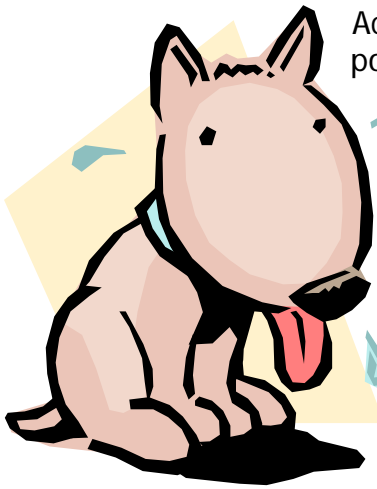


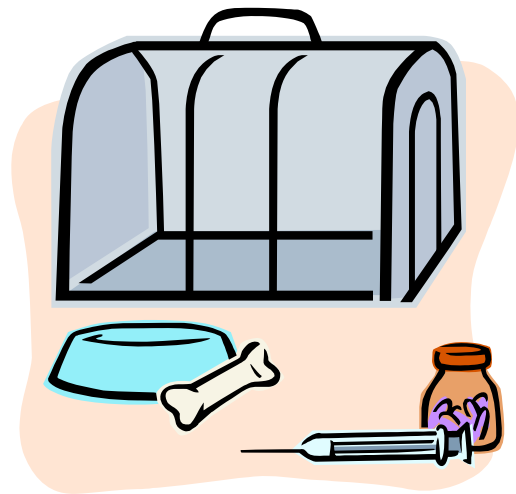
Habit or Health?

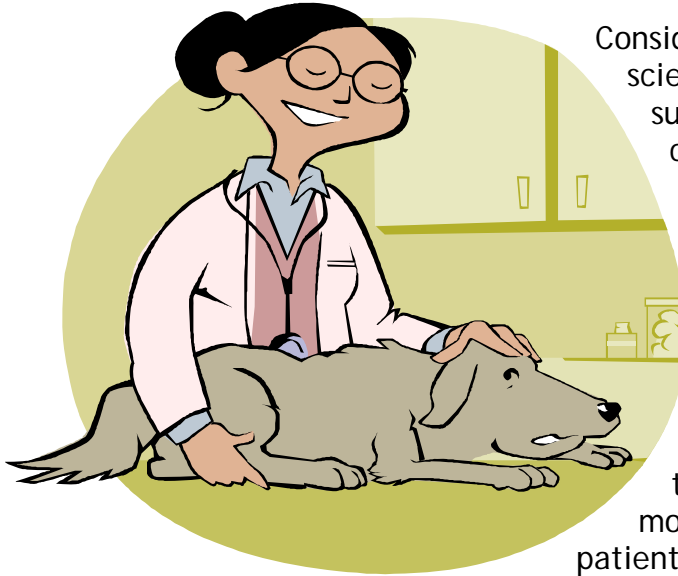
When a Problem Behavior Isn't Behavior At All by Suezanne M. Law



According to the CDC, about 25% of the human population suffers from behavioral disorders that are caused by chemical imbalances, neurological problems, or other bodily illnesses that affect the way their bodies and brains receive and transmit information. And though there are few studies to suggest the number of dogs who suffer from similar health-related behavioral disturbances, because so many structures within the canine brain mirror those within the human brain (we are both mammals, after all), including the structures that govern learning and the emotions, one can assume that the percentage of canines suffering from these biological maladies must be similar, too. In fact, even common illnesses like thyroid disease, diabetes, cancer, and allergies can influence the way your dog behaves in any given situation.

So, how do you know if your dog's problem behavior is due to bad habit or ill health? It's not always clear, even to skilled dog behavior consultants and veterinarians. But certainly, the closer the relationship you share with your dog's trainer and veterinarian, the better able you are to make the decisions necessary to impact his behavior in the long run. Whenever you encounter a problem behavior in your dog, it is a good idea to consult not only a trainer, but also a veterinarian who is knowledgeable in animal behavior, just to make sure that any behavioral methods you and your trainer may try will be effective. A physical exam including a thorough history, routine blood-work, and occasionally more extensive testing may be necessary before you really get a clear picture of your dog's total health - both physical and behavioral.





Consider, too, that for many years, scientists have worked with human subjects to find the best approach to correct problems such as anxiety or panic attacks, fear resulting in self-harming behavior, and even schizophrenia and psychosis. Their techniques ranged from electric shock therapy to cognitive behavioral analysis, with many stops in between. And just as it was discovered that electric shock therapy had a tendency to cause more problems than it solved for human patients, so electronic dog collars, also

called shock collars, are contraindicated in treating behavioral problems of any origin in dogs. Don't be dismayed, either, if your veterinarian suggests that your dog be treated with one of the many new medications on the market today designed specifically to treat chemical imbalances. Over the years, caregivers who work with human subjects have come to the realization that though behavioral methods may help patients cope with the various stimuli their bodies and environment present them, the right medication most effectively addresses issues which are indeed biological and not behavioral at all. Many veterinarians now believe that our companion animals can benefit from this same care.

This dog training tip sheet has been made available to you by Sympawtico Dog Training, LLC and your pet care professional:

For more information on working with problem behavior, please contact:

Sympawtico Dog Training, LLC

913.424.5072

Sympawtico Dog Training, LLC: Come see how easy living well together can be!

All rights reserved.

Copyright © 2009 by Sympawtico Dog Training, LLC
(913) 424-5072 www.sympawtico.com