

March 1, 2015

Re: Advantages of collaborating with professional reward-based animal trainers

Dear Veterinary Colleagues,

With 51% of pet owners reporting their pet dislikes going to the veterinarian¹, and with up to 15% of pets being relinquished annually due to unresolved behavior issues², the result is fewer veterinary visits and a decrease in patient retention.

Collaborating with a professional reward-based animal trainer can provide for a mutually beneficial relationship and future success; for your hospital, the trainer, your clients, and their pets. Some of the possible advantages of teaming up with a reward-based trainer include:

- Increase pet retention! Positive reinforcement training builds a relationship based on mutual trust and understanding; it keeps pets in their homes and returning to your hospital.^{3,4} An enhanced human-animal bond decreases the likelihood of relinquishment.
- Increase income! Create a new service center by offering preventive training services such as Puppy Start Right Preschool™ socialization classes⁵, Ready ... Set ... for Groomer & Vet!⁶, Kitten Kindergarten, pet selection counseling, or basic manners training classes.
- Happy pets equal happy owners! If the pet enjoys coming to your facility, the owner will too. This results in increased visits to your facility.
- Low stress handling and examinations. Pets who are happy and relaxed while being examined increase overall productivity. Expenses associated with workers compensation and staff injury are reduced.

Partnering with a trainer should be based on a multitude of factors, similar to hiring an associate veterinarian for your hospital. Of the most importance is that “the trainer should do no harm” emotionally or physically. Be wary of trainers who use reprimands or do not use food for reinforcement. The trainer’s skillset and techniques will be a direct reflection of your hospital and thus should be chosen not only based on their level of education and positive training style, but also on their client and pet communication skills.

Refer to the AVSAB position statement on how to choose a trainer for more information.

[http://avsabonline.org/uploads/position_statements/How to Choose a Trainer \(AVSAB\).pdf](http://avsabonline.org/uploads/position_statements/How_to_Choose_a_Trainer_(AVSAB).pdf)

Sincerely,



Kenneth Martin, DVM, Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists

¹ “Reversing the Decline in Veterinary Care Utilization: Progress Made, Challenges Remain,” from AAHA and the AVMA, leading members of a coalition called Partners for Healthy Pets, 2014. http://www.partnersforhealthypets.org/Uploads/iv4kcp3e.iuc/VetCareUsageStudy_WhitePaper_July2014.pdf

² Patronek GJ, Dodman NH. Attitudes, procedures, and delivery of behavior services by veterinarians in small animal practice. *JAVMA* 1999;215:1606-1611.

³ Salman MD, Hutchinson J, Ruch-Gallie R, et al. Behavioral Reasons for Relinquishment of Dogs and Cats to 12 Shelters. *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science* 2000;3(2): 93-106.

⁴ Duxbury, MM, Jackson JA, Line SW, et al. Evaluation of association between retention in the home and attendance at puppy socialization classes. *J Am Vet Med Assoc* 2003; 223(1):61-6.

⁵ www.karenpryoracademy.com/puppy-start-right

⁶ <http://abtconcepts.com/in-the-media-laura-monaco-torelli/>