

ANIMAL HOSPITAL OF LANESVILLE

1849 Highway 11 Lanesville, IN 47136 (812) 952-3643

The Correct Use of Punishment

By Dr. Rene Wingerter

Punishment is often over used. When working with your pet, you should be using rewards at least three times as often as punishment. Punishment should never involve hitting your pet, it should be a sharp "No" or a loud noise from another source such as shaking a soft drink can filled with pennies. If used improperly all punishment does is confuse and frustrate the pet and the owner.

To be effective punishment must be applied when the pet is performing the undesirable act or no more than three seconds after. If you punish your pet when you come home from work, 4 hours after he has urinated on the floor, it does absolutely no good and in fact can cause the pet severe anxiety. This often leads to more destructive behavior when you are gone. In his mind the punishment is for whatever he did less than three seconds before the spanking, which in this case is get near you! Never call a pet to you when you are angry or when you need to punish him.

When house breaking your puppy, never use punishment unless you have first used praise to teach him what you want him to do. In other words, once you have taught him that he gets a reward for going potty outside, you can start to teach him not to go inside by telling him "No". Only punish him if you are sure it wasn't your fault for not taking him outside sooner, too. You can't get mad at a dog for going to the bathroom, he has to do it!

Remember the four basic rules of thumb for correct use of punishment:

1. Punishment must be administered while the pet is committing the "crime" or within three seconds after.
2. The punishment should not be painful but must make the pet realize you are angry or at least startle him. (but then you should come back in a minute or two and pet him.)
3. You must be consistent. Every time the "crime" is committed there must be some kind of punishment. For example, if he jumps on you, shake the can until he backs away every time, not just when you are dressed nice and then pet him when he jumps on you later when you are wearing jeans.
4. Reward him for good behavior. If he steps away from you when you shake the can and sits down, immediately praise him lavishly.

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If you have any questions about training your pet, please feel free to call us at the Animal Hospital of Lanesville at 952-3643.

