

**Shelter Dog Mod Squad:  
Identifying and Modifying Canine Problem  
Behaviors in Shelters**

Sheila D'Arpino, DVM  
Diplomate, American College of Veterinary Behaviorists  
[www.centerforshelterdogs.org](http://www.centerforshelterdogs.org)

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**Our Mission: Behavior Mod Squad**

- Identify potential problems
- Make outcome decisions
- Optimize welfare
- Behavior modification
- Reassessment
- Rehoming
- Follow-up



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**Meet Nellie...**



1.5 year spayed female Rat Terrier, 11#  
Owner surrender: can no longer care of



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**Brody**



1 year neutered male mixed breed dog, 65#  
Previously adopted as 'jumpy mouthy' dog. Returned for biting owner four times.



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**Optimize Welfare**

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**Getting to Know the Dogs**

Behavior History  
Behavior Evaluation  
Shelter Behavior/Behavioral Observations



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**Assessment and Decision Making**

**The Match-Up II Shelter Dog Rehoming Program**

Uses all available information about dog's behavior...

Behavior in previous home (behavioral history)  
Behavior evaluation results  
Behavior observed in shelter



...to help guide treatment and placement decisions.

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**Match-Up II Components**

Behavior History  
Behavior Evaluation  
Personality Scoring  
Behavior in the Shelter  
Behavioral Triage



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**Shelter Behavior/Behavioral Observations**

- Behavior toward staff, volunteers and public (men, children)
- Behavior on walks
- Behavior during training
- Behavior during any further assessments of problems
- Behavior toward other animals



1. Behavioral History
2. Behavior Evaluation
3. Personality Scoring
4. Behavior in the Shelter
5. Behavioral Triage

Shelter Dogs

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**Behavioral Triage**

Incorporates all information known about each dog and gives points for behaviors

- Behavioral history
- Behavior evaluation
- Behavior in the shelter
- Consideration for weight

Points calculated automatically

Higher points means a potentially more challenging adoption

1. Behavioral History
2. Behavior Evaluation
3. Personality Scoring
4. Behavior in the Shelter
5. Behavioral Triage

Shelter Dogs

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**Match-Up II Online**

Behavioral History ✓ Behavior Evaluation ✓ Shelter Behavior ✓ Triage Report ✓

Last updated by Amy Marder 4/14/2011 at 8:49 PM

Behavior Triage Points		Personality Scores		Potential Problems Identified
Behavioral History:	3	Friendliness:	31	• Jumpy/Mouthy
Evaluation (4/14/2011):	4	Fearfulness:	2	
Shelter Behavior:	1	Excitability:	13	
Weight: 40 - 49 lbs	1	Aggressiveness:	0	
<b>Total:</b>	<b>9</b>	Playfulness:	10	
		Trainability:	9	

**Triage Point Range Descriptions**

- 0-3 Points**  
The dog exhibited few or no problematic behaviors and is likely to be a good candidate for adoption with routine screening and counseling.
- 4-20 points**  
The dog exhibited some problematic behaviors and is likely to be a candidate for adoption into a selected home. The dog may benefit from behavior modification training in the shelter and/or problem-based behavior counseling.
- 21+ points**  
The dog exhibited numerous and/or severe problematic behaviors and should be carefully screened in terms of adoption prospects in the community. If it is decided to adopt, the dog is likely to benefit from behavior modification training in the shelter and/or problem-based behavior counseling.

**Recommended Behavior Training**

Jumpy/Mouthy

Remember, it is important to provide dogs with social interaction, mental stimulation, and the exercise that they need. Visit our enrichment programs to find out more.

Points are guidelines which create a common language when discussing individual dogs, and help shelters make plans for individual dogs.

Triage Outcome Categories (please select)

Indicate your shelter's recommendation for the dog below.

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## Nellie



Total Behavior Triage Points: **43**  
Behavior history **+21** (shown teeth/growled snapped men, women, children, shown teeth/growled at vet or groomer, flagged to urinate/defecate when alone),  
Behavior evaluation **+13** (Room Behavior +1: jump up; Room Behavior Part 2 +1: jump up; Toddler Doll +6: growl; Strange Woman +6: growl)  
Shelter behavior **+12** (shown teeth/growled men, women, shows fear such as cower run away or tremble, soft mouthed or jumped up)  
Weight **-3** (< 15 lbs)  
**Potential Problem Behaviors**  
Aggression to Adults/Children  
Fear of people  
Fear of Being Alone (separation anxiety)  
Aggression toward veterinarian



## Brody



Total Behavior Triage Points: **44**  
Behavior history **+20** (+12 bite adults, +8 for growl toward unfamiliar children)  
Behavior evaluation **+21** (+2 for soft mouths on room and feet, +2 for jump ups on toys and strange looking women, +1 for jump up and soft mouth on run and freeze, +8 for inhibited bite on wet food, +8 for inhibited bite on pig's ears)  
Weight **+3**  
**Potential Problem Behaviors**  
Jumpy Mouthy  
Food Aggression  
Aggression to Adults  
Aggression to children




## Stop the Presses!!!



### Accuracy of Assessments

- Behavior History
- Behavior Evaluation
- Behavior Observations



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### Accuracy of Assessments



- Standardization
- Reliability
- Validity



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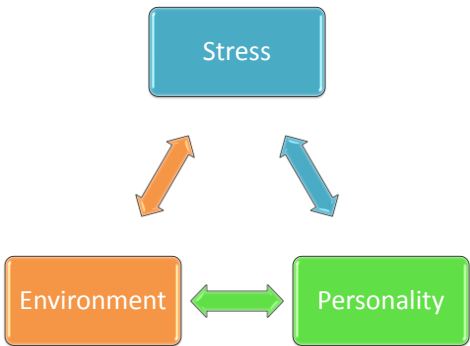
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### Accuracy of Assessments



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**Outcome Decisions:**  
Make Decisions Based Upon...



Shelter's Ability to SAFELY  
Rehome the Dog



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**Nellie Outcome**



Foster  
Whines when left alone  
Aggression over rawhide  
Contact former owner  
Says she is OK when left with dog  
Confirms anxiety when crated  
Confirms fear of loud noises  
Confirms food aggression



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**Nellie Outcome**



Special Adoption for:  
Separation anxiety (potential)  
Fear of people  
Food aggression  
Monitor and regularly reassess  
anxiety



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**Brody Outcome**



LOTS of debate within the shelter  
Previous owner used dominance theory/techniques  
B Mod while in shelter  
Foster  
Initially with Dr. D'Arpino  
Next with experienced volunteer  
No problems in foster



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**Brody Outcome**



Special adoption for:  
Aggression to adults  
Food aggression  
Jumpy Mouthy  
Mild fear of unknown people  
Stay in foster until adoption



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**Behavior Modification**

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## Starting a Behavior Modification Plan

Is a plan needed?



Or is matching to the right home most important?

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## Goal of Behavior Modification Programs



Assess risk

Determine response to behavior modification

Determine type of adopter that is best for pet

Pets are usually NOT cured via behavior modification plans



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## Evaluate your Resources



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**Begin with....**

- Plans and protocols
- Staff training
- Volunteer training



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**Staff Training**

- Dog body language
- Dog handling and safety
- Assessing welfare
- Assessing and recording behavior
- Principles of training and b mod
- Behavioral tools (and humane use)



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**Behavior Modification for Jumpy Mouthy Dogs**

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**Medication for Nellie?**



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**Considerations**

Explore options for enrichment  
Explore options for change of environment  
    office foster  
    foster home  
Would this dog need medication if not in the shelter??

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**Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors**  
(i.e., Fluoxetine, Sertraline, Paroxetine)

Blocks serotonin reuptake from synaptic cleft  
    Increased serotonin  
Used to decrease anxiety, aggression, impulsivity - long term relief  
Labeled for use in separation anxiety  
Takes days to weeks to begin working

Dose: Fluoxetine - 0.5-2 mg/kg sid

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<http://sheltermedicine.vetmed.ufl.edu/education/courses/online/shelter-animal-behavior-and-welfare/>



<http://www.centerforshelterdogs.org/Home/ResearchandEducation/Webinars.aspx>



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Sheila D'Arpino, DVM, DACVB  
sdarpino@arlboston.org

Thank You!!