



Maddie's Institute

Behavior Modification for Cats in Shelters and Foster Homes

Webcast Transcript

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[Beginning of Audio]

Lynne Fridley:

Good evening everyone. I'm Lynne Fridley, program manager for Maddie's InstituteSM. We're very happy you were able to join us. Welcome to tonight's webcast, "Behavior Modification for Cats in Shelters and Foster Homes." Our presenter is Dr. Sara Bennett, a board certified veterinary behavior specialist. Dr. Bennett works with a variety of animal behavior problems and disorders. She particularly enjoys addressing problem behavior in shelter animals, helping to make these pets ready for adoption, and then strengthening the human animal bond on to keep these animals in their new homes.

We'll be starting the presentation in just a few moments, but before we do, we have some housekeeping items to go over. If you need help with your connection during the webcast you can click the Help icon, which is at the bottom of your screen. Since you're joining us for the live webcast tonight you can download and print your Certificate of Attendance with no quiz required. Just open the green file widget at the bottom of your screen. Click on Certificate of Attendance and print or save the document.

Other resources that we wanted to share with you tonight are also in that file. RACE CE certificates for veterinarians and vet techs will be e-mailed within two weeks. You can ask questions in the Q&A window on the left hand side of your screen. We will try to answer as many as we can at the end of the presentation.

Before I turn things over to Dr. Bennett, I want to say a few words about Maddie's Fund. We are the nation's leading funder of shelter medicine education and it is our goal to help save the lives of all of our nation's healthy and treatable shelter dogs and cats. Our founders, Dave and Cheryl Duffield, were going through a difficult time in their life, but they were sustained by the unconditional love of their little dog named Maddie. She gave them such joy that they promised her that if they ever made any money they would give back to her kind. Well, their dreams did come

true and they made good on their promise by creating Maddie's Fund in honor of their cherished companion and the special bond that they shared. We hope you will be inspired by what you learn here tonight. Dr. Bennett, thank you for being here with us.

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: Thanks, Lynne. As she said we're going to start our presentation tonight. We're going to be talking about behavior modification for cats in shelters and foster homes. And I had to have a little chuckle when I read the description of the presentation tonight, because it said that we were going to learn about new information about the behavior modification.

But in fact, this isn't necessarily new information in and of itself, but it might be a new application of some information that you may have already been exposed to by just working with different species.

Lynne Fridley: So we have our first poll question just right off the bat. We're going to get you guys interactive with us by answering a poll question. Please answer on your screen and not in the Q&A box. Answer on your screen. Is training cats possible? Your choices are yes, yes, but it must be really hard, maybe and laugh out loud, are you kidding, no.

So make your choices. Answer on your screen please and we'll see what everybody out in the audience has to say about training a cat. Is that possible? So let's jump over to the results. Well, that's interesting, isn't it Dr. Bennett?

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: That is wonderful. I was actually expecting a lot more laugh out loud, are you kidding, no. So this is good. This means that everybody is very open-minded about the possibility of training cats tonight and I think we're all going to have fun with this.

So with that let's go through a quick outline of what we're going to cover tonight. We're going to start by talking about some different types of learning. Within that we're going to discuss the quadrants of operant conditioning.

Once we've gone through the different types of learning that can occur we'll start discussing a little more in depth some specific behavior modification techniques that utilize some of these different types of learning. And once we've gone through the behavior modification exercises and had a couple of these samples we'll pull it all together at the end by discussing a little bit about how we put together a behavior modification plan.

So let's start with learning. There are a couple of fallacies to learning. Some of these you may have heard previously and may or may not agree

with me 100 percent on all of these, but animals really are a little more simple than oftentimes we give them emotional credit for.

They can form simple abject concepts, but some of the bigger, more implications that we try to apply to their behavior sometimes can be a little bit more than what they really deserve, if you will. And we'll stipulate don't act out of spite. They don't feel guilt or remorse. These are really moral applications that we humans have put on them, so understanding right from wrong.

Animals aren't necessarily moral, but amoral. The things are safe or not safe. Animals are not necessarily jealous. If you look at the definition of jealousy it would be something like I don't like you as a person, because you have great hair. It's something like that.

They can be competitive for attention, but not liking another individual overall because of a certain feature isn't necessarily something they're quite qualified to be able to do.

And boredom is another one that tends to get thrown around a lot with animals and I think again, as a little bit bigger of a construct than they're really able to wrap their little heads around, if you will.

Frustration however, is certainly something that we do see in animals and a lot of times the definition of looking at this is being motivated to do something, but not necessarily having the appropriate outlet or releasing stimulus to perform that behavior.

For the types of learning that we're going to talk about today we're going to start with habituation, which is modifying a response to a stimuli, classical conditioning. So if you've ever heard of Pavlov, the *[inaudible]* dogs, that's what that is. And then there is the operate conditioning, so if you know B.F. Skinner, the little rat that *[inaudible]* levers in boxes, that's the type of learning that was applied there.

Lynne Fridley:

We have our next poll question. So this is exciting. Please, everybody, answer on your viewing screen and not in your Q&A window. On the viewing screen you can just click right on your answer. Do you think you can use the same training techniques used in dogs to train cats? And your choice is yes, no, don't know. So your training techniques with your dogs, can you use that on cats? Please submit your answers and we'll go to the results. Well, that's good. The majority says that will work. Is that correct, Dr. Bennett?

Dr. Sara L. Bennett:

Yeah. So about half of the audience says yes, you can use the same training techniques that we use in dogs for cats and I actually agree with

that. What we will find as we go through some of these different techniques is how we might change the way we apply them to meet the different sensory needs of cats.

So yes, it's the same technique, but sometimes the application process in and of itself might be just a little bit different, but this is good. This means that we've got some things to talk about tonight.

Well with that let's talk a little bit about habituation. That's our first type of learning that we mentioned. And habituation is really an animal's response to a novel or neutral stimulus starts to weaken after it's been exposed to that stimulus multiple times. And what I mean by mutual is that that stimulus is non-harmful and nonthreatening to the animal.

Essentially what happens here is that the animal learns that it has no *[inaudible]*. It doesn't mean or predict anything, so if they've stopped responding when it occurred. It is an act of learning process. It's not just forgetting. They are actively learning that this has no consequence, so I don't have to worry about it.

A funny story that always makes me think of habituation is looking at horses and my horse out at my barn has never seen a donkey before. And a baby donkey came out to our barn and did his cute little baby donkey things including making braying noises.

And the first time he brayed, my horse thought that the sky was falling and was just running around the pasture, vocalizing, didn't really know what to do. But over time as he was there and nothing happened, he continued to bray.

He continued to have large ears, but there was absolutely no environmental consequence of *[inaudible]* him being on the farm. She finally stopped responding to him. So that would be a good example of habituation.

Habituation can occur in two different types of behavior modification, systematic desensitization and flooding. And we're going to talk about both of these in a little bit more detail and a little bit later in the presentation.

A second type of learning that we're going to be investigating is called classical conditioning. And with this, a previously neutral stimulus suddenly obtains meaning or becomes a predictor, now a condition stimulus for something after it was paired with something that was inherently meaningful or an unconditioned stimulus.

It's at times very complicated and there is lots of different words like conditions and stimulus and predicting and things like that, but don't make this harder than it needs to be. Essentially what we're doing here is we're just making an association between two unrelated stimuli.

And really, this the association that's being made is an involuntary one. It's a physical or emotional response, so we can see things like excitement or fear responses, changes in blood pressure, heart rate or salivation.

So this makes sense if we think about Pavlov, who is the prime example of classical conditioning. So he had the dogs in his experiment and he would give them meat powder and he was measuring salivation in different contexts.

But what ended up happening was if a bell would chime prior to the dogs being presented with the meat powder, as soon as he started to see that the dogs started salivating when they heard the bell, even before they had the meat powder presented to them, because the bell had become the predictor for the meat powder being presented.

So it kind of screwed up his physiology experiment with the salivation, but we learned a very important concept from a behavior standpoint.

With classical conditioning the learning process actually happens really fast if the two stimuli are always paired together, and they never occur not together. So really happens is this mutual stimulus is [*inaudible*] becomes the perfect predictor for the inherently meaningful stimulus, the meat powder.

So if we wanted to apply this to cats, we could say that the cat carrier in and of itself is inherently neutral and the only time the cat is put in the carrier is to go to the vet and the vet visit in and of itself is frightening.

So now, because the cat carrier only comes out when the vet visit is going to occur, the cat carrier predicts the trip to the vet and therefore, the car carrier now in and of itself creates a fear response in the cat.

Ample conditioning is something that is always occurring and this is important to remember. It's always occurring whether or not a handler intends it to be. So this is in our best interest to understand this concept so we can see it happening and maybe can have a little bit of control over what conditioning might occurring in the situation.

And it's again, the animals might associate a situation with the experience they had. We already used the vet office experience.

For some of these more intelligent animals, which we all run into when we're in a shelter setting, it only takes one exposure to the pair of stimulants for the animal to learn. And they say, "Never again, that was so scary. I am never letting this situation occur. That person in a white coat can never come near me, because I got poked with needles."

Another thing to remember is that classical conditioning can actually interfere with operate conditioning. So if they're both happening at the same time, classical conditioning can actually trump operate conditioning and this is going to become important later down the road when we're putting together our *[inaudible]* exercises.

All right. Now I want to talk about operate conditioning. As I said, operate conditioning is the type of learning that *[inaudible]*. It's also known as trial and error learning. And again, with this situation basically the animal is forming associations between a stimuli and a response.

What we're learning now particular behavior has a particular consequence. And we can actually associate responses with stimuli that don't naturally occur together, and so we can make behaviors that are not naturally occurring otherwise too.

And this is the way that we get an animal to do unusual behaviors. They have commercials and things like that, something that an animal wouldn't really do in its day to day life or error actions.

So a couple of things that we have to keep in mind when we're looking at operate conditioning. There is a law of effect and this is going to be really important when we're looking at what types of learning that we want to have in place.

And so essentially what we're seeing here is that the behavior that results in pleasant consequence is going to be strengthened or increased as in frequency. It pays to do it, so you're going to repeat the behavior.

A behavior that results in no consequence or has a neutral response is going to be weakened and decreases in frequency, because it doesn't pay off, so there is no point in doing it again. Additionally, a behavior that results in an unpleasant consequence is also going to be weakened or decreased in frequency, because the animal is afraid of the consequence. They don't want it to happen again.

So we have the same consequence, purring or a frequency change occurring for both a neutral consequence as well as a negative one. *[Inaudible]* behavior potentially might decrease in frequency stature if we use the same *[inaudible]*.

But again looking at the overall situation if we're trying to make the behavior decrease in frequency and we can do so by having a neutral response, why do we have to go to the unpleasant one to begin with?

The second very important thing to remember is that the interpretation of the consequence good, neutral or negative is based on the cat's perception, not our intention and this become vitally important when we start to say, "Oh, but I just really wanted to reach out and pet him because he looks so soft and I wanted to make friends with him."

Then we get hissing and scratching as a response. We intended it to be nice, but the cat did not perceive it as so.

A couple of additional important definitions is we're going to start breaking down the four quadrants of operant conditioning. So we've all heard positive punishment and positive reinforcement, but we also have negative reinforcement and negative punishment.

So to break these down and to the extent that these definitions we are going to need to understand them to use them. Look at it one word at a time. So when we're talking about reinforcement really what's happening is anything that increases the probability of a behavior occurring.

When we're applying punishment it's going to be anything that decreases the probability of the behavior occurring. When you add the qualifier of the positive or negative think about it like simple arithmetic. We're either adding something to the situation that's positive or we're taking something away.

So we put all of these together, we now have our four quadrants. So positive reinforcement, we are adding something – food – to the situation to increase the frequency of the behavior. As a punishment we are adding something to the situation to decrease the frequency of the behavior. Inherently this is usually something considered unpleasant by the animal.

With negative reinforcement we are taking something away to increase the frequency of the behavior. Typically this is taking something inherently unpleasant away. And with negative punishment we're taking something away to decrease the frequency of the behavior.

So, one of the prime examples of negative punishment is taking away your attention when an animal is doing something obnoxious to seek attention.

And it's really, really important for us to understand these definitions because positive punishment is not the same thing as negative reinforcement and is not the same the thing as negative punishment.

So in order for us to have an intelligent conversation about learning theory and what we're trying to apply, we need to understand the difference between these.

Lynne Fridley: We have another poll question. I want to encourage everybody out there in the audience to submit your questions to Dr. Bennett. We will be looking at those as we get closer to through this presentation and hopefully she'll have time at the end to address some of those.

So get your questions in early. We'd appreciate it. And as far as the poll question, have you ever trained a cat? Please answer on your screen yes, I tried or no. So have you ever trained a cat? Let's see what the audience says. Yes, that's interesting, isn't it?

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: That's awesome. I love that almost half of you have been able to train a cat before and I love even more that over 16 percent of you have tried. So this is perfect, because we're going to go through some of these steps and maybe help you troubleshoot a little bit to make it a little bit more successful for you.

And those of you who haven't tried yet, after this lecture tonight I challenge you to go home and try to train a cat, even if it's one simple behavior. Once you start you're never going to be able to stop, because it is so much fun.

All right. I want to talk a little bit about at first of conditioning here for a couple of slides. I alluded to, when I was talking about the law of effect, that perhaps we don't have to go to the negative consequence or to decrease the behavior, knowing that a neutral consequence could have the same result.

With the first of conditioning and with those I mean negative reinforcement and positive punishment, we have some potential ramifications of using these types of methods and it's important for us to understand these when we're choosing a method to use to modify the behavior of an animal, whether it be dog, cat, horse or otherwise.

So with negative reinforcement, remember this is taking something away to increase the frequency of the behavior. This does create very strong behavior, but if we're trying to teach a new behavior, this can actually be a rather cruel and archaic method to do that.

I don't know how many of you have been around the dog training world, but a rather archaic method of teaching a dog to sit was to use the ear pinch and this is applied negative reinforcement. Essentially what you did, you grabbed the ear of the dog and you pinched and you hung on.

Then the dog went oh, ee, ow, oh, that hurts. That's and [*inaudible*] around and did all sorts of stuff and then finally he sat down as a way to try to get away and you let go, because the pinch goes away when the behavior occurred or you're going to sit to try to avoid the ear pinch.

I think we can all agree that's probably not the most humane way to teach an animal and I challenge you to not ever do that to a cat, because if a dog is uncomfortable with it I can only imagine what a cat would do to you.

There is a couple of other types of conditioning that can occur using aversive conditioning. One is called escape conditioning and this is where the animal learns that if they do a behavior they can terminate an aversive stimulus, hence the definition negative reinforcement.

What this can happen though is before approaching an animal when they're frightened and they start to hiss or spit or swat or growl at you and you stop or you back away, they have learned that doing that behavior prevents your approach, which is from their point of view, an aversive stimulus.

Avoidance conditioning can also occur too, and this where they learn to avoid the aversive stimulus. So an example would be if I never come out of my hiding spot underneath the bed, I never have to encounter the scary person who might approach and try to pick me up. So this again creates a very strong behavior, because if they never go into that situation, nothing bad can ever happen to you.

When we look at positive punishment, remember this is adding something to the situation to decrease the behavior. We have some requirements for this to be used effectively. First off, we have to look at the motivation strength. Can we apply our punishment at a level high enough outside the motivation to perform the behavior to begin with?

We're dealing with innate hardwired behaviors. Sometimes this is virtually impossible to do. The animal is so motivated to do that behavior we can't apply a punishment harsh enough to stop them.

Secondly we have to look at contingency and what contingency is, is the reliability of them being paired together. So the punishment happens every time the behavior occurs, but never when it doesn't. And this has to be perfect in order for this to be effective.

Intensity is also important and has to be strong enough to stop the behavior if the animal doesn't want to experience it again, but not so

intense that it traumatizes the animal and sometimes this can be a very fine line.

The timing also has to be perfect with the punishment being applied or occurring within a half second of the behavior starting. I don't know about you guys, but that's even for me being a professional, pretty tight criteria.

And then lastly we have to have an alternative. The animal has to be able to know a different behavior to perform, to stop the punishment from happening to it or to make it stop. Well in reality, in order to *[inaudible]* the punishment correctly the animal already has to know an alternate behavior to do anyway, and we have to train them before we ever resort to using punishment.

So a couple of basic steps. As you can imagine some of the things that we talked about with that last line, punishment can be pretty complex and it's actually really difficult to use in a day to day setting. And oftentimes it is poorly understood and overused and very ineffective.

If it's going to be effective it will work within three to four repetitions. So if you had to do it more than three to four times, it's not working. *[Inaudible]* being applied incorrectly because have so many criteria that we have to meet to make it work. So let's try something else. We've got other options.

A couple of quick side effects that we have to think about too, with these. Not only is it the hard to use and applied incorrectly a lot, but we can have side effects that can be detrimental to the situation too and inhibit learning. It can actually make some behavior problems worse, particularly fear or aggression.

The last thing that we want to do is increase aggression, because that can *[inaudible]* very quickly. And it can increase *[inaudible]* and *[inaudible]* related problem. Now remember when we were talking about classical conditioning trumping over operate conditioning and this is where it can happen.

We can have *[inaudible]* and classic conditioning associations being made. So the animals starts to fear that person or the situation surrounding it and is unable to actually learn the operate behavior that the handler wants. Additionally it makes the handler focus on bad behavior and it puts us all in less positive state of mind.

It damages the human animal bond and isn't that really why we're all here, is to help strengthen the human animal bond?

All right. Off to more positive things. Let's talk a little bit more about operate conditioning and what we can do to set up successful positive reinforcement. Well we start the behavior, starting to rework the behavior by using things like *[inaudible]* or fading, capturing, which we'll talk about here in a little bit more.

Shaping is another option that we can use, and once we have the animal actually performing the behavior that they want, we wanted to continue to use the continuous reinforcement schedule. Basically what this is, is that we reward every single repetition or offer of the behavior that the animal gives us and this makes the learning occur much faster.

Once we can predict that the animal is going to perform the behavior, then we can use determination training which simply means putting it on cue or putting a word to it. So telling an animal that that behavior means this. So when I say sit, you do that.

Once we've learned to put it on cue, we start to over learn and essentially all this is, is practicing. Practice, practice, practice. Practice makes perfect, right. The more we practice the more muscle memory we have. The more automatic it becomes.

Once we have practice and we are very proficient in the behavior, then we can start to take it onto an intermittent reinforcement schedule, which means that we reward every couple of repetitions of the behaviors or maybe we use something like praise rather than food every time. And this actually creates a very persistent behavior.

So to tell you a little bit more about capturing, what this is, it's really just rewarding spontaneous behavior. We sit and we wait for behavior that resembles the behavior that we want and when it happens, we reward it, but the training is actually well suited for this, because you can just sit there with your clicker and wait and oh, it happens, you click, you reward.

This is a really, really option for aggressive or for a fearful animal, because it's very much hands off. You never actually have to touch the animal to make anything happen and you can train animals through barriers, as well.

And this is something that's used actually quite frequently in zoo animals. I don't know about you guys, I really like cats, but I don't really want to go in the pen with a tiger to do my training session.

Well we're talking about shaping. Shaping is essentially training by rewarding successive approximation of a target behavior or pieces of it. When you break it down in steps. So it takes advantage of the very ability

of behavior the animals can offer, so it's not always exactly the same each time.

And really what you do is you have an idea in your head of what the next step is going to look like and as it happens you gradually become more discriminating in what you're going to reward. For those of you who have been around training worlds a little bit you recognize this as increasing criteria.

Keys to shaping are to have small steps and to be patient. So if the animal isn't performing the desired behavior that you are trying to reward at that moment, go back a step or two and proceed through whatever pieces of the puzzle that make it smaller steps for them. Break it down so it's a little bit easier.

They don't have to make quite as big of a leap and then you only reward the best or the most accurate behaviors. Or as you can imagine, anything that's techniques, the shaping, you need to have a training plan.

And this doesn't mean that you have to be a professional trainer and have everything all written out and down for you step by step we're going to do this, this and this today and this, this, this tomorrow, but have an idea at least in your head of the different pieces of the behavior and how you're going to reward it.

So for example, if you wanted to teach a dog to lie down and play dead, first you have to start with a sit, then a down and then lie down on your side and then close your eyes. So you've got four steps there, but you might in actuality break down going from a down to a lie down on the side. It's going to be three or four additional steps.

As long as you have an idea of where you're going with that you've got a shape and plan.

Lynne Fridley:

Well we have another poll question and this one you can check all that apply. What do you use to reward a cat during training? Did you use food, petting, brushing, and playing, other or not applicable? You may have to scroll down to find your Submit button, but please fill this out on your screen. What did you use to reward a cat during training?

I'd like to remind you that there is a Certificate of Attendance available tonight after the webcast or during the webcast you can go to the Resource widget at the bottom of your page and download it and save or print your Certificate of Attendance.

Also please get your questions in early. We're running through this webcast pretty quickly, so we would like to answer as many questions as we can at the end. Let's look and see what the results are. Food, petting, brushing, playing and other. Yes.

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: Great. So it looks like food, petting and playing are the most popular rewards for cats, which is good, because when we're looking at rewards we want it to be inherently reinforcing meaning in and of itself has meaning that causes to the cat and I agree that these three certainly fit into that category.

For some cats, brushing fits in that category. For some cats other things fit into that category, so this is great that there is a nice spread.

So with that, the question arises, how do we reward a cat? And as you guys have already identified, toys, treats, petting, brushing and preference testing can all be things used for this. Preference testing is actually something that I came across when I was researching ways to address resource learning in dogs in shelter settings.

And the Center for Shelter Dogs, if you're familiar with them, have a bunch of really great protocols on their website for behavior modification for various problems. And they actually have something called the toy preference test to try to figure out the importance of certain toys or certain types of toys to the dogs and they have a hierarchy of value to work through and *[inaudible]* resource guarding.

So basically what we did is we just took this test that we apply to dogs to apply for resource guarding and we put it together with cats. So basically what we're doing is we're just testing to see which things the cat prefers the most and we use those higher value ones as a reward for training.

And you can see a variety of different options appear on the different sides from toys to treats and you might notice little George there in the corner of the bottom picture. We're going to be meeting him a little more here in a few minutes.

We're going to actually with this next video demonstrate the reward preference testing applied to a cat. *[Video]*

Well as you can see in that video, we offer George five different types of food treats to see which one he likes the best. And so we put them all in a line, put him in the middle of the table and let him make his choice. So that purple can was his first choice. We took that away. And then his second choice was the treat to the right of that and his third choice was the other canned food.

And then he was kind of ambivalent about those last two that were left behind there. And so what that tells us is that whatever is in that purple can there is George's highest value of what we've offered him, so that's probably going to be the first thing that we're going to use when we set up a training session for George.

And we actually went through a couple of other testing with him and we had a couple of toys out and some catnip and things like that and he was really a chow hound. We just narrowed it down and said, "Okay. This is the top thing for him, so let's figure out what he likes."

And you can do the same thing with toys, catnip, brushing, petting, and all those types of things to see which one he works the hardest for.

All right. So we have talked a little bit about some different learning, so now let's talk about how to apply those to a couple of behavior modification type *[inaudible]*. So we're going to start with classical conditioning, counter conditioning, responsive petition, *[inaudible]* offer conditioning, systematic desensitization which is going to use habituation.

The counter conditioning with I have *[inaudible]* care in parentheses because sometimes the terminology and behavior and between behavior is just a little confusing sometimes. Really what we're doing here is we're using classical conditioning to change the meaning of a previously conditioned stimulus.

So basically we're pairing something that was previously frightening or harmless with something good – food, play, relaxation, whatever George likes, right? This is a really excellent technique to use with handling, so basically turn that person – that scary person is going to touch you into the treat guy.

So if you can touch my leg and give a treat. If you can touch an ear, give a treat. If you can touch the tail, give a treat and so on and so on and so forth.

A treats are cheap and for those of you who are in practice whether you be in a veterinary clinic or in a shelter setting, I think you will agree with me that treats are a lot cheaper than Worker's Comp. So it's in everybody's best interest to pair things with positivity, particularly when we're doing handling so that we can keep the animal in a pleasant state of mind and less likely to be reacting *[inaudible]*.

So I want to give you the quick little example of application of classical counter conditioning for shelter pets. So Miss Izzy, this beautiful little gray haired two-year-old female spayed shelter kitty was really, really

fearful in the shelter. Having a hard time there, wasn't really coming out of her shell so they had elected to put her into a foster home, so she was in a foster home with a male and a female couple.

When she got into that foster home we figured out that she really has some pretty inherent fear of people in general and particularly men. And so Steve, bless his heart, he was such a patient man. This kitty would hiss at him when he walked in the room. She'd swat at him if he came near. They were trying to make nice and make friends with her and she just was having none of it.

And so what we did was we just made Steve the treat guy. So every time he walked in the room he was going to toss a treat to Izzy. He was the one that was in charge of making her meals and feeding her and if he was going to walk into a room and stay in the room and Izzy happened to be in there, he was going to offer her a toy when he did that.

So we did this for several weeks with Izzy and over time she stopped hissing. She stopped swatting at him as he entered the room. She would share space with him and coexist peacefully, and then she started actually coming near him and sitting next to him. And then she even began to offer eye contact with him and this is something the female sponsor had been working on with her with operate conditioning, is to teach her some cues.

And so when she had learned it with the female owner, Steve suddenly had a way to communicate with her and have some type of social interaction. It had already been practiced, learned is the very safe and non-confrontational.

The happy ending to the story is that Izzy actually ended up getting adopted by these two fosters, because they really put a lot of really good work into making her more comfortable with people around and she really started to like Steve.

A couple of other applications that we can use classical counter conditioning is frightening noises. So cats can also become afraid of noises very much like dogs can. Thunderstorms will be and loud noises or slamming things like that. What happens if a cat is *[inaudible]*? *[Inaudible]*.

As we mentioned previously, handling, people, any types of veterinary care or grooming care has not totally thrilled about being brushed or new housemates or group housing. You know, you compare those first couple of interactions with something amazing that's actually very pleasant and so

it can make those cats actually think that it might actually be a good thing to have that other guy around.

Now let's talk about response substitutions. So this is going to be applying operant conditioning to a behavior modification technique. Basically what we're doing here is we're asking for a behavior that is incompatible with an undesired behavior, the one we don't want.

And when we're wanting a behavior that we're asking for instead and it can also be called operant turner conditioning, differential reinforcements and alternate or incompatible or other behaviors, so you'll see those initials there. And again, this is where the terminology sometimes gets confusing which is why I list these other potential names out for you.

An example could be the cat who likes to run up and grab your leg as you are approaching or walking down the hallway. Instead, how about we ask that cat to go catch a toy? And the cat has the toy tossed. The cat runs to get the toy and catching the toys in the hallway is getting reinforced, because it's something to do rather than grabbing a person's leg.

So remember we talked a little bit about the law of effects when we were talking about operate conditioning. Law of effects can apply to shelter settings, as well. And this is the place where frustration becomes really, really important and this is where we have to think about when people start saying, "Oh well, these poor shelter animals. I think they're really bored."

Are they bored or are they frustrated? They're likely frustrated and motivated to do something, but because of the housing situation they don't have the appropriate outlets on their behavior like normal behavior. So a frustration can result in higher *[inaudible]*, which is really the *[inaudible]* emotional state.

Lack of *[inaudible]* control or self-control and we can see things like swatting or biting while playing. You can see two *[inaudible]* behaviors that get expressed vocalization. You can see things like reaching out and grabbing people as they walk by the kennel or the room.

And even aggression, particularly with opening cage doors or putting the cat away, those types of things. And as you can imagine, it's really, really hard to ignore some of these unwanted behaviors.

And so if you're trying to disengage that cat's claws from your arm as you pass by a cage, you have to interact with the cat and that type of interaction, even if it's not the most pleasant, it's still interaction. And if the cat's that motivated, that desperate for social interaction, that's better than nothing where the behavior gets reinforced.

So I want to show you a couple of video clips. This is going to be a series of videos and really what we're doing is we're teaching the cat a novel behavior and we're going to use this in a situation where we might work to change a cat's behavior.

Before we watch these videos I want to point out to you we're going to see George again. George has never been exposed to training. He's never trained before in his life. That preference test was the first thing that we ever did to figure out what he likes, so this is all brand new for him.

And the person in the video who is training him is Dr. Harbison. She is an intern from California that came to spend a couple of weeks with us. She has also never trained a cat and has never done clips of training before. So we have a novice cat and a novice trainer working together for the first time and these are real-time clips.

This is it the first time they've ever worked together. So I want you guys to see that even though you're not a professional in this, you can make progress. And there will be a couple of mistakes here and there and I'll point them out, but I think it's good to show you that even if you're not perfect, you can still help the cat learn, so we don't have to make this harder than it needs to be.

So this is charging the clicker. We're using classical conditioning here to teach George that click equals the food is coming. We're just going to pair them together. *[Video]*

So one minute you saw her click and you saw her offer the food to George immediately following. So really all we're doing is making that perfect predictive. Click equals treats each and every time. And you even saw George start to look at her hand when she started to click saying, "Oh, I think something good is happening now."

The next thing that we're going to watch is we're going to watch capturing used to teach target training. The target training is really just touching a body part to a designated object.

So here we're going to be using touching George's nose to the tip of a chopstick and we're going to be using capturing. We're just going to stand here, offer the prop and wait and when he touches it, he gets *[inaudible]* treated. *[Video]*

Now George made out pretty good, but it pains him to really think *[inaudible]* to touch that stick with his nose. And it really only took a couple of repetitions for him to figure that out. And he might have had a

little bit of timing issues with when she was clicking versus anywhere here, but you know what? Those are minor details and George is still learning.

So again, we don't have to make this a situation where you're not comfortable trying clicker training or using positive reinforcement when you're training with cats, just because you're not a professional trainer.

This next video we're going to watch is where we're going to actually start to put that behavior on a verbal cue and the verbal cue is touch, so she's going to say touch. She is going to offer the stick and when he does it, she is going to click and treat.

So you know things happen in that order. Give the cue, then offer the prompt and then when he does it he gets a reward. *[Video]*

So we're starting to get an old cue and George thinks this is an amazing game. I don't know if you guys are noticing that he is pitching closer and closer to the edge of the table in each of these video clips. He's having a really good time.

And the next thing that we are going to watch is going to be taking this behavior that she just taught him and start to apply it to a situation that maybe we really want to modify his behavior. One of the things George's owner said to us was, "You know, he doesn't really like having his nails clipped." I said, "Really?" And she said, "Yes."

"Well what does he not like about it?" And she said, "Well he doesn't like to have his feet touched and he doesn't really like the sight of the clippers." So we're going to take this to use that we just taught George and we're going to apply it to the clippers. *[Video]*

So basically all we did was we replaced the chopsticks with the nail trimmers and we asked him for the same behavior and he is like sure, I know the game. This is easy. No big deal. Those are clippers whenever. I'm going to get my food for it.

The cool thing about this type of training is that it's really, really forgiving. Really the worst thing that can happen is that you click on accident and the cat gets a little extra reward, because you want to continue to pair your click with something good.

Maybe we teach a superstitious behavior or maybe we don't have our behavior quite as perfectly delineated as we want it, but we can still make things happen with this and these little behaviors that we can teach can be life changing for some of these shelter cats, particularly the shier ones.

And we're just asking a cat to turn and look at you in the kennel, so he starts to orient people walking by or teaching a cat to first step out of the cage by using target training. Teaching a cat to wave, those types of things. They can actually save these guys' lives by just asking for a couple of really small, really simple behaviors. So, now as you can see here, it doesn't take that long to teach these.

So if you set a couple of different places where we can use operant conditioning or response substitution to teach a cat to go to the place or go to carrier. Use the *[inaudible]* kitty *[inaudible]* in this photo are all in their particular station. You'll see they each have their own color.

You can teach a sit. It's really easy to teach a cat to sit once it's taught within the target, because then you just hold whatever it is they're touching with their nose above the top of their head until their rear hits the ground. Then you click a treat.

You can capture eye contact. Very much likely capture the targeting. Just sit and wait and the cat glances at you, click a treat. You can teach them cute tricks. Give a paw, fetch, wave, sit and this is actually even if you're not doing something to try to change a behavior problem in and of itself an excellent form of enrichment.

So even if the cat is not actually having a problem that you have to change, doing clicker training is a fun thing to do because it works their mind and it's positive and it's safe.

All right. I got to help run a lab for the veterinary technician class and when I was doing my residency at Purdue and one of the things that we would do is we would go to the local shelter and work with the animals there. And one of the activities they had to do was to go into the cat room and clicker train a cat.

Most of these students had had no experience with training and even less experience training cats, so this was completely novel to them just like it was to Dr. Harbison. And the funny problem kept happening that they would start working with the cat and teaching him a behavior.

Come to the front of the kennel, target training, teaching them to give a high five through the cage and when they came back the next week for the next lab, the cat would be gone. And like well this is dumb, we have to keep starting over every time we come back to the lab, because the cats keep getting adopted.

I'm like, "Well guys, this is a good thing. You're doing these things and it's making these cats more adoptable, because they're coming to the front of the kennel and they're soliciting attention from potential adopters. So the fact the cats you are working with are no longer there means that this is working." And it was such a cool thing to see.

And just to show you that yes, it truly can be done I have a video clip here of a cat going to her carrier on verbal cue. We had an intern also where I was doing my residency at Purdue who came up to me one day and she said, "Guess what?" And I said, "What?" And she said, "My cat can go to her carrier on cue."

I said, "Oh yeah." She says, "Yeah." I said, "Get me video and then I'll believe you." And this is her cat going to carrier on cue. *[Video]*

Now how cool was that? And she was actually not super interested in behavior. She actually went on to do a residency in emergency and critical care, so training was not something that inherently came to her, but she taught her cat to go and so now we have video proof evidence that it can be done.

Now I want to talk a little bit about systematic desensitization and I'm including care and conditioning here, because oftentimes you're going to see these two techniques compared together. And really what we're doing here is we're creating control to gradual exposure to a situation or a trigger in incrementally increasing levels of intensity while the cat remains relaxed.

And I have relaxed italicized here, because it's important. It's not just a state of non-reactivity and it's actually, truly relaxed. We have to understand and know body language and what a relaxed cat looks like in order to know when to first *[inaudible]* and go to the next step.

A lot of time we're pairing this with a reward for remaining relaxed, hence possible kind of conditioning that can occur and a lot of times we're pairing this with another previously learned cue, and so we have operant care and conditioning going on here, as well.

We do have some requirements in order to be able to use this *[inaudible]* desensitization. We've got to be able to identify the stimulus or the stimuli that makes a cat uncomfortable. When we were talking about George we knew that having his feet touched, as well as the sight of the clippers were two separate things we had to work on, one at a time.

You have to be able to reproduce the stimulus, whatever it is that frightens the animal. You have to be able to control the intensity like with starting

at the lowest level and work our way up systematically. And we have to have a starting point. We have to have a level that is low enough that the animal isn't fearful or has minimal fear.

And last that is almost as important as anything else here, we have to be able to avoid [*inaudible*] a naturally occurring stimulus while we're working on systematic desensitization.

So, if you live in the Midwest you cannot set up systematic desensitization the thunderstorms in the summertime, because you cannot control when the storms are going to occur and if a full storm occurs before you are completely done with your systematic desensitization, it just undid a whole lot of work that you went through with that pet in between the storms.

So I want to go back and touch on flooding again here real quickly, because it is something that we mentioned when we were talking about his situation. And so flooding is defined as a prolonged exposure to full intensity of the fear invoking a harmless [*inaudible*] and the animal is prevented from leaving and escaping.

And only when the animal is relaxed is the stimulus removed. And so I gave you the example of my horse being afraid of the baby donkey and this is kind of what happened with her being on the same farm with this donkey. He was there. Couldn't really control the fact where he was aside from up the side of the farm. She couldn't leave and he didn't necessarily disappear when she was relaxed, but we weren't controlling the level of the intensity.

So it can be risky, because not reacting does not equal relaxed, as we mentioned with the [*inaudible*] desensitization. It can be time consuming, particularly if you're trying to set up a situation and if you remove the stimulus too early or you chase it away, you can actually inadvertently reward fear response or make the fear response more intense.

If the animal has a really strong physical and physiologic response to that fear stimulus it can actually become quite inhumane. So it's really only appropriate for a mild fear response or a really harmless stimuli.

And so one could argue that perhaps it might have been in my horse's best interest to apply systematic desensitization because it's on the same farm together that was going to be a lot more challenging to be able to do. Manage when he was going to bray and how far he was at all times and things like that.

So I want to show you a couple of more video clips applying systematic desensitization to the other half of the equation for George. He didn't like to have his feet touched. [Video]

So when you see that clip you see that I start touching George's leg up close to his elbow and I start working my way down. And I actually made a couple of mistakes in this video, but I kept it in here, because I think it's a good discussion point. You see as I was working my way down that at one point George started to pull his foot a little bit.

He started to pull it away and that was it should have been my cue to say, "Oh, okay. This is where he is [inaudible]. I should slow down here." So I tried it one more time, maybe a third and he finally said, "No, really. I'm going to take my foot away." And so that was my cue to say, "Oh sorry buddy. I moved too far, too fast. So let's go back a little bit farther up your leg and work our way down again."

And then you saw the same thing, when I started to get down to his foot and I started to touch his toes individually. I touched that third toe and he says, "No thank you. I'm going to pull my foot away again." I said, "Oh sorry buddy, let's go back to your wrist again and we'll work our way down."

And so if you push them too far too fast they're going to say, "Oh no, I don't really like that." That's your cue to go back a few steps and work your way towards that just a little bit slower.

The second one we're going to actually include the nail clippers into the situation, because Dr. Harbison already did such a fantastic job of teaching George that the nail clippers themselves weren't so scary. [Video]

And so in that video clip you saw me first start with George targeting the nail clippers at his nose where Dr. Harbison left off, and then started at his elbow where I started touching him and worked my way down his leg with the nail clippers to the point where I could touch his toe. I could go underneath his toenails and he might lift his foot a little bit, but he was still eating food.

And again, I was doing this for the sake of video. I probably should have slowed down a little bit and ran it right at his foot and his nails and maybe broken it up into a couple of different sequences.

So a couple of other applications where we can use systematic desensitization, towel. We can teach cats that towels aren't scary and then we use them during restraint.

Towels should be a requirement for restraint for cats whether you're doing a medical procedure or grooming or things like that because we can manage them and handle them in a way that is much more comfortable and less frightening to them than having to hold them down to tolerate the procedure.

You can use it for carrier training and that's with our intern did when she was teaching her kitty to go to her carrier on cue. We can use this method [*inaudible*] to brushing. You just [*inaudible*] the brush with the nail clippers just like we did in those other sessions. And same thing for ear cleaning and there is lots and lots of different situations where we can use these.

Well let's go back and wrap things up with talking about how we put together a behavior modification plan. So a couple of things that I always include in my behavior modification plan, we always start with management and then we look at what we can do to help those relationships, whether this be with the staff that are working with the animal or a foster or even a new owner.

And it's okay, well what type of tools and foundation cues do we need to meet our goals and what specific need or modification exercises are going to facilitate getting to where we want to go? And lastly I didn't mention it on the slide, sometimes we need to look at chronological intervention as well, but that's beyond the scope of this presentation.

So management, what is management? First and foremost, it's safety. We have to make sure that we keep everybody safe, both physically and emotionally. So we need to manage the environment. Everybody should have a hiding spot.

You know, if they're in a two by two metal cage in the shelter or if they're in a foster home or they're in a newly adoptive home, they should always have a hiding spot. I don't care whether it's a box, a paper bag, a towel on the side of the cage, a high perching [*inaudible*] box, a feral cat box, something to hide should be a requirement for every cat, every time.

[*Inaudible*] housing can be really, really important for management as well, making sure that we're minimizing [*inaudible*] around the cat that might be escalating things. Barking dogs, other anxious cats, lots of foot traffic, and those type of things.

Those high frustration cats, of course may be doing better in a lower traffic area. And again, fearful cat with a quieter one, or maybe we look at high prioritizing this cat to a foster.

And then the other half of the battle, how about preventing practicing the wrong behavior. So avoiding those triggers. Don't pet the cat for long periods of time because it *[inaudible]* that cat to invite a scratch after petting. Avoid playing roughly with him.

Give the cat something to do when they are tired. *[Inaudible]* playing put him back in the house or lock him away. If the cat is frightened or showing aggression leave him alone. He needs the time to diffuse, to calm or settle down.

Well we're talking about relationship building in shelter settings and we want to make sure that we have familiar people interacting with cats on a regular routine. These people should be very patient and nonthreatening and they should be ready to go *[inaudible]* with these kitties and if the kitty says no, I can't, then we don't push kitty beyond what their comfort level is.

Absolutely no punishment or negative reinforcement should be used in these situations, because animals are already stressed as it is and we shouldn't be doing anything that could potentially exacerbate that. *[Inaudible]* fits into the same category.

Having positive consistent interactions only are going to be high priority. It helps to ask for a cue and if they respond then we can know to continue our interaction. And if the cat doesn't respond then just leave him alone, remain neutral. They're safe that way.

We spent a lot of time talking about tools and foundation behaviors that we can use in place, so a mat or a bed or other designated location. Use your reward markers, the clicker or a unique word like yes or good. Have a target available. Pencils and chopsticks work really well.

And then look at some of those foundation behaviors we might want to use, touch, sit or play comes *[inaudible]*.

So in conclusion, we do know cats can learn. They do use the same types of learning as other species. Their training sessions might be a little bit shorter and the time between repetitions might be a little bit longer, but really other than that as long as they have a primary reinforcement that the cat like, we can use these same techniques.

Just as with dogs, cats, horses or other species, positive reinforcement is really the most humane and safe type of training to use and their behavior can be modified. You can manage them to avoid unwanted behavior and we can *[inaudible]* reinforced desired behavior instead.

The training and behavior modification not only helps to address an unwanted behavior, but it also helps to act as a sort of enrichment and can increase adoption and success in a new home.

And with that I want to leave you with a couple of references and resources for you and a lot of these are going to be found in addition to our material here and I'll let Lynne fill in the details of where this is going to be for you. We'll try to get the information for the therapist shelter dogs, as well.

Lynne Fridley: This will be in your Resource widget at the bottom of your screen. It will also be on our website after this webcast. I also would like to initially first, thanks Dr. Bennett and I want to get to some questions.

I know we're right at the top of the hour and we're supposed to end at the top of the hour, but I know you're very interested in some of these questions that you've been submitting and there have been a lot of them. So we'll do that next.

I wanted to remind you that if you're having litter box problems, we have a video from Purdue University in our conference recordings called "Curing the Litter Box Blues" so if you go to our website at www.maddiesinstitute.org you can find that under Conference Recordings.

So let's take our first question from the audience. "Can flooding apply to socialization of feral kittens?"

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: That is a fantastic question. It absolutely can. There is a fine line between systematic desensitization and flooding and it all relies on the intensity of the situation. So we can fit in the flooding very easily, particularly if we have a very low threshold of relaxation.

So try to socialize and socialize is in quotation marks here by putting new kittens or other animals into the situation that might be potentially frightening. It could very easily tip into flooding.

Keys to remember to avoid flooding is maintain systematic desensitization and to watch the body language and if an animal is frightened and has to decrease the intensity of whatever is going on in that situation.

The other thing to watch for is look at the interest in whatever you're using to positively reinforce that calm, relaxed behavior. If their interest starts to drop in it, they're not picking up the food, they've stopped taking treats. They start to shy away from the petting if you're using petting.

That tells you that whatever is going on at that moment is too frightening and we need to back off. That's a great question.

Lynne Fridley: Okay. And here is the next question and it reads "...resident cat hisses and growls at the sight of a new cat. New cat respected and retreated for months, but now reacts and charges her. I cannot force them to eat together. They will wait me out. How do I get them to be in the same room?"

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: This is another good question and this is something that we run into unfortunately all too frequently. So what probably has happened is that the new cat, who was trying to be respectable and retreating for months has now started to develop some learned fear of the resident cat.

Given that you're saying that you cannot force them to eat together, what I suspect is happening is that the distance is too small, and so we have to look at a way to minimize the – to trigger the other cat and ways to do that are to feed them on opposite sides of a shut door.

Perhaps we do some carrier training and if the carrier is not scary we put the carriers in the opposite ends of the room, maybe covered so that they feel a little bit more safe and they have their hiding space and see if they'll eat at that point, but if they're not going to eat at those types of points, if you can't get them to eat ten feet away on opposite sides of the door you probably need to talk to somebody.

A veterinarian who had a special interest in behavior or is a specialist in behavior to help you out with this problem, because it may be a little bit bigger than just needed to do some desensitization, when they are a little bit more comprehensive with the behavior plan.

Lynne Fridley: Thank you. Let's take another question here. "Tips on how to stop a cat from biting. Georgie bites often and not from over stimulus. You can pet him once and he'll bite. Learned at a young age with boys that played rough with him how can he unlearn biting behavior?"

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: Well there is lots of different motivations for a cat to bite and we really have to look at it – the motivation factor in order to figure out how we want to address this.

So I am going to *[inaudible]* and I don't know that much about Georgie, but I'm just kind of going based on the information I had here that Georgie might be a little bit afraid of hands if he was played with roughly at a young age with little boys and inherently tend to be a little rowdy and rough to begin with. So he might be afraid.

So if he is afraid of the hand reaching for him to touch and he is going to respond to bite, then we have to desensitize him to hands and the approach of the hands. So we can say something like starting target training far away with a really long target. I mean you tape two chopsticks together so the hand is a foot away.

Anything *[inaudible]* and the target *[inaudible]* he gets reinforced for that. Maybe you toss a treat instead or toss a toy so he can go chase it, and then that gets repeated and gradually make that target stick a little bit shorter and a little bit shorter and a little bit shorter so he can target your hand.

Maybe it's a hand with a palm up and we start to turn our hand sideways, you know, over the top and maybe we touch him and maybe we touch him and stroke a half an inch or we stroke an inch. We give one stroke and the session is over and gradually incubate that to one more stroke as he remains calm and relaxed and nonreactive in the situation.

It may have been a scenario where systematic desensitization could be really helpful, as long as there is the facing fear.

Lynne Fridley: Great. All right. Here is another question: “What great recommendations do you have for fearful cats?”

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: First and foremost, we have to look at the environment of the fear of cat *[inaudible]*. Can we manage the environment to try to minimize the fear as much as possible? If we can do this, then we start to look at what might be reinforcing for that cat. Really, just and go through the steps of what we talked about.

So for example, if this is a cat in a shelter and he's in his cage and he's got a comfortable bed and he's got a hiding spot, but he is in the back corner of it and he's a little black cat, you know, a kitten *[inaudible]* options are limited, right?

But what if we start to use some clicker training with him, yummy *[inaudible]* treats or a *[inaudible]* or something like that and if he purposely glances in the direction of the person in front of him, you click and treat. He might start to think about repeating that behavior and then you click and treat again as he pokes around.

Then we start to teach him the next day that, you know, if you poke around and raise your head up that's going to get reinforced too.

So you can use the exact same technique that we just talked about to try to coax the cat to try to interact and that's one of the cool things about clicker training, is that is still his *[inaudible]*.

It's not confrontational and it's completely voluntary on the cat's part that a lot of animals that are really, really fearful will actually start to offer behaviors that is [inaudible] in an actual [inaudible] for them to do. [Inaudible].

Lynne Fridley: Great. Let's take another question. "What is the most effective way to positively interact with a cat who quickly over stimulates or becomes aggressive?"

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: So this is the kitties that I always think of when I think about frustration particularly in the shelter. They get over stimulated easy. They become highly aroused. They start to swat and use their claws. So these types of cats we want to look at ways that we can interact with them that doesn't involve physical touch.

So things I think of these guys may be like toys that are on a wand that have a long handle so the cat is motivated to interact with whatever is at the end of the hand and not you. Fetch is a really, really great game for these guys, as well. And I also find that these cats are particularly suited to do clicker training.

I call these guys the border collies of the cat world, because when you start clicker training these guys you're like oh, this is the coolest thing ever.

Let's keep playing this fun training game, because I get to do all this cool stuff and interacting with you and you can actually maintain the arousal at a reasonable level for a lot of these guys, because basic clicker training and teaching cues is a way to help [inaudible] control too.

Lynne Fridley: Okay. Here is another one, Dr. Bennett. We'll take a few more after this and then we'll wrap up for the evening. "I tried clicker training with shy cats. The click was very scary for them. What do you recommend in that case?"

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: Now this is something that we run into on occasion and I would say I actually run into this more within the shelter animals than I do with own pets and I don't know if it's just because the general level of stress that these animals are under.

And sometimes the click is initially quite frightening. It's a loud, novel noise like oh my God, what is that? I've got to run and hide. So you can do things like muffling the sound of the clicker so it's not quite so loud. You know, put it in your hand or your pocket before you click it.

And if you're sitting put it in the crook of your knee. When you click it's not quite loud. Continue to pair it with something amazing so you really have to know what that cat's absolute favorite reinforcer is.

And then sometimes we've even done things like onto a quieter style of clicker like a button clicker versus a box clicker or even tried like a pen – a retractable pen. Click the pen open and closed rather than using a clicker, because it's a little bit quieter.

If that fails, then you can use a word marker like “yes” and “good” instead of a click.

Lynne Fridley: Great answer. We'll take two more questions. Here is the second to last. “Does returning a timid maladjusted cat to the shelter environment after working with them in foster care negate their progress, do more harm than good?”

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: Now this is an interesting question. When you think about environmental change and you think about cats I think regardless of the level of adjustment for the cat, changing environment is going to be inherently stressful.

So I think of that with dogs as being more social partner associated and I think of cats being more environment associated. More bond of their environment I think sometimes than dogs are. So changing environment is going to be stressful regardless of how you're changing it.

Sometimes we don't really have any option, you know. We have a finite amount of time that we can keep an animal in a foster, but we need to put it into the brick and mortar building in order to facilitate his option if you don't have a really good network set up for fostering or adopting out of your foster setting.

I think we have to consider what we can do with that environment, you know, putting the cat in to try to minimize the stress and do some things to perhaps make it more familiar so maybe we take some familiar bedding to the foster home and take it with the cat back to the shelter setting so it's not quite so unfamiliar.

I think with cats in general if we change their environment it will be stressful. Ideally in a perfect world, if I ruled the world, you know, maybe we would just keep these cats in foster care and adopt them out of foster, but we don't always have that as an option.

Lynne Fridley: Okay. Here is our last question for the evening. “Don't you have to use punishment rather than reward to extinguish undesirable behavior like covering food dish with objects?”

Dr. Sara L. Bennett: No. Is that actually punishment or is that management I would ask. So think about the definition of punishment. You're applying something at that moment without the behavior. So if you throw something at the cat or you squirt it with water when it jumps up to that food dish, that's a positive punishment.

If you simply cover it so the cat can't get to it or you put something on the countertop that makes it less appealing to lounge on in the sun, that's management. You're simply making the environment less suitable for cats, so we have to look for other options.

So give the cat an alternate resting place. Give the cat an alternate *[inaudible]* to forage for food and make the other options less desirable. That's not punishment, that's management. You have to go back and look at the definitions of punishment is actually being applied in the moment of that behavior. Something that you or some device is being added.

Lynne Fridley: Well that concludes our event this evening and we want to thank Dr. Bennett and we want to thank all of you for your time. We hope you enjoyed the webcast. We invite you to take a few minutes to complete our survey. Your feedback is important to us. Click on the link on your screen to take the survey.

If for some reason you don't see it, it might have been blocked by your popup blocker, but don't worry, it is also in the Resource file at the bottom of your screen. And we'll e-mail the link to you in a few days.

This webcast will be available on demand within a week and we hope you will share this session with your social sites. Remember to print or save your Certificate of Attendance located in the Resource widget at the bottom of your screen.

We hope you'll join us for our next webcast, "Secrets to Pet Foster Program Success" on November 6th at 9:00 PM Eastern. Get more information and register on our website at www.maddiesinstitute.org. Thanks for tuning in. We really enjoyed sharing our evening with you tonight. Goodnight.

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