

Enrichment for Shelter Dogs

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What do I mean by Enrichment?

Providing an interesting, complex, challenging, stimulating, and variable environment that encourages the animals to explore, think, learn, engage, and be well – mentally and physically.



✦ Shelters should place a priority on programs that reduce stress and promote the physical and psychological well-being of their animals.

✦ Keeping the animals behaviorally, as well as medically, healthy is the humane thing to do



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Why is Enrichment Important in the Shelter Environment?

Shelter animals:

- live in a stressful environment
- are mentally and physically under-stimulated
- are confined to a small area (cage or run) where they have little to no control

This can lead to boredom, anxiety and the development of behavior problems including abnormal behavior.

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Enrichment Programs

Provide for the psychological well-being of the animals in our care by:

- reducing stress
- providing physical and mental stimulation
- allowing the animals more control over their environment
- preventing the development and display of abnormal behavior

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Environmental Enrichment

Modifying the environment so that it:

- is more comfortable
- provides more space (larger enclosure, etc.)
- provides more choices (different levels, etc)
- is more stimulating (views, stimulating the senses, etc.)
- is less stimulating (quieter, not able to see other animals, etc.)



Behavioral Enrichment

Stimulating the brain by:

- giving the animal opportunities to perform species-typical behaviors.
- giving the animal opportunities to think and learn.



‘Research in the neurosciences has indicated that the brains of higher animals are constructed to function optimally when receiving a specific amount of stimulation.’

‘When too much or too little stimulation is presented to the brain, disorganization, instability, disease, and suffering may result.’

McMillan, 2002



Studies consistently indicate that mental stimulation is emotionally rewarding to animals, and there is a strong motivation to seek novel stimuli.

Studies also show that many animals prefer to work for their food rather than have it freely available.

‘Inadequate mental stimulation gives rise to the unpleasant emotional state of boredom, which serves to motivate the individual to seek stimulation.’

McMillan, 2002



Enrichment
Is required by law for captive primates!



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1991 Amendment to the 1985
Animal Welfare Act

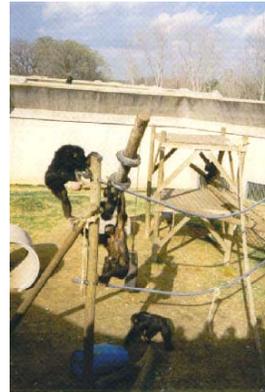
Requires all facilities housing them:

“... to promote the psychological
well-being of nonhuman primates.”

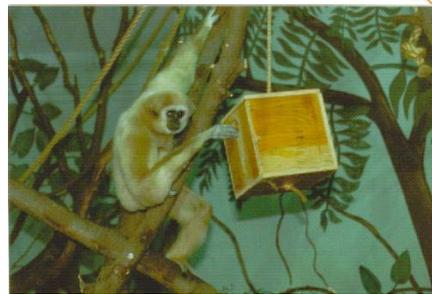


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Primate Enrichment in the Zoo



Soda bottles



Feeder boxes



PVC feeders





PVC pipe feeder



Spinning log feeder



Milk crate feeder



Nut board



Ice Treats



Coconut feeder



Fruit roll-ups





The rest of the zoo animals also receive enrichment.



Don't they deserve it too??



Environmental Enrichment



wouldn't that be nice here?



A Comfortable Environment

- Soft bedding
- Platforms



A comfy adoption floor



Less stimulating environment

You may think that enrichment is all about
INCREASING stimulation

And that is a big part of it

But in the shelter environment –
DECREASING stimulation is just as
important.



Visual barriers



Quiet Kennels



Reducing noise levels reduces stress



Noise Levels in Shelter

Can exceed 100 dB (118.9 dB)

- > 70 dB = considered loud
- 96 dB = subway train
- 110 dB = jackhammer
- 120 = propeller aircraft



Any sound in the 90-120 dB range is considered to be in the critical zone and can be felt as well as heard.



Click for Quiet



Time outside of the kennel in an office or real life





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The Senses

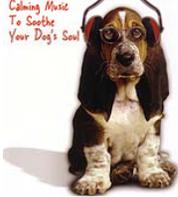
We should consider all the senses when we develop enrichment strategies for shelter animals.



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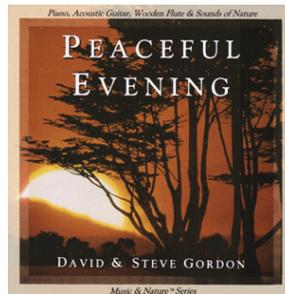
Auditory Stimulation

Mozart For Mutts
Calming Music
To Soothe
Your Dog's Soul

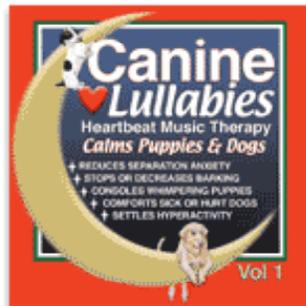


Research has found that classical music calms shelter dogs (Wells et. al. 2002)

New Age Music



Soothing Music



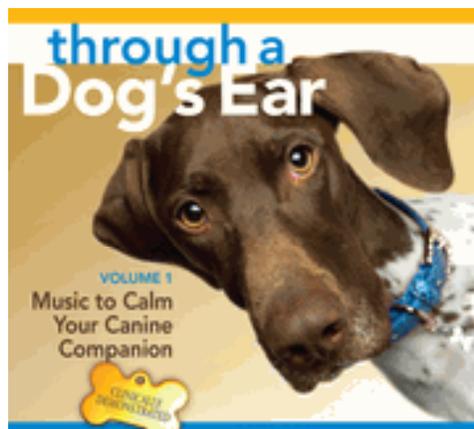
Heartbeat music therapy



Canine Lullabies CD



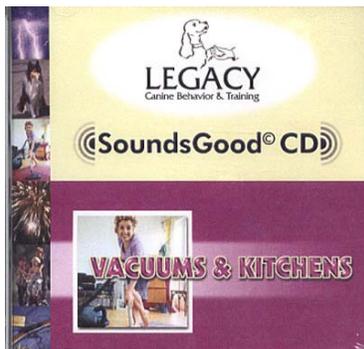
Psychoacoustically Designed Music



Through A Dog's Ear CD



Household sounds



Wind chimes



A Dog's #1 Sense



Olfactory Stimulation

Introducing scents into the environment that are stimulating and/or calming



Lavender Spray



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Olfactory stimulation in the zoo



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Dry spices sprinkled on bedding



Scent of the Day



Vanilla, almond, coconut, banana extracts



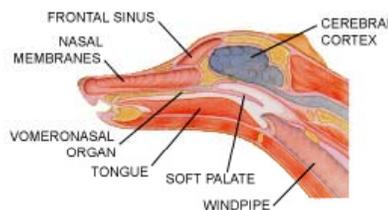
Food scented arousal spray



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The “other sense of smell”

Vomeronasal Organ



Analyzes pheromones

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Pheromone Therapy



Visual Stimulation



Back to the zoo



Bubbles for the shelter dogs



Behavioral Enrichment

- Providing opportunities for the animals to perform species typical behaviors
- Providing opportunities for the animals to think and learn



Opportunities to perform species-typical behavior



Chewing is an important behavior for dogs – especially when anxious or bored



Provide safe chew toys



Digging is a normal dog behavior



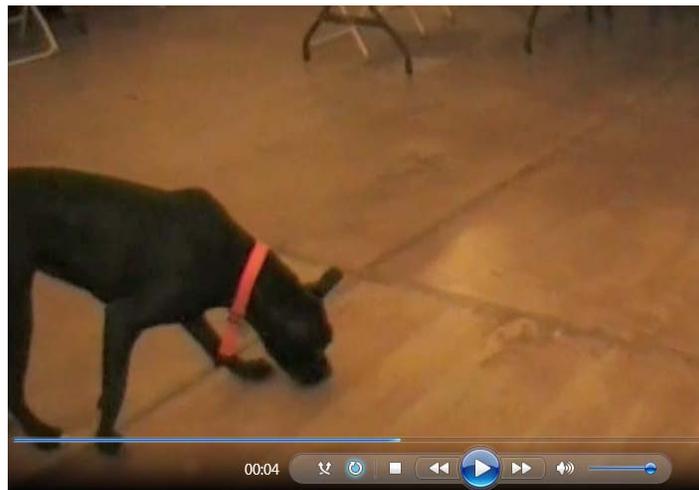
How about a digging pit in the play yard



Those amazing noses



tracking games



Nose Work



PLAY!

All dogs love to play



Toys in the kennels



Play yards for the dogs



Every dog needs exercise



Agility



Some shelters are lucky enough to have an agility field



Activity Yard



Dogs are social animals



Dogs are a *social obligate* species – they **NEED** social companionship to be emotionally healthy



Provide opportunities for social interaction with conspecifics



Play Groups



Pool Party!



Play Group Concerns

Safety

- make good matches
- introduce the dogs properly
- observation & supervision
- keep arousal at a reasonable level
(positive interrupt signal)
- be prepared to break up fights - 'fight kit'
where playgroups happen



Fight Kit

- Air Horn
- Blanket
- Break stick



Co-housing



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Co-housing concerns

Safety

- redirected aggression when aroused
- resource guarding
- more difficult to manage
 - make good matches
 - observations
 - no valuable resources in cage
 - feed dogs separately

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Human social contact is **VERY** important too.



Sitting quietly,
petting, brushing,
playing



What do people want their dog to do most?



Just be with them



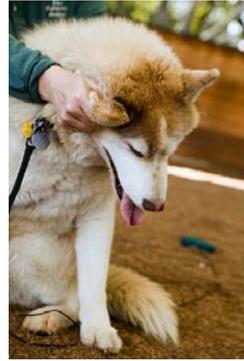
“Do Nothing” time in the shelter is important



Calm interactions outside the cage



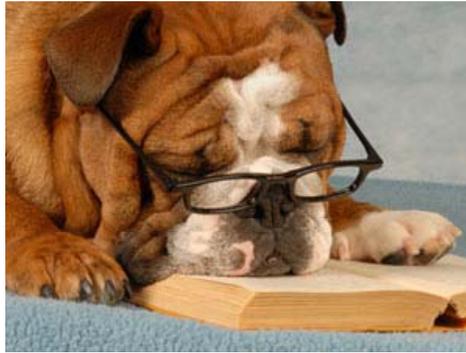
Massage



Doggie Massage



Providing opportunities for the animals to think and learn



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Food Acquisition Challenges



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Primate food gathering enrichment



Anteater Enrichment



Feeding Procedures

Feeding meals in Kongs helps to:

- prolong eating time
- provide mental stimulation



EXAMPLE - Step One: Start with a few clean Kong toys appropriate sized for the target dog that could access them.
NOTE: Small breeds need medium kongs for stuffing.

Step Two: TASTYZEEZ
 Place a 1/2oz amount of frozen dried liver, peanut butter or cheese into the little hole on top.

Step Three: DESSERT
 Fill approximately one-third of the cavity with doggie treats such as biscuits, marrow bones, etc.

Step Four: MAIN COURSE Fill the last two-thirds with canned food or food till moist with kibble or food nuggets.

Step Five: APPETIZER Leave a few kibble crickets, out of the opening. The "tree picture" will provide an immediate pay off and entice your dog to "get serious" about the job.



Make it more challenging



00:00:01



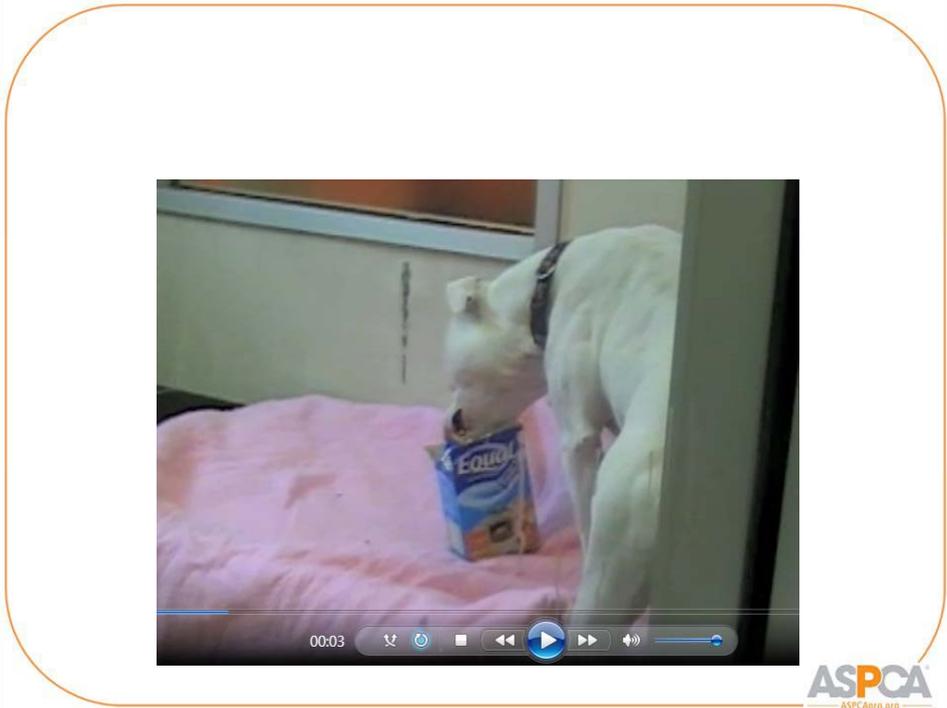
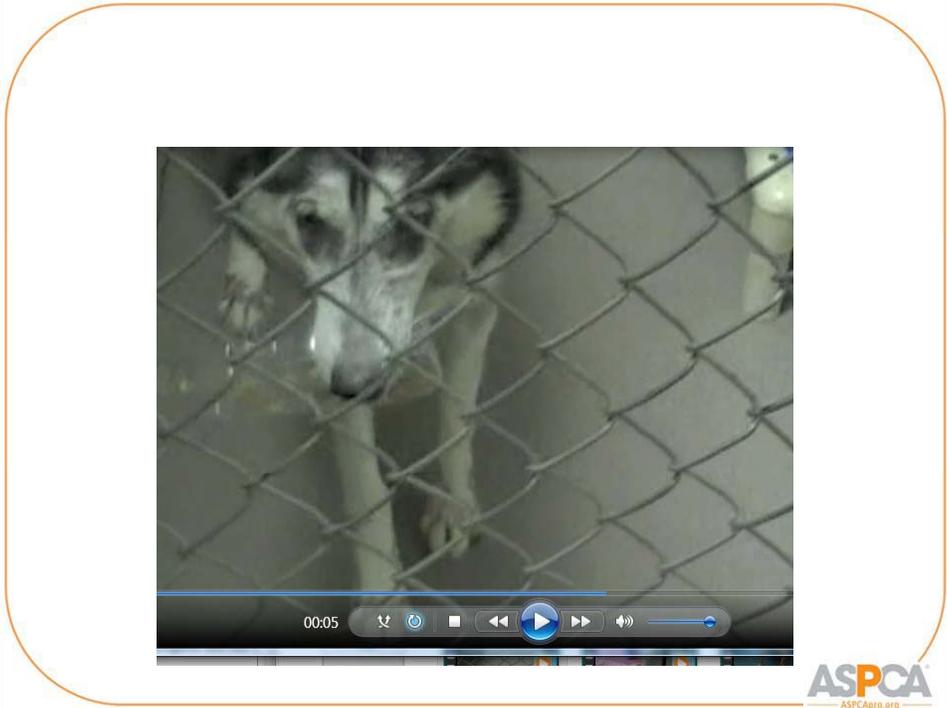
Feeder Balls





Cheap Alternatives





Box of fun



Commercially available puzzle feeders



Shelter-made puzzle feeder



Ice Blocks



We use them in the zoo too



Training in the Shelter

- Mental stimulation
- Social stimulation
- Gives the animal some control
- Increases adoptability
- Easier to manage



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Clicker Training



Very effective form of training because its principles are based in science.

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Clicker Training

Uses the two major forms of learning:

- Classical conditioning – association learning
- Operant Conditioning – learning through the consequence of behavior.



How it works

The “click” sound that the clicker makes is first paired with the delivery of a reward (classical conditioning)

click – treat click – treat click – treat

Once conditioned, the clicker becomes a wonderful, effective communication tool to “speak” to the animal.

The click sound “marks” the exact behavior you want to reward (operant conditioning)



Communicating with another species:

- is like trying to speak to a person in a foreign country when you don't know the language.

Clicker training is like using a translator.

The animal understands the click (once conditioned).



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Clicker Training is:

- Communication the animals understands
- Positive and hands-off
- Mentally stimulating – because it makes the *animal learn to think*

“how do I get that darn clicker to click?”

- Fun for the human and the animal.

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Why use a Clicker?



- Clear signal
- Carries no emotion
- Quickly marks the behavior you like
- Requires no processing in the brain
- Through classical conditioning the animal understands its significance.



Marine Mammal Training



Clicker Training in the Zoo

- Mental stimulation
- Allows the animal control over its environment
- Improves husbandry



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Stationing



Responding to cues

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Receive Injections



Listen to heart



Urine collection



Shifting



Moving from the outside exhibit



To the inside holding area



Restraint ~ Moving into a squeeze cage



An "obedient" lion



Target Training



Targeting with the tigers



In-cage target training with the shelter dogs



Training the Shelter Dogs

Start with the important skills that can help them get adopted:

- sit at the cage front
- don't jump on people
- don't pull on the leash



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First Impressions are important



Teach them to "SIT" at the cage front

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Sit at the cage front



'4 on the floor to open the door'



Jumping as person enters



Jumping in greeting

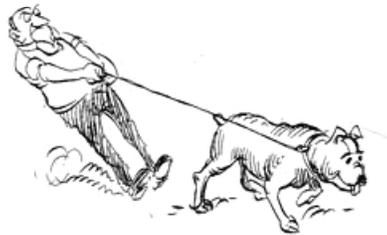


Pulling

Stop ALL forward movement when the dog pulls (when there is tension in the leash)

“Turn to Stone”

“click” and treat when the dog is NOT pulling



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Tools that can help



BCSLLC

Head-halter



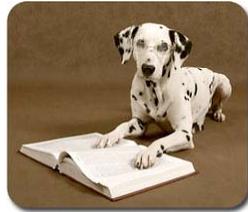
Front Clasping Harness

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Knowing some basic behaviors

makes the dog more adoptable

- people want to adopt a "smart" dog



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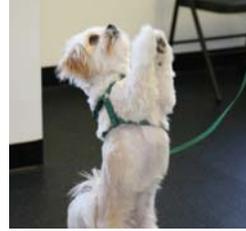
Sit - Down - Come



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A Simple Trick

is **VERY** impressive to a potential adopter!



Wave



Spin



Staff/Volunteer Classes

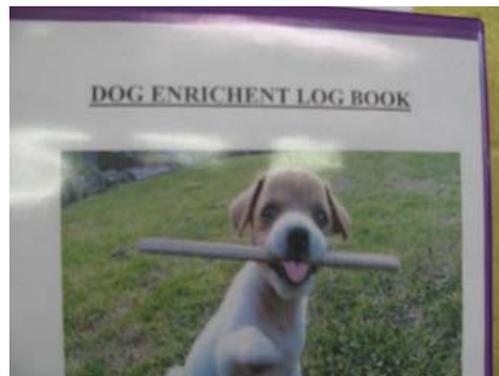


Getting an Enrichment Program Started

- Explain the importance to the staff & volunteers.
- Have everyone come up with a list of enrichment strategies they want to try.
- Everyone gets their own clicker and bait bag.
- Empower the staff – put them in charge of one or a few animals – each day it is their responsibility to come up with cool enrichment for their animals.
- Have a contest – “best enrichment of the week”
- Once it becomes part of their day it won't feel like an extra chore.



Keep Track



Daily Enrichment Log

DATE	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
<i>Meal in Kong/Feeder ball</i>							
<i>Radio - soothing music</i>							
<i>Olfactory Enrichment</i>							
Air Freshener spray							
Tracking Game							
Find It Game							
<i>Exercise</i>							
On-leash walks							
Aerobic (running)							
fetch							
chase games							
agility							
recall games							
<i>Social Contact (human)</i>							
sit quietly							
petting							
brushing							
massaging							
"do nothing"							
<i>Social (with other dogs)</i>							
play group							
<i>Clicker training</i>							
basic commands							
tricks							
impulse control							
free shaping games							



Not just for the animals

- Why did you get into this business?

- to help animals

- not to clean cages or deal with the public
ALL day

Spending even a few minutes each day enriching
the animals adds to your work satisfaction



Do you have time?

- Everyone knows that shelter workers are overworked (and under paid)

MAKE THE TIME

A few minutes a day can make a **BIG** difference to the animals in your care.



Happy humans



Happy Animals



The End



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