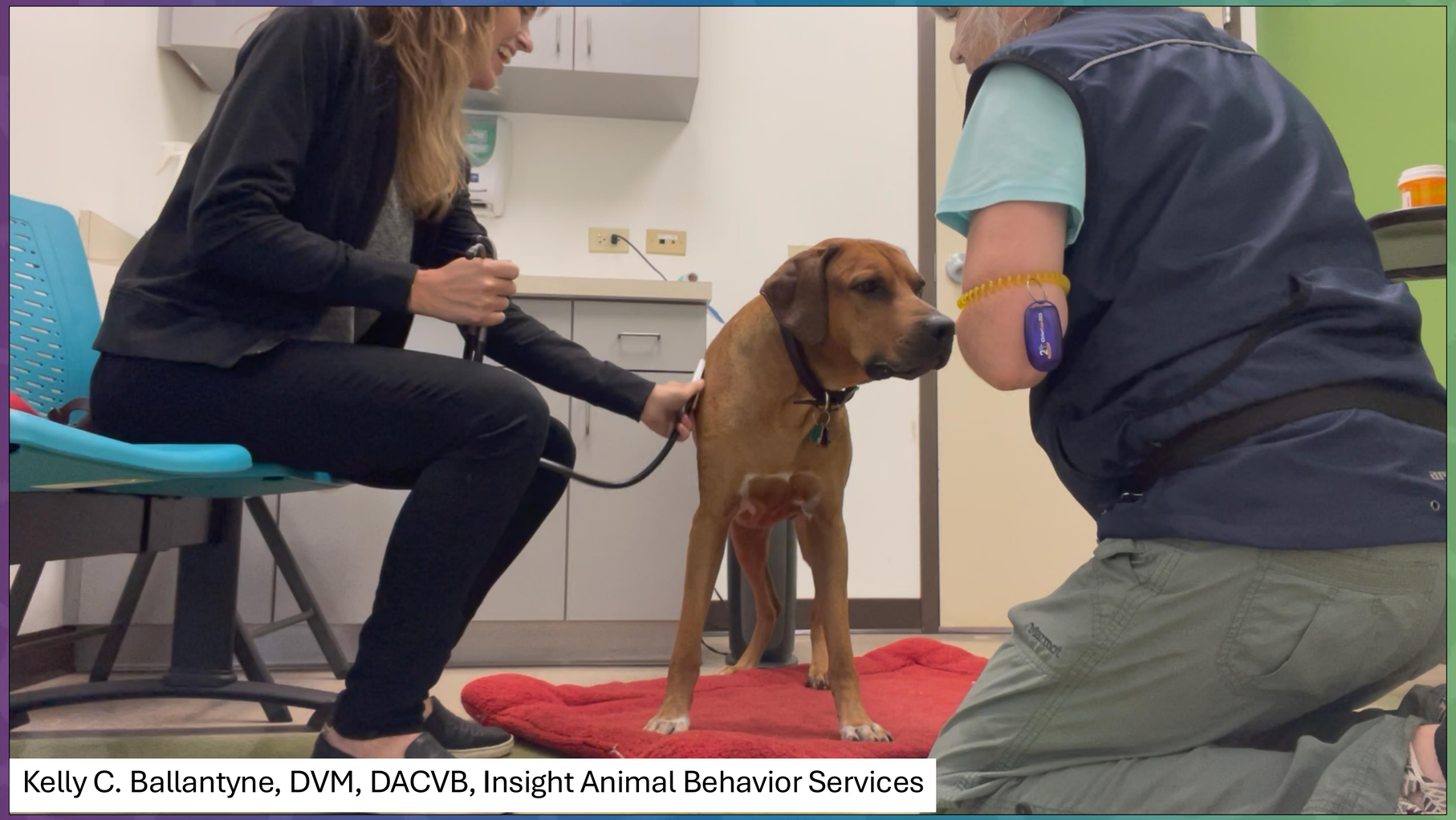
“You want me to do what procedure?” Show What We Want Them to Know



Kelly C. Ballantyne, DVM, DACVB, Insight Animal Behavior Services

Laura Monaco Torelli, KPA CTP/Faculty, CPDT-KA, LSH-Silver, FFCP

Thank you!

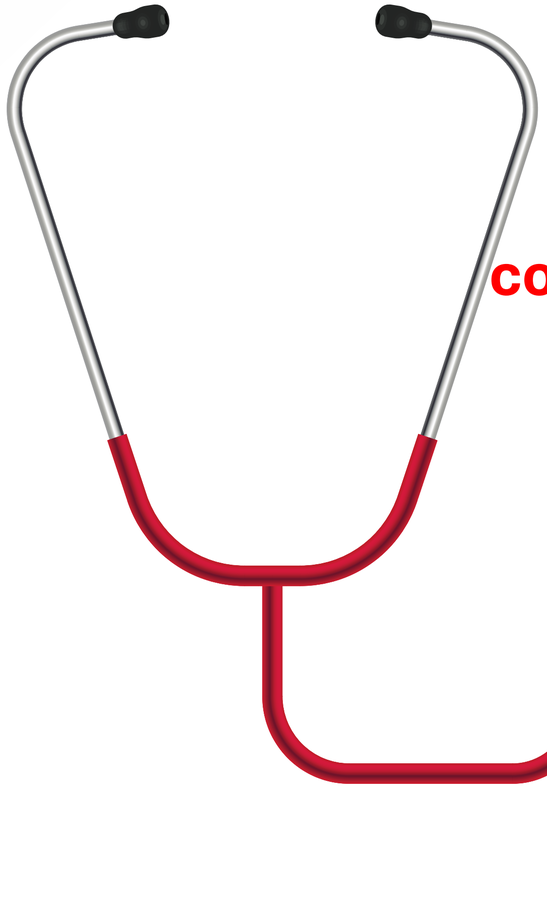
AVSAB
American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior



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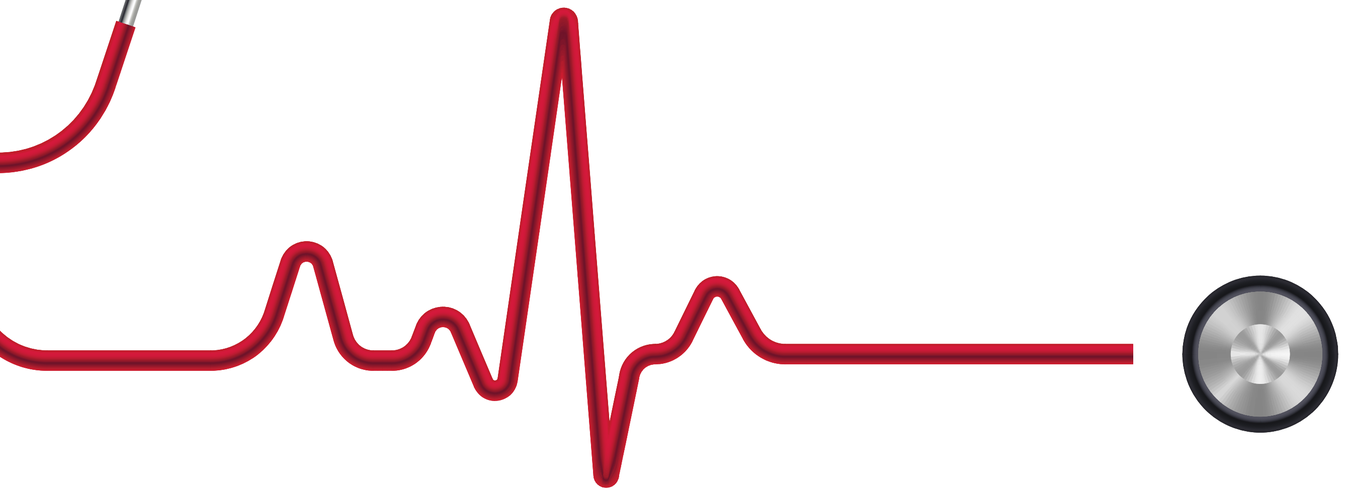
Disclaimer





This presentation offers tips for consideration towards a safe, supportive plan.

Include your veterinary team in the conversation to rule out medical concerns for the animal in your care.



© Laura Monaco Torelli

My Role

- Professional trainer since 1991
- Collaborate with veterinarians across multiple species
- *“We are the eyes and ears for the veterinarian.”* (Ken Ramirez)
- Multiple certifications with a focus on continuing education
- I am not licensed nor qualified to suggest medication & medical advice.
- My focus is collaboration with veterinary team, care team, client and the animal.



Photo: Wildlife Discovery Center | Barred owl

© Laura Monaco Torelli

To Featured Teams

A special thanks to the animal and human teachers featured in this presentation.

We all start from somewhere.

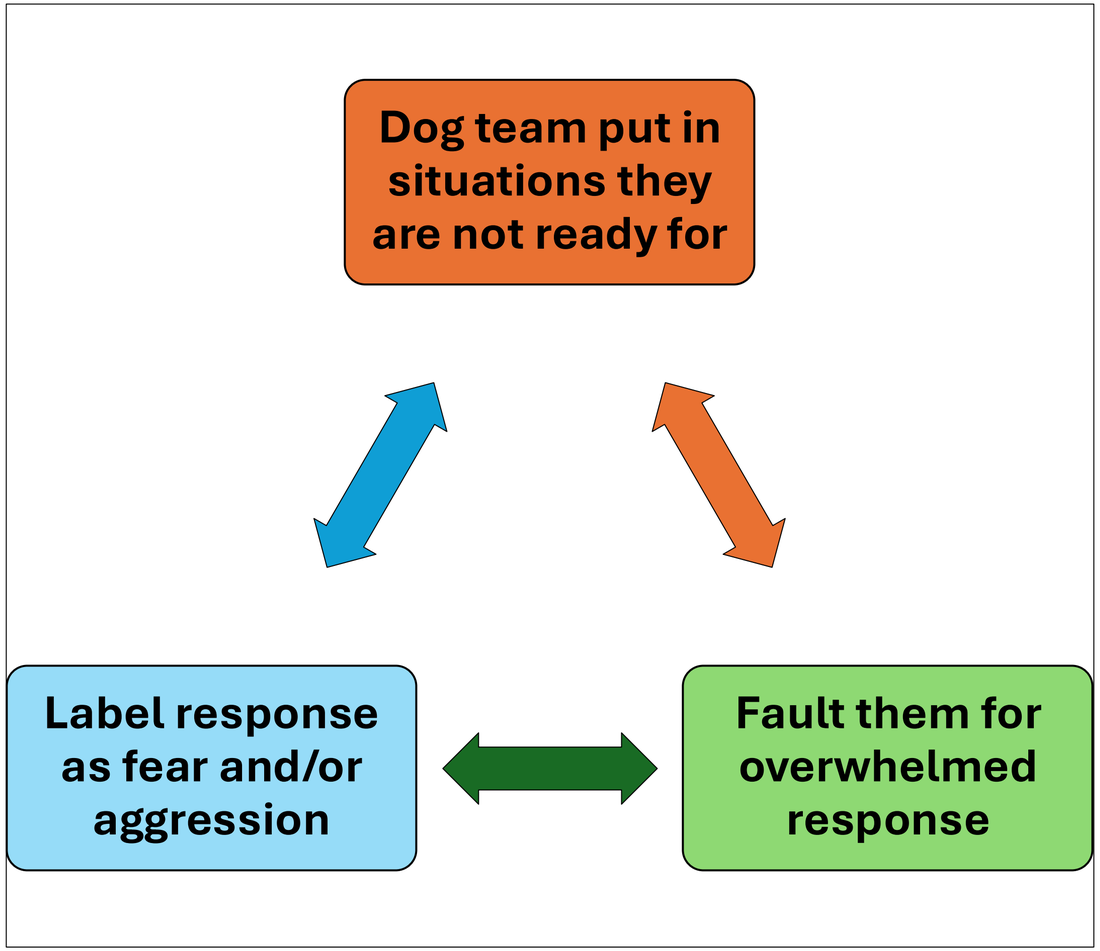
My hope is that a few tips help others' move forward.

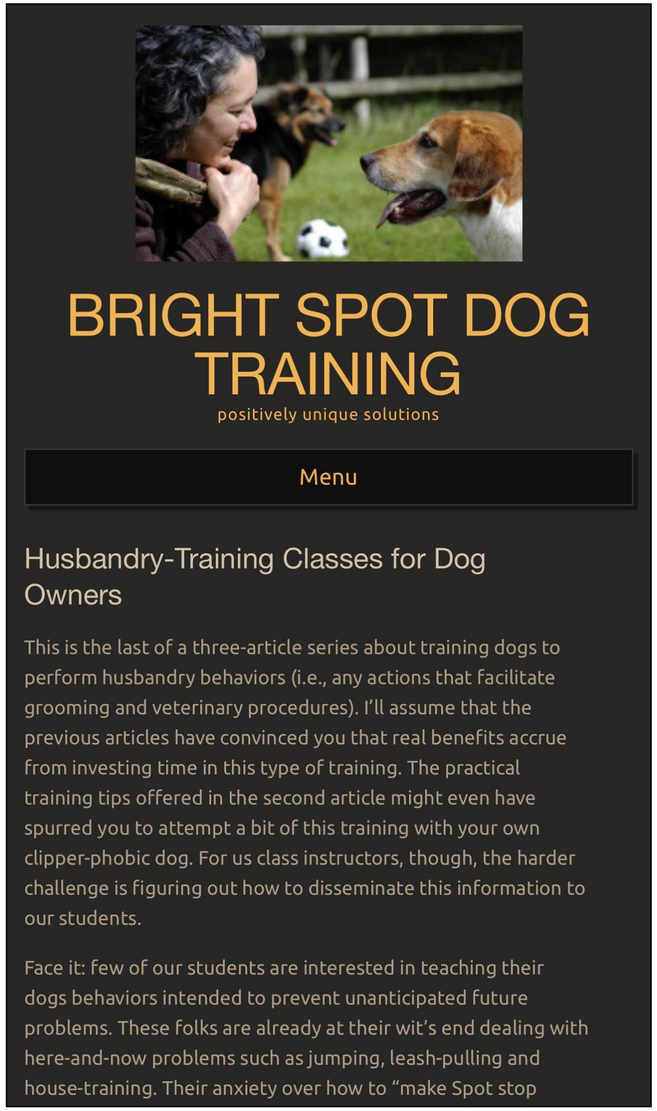


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The Rabbit Hole: Some Thoughts

- Handler care attempts decrease in frequency due to punishing outcomes



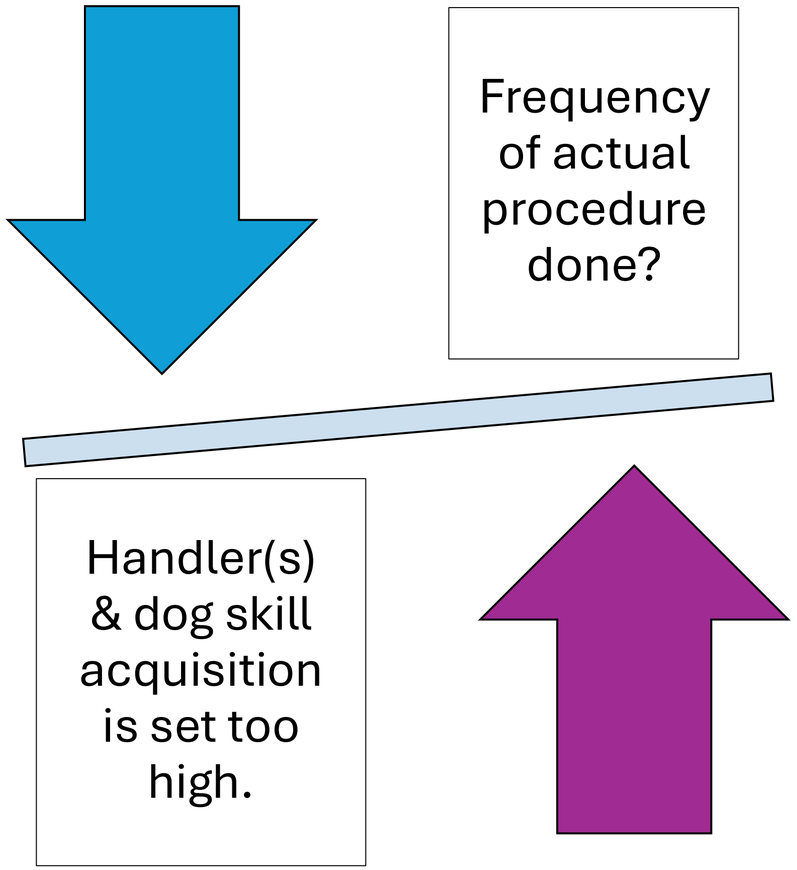


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Tip the Scales

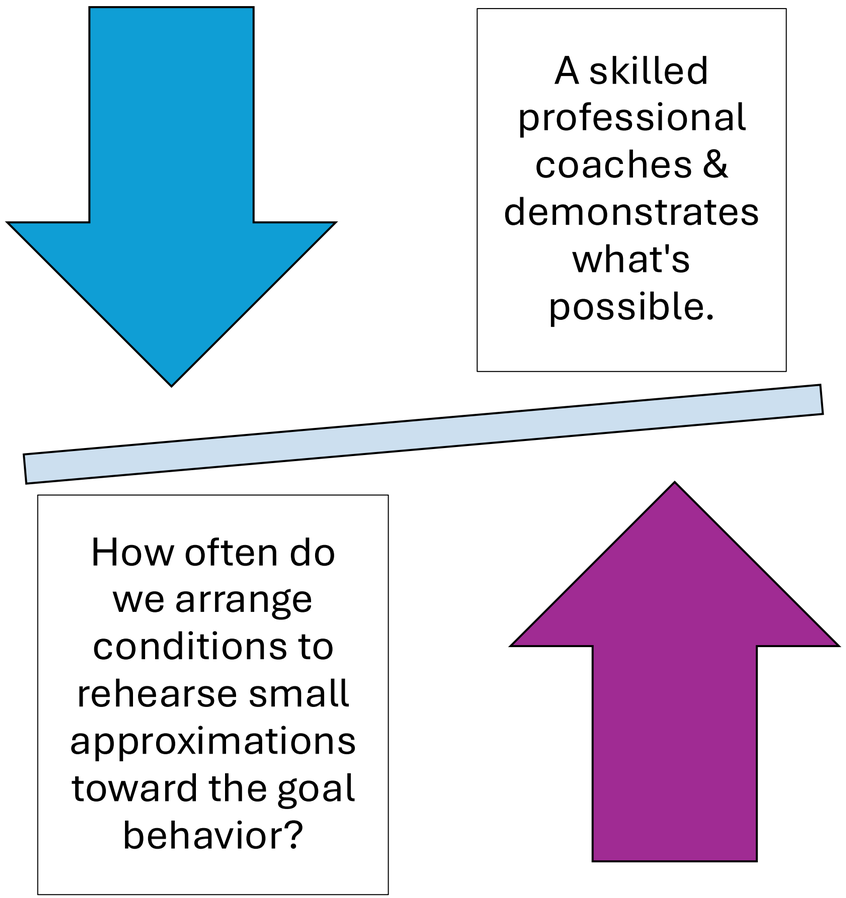
Behavior selection through consequences



© Laura Monaco Torelli

Tip the Scales

Provide team support that examine baseline behaviors. For both animal and all handlers



© Laura Monaco Torelli

Arranging antecedents thoughtfully is helpful and can support behavior change, but antecedent arrangement alone often <u>does not</u> result in *learning*.

True?

False?

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Arranging antecedents thoughtfully is helpful and can support behavior change, but antecedent arrangement alone often <u>does not</u> result in *learning*.

True!

~~False?~~

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Is There a Pre-visit Pharmaceutical Protocol?

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Hi Laura!

The patient is Jackpot, a nearly 4-year-old neutered male Pit Bull mix. He had two intestinal foreign body surgeries at 1 and 2 years of age, and those experiences caused significant emotional trauma. Since then, he has been FAS 4–5 in the veterinary setting with aggression toward staff. Medically, he has been stable with no major health concerns. He is currently on daily fluoxetine (Reconcile), with clonidine and gabapentin as his pre-visit medications.

Because Jackpot is needle phobic, we used a ShotBlocker to help reduce the sensation of the injection. I also used a microbore extension set attached to the syringe to give myself a little more distance from the needle. (This was only for this visit—I was admittedly a little nervous given his history and wanted a small safety net.)

We trained a chin rest as his start button behavior. The verbal cue "steady" from his owner lets Jackpot know the environment is about to change, and "touching" tells him a second person is about to make contact. He was reinforced with a mix of soft treats and yogurt.

After giving him time to settle into the room, we did a brief warm-up, then a reset while I prepared the injectable sedation. We completed one practice repetition with the ShotBlocker, proceeded with the injection, and then finished with a low-pressure cool down before dimming the lights and allowing the sedation to take effect.

After this visit, we completed two happy visits and then his leptospirosis booster, which I am so excited to say went beautifully on only half of his usual pre-visit medication dose.

These owners are truly the kind you dream of working with. We are hoping to continue building on this success and eventually work toward unsedated veterinary visits.

Thank you again for considering my video and for such a wonderful course. I have learned so much, and I can't wait to take your Cooperative Care Excel class next time!

Warm regards,

Kristin

- Vet professional on the Left is Kristin Peterson LVT, KPA CTP
- Middle is Jessica Odell (Jackpot's mom) and to the right is Andrea Bush (Jackpot's mom).
- Each person in this video has given their consent to share publicly -

A Closer Look at Consent
Standard Operating Procedures
Handler Safety



Video: Kristin Peterson LVT, KPA CTP | Friendship Hospital for Animals - Friendship Behavior Specialists with Dr. Meaghan Ropski DVM, DACVB

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Important scientific principles about reinforcement include:

Reinforcers must have value to the learner to be reinforcing

Reinforcement variety often improves the learning process

More difficult tasks may be learned more quickly when higher-value reinforcement is used

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Puppy Session

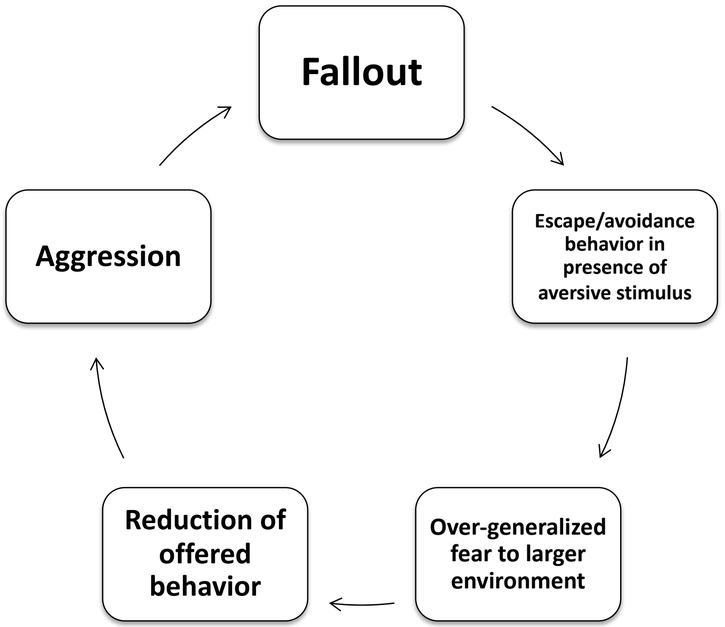
Client team concerned about mouthing behavior. Puppy contact reduced – tactile & proximity novelty high



© Laura Monaco Torelli

Observe Baseline Behavior Under Safe Conditions

Side Effects of Aversive Events



Reference: Susan Friedman, Ph.D. | Behaviorworks.org

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The clicker is often called a/an:

"Conditioned reinforcer" because its value has been conditioned, or paired, with something that has intrinsic or primary value to the learner

"Event marker" because it communicates to the animal the precise movement that the trainer will be reinforcing

"Bridge" because it acts like a time and information bridge between when the desired action occurs and the delivery of the primary reinforcement

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Second Person Support



Video: Lauren Spratlin & Robbie Crowell with Buggy

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Second Person Support



Video: Dearing English with Dearing & Dogs



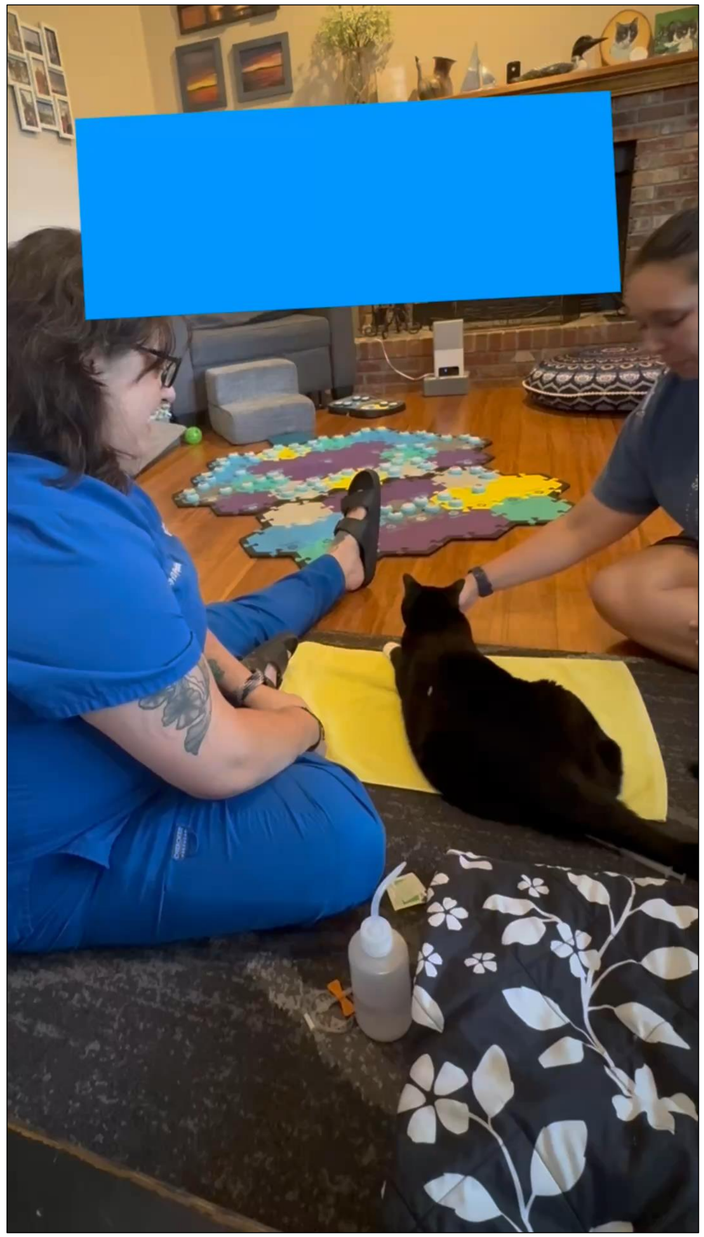
Video: Julie Smith, Wocket, Nova, & Trouble

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Second Person Support | Blood Draw Procedure Prep

Video:

Julie Smith with Wendy Davis, CVT, CCRVN, VTS
of University of Florida Small Animal Hospital,
Integrative & Mobility Service



© Laura Monaco Torelli

Vaccination During Veterinary Exam | Cues for Other Handler

Video:

Brie Blakeman & Yuka, CBCC-KA, Noble Woof | Brooklyn Veterinary team, Brittany Lauman, DMV and Veterinary Assistant Alyssa Sparks



© Laura Monaco Torelli

The first step in capturing a behavior is to:

Watch the animal closely

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Oral Care

What conditions provide safe access?

What outcomes does the learner(s) show are reinforcing?

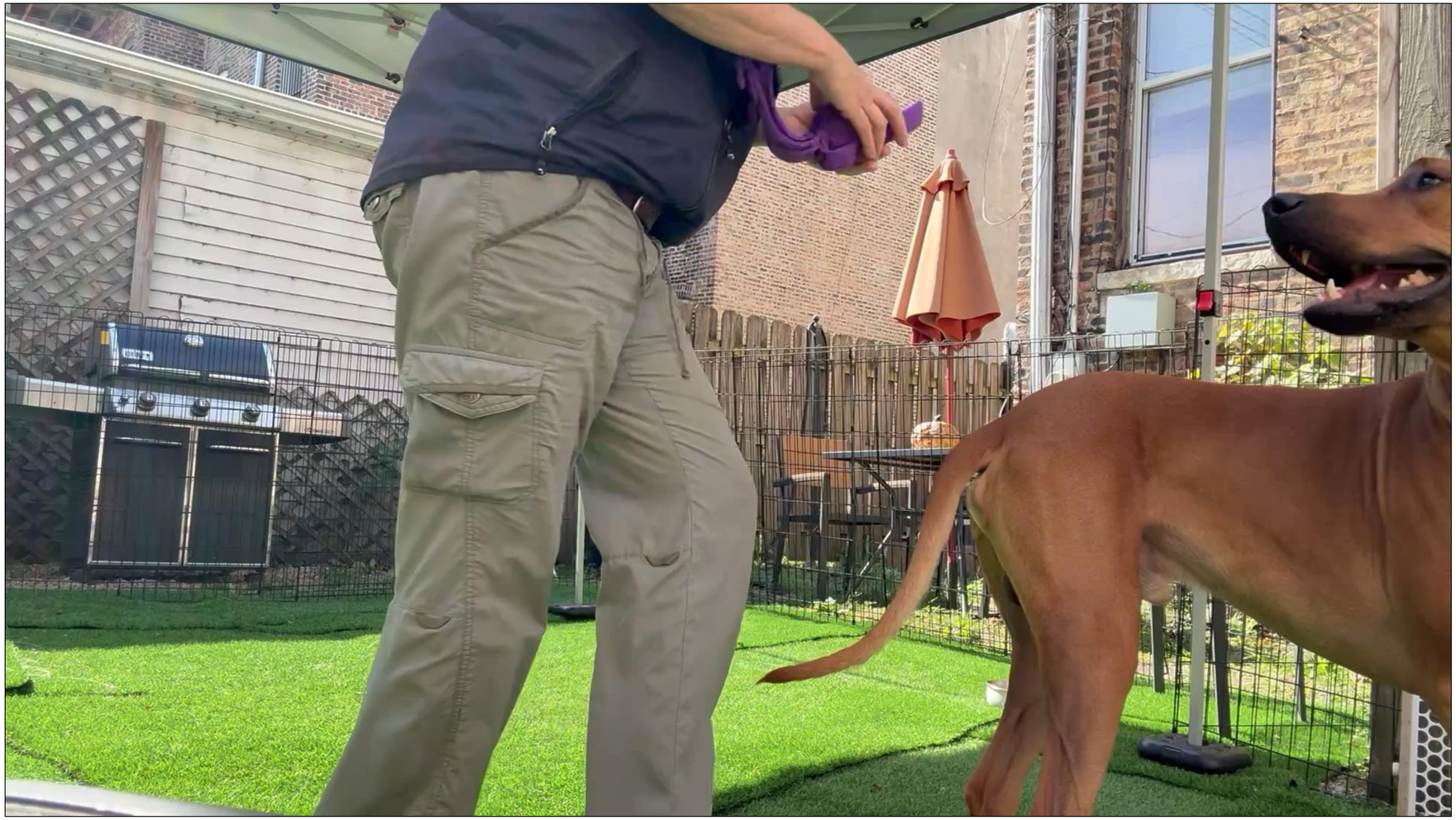


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Oral Care

What conditions provide safe access?

What outcomes does the learner(s) show are reinforcing?



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Which of the following are important benefits of shaping?

It is an efficient process for building new behavior

It maintains the animal's excitement and willingness to learn

It produces behaviors that are remembered accurately and for a long time

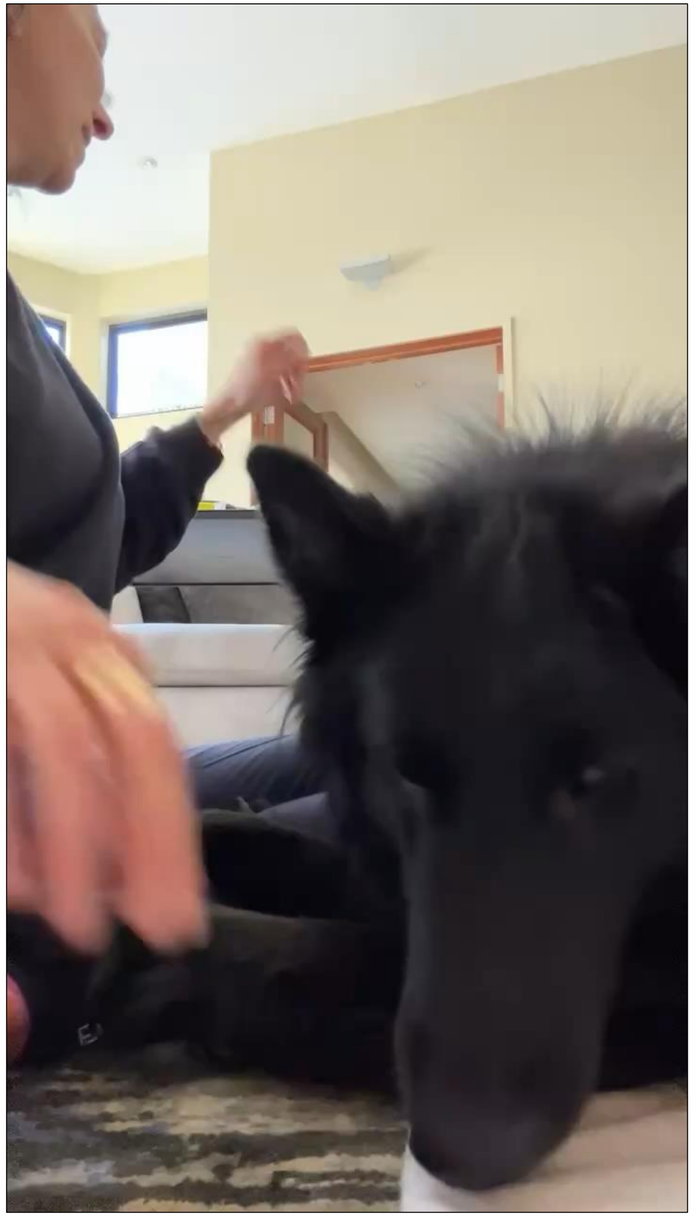
It allows for training animals and behaviors that are not easily trained in more traditional ways

It creates empathy for the animal by offering the opportunity to watch and interpret the animal's emotional behavior

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Oral Care Games





Videos: Jordan Michaels with Ripley &
Kiki Yablon with Kronos

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Oral Care Games



Videos: Michelle Wieser and Flash with Wise Canine Training & Behavior

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Variety Considerations

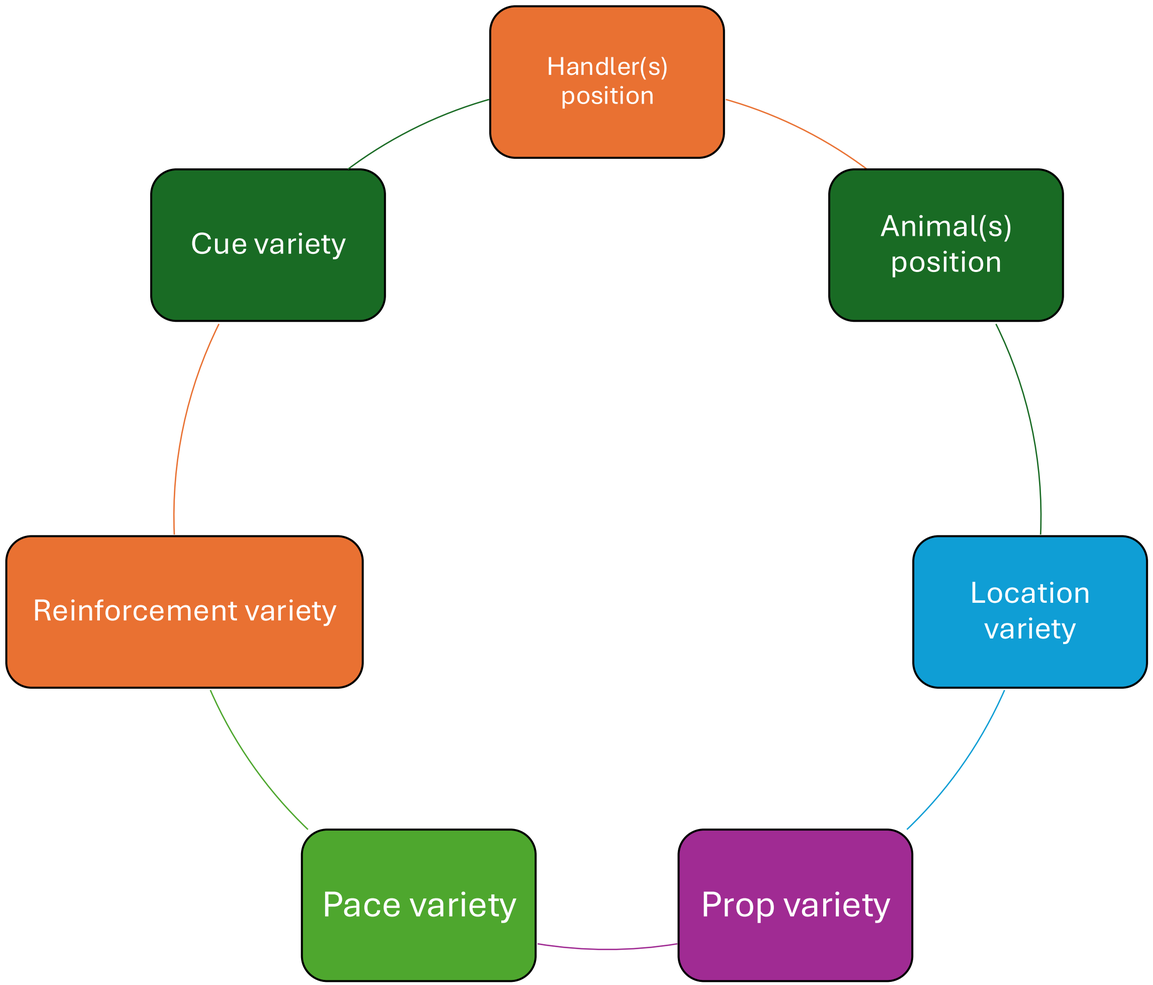




Photo: Sara Erickson with Tracer & Otter | Trails and Tails Dog School

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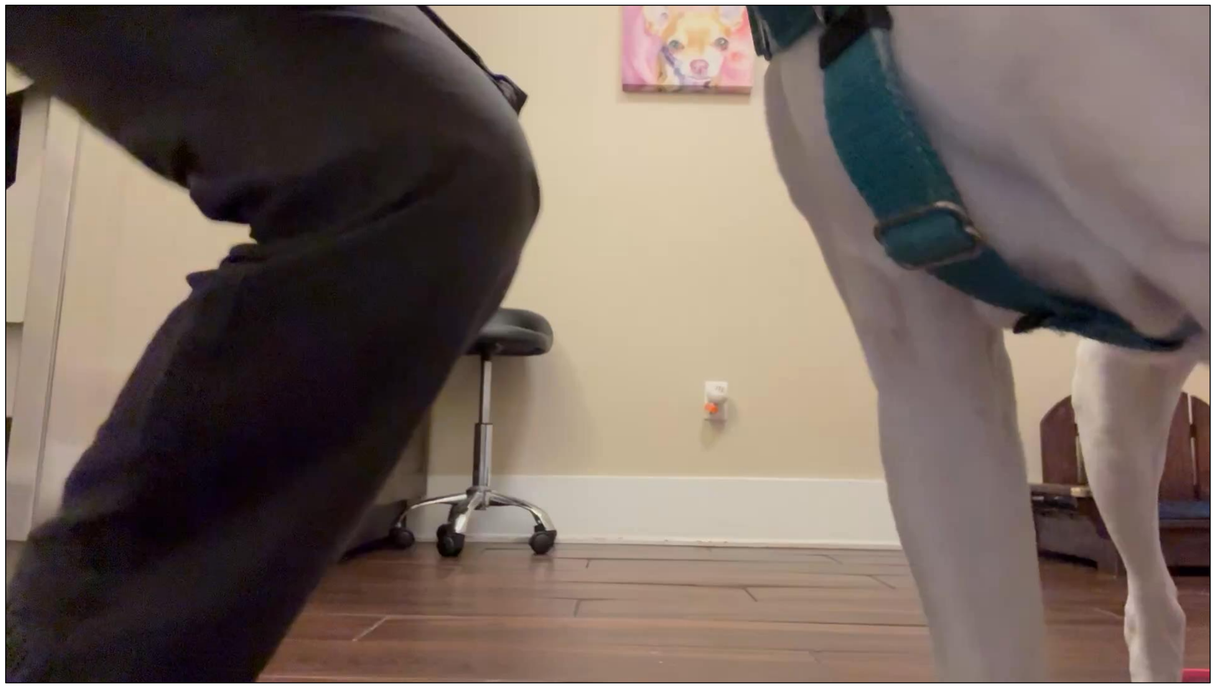
Location Variety

10/7/26

Hey Laura!

I just wanted to give you a shout to say how grateful we are for you! We found ourselves at the vet yesterday with a ruptured anal gland (poor sweet Bug), left the house in a hurry without half the things I would typically, carefully pack for a vet visit.
Some ham and training go a long way, though!

In this video we are practicing clownfish which came in handy for the a** inspection! It's so nice for her to be able to lock into the predictability of training under these highly stressful and painful conditions.
Proud of her and grateful for you!



Video: Lauren Spratlin & Buggy

© Laura Monaco Torelli

A Closer Look at Consent

- ✅ When lifting the head is a “yes”
- ✅ Raise rate of reinforcement
- ✅ Pair stimulus (stimuli) = R+
- ✅ Adjust plan for team
- ✅ Dog or cat politics?



Photo: Melissa Millett & Sugar



© Laura Monaco Torelli



Video: Melissa Millett & Sugar | Injection Prep

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Medicated Spray for Coat Care





Videos: Valerie Peck, CPDT-KA | Noble Woof

© Laura Monaco Torelli

A Closer Look at Consent – Standard Operating Procedures





Video: South Loop Veterinary Care | Dr. Manrique & Stephany

© Laura Monaco Torelli

A Closer Look at Consent – Standard Operating Procedures



Video: South Loop Veterinary Care | Dr. Manrique & Stephany

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A Closer Look at Consent – Standard Operating Procedures



Video: South Loop Veterinary Care | Dr. Manrique & Brendan

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Weigh Too Much Fun!



© Laura Monaco Torelli

Weigh Too Much Fun!



Video: South Loop Animal Hospital

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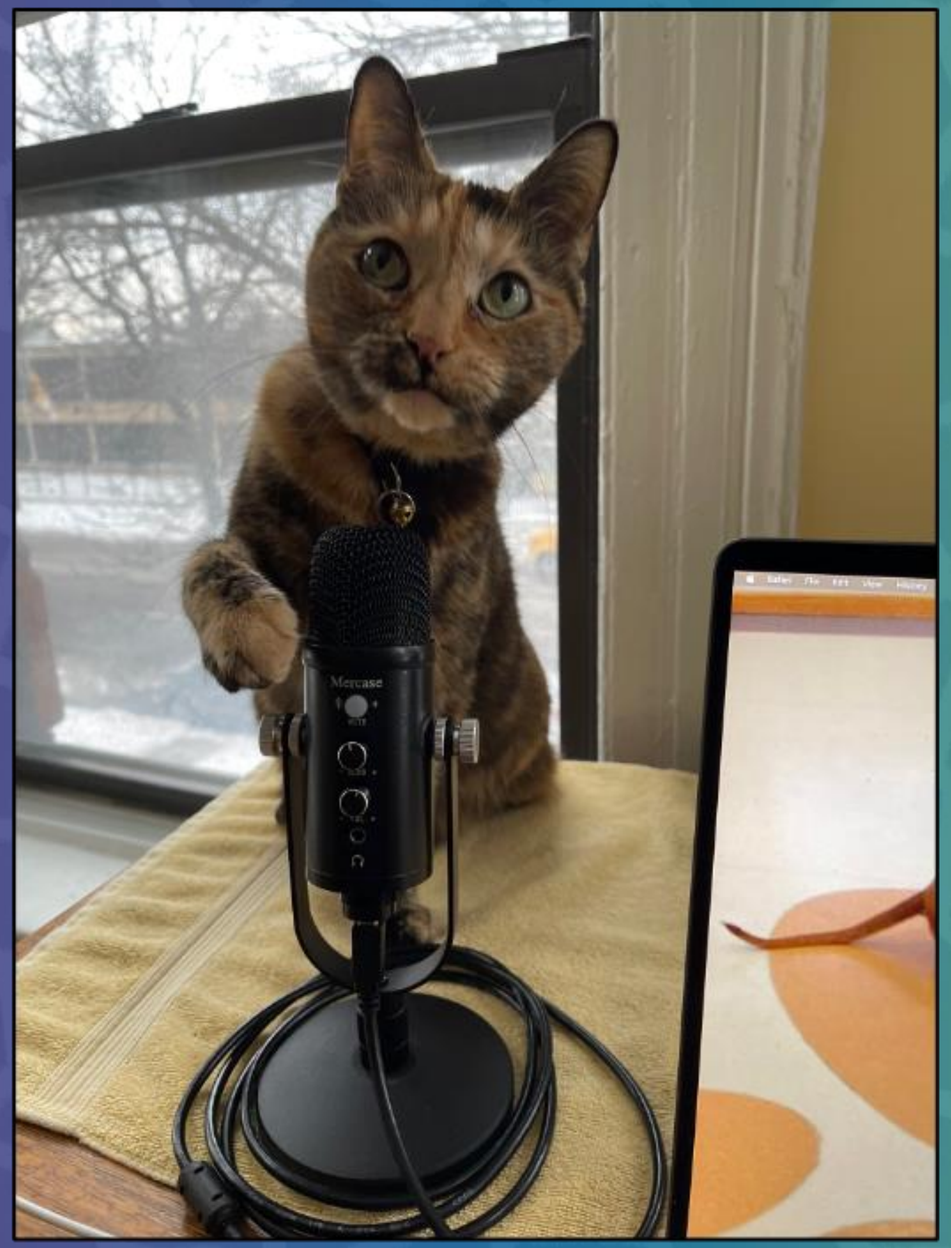
Join Me!



LauraMonacoTorelli.com | Laura@abtconcepts.com

Laura.Monaco.Torelli | Animal Behavior Training Concepts

Q & A Time!



The Smallest Success Point
Interactive Lab
Team Support From Baseline to Beyond



Maria Manrique, DVM at South Loop Animal Hospital

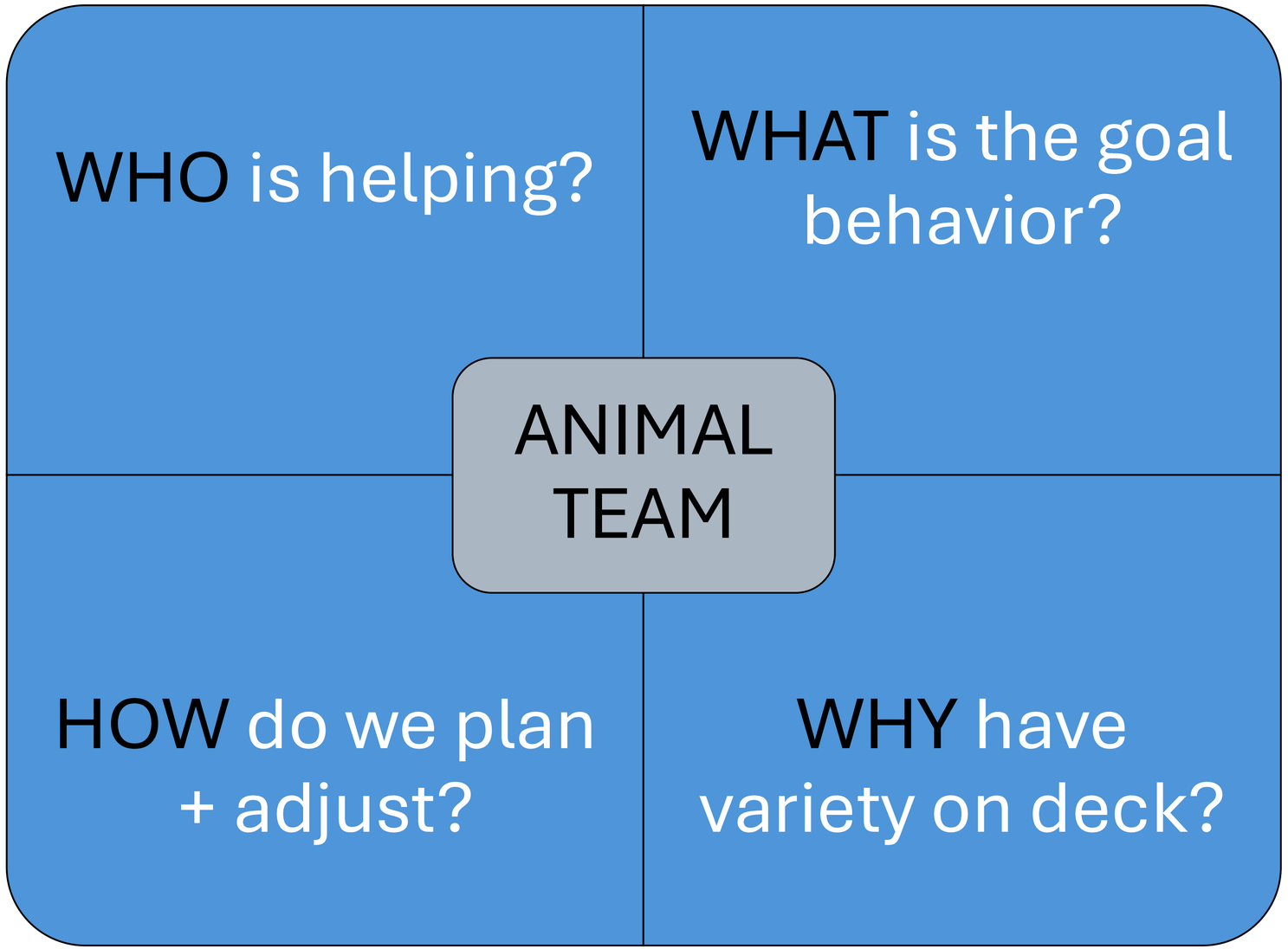
Laura Monaco Torelli, KPA CTP/Faculty, CPDT-KA, LSH-Silver, FFCP

Still Need to Do Dog Selection at Anti-Cruelty Society!



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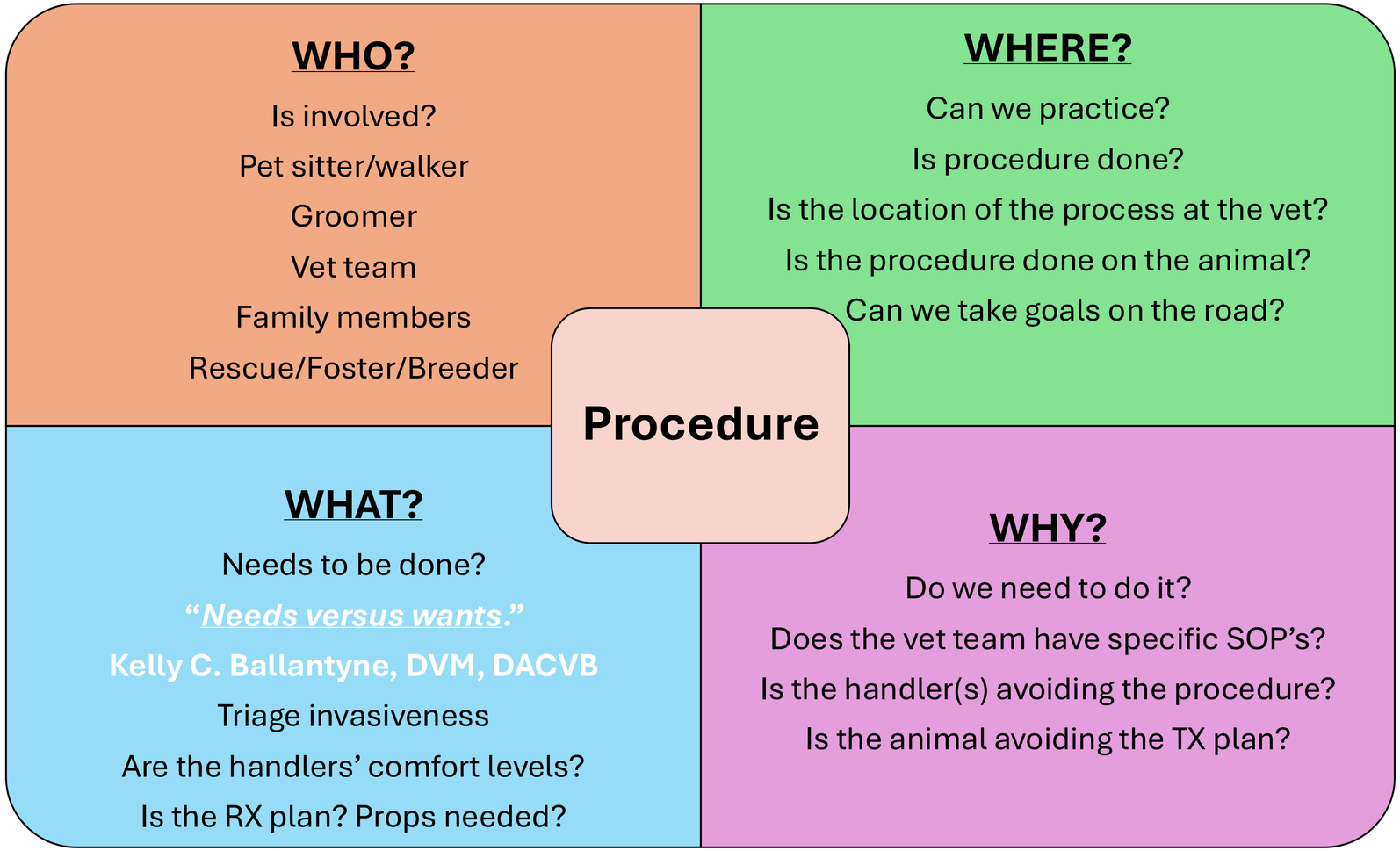
Care Team Considerations



© Laura Monaco Torelli

Plan | Predict | Practice

- What does the procedure look like in observable terms?



© Laura Monaco Torelli

A Closer Look at Underlying Medical Concerns
Dog Behavior Escalation On Walks





Video: Team Poe in collaboration with Dr. Czapor at Metropolitan Vet & Dr. Kuntz at Insight Animal Behavior Services

© Laura Monaco Torelli

A Closer Look at Underlying Medical Concerns & Dog Behavior Escalation On Walks

10/12/26

Hi Laura,

You'll be glad to know he's been much better on his walks too; he KEEPS walking when seeing dogs just across the street. Big wins still happening! In terms of his diagnosis - the vet thought it would be 1. arthritis, specifically affecting his knee or 2. an old injury from before we adopted him. We did a month of Adequan injections (to see if it was likely arthritis) and he now bends his right knee! So our vet recommended once monthly injections supplemented with daily amantadine.

Dr. Czapor at Metropolitan Vet recommended trying Adequan after a physical exam and Dr. Kuntz agreed. She told us to take him off Carprofen if Adequan worked well, which it did!

Injections at home are going really well. He doesn't even look up from the ham I'm giving him when Ernesto does the injection. So much better than before when he would anticipate the needle and try to hide between our legs.



Video: Team Poe in collaboration with Dr. Czapor at Metropolitan Vet & Dr. Kuntz at Insight Animal Behavior Services

© Laura Monaco Torelli

A Closer Look at Underlying Medical Concerns

Cayuga's dermatologist documenting Cayuga's disease progression through recovery/remission during treatment for sebaceous adenitis:

Hi Laura,

The present flareup makes me curious about whether the cyclosporine was helping his gut, as our internist suspected it might. It is an immune suppressant, and both the skin disease (sebaceous adenitis) and GI disease (IBD) are autoimmune.

I'll plan to touch on this with our vet team at our 9/24/26 recheck.

Due to Cayuga's GI ups and downs, our video submissions for our upcoming session will be with minimal food use due to inappetence, and to reduce tummy upset.

Appreciate your flexibility and support as we continue to persist while taking things day by day.



Video: Samantha Rubio & Cayuga

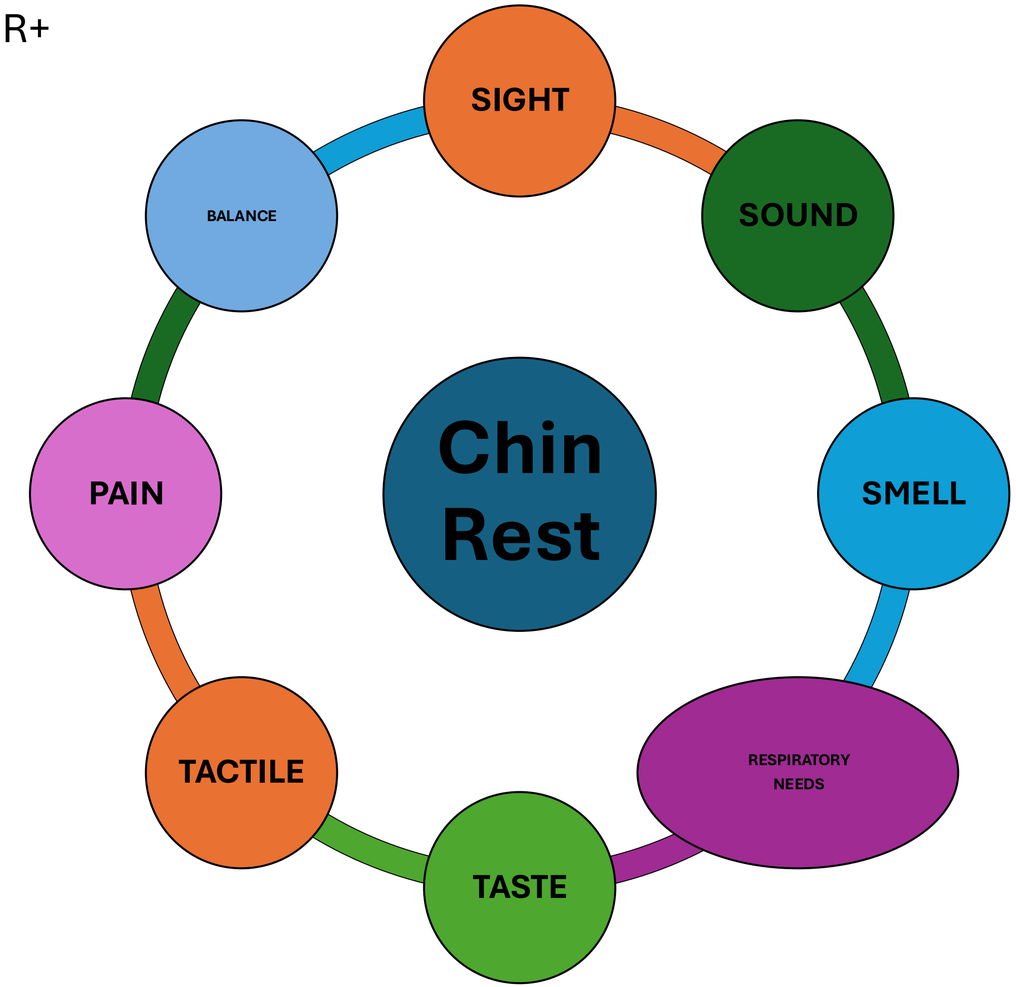
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A Closer Look at Consent

- ✅ When lifting the head is a “yes”
- ✅ Raise rate of reinforcement
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Photo: Melissa Millett & Sugar



© Laura Monaco Torelli



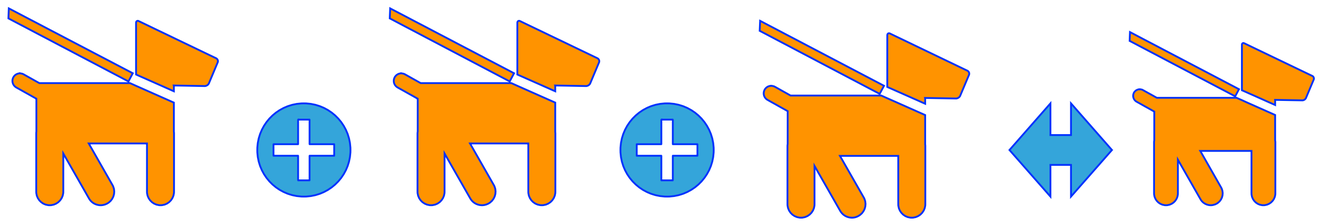
Video: | Sarah Bassett, DVM (background) | Melissa Heathers | Injection prep

© Laura Monaco Torelli

A Quick Approach Reinforced by *"Just get it done."*

Handler may avoid procedure to reduce feelings of frustration.

CAREGIVER BEHAVIOR | A CLOSER LOOK | THE THREE "CS"



CRITERIA TOO HIGH FOR HANDLER & ANIMAL | OR THE USE OF FLOODING

USE OF AVERSIVE STIMULI AND/OR PUNISHMENT

TRY TO SUPPRESS BEHAVIOR

NEXT SLIDE

"How can we get the animal to reinforcement as quickly as possible?"
~Dr. Susan Friedman

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Ear Care Goals | Small Success Point



© Laura Monaco Torelli

Various Props and Stimuli | Dremel Props



© Laura Monaco Torelli

Husbandry On Hikes



© Laura Monaco Torelli

Lessons from Other Species



Video: Wildlife Discovery Center | Barred owl

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Prop Practice For Handler Fluency Skillset



Video: Barbara Paterson & Nawa

© Laura Monaco Torelli

Which of these could explain sluggish performance of a cued behavior?

The animal is not feeling well

The reinforcement is not powerful enough

The training session has gone on too long

© Laura Monaco Torelli

If you observe dogs in a group training class that are stressed, you should consider the following possible causes:

- Frustration due to low rate of reinforcement
- Fear of punishment by handler
- Proximity to dogs or people
- Poor timing of clicks and/or treats
- Environmental causes such as noise or a slippery floor

© Laura Monaco Torelli

When you are shaping to increase the duration of a behavior, it's important to:

Shape in small increments

Vary duration so the animal does not begin to anticipate the end of the behavior

Track time carefully

© Laura Monaco Torelli

In positive dog training, the phrase "the precision of a behavior" refers to:

The overall polished look of the behavior

© Laura Monaco Torelli

To help your dog succeed when you are first introducing distractions, you can:

Create sessions in which you have control over the distraction levels.

Use a high rate of reinforcement and/or a high-value reinforcer

© Laura Monaco Torelli

When you are varying the duration of a behavior in your training sessions, you should:

Be variable, sometimes selecting shorter durations, sometimes longer

© Laura Monaco Torelli

If an animal fails to respond to a cue that they should know by now, it is important to enforce compliance so that the animal does not get into the habit of ignoring your cues.

True?

False?

© Laura Monaco Torelli

If an animal fails to respond to a cue that they should know by now, it is important to enforce compliance so that the animal does not get into the habit of ignoring your cues.

~~True~~

False!

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Join Me!



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Q & A Time!

