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Dog Behaviour Problems

My Role as a Dog Behaviourist



With over two thousand dog behaviour cases behind me, covering all conceivable aspects of dog behaviour problems, my role as a dog behaviourist is to help you resolve the issues you are experiencing with your dog and restore a sense of calm to your household. I am passionate about creating an understanding and rewarding bond between a dog and their owner.

My day-to-day work as a dog behaviour specialist covers all aspects of dog behaviour problems across a wide range of dog breeds. I address all behaviours that occur both in and out of your home, as I feel it is important that your dog is observed in its normal environment, not for example in an office or a dog training hall. I resolve cases of aggression to dogs and aggression to people on a daily basis, which provides me with a great deal of practical, hands-on experience. It is not just cases of aggression to dogs and people that gives me my experience, but also dealing with other cases such as predatory chasing, barking, and dealing with various fears and phobias in dogs, separation anxiety, puppy training, recall problems and safety with children and dogs.

Having run a successful, full-time dog behaviour practice for nearly 16 years, I have a combination of experience, qualifications and practical skills with a proven track record. Please take a look at my [testimonials from previous clients here](#) and look at my [Google reviews](#).

What skills are required as a Dog Behaviourist?

- My approach to resolve dog behaviour problems is calm and sympathetic, with an emphasis on positive leadership and reward-based dog training techniques free from harsh or unethical methods.
- Throughout my career I have enjoyed working closely with people, whether in sales in my early career, the police force, and during the last 16 years, running my own dog behaviour business. I am a good listener, an effective communicator and remain patient and considerate regardless of the situation. I appreciate that people experiencing problems with their dogs can often feel stressed and uncomfortable.

My role is to reassure you, give you confidence and provide the tools for you to restore balance to your home.

- I have always loved dogs since being a young boy and I have an affinity with them that helps me understand which techniques to use to get the best results.
- My role as a dog behaviourist in one to one consultations brings my enjoyment of helping people and my love of dogs together perfectly.

Why choose me?

Independent Dog Behaviour Practitioner

- I am proud to be an independent dog behaviour specialist, running my own business; not bound to follow formulaic methods and practices dictated by a franchise or managing company.
- For your peace of mind, I have full public liability and professional indemnity insurance and details can be provided on request.

My Experience as a Dog Behaviourist:

- You can be assured of a calm professional approach, combined with all my practical experience gained working as a dog behaviour specialist for 16 years, resolving cases of all conceivable dog behaviour problems.
- I will handle your dog where and when appropriate to demonstrate the techniques and timing for you to use, but in the main I am here to help you to learn and develop these skills to help you resolve the concerns you have. The importance here is that both you and your dog will be practicing working together; not a case of your dog working for me.

My Dog Behaviour Qualifications:

- I have a Master's degree in dog behaviour from Middlesex University (Professional Practice in Canine Behaviour and Psychology). 2012.
- I undertake ongoing training courses to ensure I remain up-to-date with current dog training practices.
- I am a full member of the CFBA, The UK's leading dog behaviour association.

- As of 2018, I am now “The Pet Behaviourist” for the UK’s most trusted insurer Petplan, carrying out regular Facebook live clinics with dog behaviour questions and answers. I have also had the pleasure of creating a number of dog behaviour and dog training videos with Petplan, which will be released throughout 2018.

Your Dog Behaviour Consultation; The 7 Step Plan:

My work as a dog behaviourist usually involves a one or two visit process, working with you in and outside of your home on a one to one basis.

1. **The enquiry form:** The process typically starts with the completion of my enquiry form, which can be found [here](#). This initial contact enables me to understand the nature of the dog’s current problems, a little about the history, and home set up.
2. **Queries, prices and pet insurance:** On receipt of the completed contact form, I respond back to you with prices and details of how I work. I also check with you whether you have **pet health insurance** as this may cover the cost of the consultation with me. I explain the process of setting up the claim and working with your vet for a referral.
3. **Confirmation of the appointment:** Should you decide to work with me as your dog behaviourist, we confirm an appointment for me to come to your home and work with you to resolve your dog behaviour problems.
4. **Assessing your dog:** In most dog behaviour modification cases, I come to see you in your home twice and each visit can last between 3-4 hours, depending on the depth of the behaviours presented to me. On the first visit I make a full assessment of your dog’s behaviour issues, with a full discussion with you and my observations of the dog. As a result of this assessment I identify the probable causes of the behavioural problems and most importantly consider a range of solutions to resolve your dog’s behaviour problems.
5. **Implement an easy to follow training plan:** The assessment is followed by setting out an easy to follow plan to address your concerns; complete with demonstrations and coaching of the relevant dog behaviour techniques and training. I aim to leave you confident in your ability to put the training plan for your dog into place with my assurance that I am available by telephone and email to fully support you with any ongoing concerns and to otherwise enjoy your progress reports!

6. **Training plan confirmed in writing:** I follow up the home visit with written details of my time spent with you and the agreed plan. This plan is key to help you implement and practice the simple dog behaviour training techniques that need to become routine for you to achieve a positive and lasting outcome.
7. **Review and Refine the training plan:** The second visit is an opportunity to follow up on your progress with your dog, refine any areas of ongoing concern and develop enhanced techniques where appropriate.

I provide ongoing free email and telephone support, which is essential for the best outcome.

**Please note that I do not use heavy-handed methods (no shouting at dogs or owners!) or any harsh training methods and equipment (such as shock collars, prong collars or choke chains) that would harm or distress you or your dog. As an ethical dog behaviourist, I keep the dog's welfare and your confidence in me as a top priority at all times.*

My Location:

Working as a Dog Behaviourist based in Bewdley in the West Midlands, I am ideally located to address dog behaviour issues throughout the UK, and abroad on request. I travel to you to help you in your home or in a location where the dog's behaviour is a problem. My combination of experience, skills and up to date knowledge makes me ideally suited to help you resolve your dog's behavioural problems.

Dog Behaviour Case Studies.

Jack Russell named Bima. Female. 2 Years and 3 months.

Main dog behaviour issues: Aggression to people and dogs.



Introduction

Bima's owner first contacted me when she was becoming increasingly concerned with Bima's behaviour towards some dogs (mostly those bigger than her) and some people in public when they tried to pet her. She doesn't want to be approached by people, but she looks sweet and innocent, so some will still approach her despite being warned to leave her.

After a forced stay at her vets to be X-rayed and examined, she appeared to come home in a state of distress and the next day she bit a lady's fingers as she attempted to interact with her in the local park. It would appear that Bima underwent a traumatic time at her vets and subsequently she became defensive towards strangers.

Behavioural overview

I spent two days with Bima and her owner and we looked at two main areas that have an impact upon her life: The behaviours she exhibits indoors and those that she exhibits outdoors. I explained how the two are interconnected and how it is important to take a holistic approach to the whole dog and not to just jump straight in focusing purely on the areas of concern; although the main areas of concern will be directly addressed.

Dogs and attention seeking

As the vast majority of visits start in the home, I could begin to see that Bima was quite an attention seeker with her caring owner and that her efforts of standing up on her owners knees were rewarded with a pat on her head, kind words and eye contact. I completely avoided interactions with Bima, so as not to create further concerns to be dealt with during the visit and she was content to ignore me also.

Babies and dog behaviour

The lady owner has a 20-month-old baby and would walk daily with Bima as she followed with the baby in a pushchair. From the early stages of my visit, I could sense that Bima was most likely displaying protective/defensive behaviours in public, which were likely to be exacerbated by her nervous/anxious behaviours towards people from previous events in her life.

Dogs and barking in the home

Before we looked at her behaviour in public, I managed to establish that the dog had access to almost anywhere in the home, would shadow her owner and baby most of the day and also had a huge problem with reactive barking in the home to all sorts of stimulus, such as in the rear garden to any noises, to the doorbell, along with her barking at larger dogs in public.

Throughout the two visits, we put in place new control measures to stop Bima from freely being able to charge to points in the home and bark, along with new measures to reset Bima's expectations in terms of what access she had to various places in the home.

Dogs on sofas and beds

For a 2-month period access to the sofa and upstairs was blocked and much more care would be taken in terms of how interactions were carried out as family members come home and interacted with the dog. Constant cycles of attention seeking behaviour and barking result in increased stress levels for all concerned and by beginning to find ways to break these negative cycles can greatly help the dog to return to a more balanced state in and out of the home.

Teaching a dog to be calm

It was also revealed that members of the family were playing ball with Bima late into the evening in the belief that it would tire her and keep her happy. All things in moderation of

course and an excessive amount of ball play in the home can create a dog that is wound up, always ready to go and more reactive. This was certainly the case here and so we agreed to focus more on relaxing 'brain games' for her, which still involve the owner and dog together, but a much more constructive way of keeping the dog occupied for sensible periods of time. Teaching a dog to relax and be still for periods in the home is an underrated skill.

Dog behaviour in the park

During our walk to a local dog park together, I could see that levels of excitement were high for Bima as she exited the home, pulled to the park and continued to pull into the park, whereby she appeared to be on high alert as she constantly scanned ahead. Despite her previous behaviours, Bima was mostly allowed to exercise freely off lead in the park and the owner explained how she would try her best to recall her and put her lead on if her behaviour became untoward. I could immediately see that the owner was not in full control of her dog when things became stressful and so we discussed the importance of basic control and a recall that is acceptable on a pet dog level, under most if not all circumstances.

Controlling the dog in the park

In light of the need for additional control, we introduced a long training line so that Bima could still express natural movement and behaviours, but that the owner was able to go through a three stage process whereby the recall training can start a fresh with a view to eventually removing the line and still have a reliable recall in place.

Muzzling the dog for safety

I also encouraged the introduction and use of a muzzle to help ensure that there could be no further nips to people in public. Even a small dog can be reported for the offence of being 'Dangerously out of control in a public place' with resultant heartache that can follow, so I was keen to avoid any further problems before they arose. Also, overcoming nervous behaviour towards dogs and people will inevitably mean that gradual and positive steps need to be made to overcome such behaviours and this can carry additional risk in the early stages. Always think safety first as you protect three main elements by using a muzzle: Protect the dog from its own actions. Protect the safety of others. Protect your own liability.

Building the dog's confidence

Once the control measures were introduced, we could then progress to look at ways to expose Bima to ever increasing situations in public that built her confidence. This is not the appropriate platform for me to go into full details on how we set about that, but by using a combination of common sense and consistency of effort, I can see how Bima will become much more settled into the future.

Calm dog behaviour on day one

On our first walk together Bima did not bark once (this was a complete change for her and seeing such dramatic change on the first day together is not unheard of). I demonstrated how as soon as we spotted any signs of a potential for escalation in her state we stopped her straight away using the line, brought her back to our feet and rewarded her calm behaviour with high value food as we continued to distract her. This particular approach worked wonders for Bima, but please bear in mind that all dogs are different and what works for one, may not work for another.

Dog behaviour problems solved

Stopping little Bima from running about the park and controlling various situations as she saw fit, was no longer an option and this alone will enable her owner to make big strides towards creating a calmer dog that is much easier to manage into the future. The first step to resolving any dog behaviour problem is being able to stop the dog from practicing such unwanted behaviours and to then go on and replace it with more positive responses, which are guided by the owner.

So in summary, by carrying out a complete assessment of the behaviours exhibited both in and out of the home, it is possible to make a comprehensive change for the better. Placing an emphasis on calming measures and slowing the dog down to a speed that enables the owner to exhibit greater levels of control is a fundamental aspect of my work that needs to be addressed on the vast majority of visits.

Cavalier King Charles Spaniel. Teddy. Male. 1 Year.

Main dog behaviour issue: Separation Anxiety



Introduction

Teddy's owner first contacted me feeling tired and emotional after weeks, if not months, of broken nights due to her beautiful King Charles spaniel insisting that he slept with the couple in the bedroom and ideally on the bed between them. Teddy's owners are young and without children and so the tendency to direct their love and attention towards him was easy to understand.

It has to be said that Teddy is one of the sweetest little dogs that I have met, and I can easily understand the temptation to pick him up and hold him all day long! In part, this was the problem. Small, companion sized dogs like Teddy can be picked up, can rest happily on the lap and get into places with you that larger dogs simply cannot. This can in some cases result in a dog that has not learnt to spend time alone and may create a case of over-bonding.

Naturally, we want a bond with our dog, but equally that bond needs to be balanced so that both can be apart for sensible periods of time in various circumstances.

Although it is not uncommon, Teddy was able to cope on his own at home in the daytime for a few hours, but when it came to night time sleeping, he insisted on being with his owners. The heading of canine separation anxiety (as is typical of many of other dog behaviours) has many variations upon a theme; so it's always important to drill down to the key areas that the particular dog finds difficult to cope with and to work on those specific concerns.

Behavioural overview

From the very outset, the main behaviour problem that we were all desperate to resolve was the ability for the couple to have a good night's sleep without Teddy scratching at the door to come in. Even when he *was* in the room with them, he would regularly snuffle, snore loudly and move about causing almost as much disruption as if he were out of the room.

The prospect of change

Given the tired faces on Teddy's lovely owners, I knew that something had to be done that was relatively quick and meaningful for them to see that my approach would be effective and for them to experience a break from their on-going sleep deprived state.

In my experience there are two ways you can approach this sort of case:

1. Very gradual changes for the dog and owner, making the emotional withdrawal easier to handle.
2. Immediate and potentially wide reaching changes in the home that must be stuck to for best effect.

Which approach we take depends on the nature of the dog, the owner's lifestyle and the severity of the problem. In this case I felt that option 2 was best for all concerned. Dogs have a far greater capacity to cope with change than we give them credit for...it can be the humans that struggle more than the dogs in some cases. Dramatic change does not mean that we lose sight of the welfare of the dog. Indeed, the changes ahead were for the welfare of the dog and the owners, but this does not mean that the dog will initially agree with the changes, or that the owners will easily adapt to the new ways in which I am suggesting they carry out their interactions with the dog.

House rules for the dog and owners

In this particular case a number of sensible rules were implemented from the first night onwards. These rules were rigidly kept to and I was in regular touch with the owners (almost daily for the first week).

This is not the full list, but I shall outline the main rules below:

To place a baby gate at the foot of the stairs and to set Teddy up so that he has a comfortable sleeping option downstairs.

To not return to Teddy at night under any circumstances. Thankfully, his night-time disturbances were more of a scratching and whining nature and not a full on bark!

To block access to the sofa and lap, the upstairs rooms altogether and no picking up for a full one month period. We then reviewed the need for these measures on my return visit.

To increase his exercise each day and to use a long training line, so that he was more tired when in the home.

The removal of hyperactive toys in the home, so that he begins to learn to relax more in this area. He would play ball all day long in the home if given the chance, which is often not conducive to a settled night-time experience.

To carry out calm homecomings and departures and to deter jumping up, teaching Teddy calmer ways to engage with his owners.

To work on basic obedience commands in the home, so that he is more stimulated on a mental level and less so on the physical, whilst learning to take direction at the same time.

To only engage with Teddy on the owner's terms, to simply ignore him and let him go and settle elsewhere as a result. This alone can have a profound effect upon a dog, leading to much calmer behaviour across the board.

Please note that wide-ranging changes like this are not designed to be kept in place forever, though after a period of 2-3 months some owners often like the ability to be able to sit on the sofa without a dog there before they get a chance to sit down and so some access measures may remain in place. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of a plan that is designed to suit you and your dog based on the dog's individual needs; not something randomly found on the Internet.

Separation anxiety cure

A rather bold heading, but through the remaining afternoon and evening after my visit, Teddy's owners maintained the above measures that we went through in detail together and experienced their first decent night's sleep for months. He was unsettled to start with, but soon fell asleep and remained that way until it became light the following morning.

Over the coming week Teddy's waking times became later each morning and the prospect of a 'normal life' with Teddy became more and more of a reality. As can be expected in the first few weeks, there were a few minor set backs, but the overall trend was immensely positive as his owners stuck to the plan. On my last visit, Teddy was sleeping happily downstairs and his owners upstairs. Both are getting a good night's sleep, which always makes the world a better place.

Supporting owners through dog behaviour changes

Providing on-going support through the initial turbulence of these changes is absolutely essential, so that we have what could be called 'owner compliance'. I have long understood the importance of this contact to help ensure a positive outcome for the dog and the owners and lastly for me to feel happy and satisfied that the case is being resolved at an acceptable speed and that the changes are maintained into the future.

If you would like help for similar dog behaviours, then please [contact me here](#).

Nick Jones MA. MCFBA.

Dog Behaviourist

Dog Expert Witness