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

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www.centerforshelterdogs.org

Our Mission: Behavior Mod Squad

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

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

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

Brody

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

Optimize Welfare
Meeting Shelter Dog Needs

Identify Potential Problems
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.

www.centerforshelterdogs.org
Behavior History

Behavior Evaluation

Online Data Entry
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

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

Match-Up II Online

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral History</th>
<th>Behavior Evaluation</th>
<th>Shelter Behavior</th>
<th>Triage Report</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Triage Points Range Descriptions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 - 3 Points</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The dog exhibited no or problematic behaviors and is likely to be a good candidate for adoption with minimal screening and counseling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 - 10 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>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 a shelter and or problem-based behavior counseling.</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 - 20 points</td>
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<tr>
<td>The dog exhibited numerous and/or severe problematic behaviors and is unlikely to benefit from behavior modification training in the shelter and or counseling.</td>
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</table>

Recommended Behavior Training
Jump/Drive
Remember, it is important to provide dogs with social interaction, mental stimulation, and the exercise that they need. Visit our "Enrichment" programs to learn more.

Shelter Dogs
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!!!

How accurate is all this information??
Accuracy of Assessments

Behavior History
Behavior Evaluation
Behavior Observations

Accuracy of Assessments

Standardization
Reliability
Validity

Accuracy of Assessments

Stress
Personality
Environment
Accuracy of Assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Skill/knowledge of evaluator</th>
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</table>

The Behavior

How fair is it to focus primarily on negative behaviors?

Outcome Decisions:

Make Decisions Based Upon...

Individual Dogs

Because Every Dog is Different

Outcome Decisions:

Make Decisions Based Upon...

Shelter's Capacity for Care

Photo courtesy of Dr. Kate Hurley
### Outcome Decisions:

Make Decisions Based Upon...

Shelter’s Ability to SAFELY Rehome the Dog

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nellie Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foster</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whines when left alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggression over rawhide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact former owner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Says she is OK when left with dog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirms anxiety when crated</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confirms fear of loud noises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirms food aggression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nellie Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Adoption for:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Separation anxiety (potential)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food aggression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitor and regularly reassess anxiety</td>
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</table>
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

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

Behavior Modification
Starting a Behavior Modification Plan

Is a plan needed?

Or is matching to the right home most important?

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

Evaluate your Resources

WHO

WHAT

WHERE

WHEN

WHY

HOW

Evaluate your Resources
**Begin with....**

- Plans and protocols
- Staff training
- Volunteer training

**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)

**Behavior Modification for Jumpy Mouthy Dogs**
Plan for Brody

TRAINING PLAN JUMPY MOUTHY DOGS

WE SURE TO REVIEW "JUMPY MOUTHY DOG TRAINING TIPS" BEFORE INTERACTING WITH THIS DOG

1. Say Please Program (see doc)
2. Retrieve Training (1X daily, see doc)
3. Ignore Inappropriate Behavior
   - Let the dog chew on you, you are not interested in the bone or toy.
   - Stand perfectly still; arms and legs away from dog
   - AS Soon as the dog jumps/ mouthing, reward him/her

JUMPY MOUTHY TRAINING TIPS

TIPS: 1. Some ways call, see, they push, instruct the dog to be by you
2. Say Please Program: Place a treat on the floor, stand or sit on the floor, instruct the dog to be close to you and expect the treat
3. Retrieve Training: Place a toy in front of the dog, instruct the dog to take the toy, instruct the dog to retrieve the toy
4. Ignore Inappropriate Behavior: Reward the dog when it is doing what you want. When the dog does something you don't want, ignore it
5. Practice "Telephone" if the dog is not responding to the word "telephone" use the "telephone" command

www.centerforshelterdogs.org/Home/DogBehavior/ProblemsandManagement/JumpyMouthy.aspx
Behavior Modification for Fearful Dogs

Fear

Fear Aggression
The Plan

Initial training with highly experienced/trained staff and volunteers ONLY

Training Plan for Nellie

AVOIDANCE
'SAY PLEASE' PROGRAM
PLAYGROUP
TREAT BUCKETS
BASIC TRAINING
CREATE POSITIVE ASSOCIATIONS
QUIET TIME

Training Staff about Fear of People

What TO do
Create positive associations
Avoid fear inducing stimuli

What NOT to do
No aversives
No ‘dominance theory’
Don’t force interactions
Medication for Problem Behaviors

Primary indications for medication:
- Poor welfare
- Severe anxiety

Medication for Problem Behaviors

Medication for Brody?
Medication for Nellie?

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??

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
Identification and Modifying Canine Behavior Problems in Shelters

**Trazodone**

SARI: Serotonin antagonist (blocks receptors) and reuptake inhibitor
Can be used as adjunct to primary medication such as SSRI (long-term effects)
Side effects uncommon

Dose: 1-5 mg/kg bid, titrate to effect

**Medication?**

None were used

**Medication?**

Fluoxetine 1 mg/kg po sid
Reassessment

Treatment Duration/Other Considerations

Most dogs respond within 1-2 days.
Continued treatment while the dog is in the shelter is crucial.
Jumpy Mouthy dogs are often more likely to be returned than many other more serious problem behaviors.

How to Assess Progress

Day to day interactions?
Repeat behavior evaluation?
Send to ‘real life’ (foster home) environment?
Rehoming

Finding the Right Home

- Place pets for adoption that will be safe (not bite or harm) for people in your community
- Match the pet to an appropriate adopter
- Inform and educate adopters
- Be honest and realistic
- Be FLEXIBLE

Adoption- Jumpy Mouthy Dogs

The right home is crucial
- Active people
- People who enjoy training dogs
- People who are willing to invest time, energy, and effort
Adoption- Fear of People

The right home is crucial
Quiet home
Understanding of fearful dog needs
Patient people

Risks and Benefits

The only way to GUARANTEE that you will not have a pet with a problem is to not own a pet

Aggression (and problem behaviors) is a risk with ANY adoption. Our goal is to do everything possible to reduce that risk.

The Special Adoption Appointment

Full disclosure
Demonstrate the problem
Discuss/teach plan for management (NOT treatment), and give handouts
Follow-Up

Special Adoption Counselor Phones the Adopter at:

One week (or sooner if we have ANY concerns)
One month
Two months
Three Months (if necessary)

Using questionnaire as a guideline for conversation.
## Follow-Up

50% discount on training classes through our shelter

Free behavior appointments for six months after adoption

Phone calls and emails

Adopter knows that we are ‘on their team’

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## Nellie


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## Brody

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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

Sign up for our newsletter at www.centerforshelterdogs.org

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Thank You!!