



HUMANE SOCIETY OF BROWARD COUNTY

Behavior Modification Handout

Exercise

As a nation we are becoming more and more sedentary in our daily routines. Movies, video games or a good book may be entertaining for us but our pets have a lot more get up and go! If your pet is left to his own devices he will entertain himself with normal animal behaviors, most of which we do not like; digging, chewing, barking, scratching, pouncing, meowing (mostly in the middle of the night) and generally making a nuisance of themselves. It is up to us to establish healthy exercise routines for our pets and to encourage appropriate behaviors.

Making Exercise Part of Your Daily Routine

Exercise is not achieved by letting your dog run around the yard by himself or letting your cat simply bat around a ball of yarn! In order for exercise to be effective it should be consistent, structured and interactive. Think of your pet's exercise as more than just playing. An animal needs to stimulate their mind as well as their bodies and experience an array of physical and mental challenges.

- **Be consistent when providing exercise.** Activities should take place everyday for a specific amount of time. Exercise can be provided in short intervals frequently during the day or scheduled in the morning and then again in the evening. Pick what is going to work best for your family. Making exercise convenient and part of the everyday routine will increase the chances of it happening on a regular basis.
- **Structure is a very important part of exercise for your pet.** Use specific games or activities your dog or cat enjoys and develop a regiment like you would if you were going to the gym to work out. In the morning play fetch for 5 minutes then a long walk. Add a different game to each day of the week before the walk (fetch on Mon., Hide-n-Seek on Tue., Keep Away on Wed and so on). Avoid repetitive actions like playing fetch for 2 hours. This type of exercise can lead to obsessive behaviors. Make it fun and interesting for both of you. Remember to use a schedule that works best for your routine to ensure consistency.
- **Interactive means you participate!** Your pet will not exercise himself. Exercise should relieve stress not create frustration and exercise will be a lot more fun for your pet if you join in. It will also help to stimulate natural play and predatory behaviors and relieve boredom. By participating you will also build and continue to strengthen your lifelong bond with your pet.

Games and Toys for You and Your Dog

Making sure your dog's toys and games are safe is critical. Any toys that are left with your dog while he is alone should be examined carefully to make sure he cannot ingest any parts. Make sure he will not be able to tear it apart and ingest anything. Softer toys and some chews toys will need your supervision when your dog is allowed to have them. It is always better to be safe than sorry!

A variety of toys and games are important to keep your dog interested and stimulate his different senses. Dogs play with different things for different reasons; comfort, fun, predation and to relieve boredom. You will need to provide items and activities that will appeal to these emotions.

TOYS

- Kong products that are made of hard rubber and designed to stuff with treats or kibble will entertain your dog for hours.
- Rope knots are safe when your dog is alone and a great interactive toy.
- Buster Cubes or puzzle toys can be very entertaining but you will need to train your dog how to use them.
- Softer toys like stuffed animals can give your dog something to snuggle with and carry around. They may use a toy like this for comfort. Some dogs may also use their stuffed toys to express predatory behaviors and "kill" them by shaking and tearing.
- Nylabone products make several items from hard rubber non-destructible items to edible bone shaped toys. These can be a great way for your dog to relieve boredom and have some fun. Remember most chew- type toys should be used with supervision.
- Balls and Frisbees make great fetch toys and can help your dog to burn off excess energy.

NOTE: Do not give anything to your dog to play with that he might confuse with something that you do not want him to chew up. For example, do not give him an old shoe or sock if you do not want him to chew up your shoes and socks.

GAMES

- **Hide-n-Seek:** Have your dog complete a sit and stay and then you hide somewhere in the house (make it easy at first). Then call him to you. When he finds you celebrate with lots of praise and a small food treat. Make the game harder as your pet gets better at it. This is a great game for your kids and your dog.
- **Treasure Hunt:** Have your dog complete a sit and down-stay and place a treat (food or toy) where he can see it. Release the stay and encourage your dog to get the treat. Make the game harder as your dog gets better. Hide the treat out of sight but let him see you stash it. Then increase the difficulty by going into another room to hide a treat.
- **Red Light, Green Light:** Just like the child's game this is stop and go for your dog. Red Light is sit and Green Light is play like crazy. A great game and a good learning opportunity.

- **Fetch:** An old favorite for everyone. Some dogs may need to be taught how to fetch. The important part of this game is training a reliable “drop it” cue so this game does not become a chase game.
- **Shell game:** Place a treat under a plastic cup (let your dog see you do this) and wait for your dog to nose the cup then he gets the treat. Add two more cups to add difficulty and always place the treat under the same cup so the scent stays strong. Move the cups around and watch your dog find the treat every time.
- **Tug of War:** Yes this can be a fun and safe game for you and your dog as long as you set specific rules and stick to them. Use only one toy for this game and when you are not playing the toy is put away. You are the only one who can initiate the game and end the game. Take breaks from the game often to bring the level of intensity and excitement down. If the dog is repeatedly mouthing your hands or any part of your body you should end the game and put the toy up. Say something like “too bad game over”. You can start the game up again later when your dog has calmed down. You must have a reliable “drop it” cue to play this game. If your dog has ever shown any signs of aggression to family members or you are having problems with aggressive behavior with your pet DO NOT play this game. It will not make your dog aggressive but may intensify current aggressive tendencies.

We have a wonderful book available in the Humane Society’s Boutique called “Beyond Fetch” and it contains lots of fun and safe activities for you and your pet. Check it out!

Games and Toys for You and Your Cat

Remember safety first. Always examine your cat’s toys to ensure pieces cannot be ingested or your cat cannot become entangled or trapped.

Unique and interesting toys and games are a must with cats. They will not be as easily entertained as dogs.

TOYS

- Ping Pong balls or lightweight balls that will bounce and roll easily. Cats are stimulated by movement and they will enjoy chasing a ball around.
- Paper bags are a favorite. Make sure any handles are removed so your pet cannot get tangled and possibly injure himself.
- Toys attached to a pole with a string are great toys because your cat is not close to your hands and not tempted to accidentally scratch you. You should never play with your pet with your hands. Always use appropriate toys.
- Scratching posts and cat furniture. Having plenty of both of these will save your furniture and entertain your cat.
- Soft toys or stuffed animals. Cats will snuggle and sleep with favorite soft toys and enjoy expressing predatory behaviors by biting and scratching with their back feet.

GAMES

- Fish tanks can provide hours of viewing pleasure for your feline friend. If you don't want the extra work of a fish tank try a DVD of a fish tank or small woodland creatures and birds that your cat can watch on TV. We have these available in our pet boutique.
- Window perches will provide a view of the great outdoors. Try hanging a bird feeder outside of the window and your cat can enjoy stalking birds without being able to hurt them.
- Battery operated toys can be turned on during the day when you are not home and provide exercise and entertainment for your cat.
- Don't forget to provide lots of elevated areas for your cat to climb and perch on. Cats like to be up high to survey their kingdoms.
- Fetch can be a favorite game even with cats.
- Catnip can really spice up any game. Be careful your cat does not become over stimulated by using too much. If he does just give him his space and avoid petting or trying to hold him until the effects of the catnip have worn off.

Tips for Keeping it Fun

Rotating your pet's toys will help keep him interested. If you leave all the toys out all the time they get boring. Stash half of his toys and switch them out every few days and it will be like getting new toys each time.

Hide some of the toys (make them easy to find). A newly discovered toy is a much better prize than one that is given away.

Scenting toys will make them more appealing to your pet. Soaking hard rubber toys in a chicken bouillon broth overnight will give them a yummy smell and putting a toy in the bottom of your dirty laundry basket will give it a comforting owner scent.