



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY OF ANIMAL PROFESSIONALS

Dear Members,

Time is running away with me again which seems to happen every year around Christmas... You would think at my ripe old age I could have worked things out properly but that has not happened yet! So please accept my apologies that this Newsletter is a few days too late.

We have some really interesting contributions from our Ambassadors this time and I would like to point out that any member is welcome to send in an article which we will publish.

ISAP has attracted a few more Ambassadors this year and it is always comforting to know that people working with animals around the world are interested in representing us. We stand for education in the animal sector and using force and fear free methods and the more we spread the word around the globe, the better a chance our animals will have.

Many of you work with dogs and you will have recently noticed a message from me on our forum that there are government changes coming our way in the UK. The Charter I published will be handed into Parliament for approval. It shows that we can be a self-regulating profession with very high standards. Exciting times! I will keep you all informed how things develop.

But now I want to wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Not all of you celebrate Christmas but your calendar will also be marked by some special celebration and I wish you well.

With best wishes

Brigitte

Managing Director – ISAP



A reflection on the relationship between humans and pets

By Roberta Roscini, Ambassador to Italy



In my work as a consultant for the improvement of cohabitation between cat and human, I have the opportunity to get in touch with many different realities and with many difficult or problematic situations.

I often notice that the owners, or rather, the cohabitants of a pet expect behavior from the animal that is not part of the ethogram of its species of belonging. For example, many people living with a dog expect the dog to respond to the call always, immediately and without any communicative effort on the part of the human. This is a completely false expectation, there is no logical reason why a dog should respond to the call of a human in the absence of a relationship of trust and complicity, or in the absence of a real motivation. Likewise, many times I meet cats' owners who are deeply disappointed that the cat doesn't let them caress it for hours every night. These people completely ignore the fact that a cat has a highly developed tactile sensitivity and that it does not always tolerate direct contact too long, especially if it happens at particular times such as when the cat is sleeping, eating or cleaning its fur.

These small errors of mutual understanding can often lead to very complex problems of cohabitation, increasing the risk of abandonment of the pet by the human.

Where do all these misunderstandings come from? Mainly, from ignorance.

The fact that some animals, like the dog and the cat, cohabited with the human being for centuries, leads many people to believe that this coexistence can be expressed automatically without the need to learn about the species characteristics of the animal with which we choose to cohabit.

On the one hand, it is true that empathic and relational communication between individuals even of different species can occur in a completely natural way, but on the other hand it is of fundamental importance to know who is in front of you. Often the human being expresses a great presumption in believing that it is all the other animals that have to adapt, in one way or another, to the conditions of life imposed by humans. When we choose to share our life with a pet, regardless of the species to which it belongs, we must take all the time necessary to inform ourselves about its characteristics, about what makes it unique as an individual belonging to a specific species and as a being thinking with a mind and an emotional and relational capacity with which to interact daily.

Some time ago, I met a nice family consisting of two young humans and a young male cat. The couple was desperate because the cat every night made an ambush to their ankles,

often causing scratches and injuries. After having spent all the time necessary for a careful assessment of the situation, I came to the conclusion that this young cat simply needed to vent its need for predation, which is a natural behavior for its species and that it must be expressed every day, especially during the evening and morning hours, since the cat is a crepuscular predator. The thing that struck me most, however, was the surprise with which this young couple has learned that a cat of any age has an innate need, and not necessarily dependent on the hunger, to hunt every day. They were completely unaware of this information that is very important to know when deciding to live with a cat!

I am of the opinion that animal behavior and the ethological characteristics of the animals that most frequently coexist with the human being should be taught in schools, so that children learn about the reality of the living beings that surround them, thus becoming adults who are more aware of and more respectful of the natural needs of the animals with whom they will choose to share life.

Love for an animal is fundamental, but not enough, knowledge is also needed.

Be careful when exercising your dog outside in the frost and snow. By Jackie Murphy G.Dip ABM/ A.Dip CBM / MEST (QTLS).



This newsletter, we look at keeping your dog safe outside on walks and in your garden.

The first frosty mornings can be fun for you and your dog, not to mention a covering of snow. However, these conditions can be dangerous and lead to injuries. The following are some points to remember so that we can all enjoy the winter fun together.

- All dogs love the snow, but be careful where your dog plays, rivers and lakes can freeze over and some maybe covered with snow, so they are difficult to see. If the ice cracks and gives way this can be very dangerous to not only your dog but also you.
- Make sure your dog has frequent indoor and water breaks. Although its fun outside, the temperature will be low and therefore make sure your dog does not stay out for too long.
- Snow can be fun, but if you have swept away the snow and piled it up against the fence, this could mean an escape route for your dog! Also, be careful of any over-hanging areas of snow – as this can accumulate and then slide causing lots of snow to fall in one area suddenly.
- Check your dog's pads regularly as some dogs can suffer from crack pads. It might also be useful to trim the fur that grows between the pads to prevent snow/ice build-up.
- If the road/pavements have been treated with salt, this is toxic and may also burn your dog's pads, so after a walk make sure you clean your dog's paws to remove any salt.

For our senior dogs the winter months can a challenge for them. Make sure that you:

- Maintain the exercise regimen.
- Give them a warm and cosy area to lie down in – away from drafts and the cold. Be careful of open fires or free standing electrical fires – make sure that your dog is safe and not too close – use a fire guard.
- Ask your vet about supplements during this time.

Will You Be Boarding Your Dog?

Article by Eric Albert, our Ambassador in the USA

Here is a checklist of 10 important steps to consider before boarding your dog. Consideration of each of these items will help you and your dog to have a good boarding experience.

1. Interview - Interview the kennel on the phone. Find out how long they have been in business and ask for references. Use those references. Make a surprise visit or tour the facility before you schedule the boarding. Notice the place is clean, smells, check out where the dogs are boarded, where they are walked and if they seem....happy. Do any dogs have messes in their cages?

2. Look for Recommendations - Talk to a few kennels before you decide where to take your pet. Also, ask your friends or neighbors where they have boarded their pet and what their experiences have been. Recommendations go along way. Don't go for the cheapest place. Go for the best place.

3. Determine Kennel Requirements - Does your pet need any special vaccines for this kennel? If so, what and when? Do they need a copy of the vaccine record? Can you supply your own food and treats? Can you leave any toys or his favorite blanket? Can you leave your pet's leash, collar or harness?

4. Check out Kennel Staff - Find out about the consistency with the staff – is it the same person seeing your dog everyday or someone new? It is someone who knows about pets or a high school student shoveling food into the cages? Does the staff appear competent and do they look like they enjoy working with the dogs?

5. What is the Dog's Schedule? - How often do they go out? Where are they walked? For how long? Is that enough to make your pet happy? Will your dog interact with other dogs? Is that what you want?

6. Feeding Instructions - Consider taking your dog's own food and request that the kennel only feed his food. Many pets are fed other foods and treats and can develop gastrointestinal upset such as vomiting and or diarrhea. Your pet is already in a new environment which is most likely a bit stressful; so don't change anything you don't have to.

7. Contact Information - Ensure that the kennel has your numbers where you can be reached in the case of an emergency. Include your cell phone and any emergency contacts. Plan for the unexpected.

8. Emergency Instructions - Just in case of an emergency, leave instructions on how to proceed. During emergency hours, the kennel may use a certain veterinarian or emergency hospital. During the day, if you want your pet to go to your regular veterinarian – leave your vet's name and phone number. Leave instructions on what you do and don't want and a contact number or credit card number for emergency medical care. If you are not available

by phone, make sure they have the authorization to make charges if care is required. You don't want your pet "waiting" for medical care because of lack of credit card authorization.

9. Medical History - Obtain a copy of your pets pertinent medical record from your vet and give a copy to the kennel. Ideally, this record should include any medications, diagnosed conditions and problems . Include any behavioral quirks e.g. aggressive to other dogs or if he hates cats. Leave information about his tag and microchip numbers.

10. Leave Special Instructions - Make sure you clearly indicate any special instructions. For example, if you pet requires medications, ensure the name of the medication, dose (both in mg and number of pills, and frequency are clearly indicated. Also communicate any special foods or dietary restrictions. Keep the instructions simple with a contact number to call in the case of questions.

Is my dog talking to me?

By Dimosthenis Moumiadis, Ambassador to Greece



Communication is important to all living organisms. Either they live on earth, or fly in the air, or live in the waters, they have developed communication patterns that enable them to promote their survival. They send information to members of their species or counterparts and also receive information from others.

Members of the same species communicate their intentions towards other members, give clear information about their own identity, information about the surrounding environment that is of a great value from a survival point of view. Information can be conveyed as visual, tactile, vocal, olfactory signals.

For us human, things are more different when it comes to communicate our feelings our needs and our emotions. We have developed a unique ability to “speak” and express all these and far more complex emotions.

So if the question for many dog owners is “Is my dog talking to me?” then the answer is Yes. Our dog is definitely talking to us in every possible way. He communicates his enthusiasm, his happiness, his anxiety, his displeasure, his anger, his fear. He is using his body posture, and his senses to explain to us what is wrong and what is confusing him. But can we listen?

So for us trainers the question is “Can you understand what your dog is telling you?” A misunderstanding in communication can easily lead our dog to fearful or even aggressive behaviours. A common example of this is our need to express our love towards our dog by holding him into our arms. An insecure dog may signal his displeasure by turning his head away, by performing a quick licking and maybe by even growling. Many owners may keep on doing it. By ignoring our dog and the way he “talks” to us we may face another more tense growl or even a bite. The relationship is then shattered.

Calling our dog to “come” on a walk, may sometimes mean that the dog will not come right back to us, if this involves a cautious approach as there are other dogs present. The dog will start slowing down to become more friendly towards the other dogs and then when the situation is relaxed he will come to us. Many see this as disobedience and start yelling to their dog or even punish him. How unfair this may be!!!!

Dogs avoid conflicts. Their need is to relax the environment and solve the dispute. In that way they ensure their survival. We have to learn how to observe the behaviours of our dogs and how to see these behaviours as a way of communication. Co-existing with dogs and being able to exchange information with each other is not only important. In many cases it seems as a magical ability. A whole new world in front of our eyes.

Cat Owners Have Lower Heart Attack Risk

Published Monday 25 February 2008

By Catharine Paddock PhD

Submitted by David Oehler, Canadian Ambassador

Owning a cat could reduce your risk of a heart attack by nearly one third, researchers told delegates of the American Stroke Association's International Stroke Conference in New Orleans last week. The finding provoked a mixed reaction from heart experts and veterinarians.

The finding was the main result of a 10 year study of more than 4,000 Americans by researchers at the University of Minnesota's Stroke Institute in Minneapolis. Executive director of the Institute, Dr Adnan Qureshi, who is also senior author of the study, was reported by US News & World Report to have said:

"For years we have known that psychological stress and anxiety are related to cardiovascular events, particularly heart attacks."

Qureshi said having pets probably helped to relieve stress. The researchers said dogs probably had a similar effect, but there weren't enough dog owners in the study to show this conclusively. Previous research has linked contact with pets to heart benefits, they said.

Qureshi and colleagues extracted data on 4,435 Americans aged 30 to 75, from the second National Health and Nutrition Examination Study that took place from 1976 to 1980. 2,435 of the participants were current or former cat owners, while the remaining 2,000 had never had a cat.

Using the main outcome as death from all causes, including stroke and heart events, the researchers found that over a 10 year follow up period, cat owners showed a 30 per cent lower risk of death from heart attack compared to non cat owners.

Qureshi, who own a cat called Ninja, said they had expected to see an effect, because the theory was plausible, but the size of the link was a surprise.

Someone who was not surprised by the findings was Kathie Cole who presented the results of a study to the American Heart Association in 2005 that showed contact with dogs helped improve heart and lung function in people with heart failure. Cole is a clinical nurse at the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Center and School of Nursing. She told US News & World Report:

"I would be inclined to think that any animal that is perceived as meaningful to a person in a positive way would have health benefits."

She mentioned other research that suggested pets had a calming effect. Unfortunately, the opportunity to have this "low cost" stress relief is denied to many potential heart patients who live in apartment blocks and nursing homes where pets are not allowed.

Qureshi said this research:

"Opens a whole new avenue or intervention that we hadn't looked at before, one that can be made at the public level." And there appear to be no risks with this approach, unlike drugs or surgery, he added.

Others would disagree, saying that such findings are not proof of a causal link, only that a link between cat ownership and lower heart attack risk exists. Qureshi admits this, said a report in ABC News. The link could be to the personality and lifestyle of cat owners and not to the fact they have a cat.

"Maybe cat owners tend not to have high-stress personalities, or they are just the type of people that are not highly affected by anxiety or high-stress situations," he said.

Qureshi and colleagues did not analyse the personality traits of cat owners and could therefore not shed light in this area.

Another reason to be sceptical, other experts told ABC News, is that other studies have shown quite different results. One for example, published in the American Journal of Cardiology in 1995, showed that while dog owners had a higher chance of surviving a heart attack, cat owners had a reduced chance. Director of the division of cardiology at the University of Miami, Dr Robert Myerburg, said this made sense because many people are allergic to cats, and not to dogs. He said he was surprised by this latest study.

Veterinary experts however, put across another plausible argument for why cats might bring more stress relief than dogs. Technical vice-president and veterinary pathologist at ARUP Laboratories in Salt Lake City, Utah, Lawrence McGill, said it was probably because cats are lap animals that want to be petted, and it is the petting that brings down the stress levels, and heart rate and blood pressure too, in many cases.

On the other hand, said McGill, dogs need hands on attention, which could actually raise the owner's stress. When you get home from work the dog demands attention, you have to take it for a walk, dogs need to be fed according to a routine, whereas cats can practically take care of themselves.

The American Veterinary Medical Association estimates there are about 72 million pet dogs and 82 million pet cats in the US.

Article by Beth Babbin, Ambassador to South Africa

The year is fast drawing to a close and for what should have been spring, our weather has been unseasonably hot, with day temperatures reaching the high 30's and this, coupled to the lowest rainfall, in over 30 years, is not a good sign for either domestic or wild animals.

We once again visited the Kruger National Park in September, this time staying at a small bush camp that we last visited about 25 years ago.

Some years ago, the view of nature conservation was to sink boreholes and initially using windmills and later solar pumps, they created a variety of artificial waterholes. This enhanced tourism as the new waterholes were positioned so that they could easily be seen – however they did more harm than good. The water attracted wildlife that would not normally be found in these areas, and the greater number of grazers and browsers devastated the surrounding vegetation that still had to rely on the climatic conditions being experienced. The numbers of predators increased and game, such as the Roan antelope, that had survived in small numbers in isolated areas were all but decimated.



With the change in policy the majority of the waterholes have been closed thus allowing the adjacent vegetation to recover and also resulting in more natural animal movements. The benefit to us was that the camp is situated at a natural waterhole that is fed by a spring. This waterhole, which is softly illuminated at night, is close to the boundary fence and overlooked by a raised hide. This provides an opportunity to watch a wider variety of animals and their behaviour under natural conditions.



Elephants were the predominant species but whilst large numbers – probably in excess of a hundred – could be seen, only small groups would approach the waterhole, always led by the dominant female or matriarch, to drink, wallow and especially, for the youngsters, to play until such time as she gave an audible signal for them to leave. Little ones that were still enjoying the mud and the water were chivvied on by one of the older family members.



At no time did any other groups, of any specie, approach until the previous group had moved off. The unwritten rule of nature applied to all the animals – groups of zebra were followed by herds of antelope, then possibly a troop of baboons, then another group of elephants. When a lone zebra approached whilst elephants were drinking it was chased away by one of the younger members.



Lions could, from time to time, be heard and seen in the far distance but the older elephants kept them away, as the small and very cute baby elephants could be vulnerable. At night single animals such as honey badgers and jackals were able to make use of this natural resource.

It was a privilege to see nature working without human interference and with all the natural rules in place the hierarchies functioned correctly.

On our return home one of my team brought a quotation for the notice board that I found apt with regard to us and our dogs – “If you think about it, it’s a kind of a dirty trick to take a species that naturally chases moving objects, eats whatever it comes across, bites to argue, etc. and then announce all these are behavioural problems” – Jean Donaldson.

DO DOGS SUFFER FROM INSOMINIA?

By Elizabeth Alderton, Ambassador to Ireland

Well, if your dog does, then you will too!

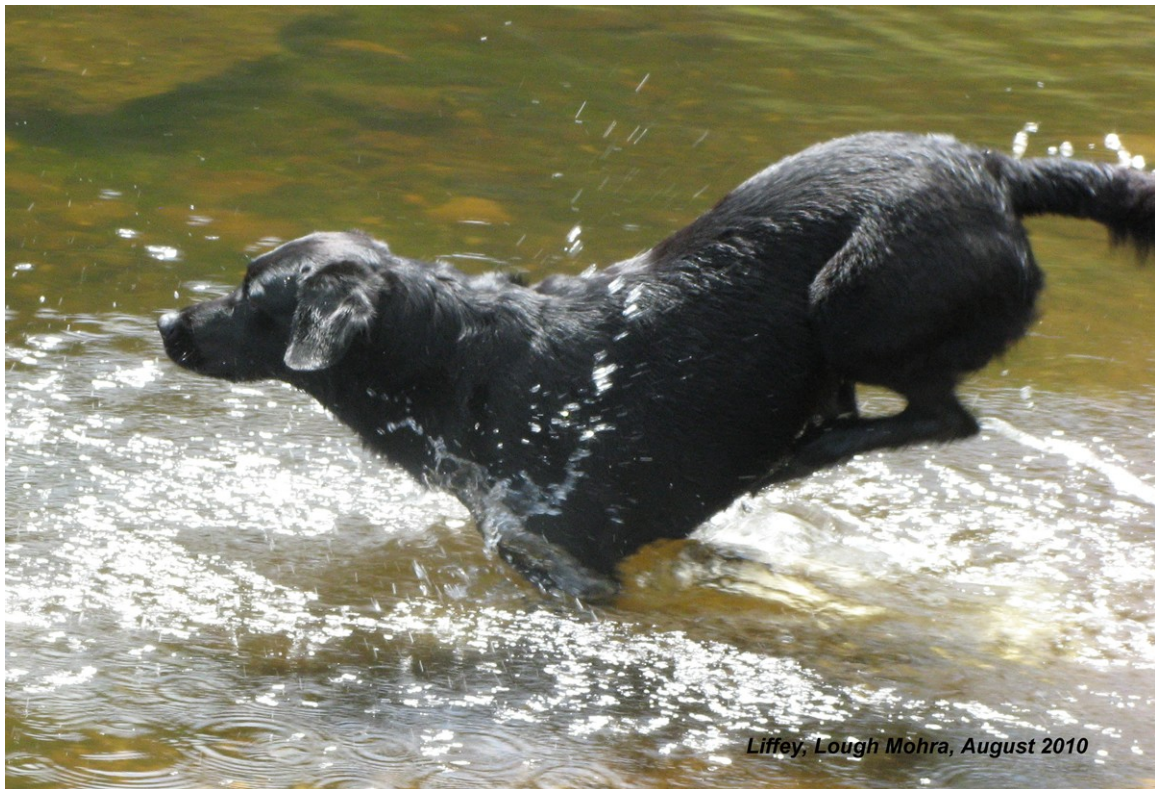
One thing about being a dog trainer, when you have a problem with your own dog, you can at least view it as a learning process.

This problem was a new experience for me

Fhinisc

Health and temperament

Is a healthy Labrador who is trained as a search dog.



She has elbow dysplasia for which she gets painkillers (Onsior) and appropriate exercise.

When out for a walk, or working, she runs fast and confidently, jumping and swimming with ease. She has a distinct limp after rest. During the day she will sleep deeply in one position for hours (if you let her).

She is sensitive and easily trained and very obedient when working at a distance

Sudden onset of restlessness at night

Licking her lips, whining and panting and getting us up every 2 hours, night after night

Trial and Error

- We had her thyroid levels checked – all fine
- We had her liver and kidney functions checked – all OK
- We changed her medication (Onsior, which can cause oversalivation) (no difference apart from stopped licking her lips)
- We tried leaving the light on (no difference)
- We changed her exercise time to as late as possible so that she was more tired (a bit better, but winter darkness has now meant that is not possible)
- We used a two-way talker so that we could speak to her at night (this improved things for a bit, but she gradually got worse again)
- We changed her sleeping place from the kitchen to the bedroom since she was disturbing the other dogs. (This led to no sleep for the human since she would pant and pace, and ultimately culminated by jumping on the bed unexpectedly 6 times in one night)

Desperate!

At this stage we were becoming a little, well, frustrated!

Back in the cage

As a puppy she slept in a cage, and the car has a cage so she is well used to it

Once confined in the cage she settled at night and became happier and calmer in the day too



Well, so did we

We got her a larger cage so that she can stretch out and she nows sleeps in that, in the bedroom.

So, what is wrong with Fhinisc?

We just don't know. We eliminated any health or drug problems, and can only think that her rather sensitive nature has led her to being anxious and that a cycle of anxiety can lead to extreme behaviour at night.

Would this be a solution for others?

Maybe, especially if the dog is already crate-trained.

The main lesson though is:

Think outside the box

Make changes to the dog's lifestyle, sometimes small changes in routine, but sometimes a completely different regime may break up the cycle of the behaviour



Common Brushtail Possums

Celia Ann Richards Ambassador for Australia

Australia is a land of diversity from its ever-changing landscapes, unpredictable climate and iconic wildlife.

In the past ten days, we have experienced raging bushfires, extraordinary heatwaves over 45 °C (113 °F), cyclones and supercell thunderstorms causing flooding.

We humans are adaptable creatures, but not so for the wildlife that bear the brunt of weather extremes.

One such animal is the Brushtail possum pictured outside our house. He has been named Puddle because he always turns up cold, wet and tired during storms.

There are 23 species of possums. The two most prevalent species is the Common Brushtail Possum (*Trichosurus vulpecular*), Greek and Latin for “furry tailed little fox) the size of a domestic cat and native to Australia and the Common Ringtail Possum (*Psuedoncheirus peregrius*) Greek and Latin for “false hand pilgrim.”

Possums are generally herbivores who eat eucalyptus, buds, ferns, flowers, fruits and leaves. Brushtail Possums can tolerate plants toxic to other wildlife. If hungry, they will eat bugs, moths, and birds’ eggs and babies. Brushtail possums possess a prehensile tip to their tails permitting them to grip branches like an extra hand. The Ringtail possum has an extremely strong white tipped prehensile tail kept coiled when unused. Possums can climb up the steepest walls, window frames (as experienced), poles and remove roof tiles from rooves, squeeze into tiny holes and can even walk across power lines!

Possums are territorial and will urinate in their territory and mark it by rubbing oil from their glands on their chest, chin and anus.

Interestingly, Brushtail possums prefer a solitary lifestyle selecting companionship only for mating. In contrast the Ringtail possum enjoys family life sharing a drey one male to one or two females. They eat together and share nurturing offspring, the Ringtail Possum being the only possum to assist in raising their young.

Brushtail possums vocalise by clicks, chattering, coughs, grunts and screeching. Jill (female) and Jack (male) possums create smacking sounds to attract the attention of other possums. Joeys sneeze and hiss when stressed or sense threat.

Possums are nocturnal feeding between sunrise and sunset and are arboreal preferring to live in eucalyptus forests, rainforests, forested backyards and dense foliage near water.

Based on Ten Facts About Possums in Australia (Bird Gard Australia)