Welcome to the twelfth 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 will introduce new members of our team, discuss some of the benefits of low-stress handling in small animal practice and some quick insight to ferret 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

Animal Behavior in Social Media

Social media is rapidly becoming the frontrunner for information and knowledge sharing and delivery. For those of you with an interest in veterinary behavior, you might consider checking out the following pages and blogs.


psychologytoday.com/blog/decoding-your-pet/201509/risk-analysis-behavior-problems-overview-part-1

psychologytoday.com/blog/decoding-your-pet/201510/risk-analysis-behavior-problems-animal-factors-2

Reisner Veterinary Behavior and Consulting Services on Facebook

facebook.com/ReisnerVetBehavior
New Additions

The OSU-VMC is pleased to welcome a new service coordinator to Behavioral Medicine. Ms. Laura Donaldson joined the team on October 5, 2015. Laura is a licensed veterinary technician with a BS in Communications from Central Penn and an AAS in Veterinary Technology from Columbus State. She has been involved in veterinary medicine since 1990, with varied experiences ranging from equine assistant to small animal emergency technician, and management of multi-site small animal hospitals. Currently, Laura is also an Adjunct Faculty Member in the Veterinary Technology Department at Columbus State, where she teaches many labs, including sections that identify the role of the veterinary technician as a member of the veterinary health care team, through patient handling, restraint, assessment, medicating techniques, and venipuncture for canine and feline species. She enjoys teaching about behavior and training for companion animals, and looks forward to involvement in puppy socialization classes and helping the clients and patients at the Veterinary Medical Center.

Dr. Taylor Kirby-Madden, OSU-CVM 2014 graduate, is beginning the process of a non-conforming residency in Behavioral Medicine at the Angell Memorial Animal Hospital in Boston, MA. She will be spending the Fall semester with Dr. Herron. Dr. Kirby-Madden earned her BA in English Literature from the University of Vermont, and spent several years working at animal shelters in Massachusetts and Ohio. While in veterinary school, she was President of the OSU-CVM Behavior Club, and a founding student leader for the elective shelter enrichment course based at the Franklin County Dog Shelter. Dr. Kirby-Madden was a participant in the 2012 OSU Veterinary Scholar Summer Research Program, where she worked with Dr. Herron to design a study on the efficacy of the shelter enrichment program on the behavior of dogs. The results of this study were presented at the 2013 meeting of the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, and then later published in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association.
Incorporating low-stress handling into your practice
by Taylor Kirby-Madden, DVM

Low-stress or Fear Free™ handling is a trend that is gaining traction in the veterinary community, and for good reason. Veterinarians and staff can implement relatively easy and low-cost changes to improve our patient’s experience, as well as modeling humane techniques to our clients. For many practitioners, the emphasis on reducing fear during veterinary exams has obvious benefits. When our patients are more comfortable, they are less likely to use aggression and cause injury to themselves or staff. Examinations are more fruitful in relaxed patients, and lab work and vital parameters are more likely to be within normal limits (ex., hyperglycemia in cats). Low-stress techniques can be used prophylactically to prevent the development of handling-induced aggression. For many vets, having patients that eagerly approach us rather than hiding is a reward in itself, we entered the field because we love animals, which can often be an unrequited sentiment in the hospital setting!

The standards for handling dogs and cats have changed dramatically over the last few decades, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the new 2015 AAHA Behavior Management guidelines1. This comprehensive resource represents the general consensus of behaviorists and can be used to help any practitioner to review their current handling paradigm. Overall, clinicians ought to strive to use the least amount of restraint necessary for a procedure, and keep a keen eye on changes in body language. Reassess frequently, and teach clients signs of discomfort and ask them to report what they are seeing back to you. This allows you to engage owners as participants in their pets’ care as well as encouraging them to practice “reading” the subtle language of dogs and cats.

For resources on canine and feline body language for clients, visit aspca.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/dog-behavior/canine-body-language. Veterinarians and staff who are interested in learning more about low-stress handling can complete an online certification designed by the late Dr. Sophia Yin2. The Ohio State Veterinary Medical Center’s Community Practice staff recently achieved their certification, and have been teaching these techniques to fourth-year veterinary students for years. Below are a few tips that can help you begin making veterinary visits more pleasant for everyone.

Make your waiting area as calm as possible. Move animals into exam rooms quickly, and think about trying to separate cats and dogs in the lobby. For very anxious or disruptive dogs, owners may take them outside or wait in their cars until a room is available. You may offer in-room check out for these pets as well. Teach staff to identify the animals that may need intervention and to act before an animal is already panicking.

In your exam rooms, add pheromone diffusers. Add white noise machines to block noise from other areas of the hospital. Offer non-slip flooring (rubber mats, etc). If your patient is reactive to people, think about having your doctor already in the exam room, rather than entering a few minutes later.

Do your physical exam on the floor, especially for larger dogs. In one study, dogs display less signs of fear when examined on the floor rather than the table3, and cats may prefer to stay in their carriers with the top removed.

continued on page 4
Be generous with treats. For many dogs and cats, food is the fastest and easiest way to change the emotional response. To minimize gastrointestinal upset, you can use canned EN or i/d, as most dogs find these palatable. For more discerning palates, peanut butter, chicken baby food, squeeze cheese, and Braunschweiger can be offered. If you know your patient has dietary restrictions, either ask their owners to bring treats with them or carry some hypoallergenic options for special cases.

When offering treats, remember to feed early and often. Start a steady stream of tiny pieces before you even touch your patient, and increase the rate before you begin something objectionable (nail trim, etc). If your patient stops eating suddenly, that is a good indication that they are uncomfortable with what you are doing. If you are able, give them a few moments and try again slowly. You can have staff or the owner assist you with treat delivery, as long as they are able to feed quickly enough.

Use basket muzzles for dogs with whom you are concerned about safety (and ask the owners to train their dog to happily wear a muzzle). The vinyl or rubber muzzles (Jafco or Baskerville, respectively) are soft and allow for treats to be fed through the front. Offer soft treats using pretzel sticks or tongue depressors. Continue to watch for changes in body language and adjust the speed of your exam accordingly. Cats can be wrapped in towels for restraint rather than scruffed. Both dogs and cats may feel more comfortable wearing a Calming Cap designed to block visual access.

Use medications. For dogs and cats with a known history of fear or aggression at the vet, consider having your owners give oral medications prior to their appointment. Trazodone and gabapentin both are mildly anxiolytic and are well-tolerated in most patients, and should be given 90 min-2 hours prior to a stressful event. Try to avoid acepromazine as a sole agent, as it does not reduce panic and can be “overcome” given a strong enough stimulus.

For unanticipated aggression, consider sedating with injectable medications. Many cats can be safely injected intramuscularly from within a soft-sided carrier (ask the owners to place in carrier once they have calmed down). Dogs can be injected IM using a “drive-by” technique, as long as they are securely muzzled and their handler can adequately prevent them from reaching around to their rear. Once medications have been injected, allow the dog or cat to relax in a quiet room with their owners until they are sedate.

Be willing to reschedule. Sometimes, despite our best efforts, there is too much stimulus for a dog or cat and we cannot safely handle them, or they are already too aroused for our sedatives to have enough of an effect at regular doses. These owners should be offered the opportunity to come back and try again. In the meantime, you can discuss muzzle training, oral pre-medications, and Happy Visits.

These are just a few tips to start with; the low-stress handling movement is gaining momentum. Veterinary conferences, webinars, and continuing education events are all offering additional learning opportunities in gentle, humane handling techniques.

1. aaha.org/professional/resources/behavior2015.aspx#gsc.tab=0
2. drsophiayin.com/lowstress/certification
In the News....

On August 24, 2015 OSU’s own Dr. Meghan Herron was a guest on All Sides with Ann Fisher. This session focused on the challenge of choosing a new pet with a highlight on the recent Dr. Seuss publication “What Pet Should I Get?”. Dr. Herron and her co-guest Rachel Finney give helpful advice on pet selection and problem prevention. Watch or listen to the full session: radio.wosu.org/post/choosing-right-pet#stream/0

Congratulations are in order!

Congratulations to senior student Nicole Starinsky in achieving the first place Whitney Engler Award for Student Excellence in Applied Animal Behavior Research. Nikki presented her research on the association between outdoor containment systems and behavior in dogs at the Animal Behavior Symposium this past July in Boston. Her manuscript, entitled “Outdoor containment systems for dogs: Use and behavioral associations”, co-authored by Drs. Meghan Herron and Linda Lord, has been accepted for publication in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association. Stay tuned for details!

Announcing new AHAA behavioral guidelines for the handling of dogs and cats in veterinary practice

The 2015 AAHA Canine and Feline Behavior Management Guidelines were developed to provide practitioners and staff with concise, evidence-based information to ensure that the basic behavioral needs of feline and canine patients are understood and met in every practice. Some facility in veterinary behavioral and veterinary behavioral medicine is essential in modern veterinary practice. More cats and dogs are affected by behavioral problems than any other condition. Behavioral problems result in patient suffering and relinquishment and adversely affect staff morale. These guidelines use a fully inclusive team approach to integrate basic behavioral management into everyday patient care using standardized behavioral assessments; create a low-fear and low-stress environment for patients, staff, and owners; and create a cooperative relationship with owners and patients so that the best care can be delivered. The guidelines’ practical, systematic approach allows veterinary staff to understand normal behavior and recognize and intervene in common behavioral problems early in development. The guidelines emphasize that behavioral management is a core competency of any modern practice. (J Am Anim Hosp Assoc 2015; 51:205–221. DOI 10.5326/JAAHA-MS-6527)

To download the full guidelines visit: aaha.org/professional/resources/behavior_management_guidelines.aspx#gsc.tab=0
New Textbook Review
by Meghan E. Herron, DVM, DACVB

Animal Behavior for Shelter Veterinarians and Staff
Edited by Weiss, E., Mohan-Gibbons, H., and Zawistowski, S.

The recently published first edition of Animal Behavior for Shelter Veterinarians and Staff is a long overdue guide to the intricacies of animal behavior and its pervasive role in animal sheltering. From intake to adoption, the book offers insight on how behavior influences factors associated with pet relinquishment, how it affects their stay within a shelter, and how it impacts the chances for successful adoption. The editors provide a compilation of science-based chapters from leading experts in the fields of animal behavior and shelter medicine. The book is divided into four sections, starting with an introduction to dog and cat behavior and the role pets play in today’s society.

The next two sections go into great detail regarding environmental enrichment, housing, and behavioral rehabilitation in both dogs and cats respectively. The final section discusses the transition from shelter to home with a main focus on the human aspects of animal adoption.

The main goal of the book appears to be to provide an overview of dog and cat behavior and a detailed, science-based account of how to maximize welfare and adoptability through behavior-focused management, housing and rehabilitation plan. It is a must read for anyone working with shelter animals and would likely appeal to those who have interest in shelter animals or animal behavior in general.

Save the Date

The 2016 MidWest Veterinary Conference will be offering a range of topics on animal behavior, including canine behavior, feline behavior and behavior in shelter medicine. Each day will offer between 6-12 talks by internationally known speakers, including Dr. Debra Horwitz, Dr. Theresa DePorter, Mr. Steve Dale, and Dr. Pamela Reid.

When
Thursday, February 25, 2016 - Sunday, February 28, 2016
7:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Where
Greater Columbus Convention Center
400 N. High St.
Columbus, Ohio 43215
Register soon at: mvcinfo.org
As a profession we commonly receive questions regarding how we can enrich the lives of our cats and dogs. But what about our client’s other pets? Have you ever wondered what birds, snakes or small mammals like? What would make their cages and outside cage time even better yet? Today we will broach that topic to discuss ferret enrichment.

Ferrets are domesticated “fuzzy weasels” that adorn the homes of approximately 334,000 USA families. These playful critters range from one to five pounds at adulthood and commonly live between six to ten years. With a lifespan comparable to a giant breed dog it is important ferrets are given the enrichment they need to enjoy their long and happy lives, but many may wonder what enrichment I am alluding to.

Ferrets are incredibly social animals and thus the first and foremost consideration when adopting a ferret and discussing enrichment should be how many will I adopt? Ferrets do best with at least one companion; in fact the HOFA suggests that many ferret owners believe three is the best number of ferrets to have so that if one becomes ill or passes away the other two still have each other.

Along with having a companion ferrets need daily time out of their cage. The most common consensus is that ferrets should have a minimum of four hours out of their cage in a ferret safe environment with at least one hour of human interaction daily. I am sure all ferret owners try their best to accomplish these goals, but on busy or tiring days is there any way we can help these owners accomplish these goals? Or suggest alternatives?

The answer is yes; there are many ways to help clients maintain their human-animal bond with these furry critters while providing the stimulus they need. The first goal you can give owners is to create a “ferret safe room” where they can keep their ferret cage and a large assortment of ferret toys and bedding. If owners cannot provide a “ferret room,” how about an exercise pen that can attach to their cage to create a mini-room. The room can then be stocked full of toys that can be rotated weekly to provide the mental and physical enrichment the ferrets need during their time out of the cage, while allowing their owner to get work done around the home.

Ferret toys range from expensive pet store made “ferret tunnels” to a simple cardboard box. In fact in my experience I have found that my ferrets love their cardboard boxes as much as their bought tunnels! Owners can create a maze out of cardboard boxes they receive with packages. Changing the arrangement of these boxes weekly provides new enrichment that works both their mind and body. Old children’s sleeping bags are also a huge hit! The warm, fuzzy sleeping bag provides a tunnel to burrow in while adding the comfort of a bed and being lightweight enough that they can move the sleeping bag to their

continued on page 8
favorite spot. A large dog bowl filled with water can provide a splash zone for any ferret who likes to "dig water." Add a few floatable ping pong balls and you have created a search game. Owners who prefer the ferret sized tunnels can choose to buy a few to connect different areas of the "ferret room" together while owners who prefer to make their own toys can use fleece fabric, large PVC piping, or cardboard. In fact some ferrets like to climb and enjoy having a cat tree in their common area! The wonderful thing about ferrets is that they are so curious and willing to try new items. Simply pick a material, make sure they cannot eat or hurt themselves with it and let your creativity be your guide.

Another way to enrich the lives of your or clients’ ferrets is to have an array of different bedding for them. Ferrets love soft, warm bedding they can curl up into, even better if it is a hammock or swing. To give your ferret mental stimulation you can change the bedding used in your ferret cage every few days or weekly. Not only will this keep the ferret cage clean, it will also make your ferrets think. Change the way the beds are placed or hung in the cage as well when providing this enrichment. Ferret bedding can be bought or made. For anyone interested in making their own I have described a few common ferret-bedding styles below.

Ferret bedding can be made by hand sewing, but the whole process will go much faster if you have a sewing machine. Like I said previously, ferrets love soft bedding and I have found that fleece or flannel works best. First, pick the print or pattern of fabric you like. You can use different fabrics, one a pattern and one a solid color, or you can use one type for the entire project.

**Creating Your Own Ferret Bedding**

**Hammock:**
Cut two pieces of fabric any size you would like
Place or pin the insides/ side you want hidden of each fabric to each other
Sew all four sides of these two pieces together, but leave a small opening on one side
Flip the hammock right-side-out so that you’re inside pieces of fabric are now hidden
The small opening can now be hand sewn or sewn the rest of the way with your sewing machine.

**Tunnel:**
Cut two pieces of fabric any size you would like
Place or pin the insides/ side you want hidden of each fabric to each other
Sew the two long sides together
Flip the fabric right-side-out so that the fabric sides you want showing are now seen
You now have a tunnel!
For a tunnel that can be placed on the floor of the ferret cage you can add a piece of PVC pipe, 4” diameter typically work well, to the ends of your tunnel and hand sew the PVC piece in place.

**Hanging your tunnel and hammock:**
I personally like the look and ease hanging grommets provide, but grommets or scrap fabric will both work well to hang your bedding items. For grommets, go to Home Depot or Lowes and buy their ~$7 grommet kit which will come with grommets and the tools to place them on the four corners of your items. For scrap fabric, loops should be made and sewn into the corners of each item when you are sewing the sides together. You can then use hooks, carabiners, or thick rope to loop through your fabric loops or grommets and tie to the sides of your cage. Make sure you do not suggest hanging bed items with rope when helping a ferret that likes to chew items.
Book Review
by Chelsea Ruzzo, Behavior Club Secretary OSU CVM 2018

Feisty Fido, 2nd edition
Patricia B. McConnell, PhD and Karen B. London, PhD

This short, easy to read guide is a perfect resource for anyone with a leash reactive dog. The book begins by describing how to teach the “watch” cue and the benefit of teaching the dog a behavior incompatible with lunging and barking at other dogs. The book provides step by step directions on how to increase the difficulty of the “watch” cue without overwhelming the dog and setting him up for success. This guide also illustrates other techniques to use in addition to “watch” such as the U-turn and emergency sit-stay. Both of these techniques can be taught and later used in emergency situations where the dog is not going to be able to perform a “watch”. Since every dog is different, the book concludes with some alternative training exercise to curb leash reactivity making it an accessible resource to all dog owners. Examples provided in the book are silly and fun, making the concepts easy to understand and relate to. This is a wonderful book for any dog owner who is struggling with a leash reactive dog.

Product Review: Buster Cube
by Rebecca Aguilar, Behavior Club Treasurer, OSU CVM 2018

The Buster Cube is a fantastic food puzzle toy with many great qualities; first and foremost though, it is SOLID! This toy is built to last and can stand up to even the toughest chewers. I actually first bought this toy because I wanted my lab to have something he couldn’t destroy. As an added bonus, I would also fill it up with his dinner. My Buster Cube has also stood the test of time. It has gone through four labs in eight years with only a few scratches on the surface!

The Buster Cube is made of a hard plastic shell with an inner maze for kibble. There’s a middle cylinder that pops out and the toy splits in half for cleaning. Additionally, it’s dishwasher safe which makes for even easier cleaning. The cube comes in large and small sizes. The large size fits about 2 cups and the small size should fit about a cup.

To get the kibble out, dogs need to push it around with their nose or paw. As the cube rotates, kibble moves through the inner maze and falls out. There are settings to make it easier or harder however, I haven’t seen a huge difference between the two.
In general it has a slower release than some of the other food puzzles available (only a few kibbles per turn), so this toy would be good for a dog that is familiar with food puzzles and is food motivated. This food puzzle can also double as a durable general toy. My dogs love fetching it and kicking it around even when there’s no food in it.

Some cons of this toy are that it is harder than other food puzzles, so some dogs may become bored with it. It’s also very difficult (at least with mine) to take apart for cleaning. This may be due to the construction of cubes vs. others but mine at least is challenging to clean. Another con is that it is very loud when played with on tile. Dogs may have to be confined to carpet with this toy if noise is an issue. However, the pros very much outweigh the cons for most dogs!

Overall, this is a phenomenal food toy that will last a long time and is great for dogs who are strong chewers.