

UNDERSTANDING ANIMALS

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Each quarter our team of experts will be bringing you the latest tips and advice features to help you understand your animals.

If at any point you have any questions, simply get back to us and we will provide you with additional info. Please refer to the MEET THE TEAM pages at the page for contact details.



GREAT COMPANIONS



THE HUNT IS ON!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

HUNTING, EATING AND YOUR CAT	2
ABOUT THE NATURAL ANIMAL CENTRE	3
STRESS BUSTING FOR YOUR HORSE	4
TWO'S COMPANY...WHY?	5
A FOAL'S DIARY	6
ANIMAL CONSCIOUSNESS	7
ABOUT BACH FLOWER REMEDIES	7
MEET THE TEAM	8



STRESS BUSTING FOR YOUR HORSE

Hunting, Eating and Your Cat

Over the years scientists have been investigating the ethology of the feline in an attempt to explain how the domestic cat has developed into one of the most well adapted pets of today. However with all of the restrictions in the domestic household, these instincts are causing conflict and stress with our cats, Katie B Wade discusses in detail.

HUNTING IS AN ESSENTIAL PART OF FELINE BEHAVIOUR - THEIR WILD INSTINCTS BROUGHT STRAIGHT TO YOUR HOME



“THE MORE COMPROMISES MADE, THE HIGHER THE RISK”

With his amazing acoustic abilities, along with his instinctual responses to higher-pitched sounds, the cat locates its prey instantly. Once his attention has been focussed, he slinks rapidly towards the suspect, dropping to the ground as he draws closer.

When near enough, a short sprint, a spring, a strike with the forepaws and he has his victim. Such intricate sequences contribute to the predatory success of the domestic cat ⁽¹⁾

Being a solitary hunter, it is vital that this relatively small predator remains unharmed, if hurt he will be unable to hunt and will not survive for

long ⁽²⁾. Bringing dead or half dead prey back to the core territory is a normal part of the cats hunting behaviour, after all home is a safer place to be.

“MANUFACTURERS TEND TO OVERLOOK THE BEHAVIOURAL IMPORTANCE OF EATING”

Eating for Satisfaction

Although nutritionally sound, feed manufacturers tend to overlook the behavioural importance of eating. Just as we do, our cats need to act upon their long evolved instincts, they need to hunt, and they most certainly need to chew upon fleshy meat, little and often throughout the day. Sinking their teeth and tearing at the flesh of their prey, many internal mechanisms set to work. This process triggers the release of certain hormones, which in turn causes satisfaction ⁽²⁾

Even “100% natural” feeds available in supermarkets do not consider texture and satisfaction, with biscuits and cutlets that melt-in-the-mouth, with added salts, sugars or fats to encourage ‘addictive’ behavioural patterns.

SO WHY FEED DRIED BISCUITS? ...

Other than frustration, aggression, hyperactivity and over-grooming, common problems such as fabric eating, chewing and sucking are often associated with such restrictions ⁽⁴⁾. To avoid problems, both nutrition and behaviour need to be considered. Many experts are now bringing natural meaty foods to compliment

nutritionally sound diets.

What We Can Do

As well as allowing greater access to outside, introducing a more natural diet, providing 24 hour access to meats as part of a balanced diet, drastically reduces stress and associated problems.

Another measure would be through the use of common cat toys, those that simulate hunting behaviour. Rather than ‘stirring’ a cats’ internal predatory mechanisms and causing frustration with no natural end result, owners can provide these meaty chunks after such games to positively simulate both the hunt and the eating.



An indoor cat will inevitably be restricted in more ways than the cat who is free to roam the neighbourhood, therefore the indoor cat does face a greater risk of developing one or more of the afore mentioned disorders. The more compromises made, the higher the risk. I would always suggest lessening compromise, at least by building a run outside to provide some form of natural behaviour.

The inclusion of plentiful horizontal scratching mats and vertical posts ...

... and social company (introduced in an appropriate way) are all other strategies that have proven success, replicating natural environments as much as possible.

The more we understand, the more we can change to help our cats. With a better understanding of your pet,

you are equipped to implement simple changes in management routine, preventing the development of stress-related disorders for life. For any further reading just ask.

Katie B Wade 2009

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3. Carlson, N. (1998) *Physiology of Behaviour: Sixth Edition*, Allyn and Bacon, United States. pp. 554-559 and pp. 410-449

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The Natural Animal Centre

You may have heard of the Natural Animal Centre (NAC) through features in popular animal magazines such as "Horse & Rider" and "Your Dog". Jonathan Mitchell gives you some background behind NAC's work.

With a mission statement like "positively influencing the wellbeing of animals worldwide" the Natural Animal Centre (NAC) is always a busy place. Started 11 years ago by animal behaviourist Heather Simpson and trainer Ross Simpson the NAC has grown from a relatively small centre in Sussex to 2 centres in Wales, and 3 international reserves.

There is a wealth of animal behaviour science available but for the average animal owner getting their hands on it is difficult. The NAC works hard to bridge that gap by making the most up to date animal behaviour science available to everyone through their courses, books and articles.

Their courses started with the launch of the Equine Behaviour Qualification 8 years ago, from this course grew a 2 day introduction to

horse behaviour, to a four year part time course. The Canine and Feline Behaviour Qualifications followed suit shortly, giving students a real career path in the animal behaviour field.

For those who can't visit one of the NAC centres Heather and Ross have written a number of books and Distance Learning Programs know as the NAC Library.

2007 saw the launch of one of the biggest projects the NAC had ever undertaken a plight to save the wild equids on the planet. It is common for us to hear about endangered tigers or polar bears or other large predators but it is rare for us to think about prey animals in the same way. The domestic horse or donkey is often a well loved pet but few owners know that the 7 wild species related to them are all endangered or critically endangered.

In an attempt to raise funds to secure habitats and to undertake research on these species which we know so little about Heather and Ross launched the charity the Wild Equid Protection Trust (WEPT).



Life at the NAC is a living embodiment of the principles we teach on the course and a visit to the centre will reveal over 100 animals including dogs which mix with the giant rabbits and horses which live peacefully with pigs.

For more information on the NAC please visit www.NaturalAnimalCentre.com or call their office on 01267 236434, for additional information on WEPT please visit www.W-E-P-T.org

Jonathan Mitchell 2009

IT IS EASY TO COMPARE OUR DOMESTIC ANIMALS BEHAVIOUR WITH THAT OF THEIR WILD COUSINS



PHOTO CREDITS –
TOP: JONATHAN MITCHELL
BOTTOM: HARRY B WADE PHOTOGRAPHY

Stress Busting For Your Horse

After years of study and testing with her own horses, Colette Checa brings you the most effective tips to prevent most common stress-related difficulties.

THIS WAY FOR CHILLED OUT HORSES!



“THE EQUINE IS A PREY ANIMAL WHOSE PREFERRED WAY OF DEALING WITH A DANGER IS TO FLEE”

As behaviourists we try to avoid anthropomorphism or projection of human characteristics onto animals because by doing so we can misjudge what is really going on.

With a topic as complex as stress, what we know about humans is relevant to what happens to an equine with regard to the physiological effects that stress has. This is because the human and equine internal physiology is very much the same, using the same mechanisms, hormones and neurotransmitters. Just as humans can be affected by stress related illnesses, so can our equines.

Put basically there are two types of stress. Acute stress is good for animals in that it can save them from potentially dangerous situations. If they find their offspring in a dangerous situation, the sympathetic nervous system powers up and produces the extra strength and stamina needed for the situation by releasing the stress hormones; adrenalin and noradrenalin specifically (1).

These chemicals prepare an animal’s body for fight or flight and put on hold any systems that are not absolutely necessary. So amongst other things, digestion stops and the immune system is suppressed. Once the offspring is out of danger body systems return to normal. However, if an animal is living under constant stress, day after day, it becomes less easy for their bodies to come back into balance. This is known as chronic stress and just as it is bad for humans, it is bad for equines too and opens the door to stress related illnesses.

Although our physiological responses to stress are very similar, what causes equine stress is very different to what causes human stress. For example, because we are predators, we can find it comforting and feel safe in an enclosed space with a locked door. But an equine is a prey animal whose preferred way of dealing with danger is to flee, so being in an enclosed space they cannot escape from puts them under great pressure.

“THE EQUINE IS DESIGNED TO EAT ON THE MOVE FOR A MINIMUM OF 16 HOURS A DAY”

As another example, we may be happy to sit down to three meals a day but the equine is designed to eat on the move for a minimum of 16 hours a day. Giving him/her fixed meals in a bowl 3 times a day again puts them under pressure and is stressful for them.

However, one point we do coincide on is that we are both social animals and according to Robert Sapolsky, Professor of Neurology and Neurological Sciences at Stanford University, one of the



greatest causes of stress in a social animal is social isolation (2). It therefore becomes clear that a horse that spends a large amount of time on its own in a stable is likely to become chronically stressed and prone to stress related illnesses.

To avoid equine stress we need to understand the natural needs and behaviour of equines and then design their management and environment accordingly. This means taking into account their social nature, need for movement and their need to graze for up to 18 hours a day. They are cooperative animals who will avoid conflict if at all possible and will pairbond for life if they can.

The more turnout you are able to give in stable company the better, with plenty of hay if grazing is short, more than one waterer to avoid conflict and as much space as you are able to provide. The ideal situation is 24 hour turnout with an open barn for shelter from the elements and insects. ...

PHOTO CREDITS –
LEFT: COLETTE CHECA
RIGHT: HARRY B WADE PHOTOGRAPHY

... Unpredictability is also shown to be very stressful so there should be as little change in the herd as possible. If there are new horses that need to be introduced to the group this can be done in an appropriate and safe way so that they fit in with the least disruption.

"SCATTER FEEDING ON THE FLOOR"

If a horse does have to be stabled for most of the time, there is much that can be done to enrich the stable environment. Scatter feeding

on the floor is much more natural for example. If at all possible have pair bonds stabled next to each other and keep neighbours the same (unless of course they really don't get on).

Being aware that for a horse to be in the company of others is a hardwired need, means that we can try to make life easier for them by riding in company either in the school or out on a hack.

Something else that can really help to reduce stress for your equine is to learn how to use positive reinforcement in your riding and training. This can also

make life less stressful for the rider/trainer too! When we learn what equines really need, rather than what we think they need and put that into practice, we can take our relationship with them to a whole new level.

Colette Checa 2009

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"NEW HORSES CAN BE INTRODUCED TO A GROUP GRADUALLY IN AN APPROPRIATE AND SAFE WAY"

We All Need Companions

Two is always better than one ... Why? Read more from our expert Susan Gammage

Many animals including us like to have the company of our own kind, we like to socialise, spend time with our family members.

Cats like the company of other cats, in free ranging cats, daughters will live close to their mothers, and females sometimes share in nursing each others kittens (1)



Dogs like the company of other dogs, to play with, to sleep next to. Dogs learn their subtleties of

communicating with each other through daily contact with companion dogs (2)

Horses like to live in herds, horses have many group behaviours, eating, drinking, and sleeping. Most importantly, a herd provides a horse with security (3) which for a prey species is essential for survival

Each species has their own specific way to communicate, and although we can learn to understand some of their communication behaviours, we cannot replace one of their own species.

WE CANNOT WAG A TAIL LIKE A DOG

WE CANNOT PURR LIKE A CAT

WE CANNOT WHINNY LIKE A HORSE

Many of our domestic animals learn to live on their own, but how much more fulfilling would their lives be with another member of their



own species to live with, to be able to play with, to be able to communicate with.

If you do have a pet that has only limited contact with other dogs or cats and decide to take another pet in to your home, it is advisable to follow an introduction programme to ensure a smooth transition for all concerned.

Susan Gammage 2009

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HORSES LIKE TO LIVE IN HERDS AS THIS PROVIDES A SECURE AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT TO MAINTAIN OPTIMAL HEALTH

Zach's Diary

A behavioural expert breeding her own horse hey! Take a peek and gain an insight into foal development and training young horses, from birth onwards. In each feature witness Katie B Wade's exciting journey.

THE MARE AND FOAL SOMETIMES STRUGGLE TO ADAPT IN THE DOMESTIC SETTING. THE MORE RESTRICTIONS, THE MORE STRESS



“WEANING AT TOO YOUNG AN AGE AFFECTS LEARNING AND SOCIAL SKILLS AS WELL AS PHYSICAL HEALTH”

After backing, bringing on and re-habilitating horses and ponies of all shapes and sizes for many years, I thought I had seen it all. But for every horse there is a new adventure, just as much for an experienced behavioural expert! To start off this series I thought I would talk about the birth of Zach, the reaction of a domestic mare and how it would all work for wild horses.

After running to look out the window each morning, tentatively awaiting the arrival of our foal, excitement elevated at 8.30 am, 6th June 2007 when he arrived.

With all that we had read on foal rejection we were delighted to see Annie, this first mum, dote on her new son. In the wild every horse would have spent time in the nursery herd, regularly observing new births.

Mares would have learnt through observation,

“MARES WOULD HAVE

LEARNT THROUGH

OBSERVATION, ‘COPYING’

THE BEHAVIOUR OF THEIR

PEERS”

‘copying’ the behaviour of their peers with their own births, it is a normal part of the equine life-cycle and all understood.

In the domestic setting however, we tend to wean our foals at too early an age, suddenly taking them away from their safety base from which they learn so much.

This affects the learning of our domestic horses, they do not manage to learn the social skills that they would if they were to stay with mum for the first 2 years of life and do not witness births (1).



With Annie's poor start in life it was evident that although she was a wonderful mother, the consistent ‘doting’, sniffing and licking at her new son showed that Annie was

slightly anxious herself and did not really understand what she should be doing.

When her wild ancestor would know to stand still and show her underbelly to the newborn foal to allow first suckling (2), this new mum continued to lick, sniff and watch to remain vigilant. Luckily her instincts did ‘kick in’ and she relaxed to stand still and allow Zach to stand in good time and begin suckling.

“WE ALWAYS WANT TO

‘STEP IN’ AND HELP, BUT

SOMETIMES IT IS BEST

LEFT TO MUM”

As much as we feel like we should ‘step in’ and help in such situations, it is important that both mare and foal are given the space and time to learn about each other. If we were to run in and ‘assist’ Zach, we would have affected his structured timeline of quick development, from stretching to standing, suckling, exploring and running (3). If we were to ‘assist’ Annie, we were likely to have heightened her feelings of anxiety and therefore exacerbated the problem.

Katie B Wade 2009

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Animal Consciousness

Have you ever looked at your dog, cat or horse and been amazed at their intelligence? We hear about elephants who can paint and dolphins who can think and credit them with some level of consciousness, so should we be giving the animals, we choose to share our lives with, that same label? Jo Foster and Jonathan Mitchell explore the subject of Animal Consciousness.



IT IS EASY TO COMPARE OUR DOMESTIC ANIMALS BEHAVIOUR WITH THAT OF THEIR WILD COUSINS

The study of animal consciousness is possibly the last true mystery. Scientists like giving things neat definitions to explain them, but to date no-one has been able to define consciousness. However if we take a moment and think about the look you get from your cat, or the cute puppy-eyes you get from your dog – you know the one which makes you get up and feed them or stroke them sometimes for hours - and ask yourself ... "Have they just trained me to do what they want?"

Is it possible that they are conscious? Experts now recognise there are a number

of ways we can prove consciousness in animals. If we look at where our pets have evolved from; the dog - from a pack living hunter of prey 4 – 5 times it's size, the cat - from a tree dwelling social feline, the horse - from a plains dwelling flight animal, then we see how their consciousness has evolved too. So do you think their consciousness would be different from ours? If so would this help explain why our pets seem to have so many behaviour problems living in a human world?

So what do we do as pet owners? Let's just for a minute, give them the benefit of the doubt and say they are as conscious as you or I. Would it change how we treated them? How we manage them? How we train them? At the very least it should give us a more compassionate approach to our animals.

Jo Foster and Jonathan Mitchell 2009



THE STUDY OF WILD ANIMALS MAY REVEAL SOME OF THE ANSWERS WHEN IT COMES TO ANIMAL CONSCIOUSNESS.

PHOTO CREDITS –
LEFT: JONATHAN MITCHELL
MIDDLE: JONATHAN MITCHELL
RIGHT: HARRY B WADE PHOTOGRAPHY

Bach Flower Remedies for Animals

Lindsay Murray explains how Bach Flower Remedies can help you and your pet.



being the most sensitive part of the body shows the onset and the course of disease much more definitely than the body, so that the outlook of the mind is chosen as the guide as to which remedy or remedies are necessary (1)

The Natural Animal Centre, recognising that treating the

Pick up any lifestyle magazine and you will undoubtedly find numerous articles relating to the stress of modern day living. Alongside advice on correct nutrition, relaxation, sleep and exercise, information is given on complementary medicine and therapies to help alleviate stress and help with states of mind, mental and emotional.

Medical science now shows without doubt that chronic negative thinking in whatever form contributes in a major way to many of the illnesses seen in modern society.

The same is true for our animals. Fear, anxiety, loneliness, aggressive behaviours, to name but a few, are all negative states of mind, showing like humans that they are not coping in a balanced and healthy way.

The Bach Flower System

Between the years 1930 and 1936 Dr. Edward Bach M.B., B.S., M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., D.P.H. found, perfected and put into use, a system of medicine as simple as it has proved effective. It is based on the treatment of the mood and temperament of the patient and not on physical illness. It is suggested that the mind

physical symptoms of an animal is not always enough, use Bach flower remedies as part of their 'mind, body, health treatments', they also offer a scientifically and practically based accredited qualification for those seeking to help animals with the Bach Flower Remedies.

As NAC Graduates recognising and understanding the behaviour of animals and the physiology of stress is really important. The Bach System of 38 remedies all relating to different states of mind works brilliantly alongside various behaviour modification programmes to help the animal retain a sense of wellbeing in the world we provide for them.

Bach flower remedies are a complementary medicine; they can be used alongside allopathic treatment but are not to be used as a substitute. Qualified Bach Flower Animal Practitioners will only work under veterinary referral.

Lindsay Murray 2009

References

1. Notes taken from F. J. Wheeler, MRCS, LRCP - the Bach Remedies Repertory

Meet The Team

If you have any questions, queries or just want a chat, we are all here to help.



Katie is a fully qualified and experienced animal behaviourist, working alongside veterinary clinics, rescue centres, societies, breeders and owners to assist with various aspects of animal behaviour and training.

With professional experience handling, training, breeding and rehabilitating the domestic pet, Katie went on to study a degree in Psychology and then on to specialise in Equine and Feline behaviour with The Natural Animal Centre.

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Colette is a qualified equine behaviourist (NAC EBQ) and has worked with horses for most of her life starting as a groom and instructor. She obtained her BHS Horsemasters at the age of 17, has a certificate in Advanced Horse Knowledge and owned and ran her own equestrian centre in Spain. Her desire to understand equines better and find real, holistic solutions to problems led her to the Natural Animal Centre where she finally found some of the answers she was looking for. In 2008 she started Equinissimo with the aim of helping others with scientific, compassionate and holistic solutions for equine behaviour problems.

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Susan Gammage has qualified with the Natural Animal Centre in Equine, Canine and Feline behaviour. Susan has owned and worked with many different species of animals for over 25 years.

Having researched many different ideas of resolving behaviour problems in pets, then found the Natural Animal Centre. Their science based teaching accompanied by practical solutions has proven to be the one that really worked, plus has a true ethical understanding of how to help animals with behavioural problems.

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Meet The Team

If you have any questions, queries or just want a chat, we are all here to help.

Jo Foster and Jonathan Mitchell both work under the banner of Jo Foster Animal Behaviourists, a Suffolk based animal behaviour referral service. Jo Foster is a graduate of the Natural Animal Centres Equine Behaviour Qualification (Stage 2) and the Canine Behaviour Qualification (Stage 1) and is currently continuing her studies looking at consciousness in horses. Jonathan currently works at the Natural Animal Centre (www.NaturalAnimalCentre.com) and is a graduate of the Equine Behaviour Qualification (Stage 3) Canine Behaviour Qualification (Stage 2) and Feline Behaviour Qualification (Stage 1) He works alongside Jo as the Jo Foster Feline Behaviourist.



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Lindsay Murray has worked with rescued horses for the past 25 years, she is co founder of The Graze Trust for Horses, the first Natural Animal Centre (NAC) approved yard in the UK, their ethos being 'to provide permanency in a horses life and to implement the highest standards of welfare based on their behavioural needs'. Gifted through her family as a healer, she has worked in the UK for 20 years with animals, humans, but notably horses. She specialises in fear, anxiety and trauma, recognising that the 'undercurrent' of so many problems; behavioural or physical lies in the animals' state of mind and ability cope due to past/present circumstances.



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Katherine Ewen founded Horses Naturally in 2005 after graduating from the National Animal Centre with the Equine Behaviour Qualification Stage 3. It was during 12 year's experience as a veterinary nurse, seeing problems in handling various species, Katherine realised guidance for owners was needed to improve the physical and mental balance of their animals.

Katherine also now has the Canine Behaviour Qualification Stage 1. Some of Katherine's time is spent as a Canine Hydrotherapist and many of the dogs that she swims benefit from behaviour consultations.



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LOOK OUT FOR OUR UK EVENTS

SIMPLY CONTACT A MEMBER OF THE TEAM TO FIND OUT WHATS ON IN YOUR AREA

If you would like to unsubscribe to this free quarterly newsletter from The NAC Graduates simply email the sender with the word "UNSUBSCRIBE"

If you have any questions, queries, comments or would just like some advice, simply contact a member of the team (pages 8-9) we are always happy to help.

NEXT ISSUE

A range of exciting topics to look forward to!

ZACH'S DIARY ... THE NEXT CHAPTER

THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE MIND

SEPARATION ANXIETY PROBLEMS

... AND SO MUCH MORE!

SIMPLE PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR ALL YOUR BEHAVIOURAL NEEDS

(CREDITS - HARRY B WADE)

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