

Your Chat Moderators



Emily Weiss, PhD, CAAB
Vice President of Shelter
Research
and Development
ASPCA



**Heather Mohan-Gibbons,
MS, RVT, ACAAB, CBCC-KA**
Director,
Applied Research and Behavior
ASPCA

Your Presenter



Shannon Gramann

Senior Manager,
Shelter R&D
ASPCA

SAFER Series Part 2:

ASPCA SAFER®

Equipment & Handling



Summary of *Session One*

Canine Assessment:

SAFER Overview and Research

- Dr. Emily Weiss's research on SAFER
- SAFER research from other shelters
- Ways to gather information (besides the assessment)
- How SAFER can be used in your facility

Note: All webinars in this series will be **recorded** and available on ASPCApro.org/safer; a link to the recording of Session 1 will be emailed to you following this presentation.

Recap: How is SAFER® used?

Part of placement profile

- Adoption
- Rescue
- Foster

Intake tool

Prevention of breed bans

Any situation where you
want to gather more info



Agenda

- Equipment needed to perform SAFER assessment
- Requirements for assessment room
- Handler's role
- Observer's role
- Handling highlights of each item



Equipment Needs

Metal food bowls – they slide easily

Dry & canned food

Toys

Buckle collar and 6 foot leash

Assess-A-Hand

Unbasted rawhide

Video camera & tripod

Six-foot leash

- Must be six feet long and width appropriate for the dog



Buckle or Martingale collar

- Type of collar must not restrict airway when the leash is taught



Video camera and tripod



Record every assessment!

- Behavior can occur quickly
- Reviewing video can be critical in scoring
- Improving handling of Assessor
- Serve as record for dog post-adoption

Metal Food Bowls

The bowl should be the appropriate size for the dog being assessed.

Metal bowls are preferred because they slide easily across the floor when pulled with Assess-a-Hand.



Two Armless Chairs



Assessor can easily
change body position

Observer should be
seated during the same
items that the Assessor is
seated

Dry and Canned Food



At least two types, in case the dog does not find the first choice palatable

Moderately valuable food
– kibble mixed with few tablespoons of canned

Toys

- Two toys (large enough to be removed from the dog's mouth)
- Varied textures and shapes
- Size appropriate for dog
- Examples include rope or squeaky toys



Rawhide

Unbasted

Large enough that it can be pulled away with the Assess-a-Hand when in dog's mouth



Assess-A-Hand®



Available for purchase at www.greatdogproductions.com
(Sue Sternberg's Assess-a-hand)

Other Items

Clipboard to hold the
SAFER™ worksheet



White noise
machines/apps



Items to Defuse Aggression

It is recommended that the assessment room be stocked with items to help defuse aggression, should it be necessary to do so.



The Room is Critical!

- Minimum: 10x10 foot room
- Quiet: no phones, intercoms, pagers, barking dogs, people talking, animals housed here



Have All Supplies Ready



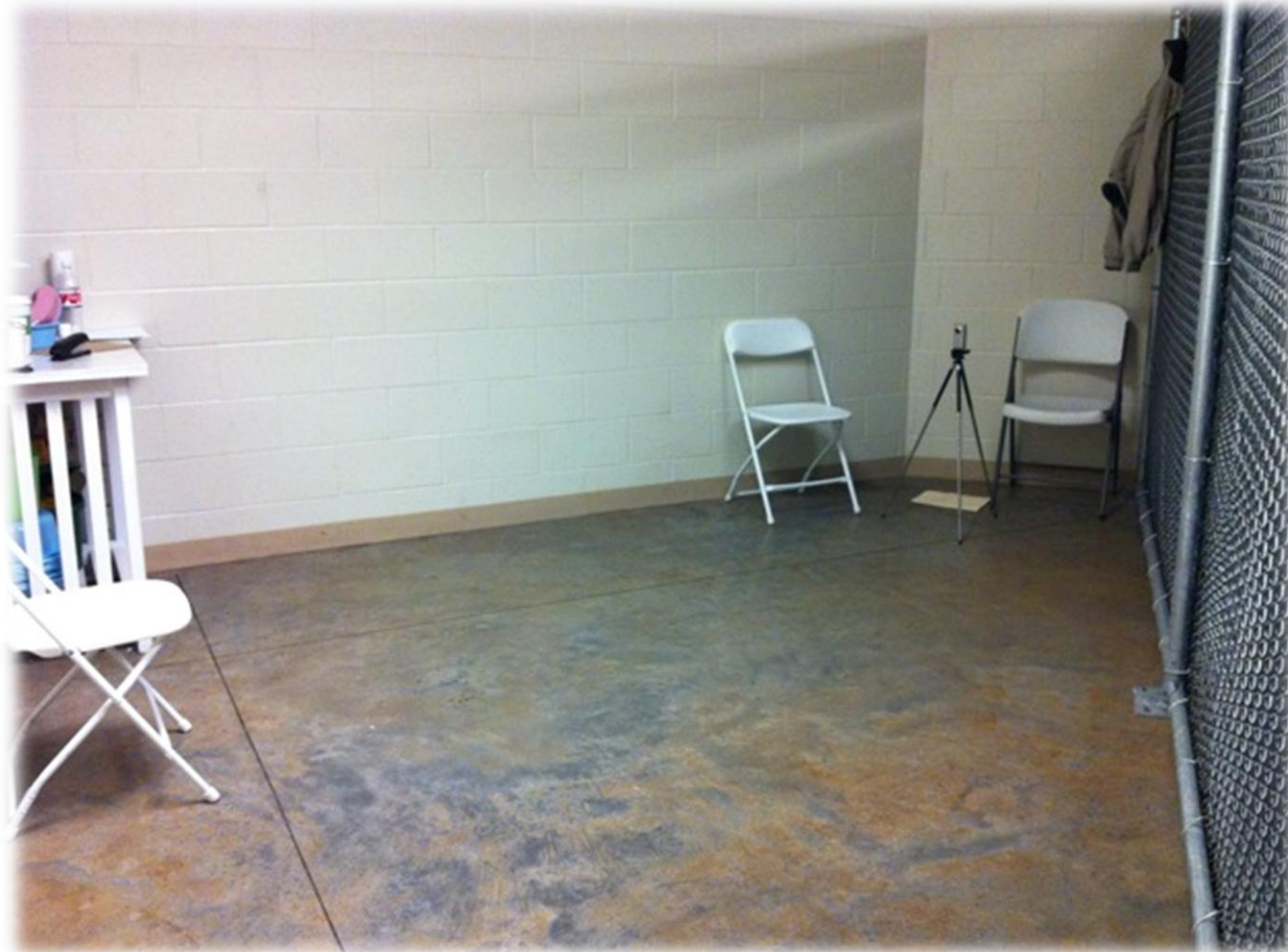
Good Assessment Space

Large enough to move freely during all items



Good Assessment Space

Creative use of a storage room



Good Assessment Space

Allocated room with raised cabinets & hooks



Good Assessment Space

Free standing trailer
allocated for assessment
space



Assessments *cannot* be conducted:

- Outside
- In rooms with windows that cannot be covered
- Where other animals are present
- Other distractions present



Distractions...

- phones
- voices
- foot traffic
- other animals
- smells
- multi-tasking Assessors
- side conversations
- more staff in the room than the Assessor and Observer



A quiet, distraction-free room increases the likelihood that the assessment is predictive

Location of Room

Ideal if near dog housing for assessment flow

- Still needs to be quiet enough for assessment

Consider access to the outdoors from kennel to assessment room

- Dogs need to have bathroom break before assessment begins

Cleaning...

- Ensure the room can be disinfected and cleaned easily
- Smells can be distracting for dogs being assessed
- Important to minimize disease transmission within the shelter



Poll Question....

Choose the response that best describes your current assessment space (see Poll Panel on the right – submit your choice):

- a) Assessment space is large enough to allow safe handling/movement and is quiet.
- b) Assessment space is adequate in size, but noisy.
- c) Assessment space too small, but is quiet.
- d) We have ideas for an assessment space but nothing in place yet.
- e) Are you kidding? We have no extra space anywhere.

Who can assess?

Physically fit, ability to bend and kneel

Provide safe and humane dog handling and interactions

Awareness of:

- own body language
- tension in leash



Who can assess?

- Knowledgeable of canine body language
- Ability to observe dog's behavior objectively
- Able to communicate verbally with Observer



Role of the Observer

- Objectively observes dog's behavior
- Verbally communicates behavior observed to Assessor
- Completes worksheet and additional behavior notes
- Videotapes the assessment



Role of the Observer

- Holds leash for the Food and Toy Behavior Items
- Handles helper dog in Dog-to-Dog Behavior Item
- Helps defuse aggression when necessary



SAFER

- Dog should be taken outside for bathroom break
- Once in the room, give the dog a few moments to get acquainted with room on leash
- All assessments need to be videotaped
- All items must be completed in the proper order unless the dog freezes, growls or attempts to bite

Assessment Tips!

Always:

- Coax dog into position (never push or pull or give verbal cues)
- Give choice to move away from contact
- Complete each item before moving onto the next (unless aggression is seen, then stop the assessment)

Never:

- Skip an item or change the order of items
- Perform SAFER without both an Assessor and Observer present
- Continue if signs of aggression are observed

Assessment Item #1: Look

Insights gained from this Item:

- How the dog behaves in social interactions with people when lightly restrained and receiving soft eye contact

Assessor: seated (if small dog, on one knee)

Dog: standing or sitting

The dog does not need to give eye contact or settle in the Assessors hands

Assessment Item #1: Look

- Upright posture
- Leash fully gathered
- Hand gently holding collar
- Dog's lower jaw gently cupped
- Soft eye contact with dog attempted
- Dog allowed to pull out of hands at any time
- Attempt up to 3 times



Assessment Item #2: Sensitivity



Insights gained from this Item:

- Dog's likelihood for touch sensitivity

Assessor: seated (if small dog, on one knee)

Dog: standing or sitting perpendicular to Assessor

Assessment Item #2: Sensitivity

- Upright posture
- Firm grip on collar
- Elbow locked to knee for safety
- Touch:
 - Firm as if kneading bread, but
 - not painful
 - Start below collar two inches off spine on side furthest from Assessor.
 - Move touch towards flank and back to collar. Repeat.



Assessment Item #3: Tag


Insights gained from this Item:

- Dog's response to movement, touch, and sound stimuli

Dogs do not need to play or engage with Assessor



Assessment Item #3: Tag

- Move chair to side of room
 - With body sideways to dog, invite him to play – ‘hey, you want to play!’
 - Begin moving about the room playfully engaging dog with voice and movement
 - Attempt to tag the dog with two fingers three times on his flank moving away after each tag
 - Keep body sideways and a loose leash with full slack for entire item.
- 
- If safe to do so, kneel or sit in chair at the end of the item and coax the dog over

Assessment Item #4: Squeeze



Insights gained from this Item:

- Dog's response to being held or touched in a mildly unpleasant manner and his response when warned it will happen again

Assessor: seated (if small dog, on one knee)

Dog: standing or sitting
perpendicular to Assessor

Flank option for dogs with paw sensitivity issues

Assessment Item #4: Squeeze



- Avoid looming over dog
- Gather leash, hold collar and lock elbow to knee
- Rock dog's head away from body
- Say 'squeeze' THEN pick up foreleg closest, run hand down to paw, and apply pressure between pads
- Allow dog to pull leg/paw out at anytime
- If dog allows the first attempt, repeat



Assessment Item #4: Squeeze

Flank Option: If dog does not allow you to pick-up/touch leg or paw, or is highly reactive on the first attempt

- Same positioning as the Sensitivity Item
- Say 'squeeze' then touch dog's shoulder and run hand down to flank (2 inches below anus)
- Repeat



Assessment Item #5: Food Behavior

Insights gained from this Item:

- Response to food taken away once eating

Can offer second type of canned food if not interested in the first

If dog shows no interest, re-asses JUST Food and Toy Behavior Items before next mealtime

If guarding behavior observed, use ASPCA Food Guarding Protocol in shelter, in foster home, or in adopter's home

Assessment Item #5: Food Behavior



- Assessor presents dog with a bowl of food mixed with 1-2 tablespoons of canned food
- Assessor approaches saying 'give me that' and pulls bowl away 1-2 feet towards him/her
- Observer allows the dog to follow dish
- Assessor backs off, allows dog to eat again, then re-approaches saying 'give me that', and pushes dog's head out of bowl from both sides
- Observer holds dog on leash staying positioned behind dog, giving full slack and a loose leash

Assessment Item #6: Toy Behavior

Insights gained from this Item:

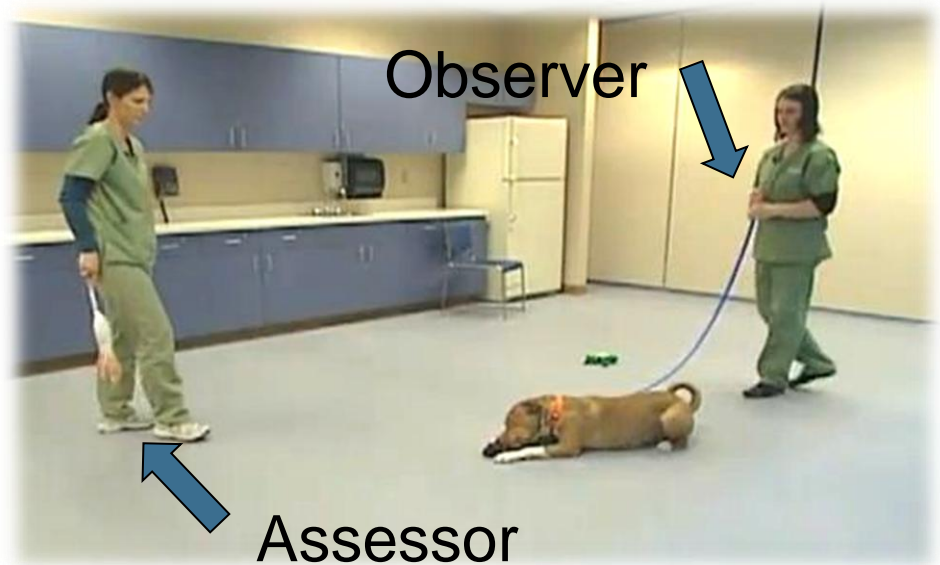
- Response to the removal of non-food objects to identify possible possession aggression

If guarding behavior is observed, use ASPCA behavior modification protocols in shelter, in foster home, or in adopter's home



Assessment Item #6: Toy Behavior

- Observer holds dog on leash staying positioned behind dog, giving full slack and a loose leash
- Assessor presents one toy to dog and verbally encourages him to interact with it
- Assessor approaches dog/toy saying “give me that” and attempts to remove
- If dog is interested in first toy the item is over, if not, try another, different toy



- Attempt to remove toy 1-2 times and no more than 3 times
- After presenting toys, an optional, unbasted rawhide may be presented

Assessment Item #7:

Dog-to-Dog Behavior (*Optional*)

Insights gained from this Item:

- The dog's likelihood for generalized dog aggression

Helper dog needs to have neutral behavior, be same sex, similar size, and kept away from door where assessed dog enters

Assess the first few seconds of a dog's response to seeing another dog on-leash

Dogs do not get close enough to meet

Assessment Item #7: Dog-to-Dog Behavior (*Optional*)



- Keep leashes as loose as possible
- Observe the dog's initial response and approach towards helper dog
- The item is complete after the initial approach

Summary

- Room requirements for assessment
- Equipment needed
- Assessor and Observer's role in successfully conducting an assessment
- Proper handling technique for each item of the SAFER assessment
- Refer to SAFER guidebook and DVD for proper positioning and handling for each item

<http://www.aspcaonlinestore.com/products/search/?terms=safes>

Related ASPCApro Webinars

www.aspcapro.org/webinars

- **Helping Adopted Dogs Adjust to New Homes (12/06)**
presented by author Patricia McConnell
- **SAFER Canine Assessment: Scoring & Choice (12/12)**
- **Becoming a SAFER Certified Assessor (12/19)**
- **Identifying and Managing Food Guarding In Shelter Dogs (1/17)**

Plus check out the Recordings in our
SAFER and Canine Communications webinar series



Bookmark this page:
<http://www.aspcapro.org/safer-faqs.php>

Questions?
Contact safer@aspca.org