

Have personalities, hang-ups

Dogs behave like humans

By BEVERLY MANJEOT

Dogs . . . strong, loyal, man's faithful companion. For centuries, domesticated dogs have helped man hunt prey, pull wagons, cross dangerous land and protect man's family and home. Today, as a way of thanks, he is loved, protected and pampered by man.

Like individuals in the human race, every dog has a distinct personality that influences the way he will respond in various situations. Dogs' experiences, like our own, may include pain, fear, anger, frustration, joy and pleasure.

"All animals have a different personality ranging from shyness to aggression," said Dr. Mary Herron, an associate professor of veterinary anatomy.

An animal's behavior characteristics, like those of people, are a product of both his environmental and genetic influences.

"Animals don't have as many psychological hang-ups as people, but they do have problems," said Dr. Neil Van Stavern, assistant professor of small animal medicine and surgery. "For example, anxiety in animals, like the stress that humans experience, is depicted by apprehension, fear, trembling, shaking and dilation of the eyes."

"When treating an animal at the small animal clinic, we try to keep stressful situations to a minimum by treating the animal on an outpatient basis instead of making it stay at the hospital."

"The animal is confused and therefore frightened because he

At this stage, even if you beat him, he would still come back to you."

"The eighth week of a dog's development is like the adolescent period in human behavior. It is a very critical time in the dog's life because he will remember everything bad that happens to him."

During this stage of behavioral development, personal contact is very important to the animal, said Herron. An owner must show the animal love and compassion by talking to it and petting it.

The twelfth week is a period of peak avoidance. The puppy will stay away from people and other animals, said Pyka.

"You can't socialize a puppy after the twelfth week," Pyka said. "If he isn't socialized by now, he will remain a completely wild animal."

The final stage of behavioral development is called the juvenile period, which continues until the animal reaches sexual maturity.

"Behavioral development in a puppy can be compared to a child growing up," Pyka said. "Puppies go through some of the same trials and tribulations as children."

Dogs, like people, can determine the difference between two people and between two animals. The dog can't see colors, but he can distinguish the difference between color intensities, shapes and sizes. A dog sees two distinct types of humans: the child and the adult, said Pyka.

"Hats freak dogs out because they conform to the shape of the person's head and make it difficult for the dog to distinguish the individual," said Van Stavern.

"The dog barks and bites the mailman because of the brown pouch he carries," Pyka said. "The pouch is totally foreign to the dog. The dog reacts to the pouch because it looks like a deformity."

When given an opportunity, dogs are not only highly socialized among themselves, but also among man. Because man has been domesticating dogs since 4000 B.C. they have adopted man into their social order or pack, said Kennedy.

"Dogs are almost human-like," said Van Stavern. "However, they're much easier to get along with than other people. You couldn't ask for a truer love."

The dog may be attracted to his owner because he considers him to be a pack member. Therefore, if during sexual excitement another dog is unavailable for mating purposes, a pet dog may try and mount his owner's leg. It is the dog's way of showing love and affection.

Often, dogs perform heroic acts to save their owners from fires, crashes or drowning. As a highly socialized and domesticated animal, the dog considers the safety and well being of another pack member before he considers his own.

The domesticated dog may also howl like a wolf when he hears a telephone ring or a loud siren because he is trying to protect pack members from danger, said Kennedy.

Dogs often display the same frustration characteristics as people, which may include a fear of people, severe shaking or trembling, running away, hiding, nervousness and anxiety.

"Often frustration in animals occurs because owners have mistreated them," Herron said. "Potential dog owners should take their time selecting a pet. They should consider their own time availability, their life style and whether or not they want a playful or decorative animal."

"For example, if you own a tiny apartment and are only at home at night a Saint Bernard would be an unwise choice. However, a pair of cats would be a better choice because they could keep each other company when you're not around."

Weinstein said, "My dog Charcoal is frustrated because he's left alone at home a lot. Recently, his companion dog was put to sleep and now he won't eat because he's lonely."

Frustration may also be caused by constant inbreeding. Dogs may respond to their frustrations by licking themselves till they are raw and

bleeding, chewing on furniture, wetting the carpet, jumping over fences or being destructive toward others, Kennedy said.

"Charcoal vents his frustration by chewing on things and tearing up

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pillows and magazines," said Weinstein.

A dog owner should avoid hitting a frustrated or angry dog because pain creates aggression. The dog will bite as a form of defensive protection, said Pyka.

There are two types of adult behavior patterns. The first type is called allelomimetic behavior. During this stage the dog spends most of its time with other dogs. The second type is referred to as the agonistic behavior pattern and it involves competition between animals.

"A dog will stare down another animal to show that he is more dominant," said Pyka. "You can show your dog that you're more dominant by staring him down."

Aggression is primarily demonstrated among pack dogs in territorial fights or when a dog marks its territory by urinating on it. A dog will also urinate on an object or person when he feels threatened in order to show possession.

"Aggressive dogs don't usually fight to kill," said Pyka. "The last thing a dog will go for is the neck because it's the most critical area."

"In a dog fight, when a losing dog finally realizes he is subordinate, he will roll over on his back to show his most vulnerable spot, his underside. The dominant dog will then open his mouth and put it over the subordinate dog's nose as a soft reminder to remember his proper place."

If during a dog fight, a more threatening event occurs, the two fighting animals will team together for protection.

All animals must face the basic problems of food gathering, defense, maintenance of territorial boundaries, courtship, mating and care of the young. Animal communication has developed because of these problems.

Dogs communicate with each other through vocalization and body postures. The most common dog vocalization is barking. When the dog barks, he is communicating an emotional state such as fear or pleasure and not a message.

"Growling represents anger or aggression, whining is physical or mental unpleasantness, yelping is an expression of surprise, squealing

is happiness, yawns and sneezes are associated with anticipation," said Pyka.

Postural communication refers to how the dog carries his head and body when approaching another animal. An aggressive dog ready to attack is characterized by a stealthy approach, crouched body, lowered head and erect ears. In contrast, a friendly, non-threatening dog will bound forward with its head up, ears back and tail carried loosely.

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doesn't understand what is going on. Some animals will fight you till they die while others will allow you to help them."

The early life history of a dog's behavioral development has been divided into four stages. The first stage is called the neonatal period when the immature puppy remains near its mother because it is blind, said E.S.E. Hafez in his book, "The Behaviour of Domestic Animals."

"The first stage is from zero to four days," said Liz Kennedy, a junior pre-vet student. "This is the period where the female dog tells her puppy how to react. For example, she'll lick the newborn puppy and it will squirm, right itself and crawl."

The second stage is a transition period marked by rapid sensory and motor maturation. It is a period when the puppy's muscle and nervous system are developing, said Kennedy.

The third stage is a period of socialization that ends when the puppy is weaned from its mother, said Carol Pyka, a senior biomedical science major.

The socialization process, which occurs between the third and twelfth week of a puppy's behavioral development, is the most important time in a dog's life," said Pyka. "It is the time when the dog realizes that he is a dog. It is called imprint learning."

Imprint learning is a form of species identification, said Kennedy. For instance, an infant duck will learn its behavior role from its mother. However, if during the imprint stage the duck sees a balloon, it will begin behaving like one.

The peak approach period occurs between the fifth and seventh week of the socialization process. During this period the puppy will actively approach anything it sees.

"This is a good time to introduce the animal to people because it is forming its attachments," Pyka said. "It doesn't matter if the dog has a good or bad emotional experience."

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