



Client's Stories – "Bella"

Dr Gillian Davis

The first time I saw Bella (or Belle as she'd been named by the nurses at Earlswood), was on a Friday night at dog training class in Holywood, May 2002. Jeanette the Head Nurse at EVH, (Auntie Nettie), was sitting at the table with a wee tiny wriggling bundle of pure black, white and tan fluff. When she set Bella on the floor it was apparent that she'd had a very badly broken front leg as her leg was almost banana shaped and covered in a big bright orange bandage. She'd just been left at the vets with her injury with the view to finding her a home, but Jeanette wanted her to go to a home where she would re-



ceive some sort of training as she saw great potential in Bella's learning abilities. Jeanette thought of me and my mum had said 'we'll just go and look but we don't really need another dog' as I was already working Lucy, my labrador in obedience and agility. Famous last words! I wasn't even sure if Bella could do any obedience, but, as time went on, and her leg got stronger with a combination of TLC, homeopathy, hydrotherapy and acupuncture (from Auntie Siobhan), I decided to gently start some training with her. Bella took off!! Within her first year of competing in obedience competitions she'd won the Novice class and in 2005, Bella and I won the N.I Dog and Handler of the Year trophy

which is awarded to the most successful obedience partnership competing throughout N.I. In 2007 Bella and I were honoured to be chosen to compete for Northern Ireland in the Obedience World Cup at Crufts - a very prestigious competition. It was a tremendous experience which we both enjoyed, but when we came home it was clear that Bella wasn't very well. She had a high temperature, was extremely lethargic and very sore all over. I rushed her to Earlswood but every test came back negative. The only treatment she responded to was steroidal. I'm glad to say that Bella wasn't to be kept down and eventually recovered from whatever it was to fight another day. To our surprise, in March 2008, Bella and I were again chosen to

represent NI at the Obedience World Cup at Crufts. Bella was in great form and was the dog losing least points from both the NI and SI teams. This time we came home and all was well. And, just last month, Bella won a special charity obedience class in Fingal and was invited to take part in the All-Winners final in Birmingham. We didn't win anything there but we had a brilliant time - competing against Obedience Champions!!

As you can see, from a poorly start as an injured puppy looking for a home, Bella has gone from strength to strength and she is my doggy soul-mate.



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"Wee Cuties"

Jeanette Gallagher RVN



A Kitten can be a fantastic addition to a household, and for the family's youngest, they are great fun to be around, but it must be remembered that taking on any pet is for life and so choosing your

kitten should be done with plenty of thought and care. **To help you on your way, here are a few helpful tips:**

- Firstly, if you are buying your kitten from a breeder, make sure they are registered breeders!
- Kittens should be with their mother for at least 6 - 8 weeks. Kittens learn a lot from the mother, so taking a kitten too early can leave it very nervous and even sometimes a little bit cheeky! Kittens that have been handled kindly from a very young age tend to be well-socialized, making the first few months of introducing the kitten to the family a lot easier and happier.

When you bring your new kitten home:

- Take your cat home at a time when

someone will be there for the first few days, it's not wise to leave your kitten alone in a strange place for long periods.

- It's known that cats are independent, but they also need a lot of TLC! Daily grooming might be essential for some cats, but it's also a good time for bonding!
- Try to raise the cat indoors to get it used to people and other animals.
- Be gentle and calm, wait for the kitten to come to you, for some kittens this may take a while, but be patient.
- Make sure you have your kitten vaccinated. The 1st of the 2 part injection can be given from 9 weeks, and then the 2nd part given 3 weeks later. This will help protect your pet against flu enteritis and feline leukaemia, Remember, an annual booster is required.
- A worming tablet should be given from 6 weeks. Adult cats should be wormed every 3 months. Worming is extremely important if there are children in the



house! It is advised that you purchase these tablets from a registered veterinary clinic rather than a supermarket or pet shop.

- Don't leave objects about the house, kittens like to find new things to play with, and if the wee one picks up something too small, it could choke.
- Keep the litter tray in the same place, so the kitten knows where to go. Clean it regularly as the cat may reject a dirty tray.
- Have your kitten micro-chipped, this makes it easier for the local Vet to identify your wee one if it is handed in, hopefully it will never happen.
- If you are not considering breeding from your kitten, then seriously think about neutering. Females can be neutered from 4 months and males from 6 months. Make an appointment with your local vet as soon as possible to get this quick procedure done, it has many benefits.
- Finally, it is very important that you register your kitten with a vet!

Behavioural problems in dogs – Part 2

D. J. Thompson OBE, BA, MVB, MRCVS

(Continued on from Issue 1)

Continuing our article on Behavioural Problems in dogs, anyone who owns a dog with a



dominance aggression problem needs professional

help as many animals can be treated successfully but it is essential that guidance and advice is given to reduce the risk of injury. The first source of help is from the veterinary surgeon many of whom are skilled in behavioural matters. There are also many trained behaviourists which the veterinary surgeon may recommend for assistance on a referral basis.

There are several simple changes which will help but it is essential to realise that dominance is never cured, it is only controlled but in many cases this can be total control provided the owner follows the training programme on a permanent basis. In male dogs castration will help to reduce the underlying dominance.

Returning to a basic obedience programme helps to establish owner control and this can be achieved by using the very basics of training ensuring that the dog will respond to commands of sit, down, stay and no. Simple training of 5 - 10 minutes a day is necessary. Dogs should not be allowed to lie on chairs or beds. Most dominant dogs will want to seek

attention and make demands on their owner, such as, demanding to be let outside, demanding their food, and demanding to go for a walk. All these everyday actions should be initiated by the owner and not the dog. When the dog seeks attention it should be ignored and a few minutes later the owner then should initiate the attention.

The same amount of attention should continue to be given but only when initiated by the owner.

Some other variations on dominance aggression are territorial, maternal and fear induced.

With territorial aggression the dog should not be allowed to regard a particular area of the house as his alone. It is

useful to avoid any situation where there is likely to be a confrontation.

Maternal aggression is likely to show itself when a bitch is nursing puppies and in these circumstances no attempt should ever be made to remove her puppies because it is completely natural for her to protect her offspring.

Fear induced aggression is often related to pain. If a dog has been hurt in any way it may well attempt to attack those who try to help or move it. Extreme care must be taken in these circumstances.

Guidance offered in this article of necessity is very superficial and will be totally inadequate for anyone with a problem dog.

“The Problem with Podgy Pooches and Chubby Cats ” Dr Rachel Dunlop MA VetMB PhD MRCVS

The importance of a healthy lifestyle is a recurring theme in the media. So it's worth bearing in mind that this advice applies to our pets just as much as it does to ourselves.

A high proportion of the dogs and cats that vets see are overweight, and there is evidence that this is a growing problem.

20% of dogs and 25-30% of cats are obese. Obesity is defined as an excessive accumulation of fat and is caused by overfeeding and lack of exercise. Occasionally obesity in dogs is associated with

hypothyroidism.

So does it matter if we indulge our pets and give them the odd extra treat? Yes, because obesity is known to reduce life expectancy by increasing the risk of development or progression of a number of diseases. These include arthritis, diabetes, cardiovascular problems and bladder disorders (in cats). Moreover pets that are overweight will tend to be lethargic and have reduced exercise tolerance.

It is very important, therefore, not to overfeed your pet. This can be avoided by giving them a measured amount of a diet appropriate to their stage of life. Neutered animals have a lower metabolic rate and so can be prone to putting on weight. There are specific lower calorie diets available for neutered animals to help avoid this. In addition you need to make sure that your pet gets enough exercise. In the case of indoor cats, you can do this

by encouraging them to play with their favourite toys.

In general, if a dog or cat is the correct weight you should be able to feel but not see their ribs. If you think your pet is overweight, your vet will be able to help you.



Firstly, your vet or veterinary nurse will weigh your pet and assess their body condition score. Based on this, they will suggest a target body weight and advise you how to achieve this with a suitable feeding and exercise plan.

Nurse Clinics

For Free Veterinary Nutrition Advice visit our Registered Nurse Clinics and take time to discuss a programme that best suits you

Meet our Staff

Laura McAllister RVN was born in Belfast into a family of two brothers and is the first in her family to join the veterinary profession. She began her Veterinary Nurse training in 1997 qualifying as a Registered Nurse in 2000. Since then, she has worked in 3 practices, rising to the position of Head Nurse before returning to



EVH. Laura says of her job, “Although it's very hard to see the animals suffer, it's nice to be able to help them through their difficult times. I love to see successful cases leave the hospital, and I feel privileged to be apart of it!” Laura has a special interest in pet nutrition, and will be starting free weekly nursing

clinics. Recently, Laura took a sabbatical and spent 3 years in Boston, USA with her husband. Glad to back home, Laura now lives in Belfast with her husband, Simon and her adorable British Blue cat “George”.