why she believes these needs are at the core of every successful dog-family relationship. Her discussion about the obligation of dog owners to fulfill the 7 basic needs concludes with

her encouraging every dog owner or potential dog owner to carefully consider the commitment required to meet these demands.

After establishing the needs of every dog, Tamar outlines her Play-Training program. With Play-Training, she begins with encouraging dog owners to learn about the body language of their dogs, and to communicate in a way that is easy to understand to reduce confusion on the part of the dog. Once the basis for common language is established, she outlines a simple approach of structured play combined with backchaining to teach basic behaviors including acceptance of non-threatening touch (i.e. vet/groomer), greeting a friendly stranger, addressing mild fears, disturbances while eating, sit, come, down, off (backing away), stay, housebreaking, leash walking and stopping problem barking.

I found Tamar's training instructions to be easy to read, clear and concise. Her attention to proofing, increasing the criteria of a given performance and transitioning from a consistent, predictable reward schedule to a variable, randomized reward schedule are commendable. She takes the time to explain some commonly overlooked details about using treats and toys in training, including addressing the comparative value of rewards, and the importance of using high-value treats in high-stress situations.

On the whole, I found *The Loved Dog* to illustrate a sensible and easy approach for the average pet owner to use in order to guide a dog down the path to being a great family member.

While I think the basic training infrastructure provided in this volume is valid, at the same time, I found myself distracted by some emotionally charged components of the book. These include the misuse of the term punishment, the assumption that dogs are just like wolves, and what I consider hypocritical situations where what Tamar professes conflicts with her examples of coaching scenarios.

Tamar Geller professes a deep opposition to any form of "punishment" in her book. She equates "punishment" and abuse, including stories about various atrocities her clients' dogs had been sub-

jected to by other trainers. She states that she never uses punishment in any form, and that punishment has no place in the training of animals.

"When a dog perceives that he is being punished, his fight-flight mechanism is aroused, producing an unpredictable state in his psyche, as well as an inability to learn effectively ... With *The Loved Dog* method, we don't punish dogs. Instead, we use rewards as motivators."

Later, Tamar describes how she uses her voice and attitude to influence the behavior of a dog when the dog is doing something inappropriate. From mild intervention like turning her back on the dog which jumps up, or frowning and sighing in a frustrated tone at the dog breaking out of the down-stay, Tamar emphasizes the use of voice and attitude to coach the dog. During severe situations, she describes her use of her voice and body postures toward these dogs as "Level Eight." She uses the analogy of keeping a child from touching a hot stove to prevent a burn.

"Just as if your child reached out to touch a hot burner on your stove, there are situations in which you can't and shouldn't speak calmly. You have to make sure she associates getting too close to the fire with a negative experience she will have no desire to repeat. This is what wolves do with their young ... When I use Level Eight, it looks so scary, I have to warn people in advance that I'll be acting."

She continues to give an example of using Level Eight on a dog crossing the property boundary into the street and getting into traffic.

"Since Luke knew me, the setup required that I wear a big jacket, boots, and a cowboy hat, so he wouldn't immediately recognize me ... In full sight of Luke, just outside the property gates, I began giving treats to [another dog] and praising him. Luke watched for a moment. Finally he wanted to play so much he made a beeline across the boundary to join us. I turned to face him and went wolf on him in dramatic attack mode. I huffed and puffed like I was about to explode, I yelled in a very deep tone of voice, I froze my body and face in a threatening posture, and I thundered and stomped my feet ... My performance made

Ask the Expert - Donna Dyer, LVT



This issue's expert is **Donna Dyer, LVT**. Donna is a graduate of Bel-Rea Institute of Animal Technology in Denver, Colorado. She currently maintains a certification to practice as a veterinary technician in the

State of Colorado and a license to practice as a veterinary technician in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Donna's interest in animal behavior developed while studying indigenous wildlife in East Africa as part of her zoology curriculum at Ohio State University. Her love of African wildlife led her to work for several years as a volunteer keeper and docent at the Denver Zoo. For the last 13 years, she has focused her efforts on companion animal behavior. Donna owned and operated a home-based business in Denver, CO, where she taught behavior management and modification techniques to dog owners and developed and presented educational programs for veterinary professionals.

Donna is presently employed as a research assistant at the Center for Neurobiology and Behavior, Department of Psychiatry, School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania. She also serves as the editorial assistant for the Elsevier health science publication, *Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research* and works as a technical writer and consultant to a pet products manufacturer.

In 2002, Donna became an intermittent employee of the federal government as a member of the Veterinary Medical Assistance Team 2 (VMAT2). VMAT2, now called National Veterinary Response Team 2, is a part of the Federal Emergency Response Plan and the National Disaster Medical System.

Donna is a co-founder of the Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians.

Question: "Hemi" is a 4 year old MN Labrador retriever who is allergic to life. He often gets thinning hair around his lips or on his muzzle when his allergies are bothering him. He has been using the Gentle Leader for one year and it has been fitted correctly. He is starting to get some thinning hair where his GL nose strap sits. He did not have any problems with his GL until his fall allergies started. I have double checked the fit and everything looks good. Any suggestions?

Answer: Has Hemi's vet recommended treatment for his allergies with an antihistamine? If redness and hair loss is just around mouth area has demodex been ruled out? For sensitive dogs, there are some things you can do to help with hair loss on the nose.

- 1) The most important thing is a good fit. If the neck strap is too loose or and the nose loop too tight it can cause rubbing.
- 2) Take the headcollar off for 8 hours a day unless you have been advised to leave it on for longer periods of time.
- 3) If the headcollar gets wet, it must be taken off until the headcollar is dry and the dog's hair is dry.
- 4) If the dog is a drooler, be sure that the headcollar is off long enough for it and the dog's face to dry out.
- 5) For dogs with sensitive skin, I would suggest getting some Dr. Scholl's Mole Foam. It comes in small rectangles, is soft with a layer of foam and it has an adhesive backing. Cut the mole foam the length of the rectangle, the same width as the nose loop. Pull off the adhesive backing and affix the mole foam to the underside of the top of the nose loop. This will provide a cushion between the nose loop and your dog's nose.
- 6) Be sure that when a leash is attached to the headcollar that you are not pulling straight up along side the dog's ear like you would if you were using a choke collar. When pulling on a leash attached to a headcollar, the leash should be pulled out under the dog's nose and up.

Question: Is it okay to use the Gentle Leader when walking multiple dogs? Or should I use a different product (i.e. Easy Walk Harness)?

Answer: Yes, a Gentle Leader headcollar can be used when walking multiple dogs. I would use a separate leash for each instead of using some kind of connector. This will give you the most control - just as it would regardless of the collar type.

Have a question for an expert? Email it to vettech03@juno.com. 🐾

Book Review, from pg. 3

a big impression on Luke, because he flew back across the boundary ... In fact, Luke never crossed that boundary line again. In fact, he refused to cross the boundary line even when they wanted him to, and they had to get the car and drive him through the gate."

While I applaud Tamar's training guide, especially in reference to the use of treats, the importance of meeting the basic needs of dogs and the creative use of play to demonstrate the desired behavior and reward success, I was distracted by her constant regaling of the use of punishment in the face of examples of her own Level Eight behavior.

I hope that readers will take away the valuable training information within this

book without adopting Tamar's terminology regarding the use of punishment. Punishment is anything which decreases the probability a behavior will be offered again in the future. Turning one's back on the jumping dog, sighing and frowning at the dog with the broken down and charging aggressively toward the dog who breaks the property boundary are examples of punishment, they just omit physical violence.

I would hesitate to recommend this book to the novice dog owner because of the skewed views the author holds about abuse, punishment and her own emotional responses from childhood. However, I am disappointed because of all of the other relevant and

very useful information the novice dog owner would miss by skipping this book.

Even experienced positive-reinforcement trainers would likely benefit from a quick read of *The Loved Dog*. Its careful outline of each behavior, easy-to-read language and emphasis on play and fun are a good example of language and methods which would be put to good use in group class or private lessons with novice dog owners.

Rating:

🐾🐾🐾 out of 🐾🐾🐾🐾🐾 paws. *The Loved Dog* is intended for the novice dog owner, but more suitable for those with prior training experience. 🐾

Terminology Think Tank: Social dominance theory as it relates to dogs

Angelica Steinker, MEd, CDDBC, CAP2

The following article originally appeared in the Volume 2 Issue 4 edition of the *Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research*. Permission to reprint has been granted by the author and the editor-in-chief of JVB:CAR, Karen Overall, MA, VMD, PhD, Dipl. ACVB, ABS Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist.

On Superiority: The truth is there is nothing noble in being superior to another being. The only real nobility is in being superior to your former self.

—Whitney Young, Civil Rights Leader

SOCIAL DOMINANCE THEORY

Social dominance theory has long been viewed as an important and relevant theory in terms of dog behavior. Social dominance is an ethological theory of conflict management in society-forming species. This theory has common interpretations in the area of dog training.

Social dominance theory states that the “alpha” wolf always wins all fights over other members of the pack, the “beta” loses fights to no one but the “alpha” and so on until the “omega,” the wolf considered least likely to win any fights. However, there are significant problems when you examine how social dominance is being misused in relation to interpreting dog behavior. Dog training techniques based on incorrect information about social dominance theory recommend absurd and sometimes abusive training techniques. At times, even well-educated professionals misunderstand the theory of social dominance. Many training situations have resulted in tragic outcomes, with the dog being euthanized, because a dog was labeled “dominant,” and subjected to abusive training techniques with the goal of forcing the dog to “submit.” Many times these training techniques worsen the dog’s behavior forcing the dog to escalate by exhibiting self-protective behaviors.

Social dominance theory only applies to one aspect of dog life: conflict. There are several schools of thought about social dominance, in general (O’Heare, 2007a), offering contradicting precepts and assumptions. All of these approaches seek to predict the outcome of conflicts.

Ideally social dominance mechanisms are thought to allow dogs to resolve conflict in less risky ways biologically because aggression can be associated with injury and death.

LABELING A DOG “DOMINANT”

Labeling a dog “dominant” is potentially destructive. Attaching a label to a dog’s behavior or personality can create conflict rather than cohesion in the family. These challenges can occur between dog and owner, dog and trainer, or all involved parties. By labeling a dog “dominant,” the humans involved begin to interpret many behaviors as evidence of “dominance” and ignore any evidence to the contrary. This can be especially detrimental in cases of household aggression. If a professional misreads a situation and tells a client to support the “dominant” dog, who is—in reality—bullying the other dogs and causing stress and unhappiness, such labels can be especially detrimental.

Human clients usually desire control. Being told that their dog is “dominant” can provoke a human to be aggressive with their dog. If the dog is aggressive, this can cause the aggression to escalate by triggering a counter-control response, and set in motion a cycle of reciprocal counter-control (Sidman, 2001). In this case, each party is reinforced negatively for their counter-controlling behavior (O’Heare, 2007b). Alternately, any application of positive punishment may cause the dog to stop aggressing temporarily; in which case people may think the dog is ‘cured.’ In reality, the aggression may be suppressed until it is evoked again, possibly without any warning signs this time. The use of any aversive stimulation may cause the aggressive dog to become even more dangerous.

It is easy to avoid creating conflict by focusing on behaviors rather than on labels. It is easy to avoid labeling a dog “dominant” if you make it a habit to consider that a dog aggressing toward other dogs may actually be engaging in appropriate aggression. In most legal systems, a rush to judgment is considered

less than ideal. It seems that in dog training a rush to judgment can also be damaging.

DOMINANCE WITHIN SPECIES

The original intent of the theorists who devised social dominance theory was to use it to describe interactions and explain and predict patterns of conflict resolution within a society-forming group of animals (O’Heare, 2007a). The concept of social dominance deals with social relationships and was developed originally for bees, then chickens, and applied eventually to other species including wolves. Dogs are descended from wolves, but are not wolves. Dogs are domesticated, a genetic process, and the result of artificial selection for hundreds and perhaps thousands of years. Some researchers even argue that dogs are not pack animals (Coppinger, 2001).

Social dominance theory was not intended to be used to predict conflict management across species. When it is applied to human and dog interactions it may not be an accurate means of predicting conflict management. Regardless of whether or not it is accurate, it is more effective to focus directly on the behavior of concern and possible modification.

THE “ALPHA”

The theory of social dominance predicts that all the animals in a wolf pack form a linear hierarchy. Early wolf researchers added the concept of wolf packs having one male and one female “alpha.” These “alpha” animals are supposedly allowed special privileges and access to resources that others are not. There are numerous problems with this concept. Wolf researchers now know that wolves form family units (Mech and Boitani, 2003). In extended family units, there can be more than one breeding pair. Pups defer and are dependent on parents, and adult wolves engage in different roles, which help the pack survive. It is a cooperative living situation not a dictatorship. Unfortunately for dogs, the concept of dominance communicates to humans that they must be masters over their dog and that dogs must obey. This leads many dog/human relationships to

Abstracts

from *The American Association of Human-Animal Bond Veterinarians*

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

Behavioral Management to Promote Quality of Life

Melissa Bain, DVM, DACVB

Behavior problems are challenging to correct, but easy to prevent. They are often very time consuming and extremely frustrating for the client and the veterinarian. However, with counseling prior to ownership, as well as preventative advice, many behavior problems can be avoided. By keeping pets in the homes and out of shelters, we can thus improve their quality of life (QoL).

Provide advice and guidance to clients during office visits, not just to new puppy owners or people coming in specifically for help with the behavior of their pet. Ask ALL owners about behavior of their pet. Notice what the animal is doing (pulling on leash, lunging at staff members, cowering in the corner) and address it.

There is obviously a close relationship between an animal's behavior and the human-animal bond, and promoting a good quality of life. Without selecting for wanted behaviors, whether for work or companionship, we wouldn't have the domesticated animals we have today. Owners need to understand their pets' behaviors, how they influence it, and how they can change it for the better, in order to decrease relinquishment and euthanasia for problem behaviors. And we all need to appreciate the uniqueness and wonder of our companions, for without them, what would we do?

Research Questions Regarding Quality of Life

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

Measurement of QoL requires quantification of a subjective phenomenon. It is not yet clear how, or even if, this can be accurately accomplished. Measurement of QoL has engendered great controversy and debate in the human field, and there is no consensus

Abstracts, continued on pg. 7

MEMBER'S PAW PRINTS

The "Meet the Members" section's new name was suggested by Kristen White, CVT. A big thank-you to everyone for your suggestions!

Tara Lang, BS, RVT Past President



Tara graduated from Murray State University in 1995 with a Bachelors of Science in Agriculture, an Equine Minor, and an area in Animal Health Technology. While at Murray State, she was an active member, and officer, in both the Pre-vet/AHT club and Alpha Zeta. After graduation she moved to Atlanta, Georgia and worked in a surgical referral practice and then in a 50% exotic veterinary practice for 7 years. In 2003, she started as a behavior technician for Dr. Rolan Tripp and the Animal Behavior Network. She now provides contract services (behavior technicians) and website services through her own business, Critter Communications, LLC. She participates in content review and editing, in addition to managing technical support and AnimalBehavior. Net web development. She is co-author of "Positive Dog Parenting" and "Positive Cat Parenting". Each is a year long weekly email series with behavior tips on raising the ideal pet.

Tara is a past officer of the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) and lectures at state and national veterinary conferences. She also volunteers some time to a local morning radio program, as well as local organizations and schools to educate the public on pet behavior and works in a private practice a few days a month.

Tara says, "Even though the above takes up a lot of my time, my first priority is my family and six year old daughter. I am fortunate in that the career I selected (developed for myself) allows me flexibility to do all the things I love!" In her spare time Tara is a Girl Scout troop leader, volunteers at the local Girl Scout camp teaching horseback riding lessons and donates platelets to the American Red Cross every two weeks!

Kristen White, CVT President

Kristen has been working in the veterinary field for the past 18 years, the last 14 of which have been at the Animal and Bird Hospital in Clearwater, Florida. In 2000, she went back to school to obtain her AS in veterinary technology at St. Petersburg College. She works part-time as the practice manager, runs general obedience and puppy classes, and assists with all behavior cases. She also works part-time from her home as a behavior technician for Animal Behavior Network. Kristen is on the advisory board for the veterinary assistant program at Tarpon Springs High School. She has given several lectures there and at other secondary schools about canine behavior and clicker training. She has spoken for the Suncoast Avian Society about captive bird behavior and clicker training. In September 2006, Kristen attended the SVBT conference and not only lectured about puppy classes, but also had a wetlab! Kristen also had her first article published in the August 2007 issue of *Veterinary Technician* magazine.

In 2004, Kristen attended the three day Small Animal Behavior course at the University of Georgia. Then in 2005, she attended both the five day spring DOGS! Course and the three day fall Dogs and Cats course at Purdue University. She is currently working towards her bachelor's degree in veterinary technology at St. Petersburg College. She continues to expand her behavior knowledge through CE courses and reading on her own.



Julie Urban, BA, LVT

Treasurer



Julie is a 1995 graduate of the Medical Institute of Minnesota, MIM (now Argosy University) program of Veterinary Technology. Her clinical internship was served at the Minnesota Zoological Gardens, certainly a major highlight of her educational experience. She was fortunate to spend close to five great years at the Chanhassen Veterinary Clinic in Minnesota. She also had the opportunity to return to MIM in a part-time teaching capacity for about three years. After moving to

Washington state she spent about one year working for a mixed practice in her local area.

In the spring of 2002, she launched a personalized pet-sitting service for pet families in her residential community of Shelter Bay. Her services have been in high demand and she has certainly enjoyed using her knowledge and skills to provide reliable, thorough, and compassionate pet care.

She is a strong advocate of Veterinary Technician education, credentialing and continuing education, as well as professional involvement. During the past decade she's been an active member of the Minnesota Association of Veterinary Technicians, MAVT, served for several years on the NAVTA Board of Directors, and on the AVMA Committee on Wellness. Currently, in addition to her duties with the SVBT, she is a member of NAVTA, MAVT and the Washington State Association of Veterinary Technicians (WSAVT).

Her "past-life" was spent in the world of banking, finance, and securities, and she holds a BA in Economics with a minor in Geography and Environmental Studies. She and her husband share their home with two collies, three cats, two birds and whatever else she may bring home. When she's not taking care of pets, she enjoys hiking, birding, gardening and reading.

Monique Feyrecilde, RVT

Member-at-Large

Since 1997, Monique Feyrecilde has been a team member at Mercer Island Veterinary Clinic in Mercer Island, Washington. In 1999, she began serving as clinic manager, and was credentialed as a technician in 2002. Monique currently manages the clinic and serves as head technician. Realizing more pets become homeless and are euthanized for unwanted behaviors than any disease, Monique spearheaded implementing behavior protocols within her clinic.



Teaching private lessons for dogs and owners since 1996, Monique added group classes at Seattle Agility Center to her schedule in 1999. In 2005, Monique began offering services for cats and their owners as well. With a strong background in humane and practical solutions based in good communication and a mutual understanding between pet and owner, Monique imparts more than just "training" information to her students. Her specific areas of interest include operant conditioning for the everyday world, training the performance dog, relationship-building, and comparative behavior. She feels strongly that no single behavior problem is an "isolated" event, and every pet deserves to be addressed as a whole individual rather than an unwanted behavior.

Aside from her duties as a technician, instructor and consultant, Monique volunteers with Aussie Rescue Placement Helpline, Inc, serving as the chairperson of their Education Committee and authoring the ARPH column in the national magazine, *The Aussie Times*. She is also currently working on her first book. In the future she hopes to have the opportunity to participate in behavior CE for veterinary professionals.

Sharing her home with 4 dogs, 3 cats, a bullsnake and her wonderful husband, Monique enjoys competing with her own dogs in agility, obedience, Rally-O and stockdog events. On serving on the SVBT Board, Monique says, "I will do my best both for the SVBT and our profession. It is my pleasure to be a new Board member this year, and I am excited to help in any way I can." 🐾

Abstracts, from pg. 6

as to the best method for assessing QoL. There exists much greater agreement about why we should measure QoL than how to do it. No studies yet exist that have determined what QoL is in animals, what factors comprise QoL in animals, what an increase or decrease in animal QoL means, even whether animal QoL can be increased or decreased, or what factors increase and decrease QoL in animals.

An instrument (or index) is the collection of items used for obtaining the desired data, usually constructed in the format of a survey or questionnaire. In humans it is widely accepted that the best individual to provide the responses to QoL-related questions is the person being evaluated. Measuring QoL from the individual's own perspective is problematic when patients are incapable of providing first-hand information regarding their subjective experience. Most often, such individuals are neonates, infants, mentally disabled, or severely ill. Because of language barriers, subjective information concerning QoL of non-human animals must come from sources other than the animal itself. Accordingly, the issue of proxy measurement has important implications for assessment of QoL in animals. Unfortunately, when the accuracy of proxy ratings has been studied in adolescent and adult humans by comparing data from proxy informants with data from patients themselves, poor agreement is very common.

The practical problems in QoL measurement have led researchers to concede that the demand that measures have robust statistical properties is very difficult to meet and that it is perhaps unrealistic to demand that a QoL scale should attain the same level of statistical rigor as can be achieved in the physical sciences. Even so, researchers have insisted that any measures proposed to assess QoL must

meet standards for reliability and validity and conform to scientific standards for instrument development. 🐾



Association of Pet Dog Trainer's (APDT) Conference Review

Tails of the Great Northwest October 24-28, 2007 Portland, OR

Review by: Lori Tyler-Ochsner, LVT

I attended the APDT conference as the 2007 Comfort Zone® Veterinary Technician of the year. This five-day conference was attended by about 1200 dog trainers from around the US and the world. With three different tracks (new trainer development, intermediate and scientific), 49 sessions and 28 speakers, there was sure to be variety and surely something for every conference attendee. Of these 49 overlapping sessions, there were only 15 that could be attended by any one person—so there were often difficult choices that had to be made. Luckily, a DVD or online conference library could be purchased to allow the conference attendee access to all the programs.

Of the 49 sessions, my favorite session was the very first. The keynote speaker was Dr. Roger Fouts. Dr. Fouts is the Director of University Research at Central Washington University and co-director of the Chimpanzee and Human Communication Institute. He has been part of Project Washoe—the longest-running project of its kind. Washoe was the first non-human primate to learn ASL (American Sign Language). She went on to teach other chimpanzees the language. In 1997, Dr. Fouts published *Next of Kin* – a memoir of his life with Washoe.

His lecture at APDT was entitled “Sign Language in Chimpanzees: Darwinian Realities vs. Cartesian Delusions.” Dr. Fouts discussed the history of the dichotomy between humans and other animals, going back to the ancient Greeks who were the first to place man above all other animals. (Interestingly, women were third on the Greek scale of animals, after elephants and dolphins.) This world view has controlled philosophy for close to 3000 years. The father of modern philosophy, Descartes, continued the tradition of vertical hierarchy of man above all else. This tradition went unchallenged until Darwin came along and proposed a linear continuum of living organisms.

According to Dr. Fouts, the Cartesian model still dominates in the world of science. In 1967, when he began working

with Washoe, most scientists believed that the chimps would never be able to learn a language and that language was a distinctly human characteristic. The very idea that animals may possess some of the traits that make humans special is very threatening. Humans need to maintain that specialness that keeps us above the rest of the animals.

As data of his work with the chimpanzees became available to the rest of the scientific community, there was speculation that they didn't actually learn the language, but rather, were being cued. This speculation ended when the matriarch Washoe taught ASL to a young chimp placed with the group (a chimp that the humans never taught any signs

to.) The chimps in the group also “self-sign,” which is equivalent to humans talking to themselves when they are alone. Both instances are proof, according to Fouts, that the chimps not only understand the language, but have adopted the language to their own use. He has been able to prove that

humans are not the only animals with language.

What does this mean for dog trainers? Dr. Fouts was able to shed some light on the history of philosophy that few of us had ever learned and the origin of the hierarchy of man and beast. We also have to battle the Cartesian delusions of the superiority of man over beast. His recollections of his work with the chimpanzees was fascinating, as well as adjustments he had to make within his own mind to accept what the chimps had to teach him. For instance, Washoe would often interpret certain signs differently than intended. He would give her no-reward markers when he thought she was wrong. Then he realized she was actually interpreting the sign differently. She knew what he wanted as a response, but she liked to call the object something different than he did. She often had two names for people or objects, depending upon their context. The implication for animal trainers in general is that we re-



ally don't know what the animal is capable of intellectually. If we can go into training animals with an open mind and be willing to allow them to teach us, there is no telling what the team of trainer and animal can accomplish together.

As an award winner, I had the privilege of having lunch with Dr. Fouts. We continued to question him about Washoe, his next projects, his work to rescue chimps from medical research and he answered all patiently and graciously. I was very sad to hear a few days after returning from Portland that Washoe had passed away of old age. My thoughts are with the Fouts family who has been with Washoe almost her entire life and all of the students who came to love her over the years.

This was the first year a technician award was ever given by the APDT. I see this as an excellent sign that veterinary technicians are becoming an increasingly accepted part of the behavior team. I spent much of my time at the conference talking to people about the SVBT and what behavior technicians can do as part of the team. The attendance of technicians at the conference was relatively low, but growing. I encourage everyone to consider attending next year's conference in Louisville, KY. If you are an APDT member, I strongly urge you to apply for the scholarship next year. It was a great experience! 🐾

AAHA has asked for input from the SVBT!

AAHA is looking to revise the current pet behavior brochure titled “*The Social Scene*.” They plan to make room to add a paragraph on dog parks since they've become such a big part of socializing dogs in the past few years. Please take some time and visit the forum to answer these questions. The Board of Directors will send a summary to AAHA.

University of Georgia (UGA) Conference Review

Preventing and Treating Behavior Problems in Dogs and Cats

Review by: Danielle Simmons, CVT

In October, I was fortunate enough to be awarded the SBVT scholarship to attend "Preventing and Treating Behavior Problems in Dogs and Cats"

at the University of Georgia School of Veterinary Medicine. Overall, it was a great experience! There were three speakers for this conference. They were Dr. Sharon Crowell-Davis, Dr.



Sabrina Poggiagliolmi, and Ms. Melissa Whitmire. Dr. Sharon Crowell-Davis, DVM, PhD, is a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. She is director of the Animal Behavior Service at the University of Georgia and has 27 years of experience in veterinary behavior. Dr. Sabrina Poggiagliolmi, DVM, is a second-year resident in Veterinary Behavior at the University of Georgia. She completed her veterinary degree at the University of Milan, Italy, in 1994. Ms. Melissa Whitmire, BS, RVT, completed her BS in psychology at the University of Georgia and her technician training at Athens Area Technical Institute. She is a special services technician for the Animal Behavior Service at the University of Georgia.

The conference began with a joint session led by Dr. Sharon Crowell-Davis. She discussed the legal and ethical issues in regard to veterinary behavior and specifically psychoactive medications. She explored the different roles of all the players in veterinary behavior, including pet owners, trainers, technicians, veterinarians, and veterinary behaviorists. The second session was also a joint session and Dr. Crowell-Davis went into a detailed review of learning theory. At this point we went into split sessions. One session was primarily geared toward veterinarians and focused on the vast subject of psychoactive medications. The other session was geared toward technicians and focused mainly on implementing behavior protocols. I attended the technician sessions. These included behavior modification, humane training methods, follow-up procedures, and a review of the various behavior tools and products. We also had two breakout sessions, one on fitting and using the Gentle Leader and Easy Walk Harness, and

the other on clicker training. The two sessions I enjoyed the most focused on the specifics of a counter-conditioning and desensitization plan and a specific curriculum for puppy and kitten socialization classes. At the end of the conference on Sunday afternoon, the two groups came back together, and we went over some case presentations from Drs. Crowell Davis and Poggiagliolmi. Although the majority of the conference was divided into two sessions and I couldn't be in two places at once, the lecture notes were comprehensive and I didn't feel like I missed anything.

I thought the lectures were very informative and the speakers were knowledgeable, approachable, and personable. On Sunday, during one of the breaks, I sat with Dr. Poggiagliolmi and another attendee. We chatted about some of the experiences that we have had in behavior. Although it was a fairly small conference, the attendees varied from technicians and staff members, to veterinarians with different levels of behavior experience, as well as behavior residents. Everyone I met was very friendly and kind.

On a side note, they provided continental breakfasts in the morning and refreshment breaks. A delicious catered lunch was provided each day. Seating was a bit tight during the meals, but it was a great way to meet new people and share ideas! The host hotel was the Athens Holiday Inn. I found it to be very economical and nice place to stay. There was a complimentary shuttle service to and from the conference. Another nice surprise was the free parking for hotel guests.

I had a wonderful time during my weekend in Georgia. I learned a tremendous amount, and I met some very nice people. I want to take this opportunity to thank the SVBT for their generosity, and I did my best to make the most of the experience. The last comment that I have on whether it was a good conference is this: it was well worth the trip, and I drove over 800 miles (one way) to Georgia from Northeastern Pennsylvania!! 🐾

Social Dominance, from pg. 5

the path of force and violence.

No profession is immune to this problem. The dog training community is not the only community awash in inaccurate information: the use of "alpha" rolls, scruff shakes and other violent techniques haunt dogs everywhere. The spread of misinformation is a problem we all share. It is a problem we all must address and work to resolve.

The original wolf research was carried out observing captive packs, many of which were composed of unrelated wolves. In captivity, the wolves were not able to choose who they formed a pack with. In addition, the packs were confined in runs, which can create stress and unusual social behaviors. Most of the original research was confounded by the construction of the social groups. Today scientists observe wolf packs in a natural free roaming setting. Over time, observations of wolves at Yellow Stone Park in the United States and Banff Park in Canada have changed what had been thought to be true about wolves and packs. Researchers learned that wolves did not have a linear hierarchy, and that they live with a balance of cohesion (behaviors bringing wolves closer together) and conflict (behaviors that drive them apart). Researcher Jane Packard writes, "Perhaps the relative importance of dominance varies with pack composition, food availability (and thus competition), and even the eyes of the observer" ([Mech and Boitani, 2003](#)). If we are looking for a linear hierarchy, we will likely observe one, which does not mean it actually exists.

Researchers agree that the terms "alpha," "beta," and so on are inappropriate for typical [wolf] packs consisting of parents and offspring...The linear [social] dominance hierarchy concept has been adopted and perpetuated by popular educational materials about wolves. However, in most wolf packs, family dynamics are more complex" ([Mech and Boitani, 2003](#)). Packard recommends considering variation in individual temperaments, as well as mood. She goes on to say, "The autocratic leading wolf does not exist" ([Mech and Boitani, 2003](#)). According to Mech, wolves live in groups that are "qualified democracies" (2003).

MISUNDERSTANDINGS

There is no credible scientific evidence that "alpha" rolls or scruff shakes are

Social Dominance, continued on pg. 10

Social Dominance, from pg. 9

useful dog training techniques. There is evidence that aversive stimulation (including positive punishment and negative reinforcement) damages any reinforcement history with your dog and may cause stress or aggression via counter-control (Sidman, 2001). The originally observed “alpha roll” was actually a submissive wolf offering his or her belly rather than being forcibly bowled over (Mech and Boitani, 2003). Unfortunately, for dogs, the “alpha” roll became universally popular and misguided humans subject dogs to “alpha” rolls, thinking they are showing their human “dominance.” “Alpha” rolls and scruff shakes frighten dogs and may cause some dogs to become aggressive and bite. We now know that “alpha” rolls are not effective dog training tools, but many professionals cling to the disproved methods. Psychologists refer to this phenomenon as ‘belief persistence’: the belief that remains even in the face of evidence that discredits the belief (Davies, 1997).

Scruff shakes using jaws are used by wolves and dogs in serious fights with each other or to kill prey. Tactile communication of wolves is an area relatively unexplored by research so it is unknown what exactly a wolf may be communicating when she grabs her pups by the scruff and gives them a light shake (Mech and Boitani, 2003). More severe scruff grabbing and shaking behaviors are intended to break the neck of prey.

According to dog training historian Glenn Martyn (personal communication, November 2006), the origin of the scruff shake and “alpha” roll seems to be from dog training literature in both Northern American and English dog training books of the 1930 to 1950s. Today, a half century later, enlightened professionals are still re-educating clients who have been told by misinformed professionals to “alpha” roll or scruff shake the dog.

PUNISHMENT TEMPORARILY STOPS BEHAVIOR

When a dog momentarily suppresses an unwanted behavior in response to scruff shaking behavior, that behavior is reinforced in the human. If a dog growls, and a human grabs the dog and “alpha” rolls the dog, the dog may stop growling for any number of reasons. The human behavior of “alpha” rolling has been

reinforced positively because the dog is frozen temporarily, or not offering an active response. The human may feel power and control as a result, which will encourage the human to continue to use the aversive method. The fact that the “alpha” roll or scruff shake intimidates means that these can suppress behavior temporarily. In turn, this reinforces the myth that scruff shakes “work.” These techniques “work” only in the most superficial way and only if we disregard the temporary nature of the suppression and the problematic secondary effects.

CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

If the dog growls at a human and the human grabs the dog and “alpha” rolls him, with time the frightened dog may growl again. So, the human scruff shakes the dog again. The dog then growls again and is now labeled as “extremely dominant,” requiring that even harsher techniques are used. This is how the cycle of violence is created and continues. Is this how we want our clients to live with their dogs? Should every interaction eventually become a struggle for supremacy? Or, do we prefer cohesion? It is interesting that social dominance is discussed broadly, but, until recently, social cohesion has been ignored. Is this a result of the human need for control (O’Heare, 2006)?

MUZZLE GRABBING

Another dog training myth states that a human can show “dominance” to a dog by grabbing the dog’s muzzle. The muzzle grab, if it does not frighten the dog, may be a cohesive behavior, rather than one used in conflict. Researchers have observed that pups are not afraid of parents who muzzle grabbed them and that the muzzle grabbing is followed by the pup moving closer to and engaging in affiliative behaviors with the parent (Mech and Boitani, 2003). A human who roughly grabs the dog’s muzzle is not exhibiting a behavior analogous to the canine parental behavior and may frighten a dog, leading to a bite (Sidman, 2001).

DISPERSAL

In addition to the misconception that wolves live in linear hierarchies, researchers in the last decade have learned that wolves do not need to

climb the “ranks” to breed. Wolves live in an extended social family until they are sexually mature—around 2 years of age—at which point they disperse (Mech and Boitani, 2003). They may encounter other wolves and eventually form a new family, return to their original pack, or engage in both strategies over time. The fact that wolves disperse further alters the misconception of the linear structure of social relations in a traditional wolf pack.

An easy way to set up a power struggle is to tell one individual that the other individual is “dominant” and that only one individual can “win.” To humans, being “dominated” means being walked on, being manipulated, and, possibly, being unsafe. By bringing the power struggle of social dominance into the human–dog relationship, we are setting the stage for conflict, rather than for cooperation. Cooperation between human and dog seems a more effective, safe, and fun.

I AM “DOMINANT”

“Dominance” is equated with exertion of influence and control (O’Heare, 2007a). “Submission” is viewed as losing, possibly resulting death. A true partnership cannot exist if one individual is considered “superior”/“dominant” to another. “Dominant” beings require “submissive” beings for social survival.

Instead, social species are dependent on each other physically and emotionally. One animal cares for the puppies, one animal hunts, and another animal babysits so the mother gets a break. We are most effective when working as a team. As Dee Ganley, CABC, author of *Teaching People, Teaching Dogs* puts it, “I feel the human-dog relationship is like dancing, some times I lead and other times the dog does!” This is good advice for trainers and veterinary behaviorists also.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Special thanks to Beth Duman and James O’Heare, CABC (www.JamesOHeare.com) for help with this article. Appreciation to Ann P. Fox (Obi) for comment. This article is dedicated to Russell, now Mak, a fearful dog that was labeled dominant and nearly killed as a result.

References available by request from the newsletter editor. 🐾

SVBT Executive Board Nominations

Do you want to be more involved in the SVBT? Now is your chance!

It is time to begin the 2008-2009 executive board election process. All candidates must hold a professional membership (student and subscription memberships are not eligible for nomination) in the SVBT and be members in good standing, have reliable email and internet access, respond to executive board emails within 48 hours and attend online and/or phone conference board meetings every six weeks (subject to change as needed). All board members must also be able to attend the SVBT's annual board meeting held in conjunction with the AVMA conference in July.

2008-2009 Executive Board Nomination Form

The Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians (SVBT) is seeking executive board nominations for 2008-2009. Each nominee must:

- Be an active member in good standing
- Consent to be nominated
- Commit to attend at least six executive board meetings for the 2008-2009 year
- Be available to the executive board via email and the internet.

Accepting nominations for the following positions:

President-elect: 1-year term with automatic succession to the office of President. This is a three-year commitment (president-elect, president, past-president). President-elect serves as President in the temporary absence of the President, cooperates in promotional activities, assists in the organizing of the annual meeting including the continuing education program, chairs the finance committee and signs checks if the treasurer becomes incapacitated.

Member at Large: 2-year term. There shall be two Members-at-large who act as voting members on the executive board.

Please complete the following form and mail it to Ginny Price
or complete the form online at www.svbt.org.

All nominations must be completed by March 1, 2008.

SVBT Nomination Committee

Ginny Price, MS, CVT

6422 29 Way North

St. Petersburg, FL 33702-6227



Nominee: _____

Credentials: LVT RVT CVT

Other: _____

States Licensed: _____

Year of Graduation: _____

Institution: _____

Nominee's mailing address: _____

Telephone: home, work, fax _____

Email: _____

Best Time/Method to Contact: _____

Nominated by: Self SVBT Member _____

Office Nominated For: President Elect (1-yr term) Member at Large (2-yr term)



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