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Veterinary Partners Appreciation Conference (V-PAC)      2nd Annual Veterinary Partners Appreciation Conference (V-PAC), 2014

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### Helping Client Manage the Aggressive Dog

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## Helping Clients Manage Aggressive Dogs



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## Motivations



- ☞ Lots: Fear, territorial, resource guarding, predatory, pain, play...
- ☞ Fear and anxiety about the target causes aggression in some dogs (usually defensive fight/flight)
- ☞ Calm, happy dog is a non-aggressive dog

## Plan of action



## What you can do in brief GP appointment



### *Physical and Mental Health*

- ☞ Exercise needs met?
  - ☞ head halters and basket muzzles for safety
- ☞ Mental Enrichment?
  - ☞ Avoid animal based products
  - ☞ Stuffed Kongs, Twist n' Treats, puzzle toys

## For pullers and/or aggressive dogs – head halters

Gentle Leader®



Halti®



Snoot Loop®



Canny Collar



## Pullers without aggression

Easy Walk



- ☞ Head halters
- ☞ (Front clip) harness
- ☞ Pressure

Freedom harness

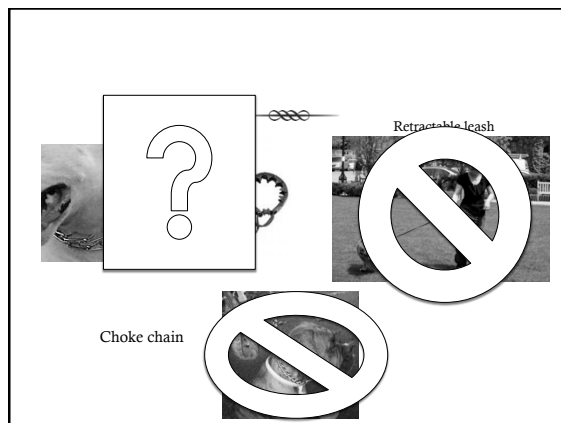


Dream walker



Sensation





## Muzzles

Baskerville



Italian basket muzzle



Tuffie muzzle



## What you can do in brief GP appointment

### *Physical and Mental Health*

- ☞ Anything that causes pain or discomfort can increase aggression
  - ☞ Orthopedic pain
  - ☞ Neuropathic pain
  - ☞ Dermatologic discomfort
  - ☞ Endocrine diseases

## Relationship builders

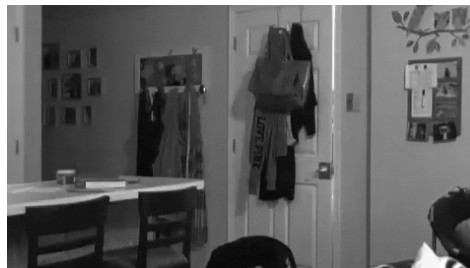
- ☞ Understand how animals learn
  - ☞ I-C-E principle (immediate-consistent-effective consequences)
  - ☞ Poorly executed aversive correction = anxiety
- ☞ Discontinue aversive punishment
  - ☞ See above
  - ☞ Results in injury to humans
  - ☞ *Suppresses behavior without addressing emotional problem*
- ☞ Leadership Protocol, Learn to Earn, "say please by sitting," "nothing in life is free"

## Avoidance

- ☞ Identify triggers and either avoid or countercondition the triggers
- ☞ Avoidance prevents emotion and behavior from getting worse
- ☞ Baby gates, muzzles
- ☞ Walking at low-traffic times and locations
- ☞ Putting dog in bedroom or crate BEFORE visitors arrive
- ☞ Not allowing dogs in underground fence to access front/driveway
- ☞ Proper approach: don't space invade or lean over/out dog

## Behavior Modification

- ☞ Simple can be very helpful
- ☞ Dog is acting aggressively to increase distance between itself and the target
- ☞ Encourage pleasant association between dog and its target
  - ☞ Treats
  - ☞ Toy/ball



## Other types of behavior modification

- ☞ Desensitization
  - ☞ “baby-stepping”
  - ☞ Staying under threshold for aggression/fear
  - ☞ Gradual increasing intensity of stimulus (e.g. distance)
  - ☞ Never simple in practice- need lots of coaching for timing and body language to prevent stress

## Don't make it worse!

- ☞ Don't flood animal – expose to stressor at high level and hope dog “gets over it.”
- ☞ Don't assume owners are using common sense
- ☞ Dog aggressive to other dogs should not be going to public area (dog park, pet store) unless strictly supervised by professional (and even then very questionable due to safety issues)

## Medications

- ☞ Maintenance antidepressants first line:
  - ☞ SSRIs (fluoxetine, paroxetine, clomipramine)
- ☞ Layer PRN medications with caution
  - ☞ Trazodone
  - ☞ Clonidine
  - ☞ Benzos?
- ☞ All medications that calm have potential to cause increased agitation in a few individuals
- ☞ Act by increasing animals ability to learn... have to teach dog how you DO want him to act

## Adjunctive therapies

- ☞ Go for it if owner hesitant about “real” drugs
- ☞ Zylkene (alpha-casein)
- ☞ Anxitane (L-theanine green tea extract)
- ☞ Novafit (SAmc)
- ☞ Adaptil, Feliway, Nuturecalm pheromones