

Behavior on a Budget



MAKING THE MOST OF LIMITED RESOURCES TO
IMPROVE THE BEHAVIOR OF DOGS IN SHELTERS



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Exercise and Enrichment



Why Should We Focus on Behavior?



- Decrease Length of Stay
- Improve Kennel Presence
- Reduce Injury
- Increase Emotional Health
- Better Placements
- Five Freedoms
 - 1. Freedom from Hunger and Thirst
 - 2. Freedom from Discomfort
 - 3. Freedom from Pain, Injury or Disease
 - 4. Freedom to Express Normal Behavior
 - 5. Freedom from Fear and Distress

Environmental Enrichment



**HOUSING AND FEEDING CHANGES
CAN MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE**

Stereotypical Kennels:

Easy to clean.

Free from items that can be destroyed.

Clear view of animals inside.

Provide shelter from elements, free access to food, water.



How Does this Impact Behavior?



- Constant visual stimulus
 - Barrier reactivity increases
- Little to no mental stimulus
 - Demand/boredom behaviors increase
- Noise amplified by hard surfaces
- No option for a break from stressors
 - Shy/fearful dogs struggle to recover
 - Reactive dogs become increasingly frustrated

Simple Changes Go a Long Way



Airline kennels work well for this.

Set up entrance facing away from the front of the kennel.

Start feeding inside, gradually move food to outside of the kennel.

Allows you to close the dog in the kennel when cleaning.



Create a safe space for shy/fearful dogs using a spare kennel.

Cover the lower half of the kennel for dogs who are reactive to other dogs.

Cover the upper half of the kennel for dogs who are fearful of people.

Engage volunteers to make tarps to specifications. Add grommets and snaps for custom sized barriers.

Hang a towel or blanket in a pinch.



Visual barriers reduce reactivity to dogs and people

Reduces boredom by allowing for an outlet for problem solving.

Reduces reactivity by increasing the length of meal time.

Directs chewing/destructive behavior to more appropriate outlets.



Make the most out of meal time by getting rid of bowls.

Drill holes in PVC pipe
(sized to be barely larger
than kibble).

Fill with kibble.

Cover ends with tennis
balls or PVC end caps.

Enjoy!

Great volunteer project.

Stands up to strong
chewers.

Google DIY PVC pipe
feeder for tutorials.



PVC Pipe Feeders

Put kibble in cups and cover with tennis balls.

Flip the muffin tin upside down and pour kibble around cups for a DIY slow bowl.

Mix wet and dry kibble, fill cups and freeze. Distribute individually or give the pan to large dogs.



Muffin tins have many uses.

Paper bags, tp rolls,
egg cartons, etc can all
be filled with kibble.

Tearing up paper
allows for an outlet for
destructive behavior.

Easy to clean up, no
dishes to wash.



**Recycle things you might otherwise
throw away.**

Frozen enrichment
means longer
enjoyment time.

Allows you to make
large batches.

Great cool treat in the
summer time.

Prevents infestation.



Fill your freezer!

Exercise – Think Beyond a Walk!

- Playgroups

- Even numbers are best
- Pair similar play styles/drives
- Pair shy dogs with social dogs for a confidence boost.

- High energy games

- Flirt pole
- Yo-yo recall
- Hide and seek
- Go find it (hidden toy game)

Flirt Pole (Your New Best Friend)



- PVC Pipe
- Rope
- Toy
- Tired dogs all day!

Training and Behavior Modification



Barrier Reactivity



- Not always reflective of sociability with people or dogs.
- Overstimulation, boredom, demand vs. fear, stress, anxiety.
- Operant vs. Classical Conditioning for solutions.

Emotion impacts behavior.

Leash vs. Nail Clippers

Changing the way a dog feels in a specific context changes the behavior they perform.

In Classical Conditioning, deliver a treat each time you pass the kennel, regardless of the dog's response (even if jumping, barking, growling).

Use neutral/appeasing body language.

Watch for anticipatory response.



Conditioned Emotional Response (CER)

Use a clicker or verbal marker to capture good behavior.

Start easy – mark for four paws on the ground for a split second.

Walk away if dog jumps or barks.

Mark and treat for all good behavior.



Click to Calm for Quiet Kennel Presence for Demand Barkers

Target to hand, spoon,
Frisbee, etc.

Great for kennel front
training, polite
greetings, confidence
building.

Hold out hand (or
object) close to the
nose. Mark and treat
for any contact.

Awesome exercise for
volunteers!



Unlock the power of targeting.

Train Inside the Kennel to Change Dynamic



- Kennel entry has strong associations with stimulating events.
- Reduce boredom, frustration, and bad habits by training inside.
 - Sit
 - Down
 - Target
 - Place
- Great impression on adopters!

Shy/Fearful Dogs



- Avoidant Behavior
 - Hiding in the kennel
 - Shying away from contact
- Balking on the Leash
- Shut Down/Non-Interactive
- Poor Recovery from Stress



Respect requests for distance.

Orient yourself to the side, look away.

Softly toss treats instead of handing them.

Let the dog dictate the level of interaction.

Allow retreat.

Pet and Pause



Be Mindful of Body Language

Begin hand feeding as soon as possible.

Up food value (wet food or dry wet mix).

Toss food at first if needed.

Appetite is controlled by emotion, fearful dogs often don't eat at first.



All Good Things Come From People

Easy behavior to start with (high rate of reinforcement).

Builds positive association with human contact.

Translates to safe greetings.

Manages human behavior as well.



Teach Hand Targeting for Confidence Building

Balking on the Leash

Keep leash slack and allow retreat.

Crouch and turn to the side.

Offer target hand.

Reinforce any progress forward.

Consider a helper dog.

Set small goals.



Implementation

- Start small
 - Get staff buy in with incremental implementation
- Find ways to engage volunteers
 - Lots of options for people who can't do physical work
- Set up for success
 - Keep supplies handy (treats, bait bags)
 - Set reasonable goals to stay motivated
 - Reach out for help

Reach Out for Help!



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