



KAR Friends ~ March 2018

Dear Reader;

Here we are—it's spring (or says the calendar—and the birds)! Time for new beginnings in the yard and garden, time for spring cleaning, and time to come to grips with things that we may have let slide over the long, cold winter months. (I don't know about you, but I've got a list ...) In the spirit of new beginnings, **this month's issue of *KAR Friends* focuses on pet behavior**, especially when said behavior is not what we want to see in our canine and feline companions. Karren Jensen looks at serious behavior problems and offers some strategies for dealing with them. The Doggie Den and Cat's Corner articles offer practical advice about less-serious but still annoying (mis)behaviors.

Yes, training and behavior modification (our behavior as well as that of our pets!) does take some work, but a calm and happy household is well worth the effort.

Please feel free to share this issue with friends and family. We appreciate your continued support of KAR's mission to help homeless, stray, and abandoned cats and dogs. Together we make a difference!

Sincerely,

Pat Hollahan
KAR Friends Editor

Dealing With Pet Behavior Issues

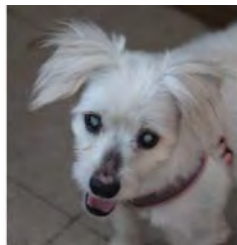
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Pets of the Month



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By Karren Jensen

We love our furry family members and enjoy their company, but sometimes problems can arise that go beyond everyday frustrations if the pet exhibits extremely



annoying and even destructive behaviors. Unusually troubling problems, even if they are rooted in natural canine and feline instincts, may result in a broken relationship and even the hard decision to surrender the pet to a shelter. **Are there ways to cope with these problems that allow you to improve the situation and keep your pet without losing your mind?** Here are a few common behavioral problems and some ways to deal with these issues before they become irreversible.

Serious problems which dog owners may face include:

- Aggression against humans or other animals,
- Barking, which if it gets out of hand can be a source of friction with neighbors or even family members,
- Destructive chewing, which can result in property damage and danger to the dog.

Problems that might cause a cat owner to surrender their pet to a shelter include:

- Destructive clawing,
- Spraying/scent marking,
- Failure to use the litter box.

These and other behaviors can be very frustrating, but **it is important to remember that our pets long for our approval and behavior that leads to negative consequences is not something that the animal enjoys or intends to pursue.** Sometimes it takes a bit of research to uncover the reasons behind the unwanted actions. A good place to start is to talk with your veterinarian, who can check for underlying health issues and suggest options for training. Sometimes a consultation



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Upcoming Events

- March 24, PetSmart
- March 31, MVPets

Please check the [KAR homepage](#) for events as they are announced

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with an animal behaviorist will reveal non-health-related causes for problems and he or she may be able to suggest options for training and behavior modification to overcome unwanted habits. For example, spaying or neutering your pet may solve a variety of issues such as spraying and aggressive behavior. Cats and dogs who go overboard with chewing or clawing furniture or clothing may be redirected to more appropriate outlets for their natural instincts, without having to resort to a drastic—and problematic—solution such as declawing your cat. Many websites also provide useful common-sense tips for uncovering the causes of behavioral problems and dealing with them.

Whether your dear friend is feline or canine, most behavior problems can be solved with patience and love under the guidance of your veterinarian and/or an animal behavior expert. Our pets love us unconditionally and deserve to be cherished and nurtured so that they can fulfill their place in our hearts as loving companions for life.

Additional Resources:

- [Dog Behavior](#)
- [Cat Behavior](#)

Doggie Den

Drag That Dog! Or, How To Choose A Dog Trainer



By Pat Hollahan

Even dog (mis)behaviors that aren't as serious as the ones that Karren Jensen outlines can be enough to drive us crazy. (I could use our dog as an example, but I don't want to embarrass him—or us!) Do you feel like you're the one being taken for a walk as your dog tugs you down the street and into the neighbors' yards? Or



newsletter suggestions
or questions!

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does your dog prefer to excavate the couch cushions instead of (or in addition to) the back yard? Is the postal carrier or delivery person greeted by a frenzy of barking and pawing at the window? Ah well, you get the picture!

This is where a professional dog trainer can help! A good place to start is to discuss problems with your vet to be sure that there are no underlying medical issues and to ask for her or his recommendation for dog trainers. Then check out the recommended trainers and look at websites like the ones listed here, which can help you think about what you want in a trainer and what might make you feel comfortable or uncomfortable with his or her methods. And, of course, you want to think about your dog's personality traits and comfort levels—a food-motivated dog will respond to some training techniques; a dog who's been rescued from an abusive situation may have a very bad reaction to more assertive forms of training.

Here are some websites to get you started:

- [Association of Professional Dog Trainers](#)
- [American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior](#)
- [Cesar's Way](#)

Cat's Corner

Declawing: Some Things To Consider



By Karren Jensen

One of the most contentious issues a cat owner faces today is declawing.

While nobody wants to have their house shredded by a persistently clawing feline friend, there are solutions to this issue

beyond the drastic and often problem-generating declaw



surgery. Kalamazoo Animal Rescue is concerned for the health and well-being of all the cats and kittens in our care and we work with pet owners to find less severe yet effective solutions to the problem of clawing.

Here are some considerations to keep in mind:

- [Declawing](#) isn't a simple and painless procedure for a cat as many believe. Rather than being a permanent mani/pedi, declawing is similar to removing the end of your fingers at the last joint. Yes, the claws are gone but there may be post-surgical pain and abnormal paw function which can lead to non-use of the litter box or biting.
- Cats can be trained to claw appropriately on scratching posts or pads instead of furniture. Providing scratch pads or posts, encouraging their use, and making furniture less attractive will direct your kitty pal toward an appropriate place to engage in this normal feline behavior.
- Discouraging the use of furniture for scratching can include covering a scratching target spot with a heavy blanket or towel, spraying with a cat repellent, and keeping doors closed to areas where the cat isn't welcome. There are also specific new products to help with this issue, such as [Feliscratch](#).
- Claw caps are another solution to clawing. Here the cat's claws are covered with plastic caps which must be replaced periodically. The caps make the claws unable to dig into fabric or wood. They can even be a "fashion statement" for a well-groomed kitty.
- Patience, persistence, and claw trimming will go a long way toward keeping your fur baby's claws under control and away from damaging your home.

Declawing is an irreversible surgical procedure that leaves your cat with very limited ability to defend herself should she ever get outside. Please consider all of the alternatives to give your kitty a long and happy life as your furry best friend.

About Us

Kalamazoo Animal Rescue is an all-volunteer, federally recognized 501(c)(3) charitable organization that was founded in 1991 and is funded entirely through donations from the public.

KAR is dedicated to providing refuge to homeless, stray and abandoned cats and dogs in Kalamazoo and the surrounding communities.

Our volunteers give their time and energy to the efforts of rescuing animals and helping them to find permanent, committed and life-long homes.



Visit our website [here](#) for more KAR information!



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