Veterinary Science
Preparatory Training for the Veterinary Assistant
Floron C. Faries, Jr., DVM, MS
Reading Animal Behavior

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Objectives

- Discuss the importance of understanding animal behavior
- Distinguish between normal and abnormal animal behavior
- Discuss the sense of smell as it relates to animal behavior
- Discuss the sense of sight as it relates to animal behavior
- Discuss the sense of hearing as it relates to animal behavior
- Discuss the sense of touch as it relates to animal behavior
- Recognize situations where animals may respond with aggressive behavior
Introduction

- Ability to interpret behavior in multiple species
  - An important skill
  - To decipher signals from animals
    - Distress and aggression
    - Subtle or obvious
  - To protect animal handlers, animals, other persons
  - To make animal patients more comfortable
    - With people
    - In environment and surroundings
Body Language and Posture

- Careful observation BEFORE handling
  - Observe standing posture.
    - Friendly body language
    - Aggressive body language
      - “Fight or flight” response
    - Pain body language
    - Depression body language
  - Observe crouching posture.
    - Fearful, threatened body language
    - Sick or injured body language
  - Allow animal to come and reach out friendly.
Approaching a patient
- Done in calm, quiet, confident manner.
- Avoid direct eye contact.
- Allow animal to relax and be comfortable.

Watch other experienced animal handlers to learn subtleties of observation.
AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR
Aggressive Behavior

- Fear
- Pain or discomfort
- Maternal protection of young
- Sex drive
- Territorial protection
- Dominance instinct
Sense of Smell
Animals can react defensively when smells are associated with unpleasant experiences.

Vet’s Office
SENSE OF SIGHT
PERSON'S EYE

Differences:

- COLOR - The color is usually different. You can see much less of the white part of a dog’s eye.
- HAIR - Dogs don't have distinctive eyebrows and eyelashes.

Similarities:

- FUNCTION - When working properly, both a dog and a person can see out of their eyes. Dogs don't cry, even when they are sad.
- Eyesight allows to quickly notice change in surroundings.
  - Instinctively evaluate changes as safe or threatening.

- Approach animals calmly.
  - Without threatening gestures

- Some animals have wide range of vision.
  - Can attack objects almost directly behind them.
Color vision

- Domestic animals are behaviorally color blind.
- Physiologically capable of seeing color to some degree.
  - Humans see 100 different color variations of 4 colors.
  - Animals see pastel blue, yellow, white and gray.
- Behaviorally do not use color vision.
Eye placement affects field of vision
- Field of vision
  - Binocular field
  - Monocular field
  - Blind area
Sense of Hearing
Most animals have excellent sense of hearing.
- Sudden and unexpected noises can add to difficulty of controlling animals.
- Calm tone can reassure and often ease fear.

Notice tone of voice and respond accordingly.
SENSE OF TOUCH
Touch and feel often send messages to animals that affect their responses to handling.

A steady, firm stroke or pat is usually reassuring.

Unexpected or nervous jabs or grasps often cause a violent response.