What is Personality?

Personality, or temperament, describes the characteristics that account for consistent patterns of behavior.
What is Behavior?

Behavior is a reflection of an animal’s personality. However, it is also heavily influenced by the animal’s current emotional state, stress level and the environment.
Why Assess Behavior?

♦ Identify dogs to be fast-tracked to adoption
♦ Identify dogs that are unsuitable for placement
♦ Identify dogs that are suffering an unacceptable quality of life in the shelter
♦ Learn enough about a dog to make a sensible match
♦ Make speedy, educated disposition decisions
The goal is to strike the right balance between taking the time to gather sufficient information while not delaying disposition decisions unnecessarily.
Scratch on the door! Scratch on the door!

Pee on the rug! Pee on the rug!

gaspiritlz.com
Behavior/Decision Spectrum

Super social, no reported issues

Severe/egregious behaviors
1. Information from the relinquishing owner.
2. Information from the person who found the animal.
3. Information from medical staff.

Very efficient and timely.
Limitations

♦ The animal may have pre-existing bad associations with medical people/procedures.
♦ The animal may be in pain.
♦ The animal may react atypically to excessive restraint.
♦ Likely to occur when animal first arrives and is highly stressed.
4. Information from shelter staff & volunteers.
5. Information from socialization sessions.
Adopter Meet & Greets
6. Information from walks
7. Information from playgroups
8. Information from foster home stay
Programs like Adoption Ambassadors
9. Information from standardized behavior evaluations
Three Commonly Used Behavior Evaluations

♦ Assess-a-Pet
♦ ASPCA SAFER
♦ Center for Shelter Dogs Match-Up II
♦ Sociability
♦ New environment
♦ Handling
♦ Playfulness
-presenting the contents of the slide:

- Resource guarding
- Toddler doll
- Dog sociability
♦ Fear tests
♦ Training & problem solving
Freida
Zeke
Canine Research

No better than flipping a coin: Reconsidering canine behavior evaluations in animal shelters

Gary J. Patronek a,*, Janis Bradley b

a Center for Animals and Public Policy, Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, Tufts University, North Grafton, Massachusetts
b The National Centre Research Council, Amelia, New York
False **Positives** (mean):
Owned dogs 35.1%
Shelter dogs 68.3%

False **Negatives** (mean):
Owned dogs 25.6%
Shelter dogs 8.5%
Of dogs that exhibited food guarding in the evaluation, only 50% did so in the adoptive home.

Of dogs that did not exhibit food guarding in the evaluation, 25% did show it in the adoptive home.

Very few adopters reported being concerned about food guarding.
Impact of Omitting Food Guarding Subtest from Behavior Evaluations

- Nine shelters located in East and Midwest states
- Baseline phase: Sept-Oct; Pilot phase: Nov-Dec
- 14,180 dogs taken in during the four months
- 778 dogs identified as food guarders (5.5%)
- Examined returns and risk to staff and adopters
Number of bites or injuries to staff

Note: Percent is not shown as it is less than 1% in each group

COPYRIGHT © 2006. ASPCA®. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
Number of bites or injuries to adopters

Note: Percent is not shown as it is less than 1% in each group
Returns (within one month) for any reason

Returns for all dogs:
- Baseline: 379
- Pilot: 326

Returns for FG dogs:
- Baseline: 21
- Pilot: 8
♦ Sociability toward children
Van der Borg (1991)

Kroll & Houpt (2004)

Reid (unpublished study at the University of Guelph)

Some predictive value but...

Not a perfect tool, with both false positives and false negatives

May be more reflective of reaction to unusual stimuli than to an actual child; probably shouldn’t be used as sole piece of info
Sociability toward dogs
### Behavior Degree of Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Degree of Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness</td>
<td>Substantial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearfulness</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Sanctuary Dogs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior</th>
<th>Degree of Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aggression</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendliness</td>
<td>Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fearfulness</td>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COPYRIGHT © 2006. ASPCA®. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.
Fake Dog: Poor tool for identifying aggressive dogs
Use Multiple Sources
behavior
team
observations

intake/
daily care staff
observations

info from
person who
found dog

info from
medical team

volunteer
observations

playgroup
observations

foster
reports

behavior
evaluation(s)

owner
reports

adopter
intros
behavior team observations
intake/daily care staff observations
info from person who found dog
info from medical team
volunteer observations
playgroup observations
foster reports
behavior evaluation(s)
owner reports
adopter intros
Research suggests that owners may be more truthful when completing a questionnaire like C-BARQ (short version).
Conversation-Based Collection
### Whiteboards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOG</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>REACTION</th>
<th>WALKED BY</th>
<th>STIMULI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
I opened the kennel to take the dog out for a walk and s/he...

Comments:

Lacy was sort of mean today. She was defending her kennel and being territorial. She didn’t like the treats I had. She mostly got over it though.
I opened the kennel to take the dog out for a walk and s/he (check box AND circle observations)…

- Appeared fearful (ears back, body hunched, tail low, eyes wide, muscles tense, trembling, urinated/defecated)
- Showed friendly body language (tail wagging, ears up, relaxed or back, mouth open, bouncy movement, play bowed, wiggly body, loose muscles)
- Showed aggressive behavior (alarm barked, growled, snapped, moved forward, moved away, stayed in place, bit, lifted lip)
Technology
Database: Playgroup Info

Playgroup Session Data Entry

1. Enter date: 4/6/2018

2. Enter location:

3. Enter Animal IDs:

A# or FIR ID#

4. View dog's play info:

Play info & history

Play info & history

Play info & history

Play info & history

Play info & history

5. Enter notes for this session:

For Remedial dogs, please indicate all dogs in the yard with him/her, and sex. Example: "Snoopy (M)"

6. Rate how well this session went (if it turned bad, rate it at its worst):

7. Click one of these options:

SAVE THIS PLAY SESSION

Clear this play session without saving

View / Enter Training & B-Mod and Concerns

Playgroup Info

Home Screen

VIEW ALL THE PLAY SESSIONS PERFORMED ON A CERTAIN DATE HERE (select date): 4/6/18
Use Objective Language
Use Objective Language

Guilty? Sorry? Sad? NO!!
How to Get There

♦ Train staff regularly

• Canine body language

• Aim for more observations (body language & behavior) and fewer interpretations (what those mean)

• Practice
How to Get There

♦ Speak the same language
  • Use a glossary of terms
Streamline Your System

1. Collect & Compile
2. Review
3. Act/Decide
Behavior assessment should address desires of adopters.
## Behavior Evaluation Summary Report

### Behavior Evaluation: Canine

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Cinderella</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Breed</td>
<td>Pit Bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Adult (1-8 yrs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Color</td>
<td>Buckskin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>3/1/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID #</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Potential behavior issue(s):
- [ ] Aggression to People
- [ ] Fear
- [ ] Other:
- [ ] Aggression to Dogs
- [ ] High Arousal

### Placement recommendations
- [ ] No kids under 10
- [ ] Experienced owner
- [ ] quieter household
- [ ] No other dogs
- [ ] With another dog

### Evaluation Summary

Overall this dog was receptive to human interaction but she didn't solicit it. She was relaxed during the evaluation and neutral with the helper dog.

In kitchen: Social, at front of kennel. Friendly.
On leash: Mildly fearful. Walked well with occasional coaxing.
Loose in the room: Slightly tense but not fearful. Explored environment.
When called: Fast tail wag when first called was the only acknowledgment of tester. She didn't approach.
Massage: Relaxed, low fast tail wag. Accepted contact readily.
Tug toy: Remained relaxed. Pulled paw away.
Chew: Not interested in pig's ear. Dropped it and approached people, sniffed them.

After scolding: Approached and interacted readily.
Fake dog: Stood over fake dog, some pawing. Delivered a couple of bites to fake dog's leg, but unclear if this was play or aggression.
Same sex dog: Approached & followed helper dog, sniffed and licked head and genitalia. Neutral body language.
Personality Profile

Bam

Enjoys cuddling with her daddy, sitting in the sun and dancing like a ballerina for treats.

Hates to get wet.

Thinks all white rugs are glorified potty pads.
Our goal is to put safe, happy dogs into our communities