



Vet Clin Small Anim 33  
(2003) 185-186

---

---

THE  
VETERINARY  
CLINICS  
Small Animal Practice

---

---

## Preface

# Update on clinical veterinary behavior



Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, PhD  
*Guest Editors*



Vint Virga, DVM

The goal of this issue of the *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice* is to make available the latest techniques and medications in the diagnosis and treatment of small animal behavior problems. In the 6 years since the last behavior issue of this Clinic (May 1997), the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists has grown to 32 members. All of the North American authors who contributed to this issue are board certified; in addition, the issue includes articles by European behaviorists whose approach to behavior problems and their solutions should provide fresh insight.

Pageat presents an in-depth review of feline and canine pheromones, the vomeronasal organ that may detect them, and the uses of pheromones in treatment of separation anxiety, as well as feline spraying and aggression. Appleby and Pluijmakers consider predisposing factors, behavioral responses, and management considerations with separation anxiety in dogs. Reisner classifies canine aggression in a rational manner and offers the latest treatment options. Feline aggression is much more difficult to classify, but Frank and Dehasse offer a new diagnostic approach and, therefore, a more rational choice of treatments; the use of selegiline is especially intriguing.

Nielson addresses elimination behaviors in cats by offering methods for eliciting the proper information from the owner, for creating a conducive and stress-free elimination area, and providing a review of recent research on pharmacological treatments for spraying. In contrast, Houpt and Zicker review older literature on the effects of diet on behavior and point out when diet is and is not important in treating behavior. One area in which diet is important is in the older animal, in which the use of antioxidants for slowing or reversing age-related cognitive decline is a surprisingly powerful tool.

An area of canine behavior that is growing in importance since September 11, 2001, relates to the use of substance-detecting dogs and other classes of working dogs. Burghardt considers the assessment of aptitude and performance, problems that may arise with performance of duties, and behavioral therapy in working dogs. His evidence suggests that methylphenidate may be useful in the treatment of some of the stereotypic behaviors that arise in these valuable animals.

Whether or not animals obsess remains controversial and difficult to prove, but Luescher contributes a diagnostic framework for and describes many types of compulsive behaviors, including oral locomotor repetitive nonfunctional activities. It is of paramount importance that medical causes are ruled out before making a behavioral diagnosis. Overall presents medical conditions that may cause behavioral manifestations by considering traditional diagnostic categories: developmental, acquired, metabolic, neurological, infectious, and toxic. Virga establishes a framework for the classification of dermatologic conditions with behavioral causes, diagnostic criteria for their clinical differentiation, and an integrative approach to their assessment and management in canine and feline patients.

No issue devoted to behavior would be complete without a discussion of the available pharmacological treatments. Simpson and Papich thoroughly consider neurotransmitter functions in behavioral pharmacology and provide a rational and structured framework for the use of psychotropic drugs. The area that offers most promise for the future is behavioral genetics. Takeuchi and Houpt review what is currently known about canine and feline behavioral genetics and offer the promise of blood tests for some behavioral problems similar to those now used for progressive retinal atrophy.

This issue of the *Veterinary Clinics of North America: Small Animal Practice* represents the work not only of the authors but also John Vassallo, Editor, and the editorial staff at WB Saunders. By bringing together the thoughts and efforts of all these individuals, we hope to provide a worthwhile compilation reviewing many of the most recent advances in small animal clinical behavior.

Katherine A. Houpt, VMD, PhD

*Animal Behavior Clinic*

*College of Veterinary Medicine, Box 31*

*Cornell University*

*Ithaca, NY 14853-6401, USA*

*E-mail address: kah2@cornell.edu*

Vint Virga, DVM

*Behavioral Medicine for Animals*

*Veterinary Healing Arts, Inc.*

*PO Box 219*

*Newport, RI 02840-0219, USA*

*E-mail address: vvirga@worldnet.att.net*