

Frankston Dog Obedience Club
Saturday 21 September 2024



CLASS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP #1

IDENTIFYING AND MANAGING DOG BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS

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OUR AGENDA



INTRODUCTIONS



PROBLEM
BEHAVIOURS



COMMON
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PROBLEMS



MANAGING
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PROBLEMS IN
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REACTIVITY AND
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REFERRING TO
OTHER
PROFESSIONALS

INTRODUCTION



ABOUT ME

Alli Berry | Lead Behaviour Consultant

- Studied a Cert IV in Animal Behaviour and Training with the Delta Institute
- Numerous further qualifications in aggression, reactivity, and dog/baby dynamics - see www.thrivecanine.com.au
- Member of the Pet Professional Guild of Australia (PPGA)
- Practicing corporate lawyer (Senior Associate at Corrs Chambers Westgarth)
- Volunteer instructor at Croydon Dog Club from 2016 to 2024
- Secretary / Committee Member at Croydon Dog Club from 2021 to 2024
- Share my home with three border collies, two of whom have severe behavioural issues



PURPOSE OF WORKSHOP #1

Our goal is to improve outcomes for dogs in FDOC classes who are struggling with behaviour problems.

- Volunteer instructors are not behavioural trainers and should not be expected to help handlers work through behaviour problems.
- However, knowing how to recognise the signs of behaviour problems will enable you to direct handlers to appropriate support.
- Without appropriate support, behaviour problems often worsen leading to worse outcomes for the dog, including rehoming and even behavioural euthanasia. Handlers also become extremely distressed, feel isolated and can resent their dogs. These are the outcomes we want to prevent.
- A group environment is not a suitable environment for all dogs, and some dogs need additional support which FDOC is unable to offer. Acknowledging this and helping handlers acknowledge it too gets us half way there.



CASE STUDIES



CASE STUDY #1 - LUCA

Luca | 7mo male border collie

Luca attended an obedience club from 8 weeks of age. During puppy school he gradually developed a habit of lunging and barking at other dogs, both in class and on walks. This caused his family a lot of stress and they often left class in tears. One day at around 7 months of age they were completing a conditioning exercise in class and were instructed to touch Luca all over his body to get him used to being handled. When they touched his lower back, he turned around and bit his handler.

1. What could potentially be causing Luca's behaviours?
2. What do you think are the next steps for Luca?



CASE STUDY #2 - HUGO

Hugo | 18mo male border collie

Hugo joined an obedience club when he was one year old. His family was hesitant to have him in close proximity to other dogs because even though he generally liked them, he would growl and snap at other dogs around food or when one of his handlers tried to pat the other dog. They also mentioned in passing that Hugo had a habit of chasing flies at home and it was hard to break him out of this.

1. What could potentially be causing Hugo's behaviours?
2. What do you think are the next steps for Hugo?

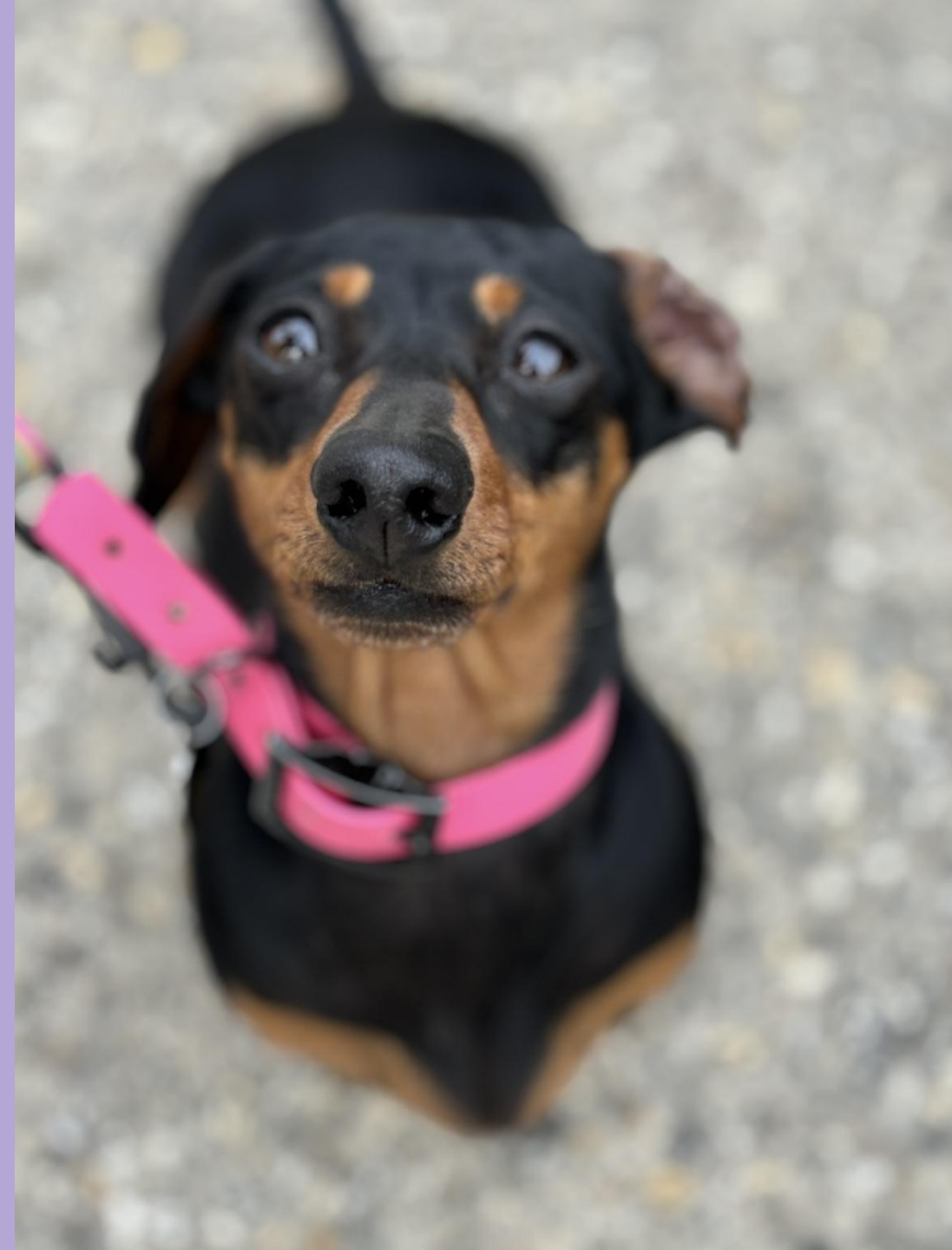


CASE STUDY #3 - IVY

Ivy | 3yo female miniature dachshund

Ivy joined an obedience club at three years old as her family wanted to do something with her that was fun and different. Over her first three weeks in class Ivy gradually became more and more uncomfortable around the other dogs in the class, growling, barking and lunging at them. After the third week the handler called her instructor crying because Ivy had attacked their other dog when they got home from the club.

1. What could potentially be causing Ivy's behaviours?
2. What do you think are the next steps for Ivy?



CASE STUDY #4 - RINGO

Ringo | 2yo male dalmatian

Ringo attended obedience classes from around a year old. He was exceptional in all his classes and passed with flying colours. He was always friendly with other dogs and people. When he began pre-trial obedience classes, his handler expressed concern about standing next to another dog in the class (a papillon). She explained Ringo had once lunged at a small dog. Ringo did not appear concerned by the papillon, but each week his handler chose to place herself at the opposite end of the class. On the day she didn't, Ringo performed an off-lead recall and instead of returning to his handler, ran straight at the papillon and attacked it. Thanks to the quick response of nearby handlers, the papillon was not harmed.

1. What could potentially be causing Ringo's behaviours?
2. What do you think are the next steps for Ringo?



PROBLEM BEHAVIOURS



What are problem behaviours?

- Problem behaviours are not the same as behaviour problems.
- You may be asked about problem behaviours in class. For example: digging, chewing, jumping up on people, counter surfing, and similar.
- We can generally address problem behaviours with appropriate enrichment and training. However, sometimes these behaviours can be a symptom of a behaviour problem.
- How do we resolve problem behaviours?



How do we resolve problem behaviours?

I teach people to ask themselves two questions:

- *Management:* How do I prevent my dog from performing this unwanted behaviour?
- *Training:* What would I like my dog to do instead? (Let's teach them to do that!)



Problem behaviour: Digging

- What is the most common reason why a dog would be digging in the garden?
- How do we resolve digging?
- When might digging be a sign of something deeper?



Problem behaviour: Chewing and shredding

- What is the most common reason why a dog would be chewing or shredding items?
- How do we resolve chewing and shredding?
- When might chewing and shredding be a sign of something deeper?
- Here's a [video](#).



Problem behaviour: Jumping up

- What is the most common reason why a dog would be jumping up on people?
- How do we resolve jumping up?
- When might jumping up be a sign of something deeper?



COMMON BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS



Behaviour problem: separation distress

- A broad category of behaviours which relate to a dog becoming distressed when left alone.
- Dogs can become distressed when a particular person leaves, when everyone leaves, or even when an animal leaves.
- Severe separation distress can be diagnosed as separation anxiety by a vet. In these cases dogs can be extremely destructive and may even self harm.
- Separation anxiety requires medical intervention as it is a mental health issue.



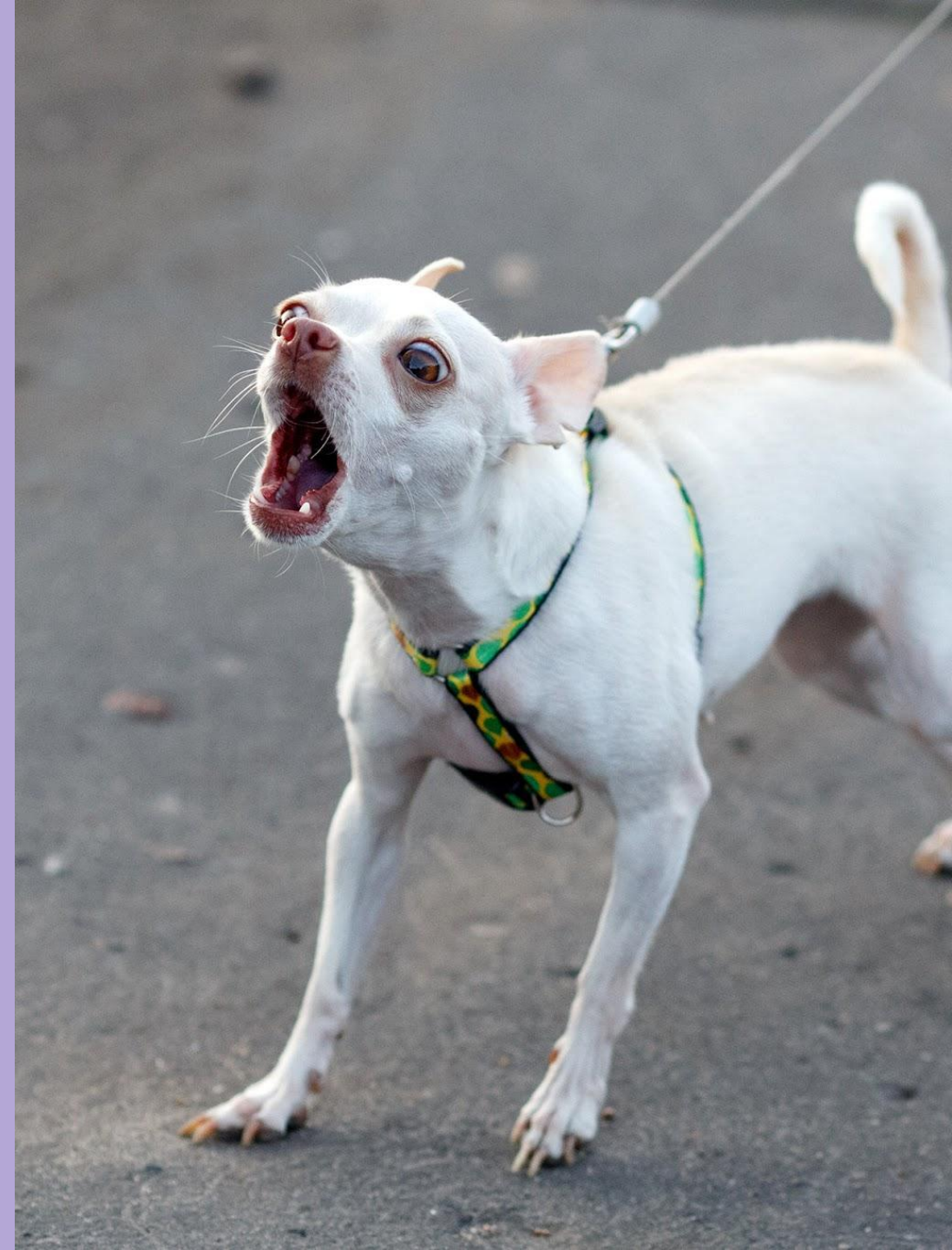
Behaviour problem: resource guarding

- Behaviour where a dog protects an object, place or person (which they value highly) from people or other animals.
- Growling and snapping at dogs or people who approach a dog's food bowl is a common form of resource guarding.
- Dogs can also guard toys, random objects like socks and tissues, locations (such as beds or couches), people, or even vomit!
- If something isn't valuable to you (like a tissue), it may still be valuable to the dog.



Behaviour problem: reactivity

- A dog may be described as 'reactive' when they overreact to situations or things which do not bother most other dogs.
- Behaviours which are commonly displayed by a reactive dog include barking, lunging, and pulling on the lead.
- Even though reactivity can appear aggressive, this is not always the case.
- Dogs can be reactive to anything, but common triggers include other dogs, people, vehicles, other things with wheels like bikes, and loud items like rubbish trucks.



Behaviour problem: aggression

- A confrontational response to a perceived threat, often with the intent to harm.
- Resource guarding is a form of aggression, and sometimes reactivity can be a form of aggression (but not always).
- The forms of aggression I see most commonly are dog-dog aggression, dog-human aggression, and intrahousehold aggression (multiple dogs in the same household fighting with each other).
- Another important form of aggression to be aware of is touch sensitivity. For example, some dogs react aggressively when at the groomer or the vet, when equipment is being put on or taken off, or when touched in certain places.



Behaviour problem: canine compulsive disorder (CCD)

- Similar to obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) in people.
- In dogs, it can present as obsessive shadow or light chasing, tail chasing, compulsive licking or sucking, and chasing real or imaginary flies.
- CCD is a medical issue and requires medical intervention.



CASE STUDY #1 - LUCA

Luca | 7mo male border collie

Luca attended an obedience club from 8 weeks of age. During puppy school he gradually developed a habit of lunging and barking at other dogs, both in the class and on walks. This caused his family a lot of stress and they often left class in tears. One day at around 7 months of age they were completing a conditioning exercise in class and were instructed to touch Luca all over his body to get him used to being handled. When they touched his lower back, he turned around and bit his handler.

Does Luca have problem behaviours, or a behaviour problem?



CASE STUDY #2 - HUGO

Hugo | 18mo male border collie

Hugo joined an obedience club when he was one year old. His family was hesitant to have him in close proximity to other dogs because even though he generally liked them, he would growl and snap at other dogs around food or when one of his handlers tried to pat the other dog. They also mentioned in passing that Hugo had a habit of chasing flies at home and it was hard to break him out of this.

Does Hugo have problem behaviours, or a behaviour problem?



CASE STUDY #3 - IVY

Ivy | 3yo female miniature dachshund

Ivy joined an obedience club at three years old as her family wanted to do something with her that was fun and different. Over her first three weeks in class Ivy gradually became more and more uncomfortable around the other dogs in the class, growling, barking and lunging at them. After the third week the handler called her instructor crying because Ivy had attacked their other dog when they got home from the club.

Does Ivy have problem behaviours, or a behaviour problem?



CASE STUDY #4 - RINGO

Ringo | 2yo male dalmatian

Ringo attended obedience classes from around a year old. He was exceptional in all his classes and passed with flying colours. He was always friendly with other dogs and people. When he began pre-trial obedience classes, his handler expressed concern about standing next to another dog in the class (a papillon). She explained Ringo had once lunged at a small dog. Ringo did not appear concerned by the papillon, but each week his handler chose to place herself at the opposite end of the class. On the day she didn't, Ringo performed an off-lead recall and instead of returning to his handler, ran straight at the papillon and attacked it. Thanks to the quick response of nearby handlers, the papillon was not harmed.

Does Ringo have problem behaviours, or a behaviour problem?



MANAGING DOGS WITH BEHAVIOUR ISSUES IN CLASS



IS IT APPROPRIATE FOR DOGS WITH BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS TO REMAIN IN CLASS?

- Separation distress
- Resource guarding
- Reactivity or aggression towards other dogs or people
- Reactivity to cars, bikes, or similar
- CCD



CAN DOGS WITH BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS REMAIN IN CLASS?

- *Separation distress:* Yes. No concessions needed in class as the issue does not occur there.
- *Resource guarding:* Likely yes. If the dog is heavily guarding, is constantly triggered or poses a risk to others, removing them from the class may be in everyone's best interests. If the dog has mild guarding issues, preventing guarding incidents in class should be reasonably easy. For example, don't do a 10-dog scatter feed! Keep everyone a comfortable distance from one another.



CAN DOGS WITH BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS REMAIN IN CLASS?

- *Reactivity or aggression to dogs or people:* Likely no. More on this next.
- *Reactivity to cars, bikes, or similar:* Likely yes. If the dog's trigger is not in the club environment, then classes are a great way for them to learn and do something fun in a safe space.
- *CCD:* Yes. The dog is unlikely to be triggered in class. If this occurs, help the handler recognise when it is going to happen so they can redirect the dog to other things.



CAN DOGS WITH BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS REMAIN IN CLASS?

Predatory behaviour is always a risk regardless of whether a dog has shown aggression before. Although it is not a behaviour problem, it can cause risk in a class environment and dogs with known tendencies should be kept leashed at all times.



**it's time for a
BREAK**

REACTIVITY AND AGGRESSION



WHAT IS REACTIVITY?

A dog may be described as “reactive” when they overreact to situations or things which other dogs are not bothered by. Behaviours which are commonly displayed by a reactive dog include barking, lunging, and pulling on the lead. Even though reactivity can appear aggressive, this is not always the case.

Dogs can be reactive to anything, but common “triggers” include:

- other dogs;
- people
- vehicles;
- other things with wheels; and
- loud items.

Here's a [video](#).



WHY ARE SOME DOGS REACTIVE?

Reactivity is *not* a sign that a dog is trying to dominate their trigger or seeking to “become the alpha”.

This is an outdated and erroneous view of dog behaviour, which unfortunately continues to be perpetuated throughout society.

You can read more about dominance theory from the RSPCA [here](#).



WHY ARE SOME DOGS REACTIVE?

- **Fear-based behaviour:** The dog is reacting because they are afraid. The function of the behaviour is to *create distance* (e.g. lunging at a person will likely cause that person to back away).
- **Frustration-based behaviour:** The dog is reacting because they want to engage with something in the environment. The function of the behaviour is to *reduce distance* (e.g. barking and pulling towards another dog may result in the dog moving towards and being able to greet the other dog).

In some cases a reactive dog is conflicted, and their behaviour is a symptom of *both* fear and frustration.



WHY ARE SOME DOGS REACTIVE?

When a dog shows reactive behaviour, they are experiencing an automatic emotional response (a bit like having a panic attack).

This means their emotions have taken over and they are not in control of how they are behaving.

While a dog is reacting, they are so stressed that they are unable to learn.



A HUMAN EXAMPLE

What are you afraid of?



HOW CAN WE IMPROVE REACTIVE BEHAVIOUR?

1. Address the underlying cause of the reactivity and meet the dog's needs.
2. Prevent episodes of reactivity.
3. Use distance to your advantage.
4. Advocate for the dog.
5. Create secure attachment through a positive relationship.
6. Modify the dog's automatic emotional response and desensitise them to their trigger.
7. Teach an alternative behaviour.



ARE REACTIVITY AND AGGRESSION THE SAME?

No.

Aggression is a response to a perceived threat, often intended to cause harm.

Not all reactive dogs intend to cause harm. However, some do.

The Venn diagrams do not completely overlap.



SUITABILITY FOR GROUP TRAINING

Group training is usually not a suitable environment for a reactive dog if their trigger is present in the environment (i.e. dogs or people).

If the dog is repeatedly put into a high stressful situation where they repeatedly react and cannot succeed, their behaviour will not get better.

Contrary to common belief, 'socialisation' does not fix reactivity.

Some reactive dogs may appear to 'improve' in group classes because they have developed learned helplessness (or because their behaviours have been suppressed). This is a welfare concern for the dog.



WHAT TO AVOID

Correcting the behaviour.

Handlers may reprimand their dog as an automatic reaction, or they may have seen a trainer who recommended this.

Correcting reactive behaviour will not address the dog's underlying emotions and will therefore not fix the problem.



WHAT TO AVOID

Why do so many trainers continue to use corrections?

Corrections “work” in that they can produce quick “results” which, to the unknowing person, can look like a great success. If a dog is corrected, they may learn to stop displaying symptoms of reactivity (such as barking and snarling) out of fear of being reprimanded.

However, they will still feel fear / frustration when they see a trigger.

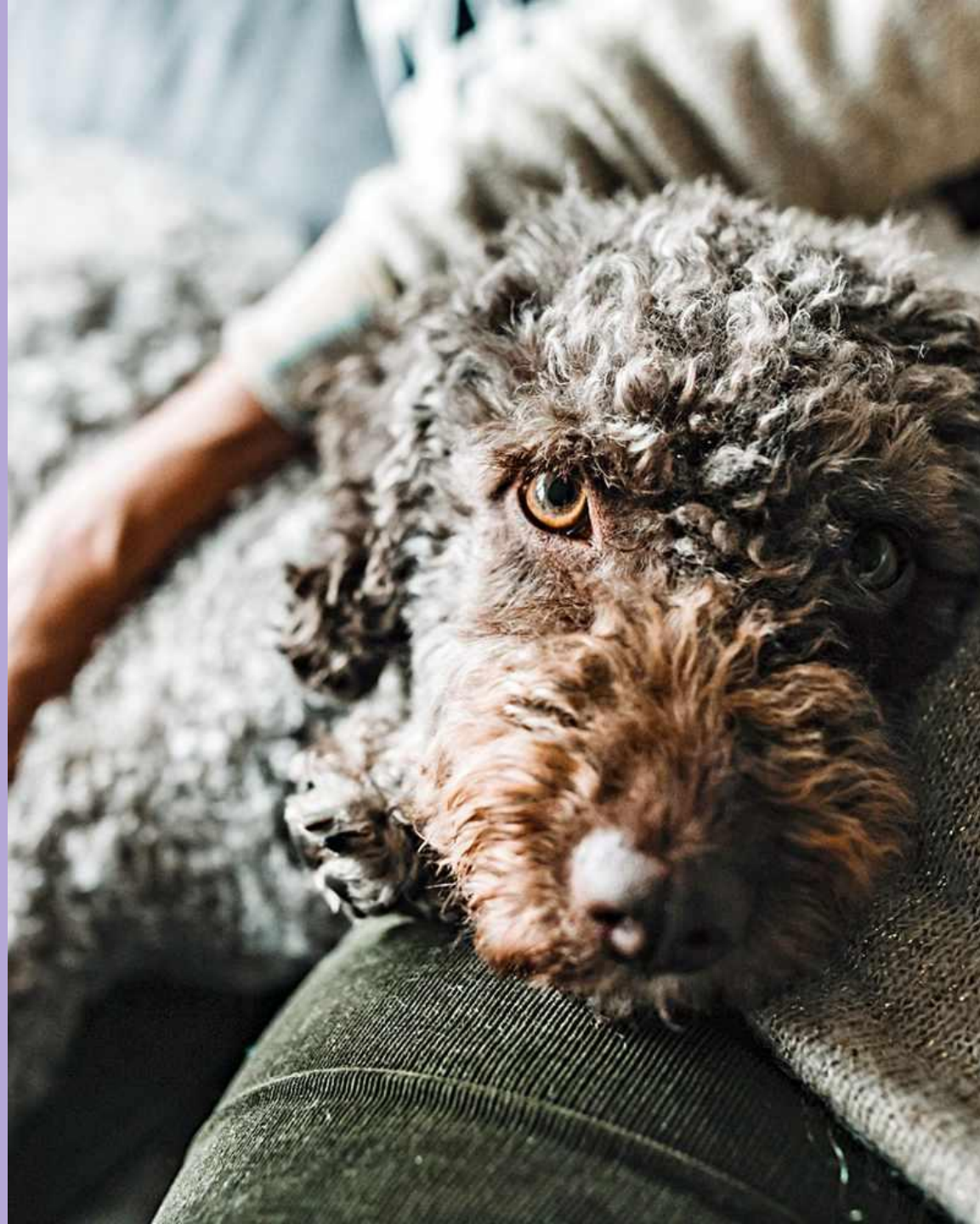
This makes the dog much more dangerous. If their warning signals are trained out, they can bite “out of nowhere”.

Correcting dogs with aggressive tendencies is also statistically likely to *increase* aggressive responses, and can result in handlers being bitten.



FALLOUT FROM SEEKING THE WRONG SUPPORT

- Increased aggressive responses.
- Redirecting onto the handler.
- Poor welfare outcomes for the dog.
- No true improvement.
- Damage to the relationship between dog and handler.
- Higher likelihood of rehoming or behavioural euthanasia.
- Here's a [video](#). Trigger warning.



REFERRING TO PROFESSIONAL TRAINERS



DOG TRAINER GREEN FLAGS

- Clear statements they train using force free or positive reinforcement methods.
- Signs they collaborate with other professionals (e.g. vets, veterinary behaviourists).
- Absence of harsh tools such as e-collars, prong collars and slip leads. Look for slip leads on social media as a red flag.
- Qualifications, ideally with:
 - Delta Institute
 - Institute of Modern Dog Trainers (IMDT)
 - Karen Pryor Academy
- Memberships with:
 - Pet Professional Guild of Australia (PPGA)
 - Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT)
 - International Association of Animal Behaviour Consultants (IAABC)
 - Fear Free Certified
- Further study in their area of interest (e.g. Michael Shikashio's Aggression in Dogs Mastercourse)



RECOMMENDED LOCAL TRAINERS

K9 Connect (Langwarrin and surrounds)

Private consults for fear-based behaviours and reactivity, as well as other behaviours problems.

Cooper and Kids (Mt Eliza and remote)

Dog and children specialist.

Helping Hounds (Mornington)

Private consults for behaviour problems.

Sit Happens (Mornington)

Private consults for a wide spectrum of behaviour issues..

Paw Behaviour (Carrum)

Private consults for problem behaviours (puppies).



REFERRING TO OTHER PROFESSIONALS



OTHER PROFESSIONALS

- **Primary care vets:** If you suspect a dog is in pain, refer them to their vet. Please do not attempt to diagnose or treat conditions identified in class.
- **Veterinary behaviourists:** Veterinary behaviourists are highly specialised vets with extensive further education in behaviour and behaviour medicine. Sadly behaviour issues are often caused by mental health concerns, and the involvement of a veterinary behaviourist is necessary in many cases.
- **Other professionals:** Be very cautious about referring to other animal professionals such as physios, hydrotherapy etc. A vet is best placed to make these referrals after they have confirmed that relevant treatment is appropriate in light of the dog's medical history.



WRAP UP



CASE STUDY #1 - LUCA

Luca | 7mo male border collie

- Luca came to see me for I-I support.
- Given Luca had bitten his humans when he was touched, I strongly suspected he had an underlying pain issue. When he was desexed, his family asked his vet to x-ray him. They discovered he had a deformity in his hip and was missing part of his hip bone.
- Two specialists reviewed Luca's case and claimed the deformity would not be causing him pain. We knew this could not be true because of his reaction. We continued to push, and saw a different vet who trialled Luca on pain medication. Luca's behaviour significantly improved.
- Luca is on ongoing pain medication and his exercise is carefully monitored to ensure he does not pull up stiff. We also implemented behaviour modification. Luca is very loved.



CASE STUDY #2 - HUGO

Hugo | 18mo male border collie

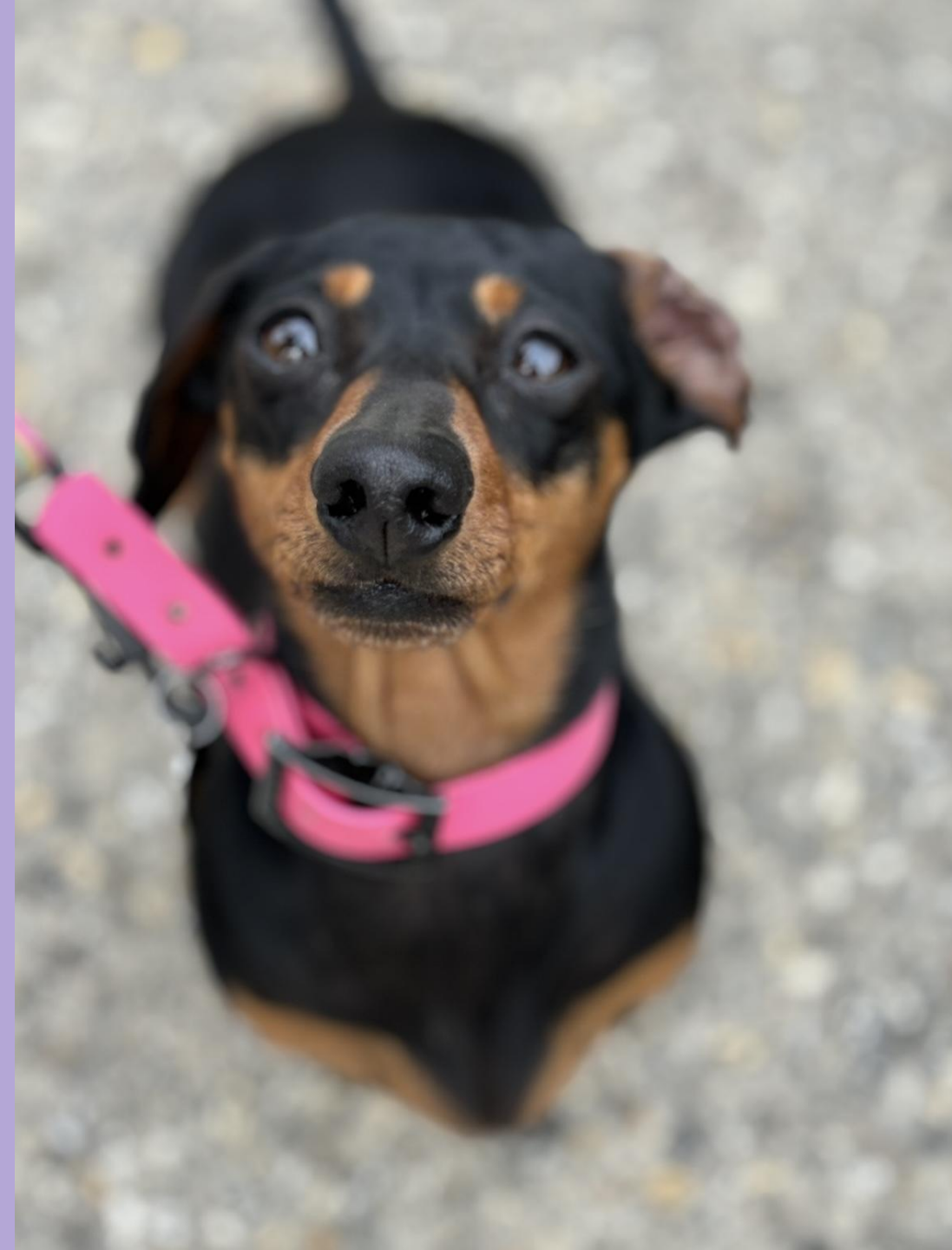
- Hugo went to see a veterinary behaviourist and was diagnosed with CCD. He is receiving ongoing medical treatment for his CCD and for anxiety which is likely contributing to his resource guarding.
- We implemented behaviour modification techniques to curb Hugo's resource guarding.
- Hugo's family is exceptionally dedicated and have a daily training regime for his resource guarding. They have successfully modified around 90% of his guarding issues (the remaining 10% relates to other dogs - he is an only dog so it is hard to train this and largely a non-issue).



CASE STUDY #3 - IVY

Ivy | 3yo female miniature dachshund

- Ivy's instructor called me and asked for my help. I told her to advise Ivy's owners to stop attending classes immediately. I also saw them I-I.
- Ivy's family adopted her in COVID and never walked her so she had been severely undersocialised. Throwing her into the club environment, which was very full on, caused her to have a meltdown. This is why she began to develop dog reactivity, and why she started attacking the dog she lived with.
- By taking Ivy out of the club environment we immediately resolved her aggression towards the other dog in her home.
- Sadly Ivy's dog reactivity remained and we are now working through this using behaviour modification techniques. I am also encouraging Ivy's family to consider a consultation with a vet as her anxiety levels outside the house are very high.



CASE STUDY #4 - RINGO

Ringo | 2yo male dalmatian

- Ringo's behaviour was predation. Ringo perceives small fluffy dogs as prey. He is not aggressive in other scenarios.
- Ringo does not have a behaviour problem - he misdirected a natural behaviour.
- Ringo should be given an appropriate outlet for his predatory behaviour (e.g. predation substitute games) and be carefully managed around small dogs.
- Ringo's family were so traumatised by the incident he did not return to the club, although I believe it would have been safe for him to attend under certain conditions (on lead only and muzzled in high risk scenarios).



KEY TAKE AWAYS

- Dogs who present with signs of behavioural problems will likely need professional support outside of FDOC.
- Group classes are not suitable for all dogs, in particular dogs with reactivity and aggression issues which are repeatedly triggered in that environment.
- Referring people out to *appropriate* professional support significantly improves (a) the dog's quality of life, (b) the handler's quality of life, and (c) your ability to effectively run classes.
- Lessening the number of difficult dogs in your classes will make it easier for you to run classes effectively and give sufficient individual attention to participants.



WORKSHOP #2

Other common challenges in group classes and strategies to resolve them, including managing difficult human behaviour.



QUESTIONS?



Frankston Dog Obedience Club
Saturday 28 September 2024



CLASS MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP #2

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING CLASS MANAGEMENT

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OUR AGENDA



BRIEF RE-
INTRODUCTION



CHALLENGES IN
GROUP CLASSES



MANAGING
CHALLENGES



HOW TO BREAK
UP A DOG FIGHT



CASE STUDIES -
HUMAN
CHALLENGES



REACTIVITY IN
PEOPLE



WRAP UP

BRIEF RE-INTRODUCTION



ABOUT ME

Alli Berry | Lead Behaviour Consultant

- I was here last week!
- I'm a behavioural trainer and I specialise in aggression and reactivity.
- I was a volunteer instructor at Croydon Dog Club from 2016 to 2024 and also sat on the committee (including as secretary).
- I am a practicing corporate lawyer and so always get asked how to resolve difficult human problems (at work and outside it).



RECAP OF WORKSHOP #1

- Dogs who present with signs of the behavioural problems we discussed will likely need professional support outside of FDOC.
- Group classes are not suitable for all dogs, in particular dogs with reactivity and aggression issues which are repeatedly triggered in that environment.
- Referring people out to appropriate professional support significantly improves (a) the dog's quality of life, (b) the handler's quality of life, and (c) your ability to effectively run classes.
- Lessening the number of difficult dogs in your class will make it easier for you to run classes effectively and give sufficient individual attention to participants.



PURPOSE OF WORKSHOP #2

Our goal in this workshop is to improve outcomes for *all* dogs in FDOC classes - and your ability to run those classes smoothly.

- Behaviour problems aside, running group classes is challenging and our survey revealed some recurring themes.
- In this workshop we will consider some strategies for resolving or improving the most challenging issues instructors face in class (including how to safely break up a dog fight).
- In my experience as a volunteer instructor, human behaviour can also be very challenging. We will therefore focus on human behaviour and management in the second half of this session.



CHALLENGES IN GROUP CLASSES



OUR CHALLENGES

- **Varying skill levels:** Different dogs and people learn at different paces. Classes need to accommodate varying skill levels.
- **Varying temperaments and physical ability:** Different dogs and people have different temperaments and physical capabilities.
- **Challenging environment:** Dog club is a highly distracting environment. Some dogs will struggle to do well at club.
- **Large class sizes:** Class sizes vary and can be very large, especially at a community dog club, making it hard to provide sufficient individual attention to each class member.



OUR CHALLENGES

- **Resourcing constraints:** Community clubs often struggle to find sufficient personnel. Sometimes this is because we prioritise quantity of classes to meet demand. The fallout: volunteers are often spread thin and there are no 'spares' available to assist.
- **Equipment constraints:** This occurs for financial and non-financial reasons. Equipment which can be used in class is also constrained by resources. An instructor cannot carry 20 chairs across the oval to their class, let alone barriers, mats, and other equipment. This limits what we can use as a class management aid.



MANAGING THOSE CHALLENGES



VARIOUS SKILL LEVELS

What strategies do you think we can implement to assist with this challenge?



VARIOUS SKILL LEVELS

Explain the short term, medium term, and long term goals for each exercise.

- Understand your course outcomes (e.g. 30 second sit stay, one minute drop stay) and explain these outcomes to everyone at the beginning of the course so they understand the ultimate end goal.
- Outline the steps that you will take to reach that end goal, at a high level. For example, let's consider a 30 second sit stay:
 - Teach the dog to sit on cue with immediate release.
 - Add duration.
 - Add distance.
 - Add distractions.
- Explain that we only progress to the next stage when the dog is performing the current stage with 95% reliability.
- Begin teaching step one and invite attendees to progress to the next stage.



VARIOUS TEMPERAMENTS AND ABILITIES

What strategies do you think we can implement to assist with this challenge?



VARIOUS TEMPERAMENTS AND ABILITIES

Is the environment suitable for the dog?

Use the knowledge learned in Workshop #1 to determine whether group classes may not be the best fit for some participants.

Is the exercise suitable for the person?

Consider any changes which may need to be made to suit the handler. For example, a handler with shoulder issues may be unable to walk the dog on their left-hand side. A handler with balance issues may be unable to walk backwards.

Is the exercise suitable for the dog?

Dogs with arthritis or other physical conditions may be unable to perform common tasks on cue, such as sit. Handlers may not know their dog has health issues!



VARIOUS TEMPERAMENTS AND ABILITIES

Make exceptions for certain exercises

Not all dogs are comfortable to perform all exercises. 'Stand for exam' is the perfect example - dogs who are anxious of people often struggle with this. Does the dog need to be touched if they have no intention of trialling in obedience? Let's grant them an exemption.

Carefully consider the order of the dogs

Don't place dogs together who love each other or hate each other. Use calm dogs as a break between dogs who are more challenging.

Carefully consider the order of the people

The same as the above! Try to avoid putting chatterboxes together and mix skill levels so everyone can support one another to succeed.



VARIOUS TEMPERAMENTS AND ABILITIES

Mark each person's position on the field

- Some people have no sense of space and walk their dogs right up to other dogs.
- Putting something out to mark each person's space so everyone knows where to stand can make a huge difference.
- Cones are easy to use for this purpose as they are easy for instructors to carry and transport.
- An even better option is mats, as you can then use these for place training / settling dogs in class.

Discourage on-leash play

Leashes remove a dog's flight option and increase the likelihood of a 'fight' response. Dog play should be off leash (and not in class) to minimise risk.



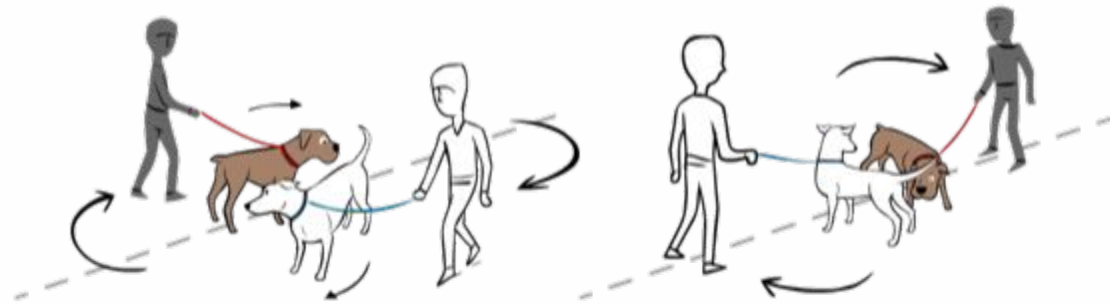
VARIOUS TEMPERAMENTS AND ABILITIES

Teach short on-leash greetings

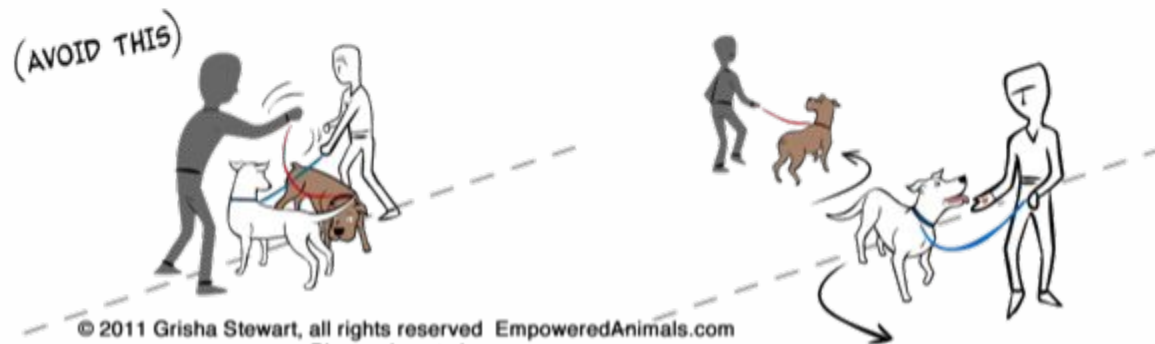
- Allow one-on-one interactions **ONLY** for dogs with suitable temperaments. The exercise should not be completed by dogs who are too uncertain or excited to participate.
- Emphasise the importance of maintaining a loose leash during interactions.
- Count '1, 2, 3' then call the dogs away. The longer the interaction, the more likely an incident.
- Leash dance.



VARIOUS TEMPERAMENTS AND ABILITIES



Don't let the leashes tangle. If the leashes tangle, breathe and stay calm. Immediately untangle them, call your dog back and give a treat.



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A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

What strategies do you think we can implement to assist with this challenge?

Note: Group classes may also not be suitable for dogs who are very easily distracted or who become so overwhelmed they shut down. A good litmus test is whether the dog will take food. If the dog takes food readily in other environments but not at the club, the dog is struggling.



A CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT

Keep exercises short and sweet

- 45 minutes to an hour is a long time for a dog to concentrate.
- Ask handlers to do 2-3 reps of each exercise, rather than expecting extended concentration periods.
- Balance exercises with breaks.

Use distance and space to your advantage

If a dog is struggling, consider placing them on the end of the class or moving them further away so they are less likely to be overwhelmed by other class members.

Teach handlers to reinforce calm behaviours

- We tend to focus on traditional obedience skills rather than life skills.
- Handlers often miss opportunities to reinforce their dog for performing desirable behaviour which is not cued. Doing nothing is such a valuable skill.



EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCING CONSTRAINTS

What strategies do you think we can implement to assist with this challenge?



EQUIPMENT AND RESOURCING CONSTRAINTS

Provide enrichment items / encourage handlers to bring them

- Lickimats
- Kongs
- Long-lasting chews
- Beware of resource guarding

Provide mats / encourage handlers to bring them

- Dogs are more likely to relax if they are comfortable. Mat training is also an invaluable life skill.
- Provide basic mats (e.g. at the clubhouse for individual collection) or encourage members to bring their own.



HOW TO BREAK UP A DOG FIGHT



What would you do?



DON'T STICK YOUR HANDS IN!

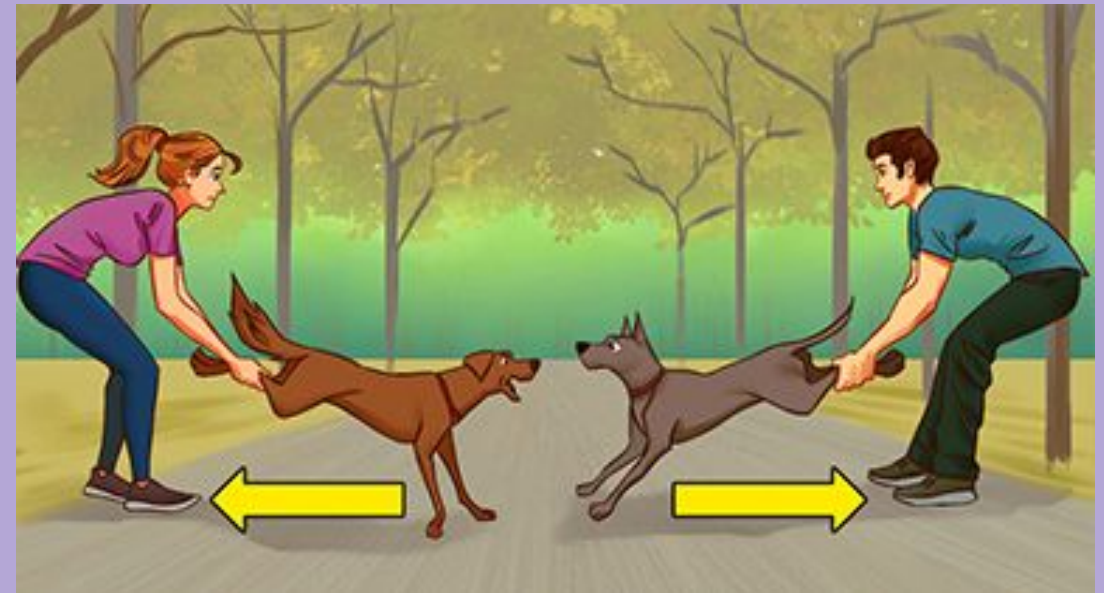
- The golden rule of dog fights is don't put your hands in.
- Put something else between the dogs so they are unable to bite each other.
- Look around your environment and get creative! Common items include: jackets, handbags, treat pouches, umbrellas, brooms, and big sticks.
- If a bucket of water or hose is available, pouring water over the dogs may also assist.



THE WHEELBARROW TECHNIQUE

For when dogs are not latched together

- If the dogs are repeatedly biting each other but not holding onto one another, then you can separate them using the 'wheelbarrow' technique.
- Grab the instigating dog's back legs, lift them up in the air, and walk backwards to 'wheelbarrow' the dog away.
- Beware as dexterous dogs may be able to bite you.
- Ideally, a second person will also be available to wheelbarrow the other dog away.



THE PUSH TOGETHER TECHNIQUE

For when dogs are latched together

- If one or both of the dogs are latching on to the other, you must NOT use the wheelbarrow method.
- Grip both dogs by the collar and quickly push their heads together, then apart. Pushing their heads together quickly will cause their jaws to release.



AFTER SEPARATION

- Remove the instigating dog as soon as possible. Ideally, another person will be available to remove the other dog.
- If a second person is not available, use your environment to protect the victim dog. For example, you might place the dog behind a picket fence, on top of a car, or on top of or inside a bin to ensure the other dog cannot get to them.
- Do not pick up the victim dog as this may cause the other dog to attack you. Your safety is the priority.



AFTER AN INCIDENT

- Assess for injury.
- Consider the severity - the more serious the attack, the higher the risk of legal consequences. A fight is serious if one of the dogs has punctured, latched onto, or shaken the other dog.
- Recommend both dogs are taken to the vet for thorough examination and treatment. If a dog has been physically shaken, they may have suffered internal damage which can be fatal if left untreated.
- Encourage both handlers to go home and decompress. There is no need to resume walks / training immediately.
- For the instigating dog, recommend they contact a trainer via the Pet Professional Guild of Australia.
- If the victim dog shows signs of anxiety around other dogs after a fight, also recommend contacting a trainer via the Pet Professional Guild of Australia.
- Encourage handlers to consider support for themselves if they are struggling. I recommend Dr Vanessa Rohlf to assist with animal-related trauma: drvanessarohlf.com.au.



PREPARING FOR NEXT TIME

- Bucket of water
- Canned air, mini airhorn, silly string, or similar
- Break stick



**it's time for a
BREAK**

CASE STUDIES



CASE STUDY #1 - THE PHYSICAL REPRIMANDER

A dog in your class is unable to perform some of the exercises covered in the lesson. Over the course of the class, their handler becomes increasingly more violent. About halfway through the lesson, they yank their dog harshly by the neck and whack the dog in anger. The dog is visibly distressed, as are other members of your class.

1. Why is the handler behaving this way?
2. What could you say to the handler in the moment?
3. What should you do after class has ended?
4. What might committee do about this incident (if anything)?



CASE STUDY #2 - THE UNRULY CHILDREN

You are running a class when two small children (aged 4 and 6) run past kicking a soccer ball. The children continue to run around with the ball in the middle of the grounds. Some of the dogs in your class and several other classes become interested and several react. You ask the children where their parents are and they point to a handler in a class on the other side of the grounds. Another instructor tells the children off and explains their behaviour is dangerous. Both the children start crying and run back to their dad, who becomes very angry and walks out mid-class.

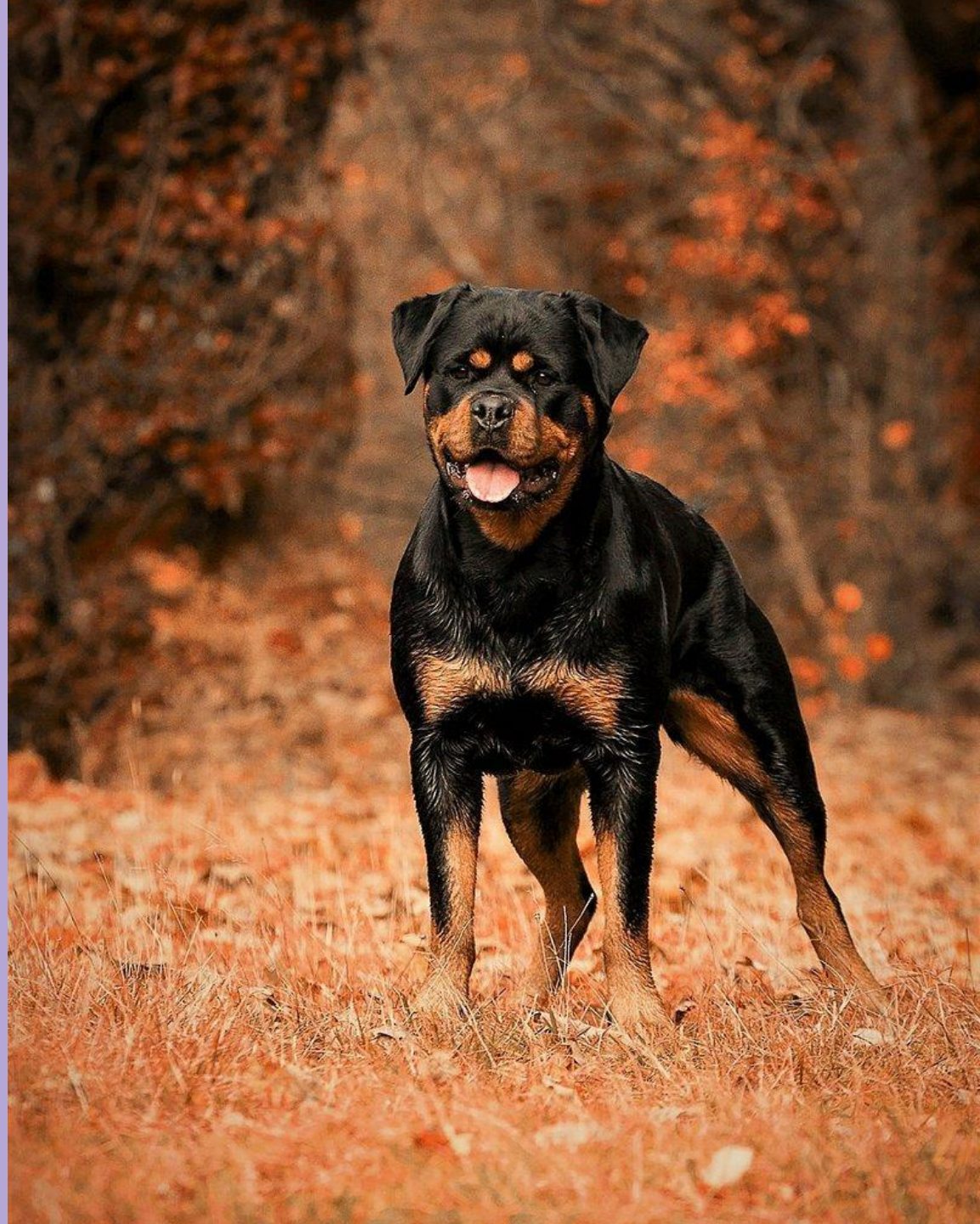
1. Why are the children behaving this way?
2. Why is the parent behaving this way?
3. What could have been said to the children/parent instead?
4. What should you do after class has ended?
5. What might committee do about this incident (if anything)?



CASE STUDY #3 - THE PERSONAL INJURY MATTER

A petite female handler in her 60s joins your class. Her dog is a rottweiler. The handler does not attend most of your classes then shows up for the assessment. The assessment is run in the middle of winter and the ground is wet and uneven. During the assessment, the rottweiler lunges towards another dog in the class and the handler slips over in the mud. She complains of pain in her leg. A first aider attends to her and she is advised to visit her doctor. The handler ceases attending club. 12 months later, she sues the club for negligence.

1. Why is the handler behaving this way?
2. Could anything else have been said or done to prevent this?
3. What changes could be made by you as the instructor and the committee to prevent this from happening again in future?



REACTIVITY IN PEOPLE



RECAP: REACTIVITY IN DOGS

- Reactivity is driven by 'big feelings'.
- It is an automatic emotional response.
- When a dog is reacting they are not in control of their behaviour and are unable to effectively learn or take in other things in their environment.
- Reactivity is typically a symptom of a deeper issue.



REACTIVITY IN PEOPLE

- People can be reactive too! Humans 'lash out' when they are frustrated or stressed.
- People can behave in a more reactive manner in a dog club environment if they feel embarrassed or targeted because:
 - Their dog is struggling with behaviour issues.
 - Their dog is not performing at the same standard as other dogs in the class.
 - They don't 'get' dog training as easily as others and are struggling personally with the class content.
- YOU might react to people in your classes, too, if you are frustrated with them or perceive their comments as a personal attack. We need to actively work to prevent ourselves from doing this.



REACTIVITY IN PEOPLE

1. What do you think we can do to prevent people in our class from lashing out?
2. If someone in your class behaves this way, what should you do?
3. What is the difference between human 'reactivity' and dog reactivity?



REACTIVITY IN PEOPLE

How do we resolve reactive human behaviour?

- **Empathy and understanding:** Consider why the person is behaving this way, listen actively, and acknowledge their feelings.
- **Moderate yourself:** Even if you are angry, your reaction should be moderated. Responding negatively is likely to escalate the situation.
- **Avoiding triggering comments:** Be conscious of comments which are likely to trigger a defensive response (e.g. 'why did you get this breed of dog?').
- **Brainstorm solutions:** Offer the handler a solution or alternative strategy, rather than leaving them to struggle on their own.



BAD BEHAVIOUR? REPORT IT!

Every incident which poses a risk to an animal, person or the club should be recorded in writing and stored against an incident register.

This includes episodes of verbal abuse.



CASE STUDIES REVIEWED



CASE STUDY #1 - THE PHYSICAL REPRIMANDER

...About halfway through the lesson, they yank their dog harshly by the neck and whack the dog in anger.

1. The handler is frustrated / embarrassed by their dog's 'inability' to perform.
2. In class, give the group an exercise to perform and calmly speak to the frustrated handler 1-1. Empathise and express that you understand why they are frustrated. Ask them if they would like to stay after class to troubleshoot, but explain FDOC does not tolerate harsh treatment of dogs.
3. After class, notify your coordinator or a member of the committee about the incident and write up an incident report.
4. If the incident occurs more than once, the committee should consider intervening.



CASE STUDY #2 - THE UNRULY CHILDREN

...Both the children start crying and run back to their dad, who becomes very angry and walks out mid-class.

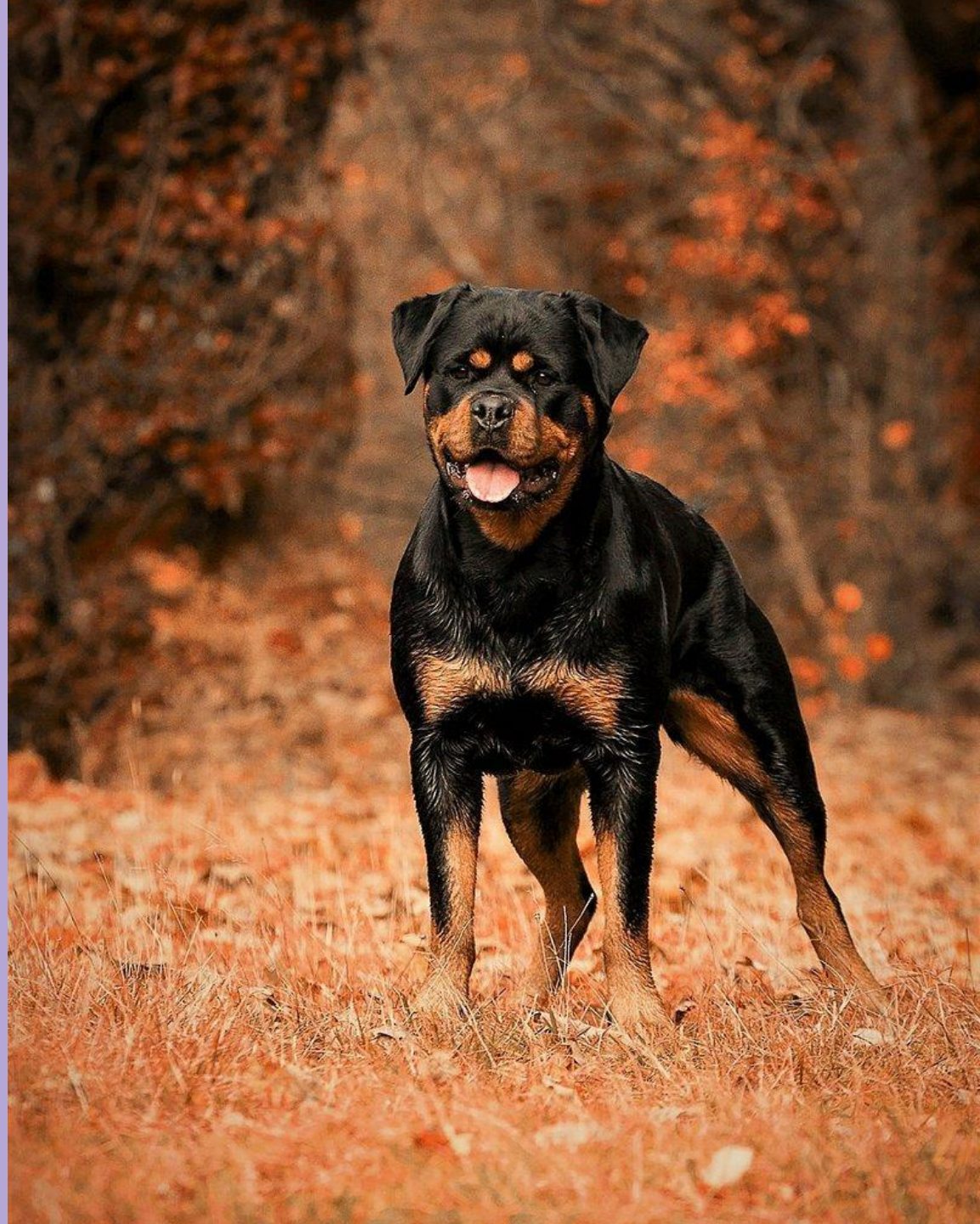
1. The children are behaving this way because they are children.
2. The parent is behaving this way because the instructor made his children cry. His lack of supervision is probably naivety.
3. Instead of an instructor telling off the children, they could have approached the parent and calmly explained that the children's conduct was dangerous.
4. After class, the incident needed to be reported to the coordinator and/or committee and an incident report prepared. If the handler did not return, someone with seniority should call them to discuss with empathy.
5. The committee should discuss the incident with instructors so all volunteers are clear on approach. Supervision requirements in the club's policies should also be considered and potentially reviewed.



CASE STUDY #3 - THE PERSONAL INJURY MATTER

...12 months later, she sues the club for negligence.

1. The handler is behaving this way because she thinks she can gain financial benefit.
2. People who have a desire to sue will always attempt to sue. In the moment, the incident was handled as best it could.
3. The club should review its policies and handler training regarding safety. Are handlers warned to stand reasonably far apart, and that the ground is slippery when wet? Do they sign a waiver / assumption of risk when they join the club? In this case, the club should also consider revising its criteria for attending assessments.



WRAP UP



KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Managing people and dogs in your class is hard!
- We can mitigate common challenges in group classes by considering the needs of our handlers and their dogs and how we can address these.
- Be conscious of your own behaviour and how this could be misinterpreted or misconstrued by your handlers. Respond to emotionally fuelled behaviour with empathy and understanding.
- Consider how to safely break up a dog fight before you have to - and never stick your hands in!
- Record all incidents in writing, whether involving dogs, people, or both, and always raise incidents with the committee.



QUESTIONS?

