Welcome to the thirteenth edition of Behavior News, the newsletter designed to keep veterinary staff and other animal handlers up to date on current behavior recommendations for companion animals. In this issue we highlight our friendly and feisty feline friends with several articles about their behavior. We also offer insight into a few new books and pet products.

For additional resources on animal behavior at The Ohio State University, please visit: vet.osu.edu/Behavior and vet.osu.edu/CommunityPractice.

Animal Behavior in Social Media

Social media is rapidly becoming the front-runner for disseminating information and knowledge. Check out the following online veterinary behavior articles:

Veterinary behaviorist Dr. Debra Horwitz shares advice on calming social conflict between cats on the Psychology Today “Decoding Your Pet” blog:
www.psychologytoday.com/blog/decoding-your-pet/201512/social-conflict-between-household-cats

Veterinary behaviorist Dr. Emily Levine discusses the role pain can play in animal behavior:
www.psychologytoday.com/blog/decoding-your-pet/201602/your-dog-can-t-be-in-pain-he-runs-and-plays-think-again
In the News

Information from the Indoor Pet Initiative, formerly known as the Indoor Cat Initiative, was recently featured on PetMD.com:

www.petmd.com/cat/training/evr_ct_how-to-keep-a-cat-from-scratching-furniture

Indoor Pet Initiative is a collaborative effort between Drs. Tony Buffington, Judy Stella, Meghan Herron and Ms. Traci Shreyer to provide online behavior and wellness information to dog and cat owners, as well as their veterinarians.

We’d like to take this opportunity to highlight the original article from Indoorpet.osu.edu.

Scratching Behaviors
From the Indoor Pet Initiative

Scratching is a natural behavior for cats. Cats scratch to stretch their muscles, shed old cuticle, sharpen their claws, and leave scent marks. Even if declawed, cats retain the instinct to scratch. Scratching posts provide cats with an outlet for their instinct to scratch while at the same time saving your furniture and carpets! In order to choose the right scratching post for your cat, consider the following:

What does your cat like to scratch?
Choose a scratching post that is similar to the material your cat most likes to scratch. Most, but not all, cats prefer scratching posts made out of rough material they can shred. Sisal scratching posts are ideal because they are satisfying to scratch and tough enough to stand up to repeated use. Vertical or upright and horizontal or flat scratching posts are available in a variety of sizes and materials including sisal (a coarse natural fiber), carpet and cardboard.

Cats that scratch chair legs or the corners of your couch may prefer a vertical scratching post. Make sure that vertical scratching posts are tall enough so that your cat can stretch up to scratch. Cats that scratch rugs and carpets may prefer a horizontal scratching post or mat. Scratching posts should be stabilized to ensure that they don’t move or tip over and scare your cat while they are using them.

Where does your cat scratch?
Cats scratch to leave scent marks that define their territory and tell other cats they have passed through. They will often scratch prominent objects near sleeping areas and room entrances. Therefore, scratching posts should be located in these and other “public” parts of the house that the whole family uses. In multi-cat households there should be several scratching posts, both vertical and horizontal, located throughout the house. These posts should be placed in areas where the cats congregate and along their routes to common areas such as food and water bowls, and litter boxes. Setting up multiple scratching posts provides the cats with an acceptable place to leave their mark without ruining furniture and carpets.

continued on page 3
Scratching Behaviors continued from page 2

What if my cat won’t use the scratching post?

Considering your cat’s demonstrated preferences, substitute similar objects for them to scratch. Place the scratching post near the object you want the cat to stop scratching. Cover the inappropriate objects with something your cat will find unappealing, such as double sided sticky tape, aluminum foil, sheets of sandpaper or a plastic carpet runner with the pointy side up.

You may give the objects an objectionable odor by attaching cotton balls soaked with a citrus scent or perfume. Don’t use anything that could harm the cat if they ingest it and be careful with strong odors because you don’t want the nearby acceptable objects to also smell unpleasant.

When your cat is consistently using the scratching post, it can be moved very gradually (no more than three inches each day) to a location more suitable to you. It’s best, however, to keep the scratching post as close to your cat’s preferred scratching locations as possible.

Trimming your cat’s nails

Nail trims are an easy, and often overlooked, way to reduce damage from scratching. You can clip off the sharp tips of your cat’s claws about once a week. There are several types of nail trimmers designed especially for cats. These are better than your own nail clipper because they won’t crush the nail bed.

Before trimming your cat’s claws, accustom then to having their paws handled and squeezed. You can do this by gently petting their legs and paws while giving them a treat. This will help to make it a more pleasant experience.

Gradually increase the pressure so that petting becomes gentle squeezing, as you’ll need to do this to extend the claw. Continue with the treats until your cat tolerates having their feet handled. When they are ready, apply a small amount of pressure to the cat’s paw, with your thumb on top of the paw and your index finger underneath, until a claw is extended. Near the cat’s nail bed you should be able to see a pink area, called the “quick”, which is a small blood vessel.

Don’t cut into the pink portion of the nail because it will bleed and be painful for the cat. Cut off just the sharp tip of the claw to dull the claw. Go slowly with your cat or they may become fearful of having their nails trimmed. To begin with, trim just one foot each day. As your cat becomes accustomed to having their nails clipped, you can trim all four feet at the same time.

If you prefer not to trim your cat’s nails, you can purchase soft plastic caps that fit over the nail. Nail caps are available under the brand name Soft Paws and are available in a variety of sizes and colors. For more information on nail caps please visit catscratching.com.
How to Introduce A New Cat to Your Current Cat

by Monica Monto, DVM – Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine Class of 2012

The process of introducing a new cat to resident cat(s) is a delicate task. It requires planning and patience. Introductions take time and one can never go too slow during this process. These introductions could take from days, to weeks, to months.

Just like humans, first impressions to cats are everything. For this reason, cats should never just be placed together in order to “fight it out”. This could cause cats to become injured or possibly create prolonged or even permanent conflicts between the cats. In order to avoid bad experiences and encourage good ones, this step-by-step guide can help set cats up for success when being introduced.

**Step 1:** Set up a room that is just for the new cat. Make sure the room contains a litter box only for the new cat. Also make sure to provide all other amenities, such as water and food bowls, toys, bed, hiding areas, and scratching post. This confined area will help the new cat feel comfortable and provide a safe place to go to when the face to face introductions begin.

**Step 2:** When bringing a new cat home prevent it from seeing the resident cat(s) from the carrier. Do not allow the cats to see or touch each other. Do not set the carrier down with the new cat in it and let the others go up and smell the cat. This can be very scary for the new cat, as it is not only being approached by strange new cats but it also has no way to retreat if it feels threatened. Take the new cat directly to the new room, shut the door behind you, place the carrier on the floor and open the door. Allow the cat to come out on her own time. You may have to leave the room to allow the cat to come out and explore without anyone in the room.

**Step 3:** Once the new kitty is comfortable in her new room—which could take hours to days—you can begin to introduce the scents of the resident cat(s) to her and vice versa. You can swap the beds that the cats lie in or you can swap towels on which each of the cats has lain or been rubbed. This allows them to get used to the scent using something that won’t alarm them. You can also rub each cat with toys and then swap them so that they associate the smell with something good.

Another idea is to attach two toys together with a string that is placed under the door to the new cat’s room. The cats can play together without seeing each other and they may touch paws.

**Step 4:** Once the cats seem comfortable with each other’s smell, they can be allowed to explore each other’s areas (without actually being in the same room together). This can be done by removing the new cat to a separate room that is unoccupied by other cats. Allow the resident cats to enter the new cat’s room to explore and smell around.

The new cat can be brought into one or two rooms that the resident cat(s) frequent and allowed to explore. Remember that it is necessary to supervise the new cat so there are not any negative experiences that happen while she is exploring this new area.

continued on page 5
How to Introduce A New Cat to Your Current Cat - continued

**Step 5:** After the cats seem to be OK with the smells of each other, try feeding the new cat and the resident cat on their respective sides of a closed door. The cats will associate the smell of each other with good things. This step should move slowly. If the bowls are moved too close to the door too quickly, you risk one or both cats not eating due to fear.

Once the kitties are doing well with eating with the bowls close to the door, you can try offering high value treats to each cat at the same time on each side of the door. This would work best if there were a person on each side of the door with whom the cats are familiar.

Taking small bits of highly palatable food and placing or tossing them toward the door will allow the cats to associate each other’s smell with good things. Highly valuable food items for cats may be tuna, rotisserie chicken, salmon, or cheese.

**Seeing each other for the first time!**

**Step 6:** This would ideally be performed with a person on each side of the door. Prop the door open about one inch with doorstops. Allow the cats to see one another and possibly place a paw through but no more. Highly palatable foods can be offered to both cats to keep this step of the introduction positive.

Make sure that the cats are calm when introduced. If one or both cats show fear or aggression, stop and go back to the previous step where the cats were comfortable. Once step 6 is mastered, you can begin to open the door a little more each time so that the cats can see one another but not get to each other.

**Allowing the cats a full view of one another without touching**

**Step 7:** A moveable screen door is ideal for this step, but baby gates stacked on top of one another or a glass door would also work. Allow the cats to go up to one another, offering them food and treats while they are relaxed. If either of the cats becomes fearful or aggressive, go back to where the cats were comfortable. This does not mean that you have to go back to a previous step: it may just be that the cats need to be further from the door when they see each other.

continued on page 6
How to Introduce A New Cat to Your Current Cat - continued

Step 8: Once the cats are able to complete all the above steps without agitation or fear, they may have their first face-to-face meeting. Make sure that the environment around them is as relaxed as it was for any other step and that the cats are relaxed. Keep the initial meetings brief and continue to offer good things like food, toys and attention.

If either cat gets fearful or aggressive, stop and return cats to their respective areas and try again later. This can be done by distracting the cats with another toy or calling the resident cat to the kitchen for food. If the cats begin to fight, distract them away from each other. DO NOT reach in to try and break up a fight: you may get bitten.

A loud noise may be enough to startle the cats from fighting enough to get them apart and into their rooms. A loud clap or air horn could be used, a thick blanket tossed on top of them, or a squirt bottle or large glass of water dumped on them could work. This is not to be repeated but only used to break up a confrontation before one of them gets hurt.

Try to be consistent and calm throughout this process. Don’t change routines that the resident cat had before the new cat arrived. If you have to do so, do so gradually. Remember to keep all aspects enjoyable for all of the cats and avoid punishment, which can make situations worse. If the cats show fear (dilated pupils, hissing, growling, puffed up tail) or agitation at any step, stop and go back to the step at which the cats were calm and relaxed and spend time there before moving on.

Allow the new cat access to the safe room at all times so that there is always a safe place to retreat. Spend time playing and interacting with each cat separately from the beginning. If either cat shows signs of anxiety or stress, such as hiding, excessive vocalizing, aggression or appetite changes that continue for a more than a few days, or if either cat stops eating, consult your veterinarian.

Keep in mind there are some cats that will never be able to live with another cat. If you find that, even with all of your hard work the cats are still not getting along, consult your veterinarian or animal behaviorist. Remember the saying that “slow and steady wins the race.” Patience is key with feline introductions.
Upcoming Events

American College of Veterinary Behaviorists
2016 Veterinary Behavior Symposium
Friday, August 5, 2016 – San Antonio, Texas
Keynote Speaker: Jaak Panksepp
Click here to register

Save the Date

2016 AVSAB Meeting

When: December 9-11, 2016 Where: Las Vegas, Nevada

Once again, AVSAB is teaming up with the SVBT (The Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians) and the AVBT (The Academy of Veterinary Behavior Technicians) to hold another interactive, hands-on conference in 2016!

The 2015 conference sold out quickly and received excellent reviews, so we anticipate that seats will go fast again. More details are forthcoming. You can also visit the dedicated website for updates: Animal Behavior Conference

The conference is open to all behavior professionals, but if you are not already a member and would like to join the AVSAB, please click this link: Join the AVSAB!
A Clean Slate
by Rebecca Aguilar, Behavior Club Treasurer, Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine 2018

For this article, I wanted to reflect on my personal shift in training style, and more importantly my interpretation of behavior. I have had dogs in the past and have read books about dog breeds, training, etc. Unfortunately, I just hadn’t come across the latest research on training methods and dog behavior.

I was using outdated methods and relying on refuted dominance- and punishment-based training. While training my dogs I noticed my methods did not consistently change behavior in the way that I wanted. For example, when I used verbal or leash corrections in low distraction situations, they seemed to work. However, if the dog’s level of arousal increased because they were excited to see someone or wanted to chase a squirrel, saying “No” or popping the leash did not work.

Because it wasn’t working, I would either increase my volume or force of corrections. Many times even that wasn’t enough! I was forced to hold back my dog until the distraction had passed. This was very frustrating! I realized that I was not enjoying these high-stress situations and neither was my dog. Even worse, I didn’t realize the negative repercussions that could result from my actions, like the dog developing fear toward anything that was in the environment during the correction.

During my first year of vet school I had an animal behavior class co-taught by Dr. Meghan Herron, Ohio State’s board-certified veterinary behaviorist. I learned that the entire basis of my training style was terribly misinformed! I learned to accurately interpret dog behavior when they felt scared, nervous or relaxed. This is the most important factor that changed my training style. Once I knew how to interpret behavior, I could see firsthand the negative effect that punishment-based training has on dogs: they are afraid!

They are not trying to dominate us! Dogs are simply performing actions that result in rewards, either from us or the environment. This was revolutionary for me. I urge anyone who is still using punishment to simply read accurate resources about how to interpret behavior and positive-reinforcement training.

Since I have started shifting my outlook, I have become more passionate about behavior and learning all that I can. It’s exciting to find new ways to train that work better than my old methods. More importantly, my dogs and I are thoroughly enjoying training, even in high-distraction situations. I urge anyone uncertain about positive reinforcement techniques to read more about it and try it with your own pets. Finding the right resources is essential.

Below is a list of online resources to get your daily behavior fix. A little reading everyday goes a long way!

**Websites**
- avsabonline.org/resources/position-statements
- indoorpet.osu.edu
- drsophiayin.com
- positively.com
- patriciamcconnell.com/theotherendoftheleash
- fannygott.com
- psychologytoday.com/blog/decoding-your-pet

**Facebook Pages**
- American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior
- Sophia Yin
- International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants
- Vet Behavior Team
- Reisner Veterinary Behavior & Consulting Services
- Society of Veterinary Behavior Technicians
- Victoria Stilwell
- absoluteDOGS
Book Review
by Melissa Marmaduke Link, Behavior Club President,
Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine 2017

Tell Your Dog You’re Pregnant
Dr. Lewis Kirkham BVSc, MRCVS, CMAVA, MANZCVSc (Animal Behavior)

Pregnancy brings a multitude of emotions into the expecting home, including love, adoration, joy and anxiety. For expecting couples that are pet parents, pregnancy can also bring uncertainty into the pet’s life. Many expecting parents will be given advice regarding their pet and future child from doctors, family members, friends and veterinarians, but which advice should you follow to prepare your furry companion for the arrival of your soon-to-be bundle of joy?

Tell Your Dog You’re Pregnant by Dr. Lewis Kirkham provides an easy step-by-step guide for dog owners who are expecting a baby. In Dr. Kirkham’s book, expectant parents will learn how to:

• Prepare your dog for the baby
• Accustom your dog to numerous baby sounds, including toy noises
• Introduce your dog and baby for the first time
• Read and interpret your dog’s body language
• Adjust your routine and the household to keep your dog calm
• Recognize your dog’s warning signs
• Know when you need professional assistance

Tell Your Dog You’re Pregnant comes with a CD of 13 baby and toy sounds to help prepare your dog for the future arrival of your baby. The book also provides short case studies Dr. Kirkham has worked through to bring real-world scenarios to the table. This short 100 page guide to preparing your dog for a new baby is truly a must buy for all expectant families with dogs. Dr. Kirkham has also published Tell Your Cat You’re Pregnant for expectant families with cats.
Product Review:  
The Wheeky™ Treat Ball - Enrichment for Pocket Pets  
by Chelsea Ruzzo, Behavior Club Secretary Ohio State College of Veterinary Medicine 2018

The Wheeky™ treat ball is a new product specifically designed for guinea pigs, rabbits and other small mammals. It is made of heavy duty plastic to prevent chewing and is appropriately sized for pocket pets. I have used this product for my two Guinea pigs and overall really like it. It only took about a week to teach them that nudging the ball forward made the food fall out of the opening. I recommend starting with high value treats, such as Oxbow Barley Biscuits, to entice your pet to investigate the Wheeky™ treat ball. You can also place a small piece of their favorite fruit or veggie underneath the treat ball where they can see it poking out and are easily able to get the treat by slightly moving the ball. You may need to roll the ball and let pieces of treat fall out in the beginning so they understand how to use their new toy.

It is important to remember that Guinea pigs and rabbits have sensitive stomachs, so break treats into small pieces so they don’t eat too many treats in one day. Once the Guinea pig gets the hang of it, you can transition to putting their pellets in the treat ball and feeding them from it instead of using a bowl.

Another benefit of the treat ball is it slows down eating. My Guinea pigs love their pellets and would eat them as fast as possible from their bowls. With the Wheeky™ treat ball their pellets last much longer. This product is not only mentally stimulating, but also provides physical stimulation as they spend more time moving about their cage. One of my Guinea pigs even manipulates the ball with her paw.

There are a couple of disadvantages to this product. The ball doesn’t come apart, so cleaning can be difficult, especially if fruit or veggie pieces are placed inside. Dry treats and pellets would probably work best in this product. The ball works best on smooth surfaces, so it may be more difficult to use in a cage with shavings. I use fleece bedding in my cage and the ball rolls nicely. If shavings are used in the cage, the balls can be used outside the cage during floor time instead. Once the Guinea pig understands how the treat ball works, the shavings may add increased difficulty and provide additional mental stimulation.

Overall, I think this is a well-made product and would recommend it. The price is reasonable and the product appears durable. For ordering information, visit mySTAYbowl.com.