

Exercise, training & behaviour

Exercise



Exercise should be a part of every pet's daily routine to keep them content and in good physical condition. Dog's benefit from daily exercise

outside the yard and/or home. This can be in the form of going for a walk or a run, swimming, throwing a ball at the park or even encouraging play with a food dispensing toy! If your dog is difficult to walk, ensure you speak to your veterinarian or a reputable dog trainer about an appropriate walking aid to assist you.

Cats able to venture outdoors are more active and generally in good physical condition. Cats living predominantly indoors however are mostly sedentary and are at a higher risk of becoming overweight.

If you have an indoor cat, you need to ensure you allocate time each day to get your cat moving. Start with 5 minutes per day engaging them in play and gradually increase the amount of time you dedicate to the activity to help your cat adjust to the new routine.

Training

Training should be viewed as a means of effectively communicating with your pet and setting them up to succeed with the interactions they have with their environment, other people and other animals. A training program under the guidance of a qualified trainer should start as early as possible in life. Puppies and kittens naturally have an excellent capacity for learning so where possible start young.

Consistent ongoing training is important to cultivating good behaviours in your pet so be sure to keep up regular training for your pet over the course of their life.



Behaviour

In addition to exercise, mental stimulation of pets is important to keep them content. Enrichment is a means of encouraging your cat or dog to display their natural behaviours. Providing environmental enrichment can help provide mental stimulation for your pet and also promotes exercise.

Many interactive toys exist for cats and dogs to keep them entertained. An example of an interactive toy would be the use of an interactive feeder or food dispensing toy to help encourage your pet's natural feeding behaviours. These toys can help keep your pet busy for hours! Dogs are natural scavengers and enjoy searching for their food; many toys exist that hide food and encourage your dog to search or work for their meal.



In addition to enriching their environment through feeding, take some time to consider the layout of your pet's environment. For example, cats enjoy being up high, able to survey their surroundings. Ensure you provide plenty of perches for them to climb onto to encourage this natural behaviour.

A combination of daily exercise, environmental enrichment and consistent training can help to reduce behavioural problems in pets. Many behavioural issues in pets stem from stress and anxiety. It is important to recognise that stress in pets is very common and many things exist in their environment that may seem benign to us, cause them considerable stress. Some examples include:

- New or existing pets
- Children
- Visits to the veterinarian
- Travelling in the car
- Thunderstorms and fireworks

If you suspect your pet may have anxiety or is exhibiting a behavioural problem, it is important to address this as early as possible and speak with your veterinarian about a management plan.