



The role of your primary care veterinarian

If possible, all pets should have a complete physical examination, including blood and urine testing, before your appointment with our veterinary behaviorist. This is important because your primary care veterinarian is the individual who will assist you in the lifelong care of your pet. We encourage the involvement of your primary care veterinarian in implementing any behavioral treatment plan prescribed by our veterinary behaviorist. We will provide a detailed referral letter to your primary care veterinarian and follow up with them regarding your pet's behavioral consultation.



What clients have to say

Our dog attacked and almost killed a smaller, defenseless dog. Shortly after this incident, I took him to the Animal Behavior Clinic at UC Davis. At our first meeting, our veterinary behaviorist correctly diagnosed the problem and gave me step-by-step instructions to follow. Her advice has caused a marked improvement in my dog's behavior. It has been exciting to see his steady improvement. I have kept in contact with our veterinary behaviorist by e-mail and subsequent visits and she continues to show me how to improve the relationship I have with our dog. She has also helped me to change my behavior and expectations about our dog so that my wife and I can have an active, fun life with him. She has shown me how to be a better, more effective dog handler and owner.

– John Davis

My husband and I have had two beagles since they were puppies. They were 11 and 12 when my mother's Cairn Terrier came to live with us. He had always gotten along with our dogs until he came to stay. He repeatedly attacked our two dogs, at one time sending one to the hospital. We hired a trainer, but despite hours of work and lots of expense, nothing helped. We couldn't euthanize the dog because it would break my mother's heart, so I contacted the Behavior Service at UC Davis. They put together a plan to improving the general interaction among the dogs in our household. The plan was not difficult or time-consuming and yet within a week to 10 days we could see a SIGNIFICANT improvement. It is now 9 months later and we haven't had a single fight. I am so grateful to the Behavior Service for helping us keep my mother's dog and to stop the constant worry in our household.

– Barbara Schwarz

MORE INFORMATION

How do I make an appointment?

Appointments can be made either by a referral from your primary care veterinarian or directly by you. **You may contact us to make an appointment for your pet by calling (530) 752-1393.** We require that a 72-hour notice be provided if you need to cancel or reschedule an appointment.

Payment for services

Charges for the initial behavioral consultation appointment include a follow-up visit (for dogs) to evaluate your progress and to build on the recommendations given initially. **Payment in full is expected at the time services are provided.** The initial consultation also includes reasonable follow-up, during which time you may call or e-mail if you have questions.

Visit our website

Our website provides substantial information in the form of printable fact sheets on various health and behavioral issues in dogs and cats, some background information on our veterinary behaviorists and clinical studies they may be conducting. We also provide answers to some frequently asked questions.

Please visit our website at www.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/vmth. Select *Small Animal Clinic*, *Our Services*, and then *Behavior*.



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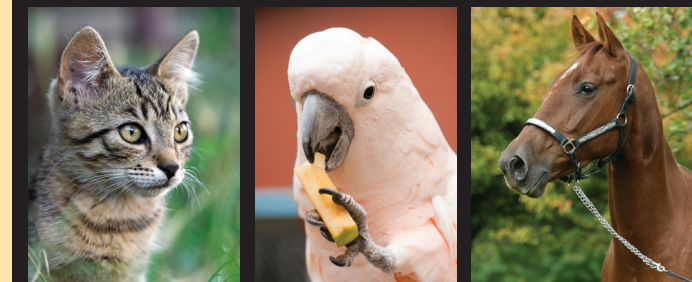
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Veterinary BEHAVIORAL Medicine

William R. Pritchard
Veterinary Medical
Teaching Hospital
at UC Davis



*Building stronger
relationships between
pets and their owners*



BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE

at the UC Davis VMTH

What is behavioral medicine?

Behavioral medicine is a specialty of veterinary medicine that involves diagnosing and treating behavioral problems in animals.

Behavioral problems can result from a neurochemical imbalance, a medical condition, from learned fearful associations or conflict over rules and social structure. Veterinarians are in a unique position to diagnose medical conditions that can affect a pet's behavior.

Why is behavioral medicine important?

Behavioral problems are the most common reason given for the surrender of companion dogs and cats to animal shelters in the United States.

The majority of animals with behavioral problems are not poorly behaved or misbehaved; they are abnormal (there is an organic cause for the problem) or are responding to an abnormal social system.

Behavioral problems are complex and multifactorial and often are not easily solvable. Behavioral medicine requires a broad knowledge of animals and the ability to translate that knowledge into practical methods that reduce the conflicts people have with animals.



How does a veterinary behaviorist differ from a dog trainer?

Veterinary behaviorists are veterinarians who are knowledgeable in all aspects of animal behavior. They stay current on the most recent scientific findings through research and continuing professional education. Trainers have some knowledge of behavior, but not at the depth or breadth that is expected of a veterinary behaviorist. While a trainer may teach an animal to perform certain actions in response to a command, obedience training does not usually get to the root cause of a behavioral issue or solve the behavioral problem. Be aware that some training techniques are considered questionable and inhumane in their approach.

What kinds of behavioral problems are treated by a veterinary behaviorist?

Common behavioral problems in dogs include aggression, separation anxiety, barking, destruction, urine marking, fearfulness, and repetitive behaviors.

Aggression is a complex problem. Because the potential consequences and liability are so serious, we recommend that you get professional help from a veterinary behaviorist.

It is important to realize that the destruction that often occurs with separation anxiety is not the dog's attempt to punish or seek revenge on its owner for leaving him alone but is part of a panic response. This is where a veterinary behaviorist can help. He/she may prescribe a medication that is used in conjunction with behavior modification techniques to reduce the dog's anxiety during the owner's absence.



Behavioral problems in cats are often related to aggression and urine marking.

Cat caregivers sometimes have difficulty understanding why their cats may suddenly bite and scratch or urinate on furnishings. Urine marking is often related to stressors in a cat's household. Attempting to resolve this problem may require help from a veterinary behaviorist who can prescribe specific behavior modification techniques and possibly medication.

Birds can also exhibit aggressive behaviors as well as feather-picking, anxiety and fear.



Horses can exhibit aggression toward other horses or humans, fear,

procedure aversion and compulsive disorders. In the equine cases seen at the UC Davis Equine Behavior Service, approximately 25% have had medical problems that were directly responsible for behavioral changes.



This underscores the importance—for all animal species—of a veterinary behaviorist to understand the relationship between any medical and behavioral reasons for the problem before tailoring a plan for the pet and family.

What to expect at the first appointment

- Before your initial appointment, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire to describe your pet's home environment and specific behavioral problem(s). In order to consider all possible factors contributing to the problem, we will also request your pet's medical records from your primary care veterinarian.
- Our veterinary behaviorist and a team that includes a veterinary student and technician will review this information in preparation for seeing you and your pet.
- The first appointment usually lasts 1½ to 3 hours. During the appointment, you and the behavioral team will discuss your pet's medical and behavioral history. **The environment is nonthreatening and is intended to help identify and understand the behavior problem.** We do not trigger the pet to perform the behavior.
- Once a diagnosis is made, a treatment plan will be discussed. Management of your pet's behavioral problem may include safety counseling, behavior modification, making changes in the home environment, and medication if appropriate. The safety and well being of your pet and of all those who interact with your pet are emphasized.
- A member of the behavioral team will work with you on the behavior modification techniques recommended by the veterinary behaviorist. **We will prepare a detailed written summary of the visit with all of the recommendations and instructions for continuing behavior modification in the home.**
- The initial fee for dogs includes a follow-up visit within four weeks to evaluate your progress and to build on the recommendations given at the initial appointment.
- All appointments include reasonable follow-up for up to three months, during which time you may call or e-mail for assistance with questions regarding management and behavioral modification techniques. Follow-up appointments are available as needed.