

PET CORRECTOR™

PAYOFFS AND PENALTIES in Dog Training

THEORY AND PRACTICE OF THE PET CORRECTOR

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Life moulds human behaviour by our experience of events which can be rewarding or punishing. Drive through a red light and you will be punished. Do a good job and you will be paid! The scientific study of learning by animals shows that their cognition (thoughts) and emotions are determined in much the same way: every aspect of their behaviour has a consequence and which may be positive, negative or neutral. The table below is a summary of how animals and people learn.

Positive Reinforcement
(adding something nice)

Negative Reinforcement
(removing something nasty)

Negative Punishment
(removing something nice)

Positive Punishment
(adding something nasty)

Dog trainers in the last century were much influenced by the results of learning studies on animals like laboratory rats, including use of devices that could deliver the penalty of electric shock vs. carefully metered access to payoffs from food, water or warmth. So it was that electrical shock collars became widely used by dog trainers, but others favoured use of food rewards to guide or mould behaviour. I am in the latter camp, BUT my practical experience clearly showed that we sometimes need to utilise a *positive punishment*, or deliver a well timed penalty to the dog that exhibits dangerous or undesirable behaviour.

Unfortunately, in the world of dog trainers, there has been a tendency to polarise views between those who say that they only use reward-based methodologies, whilst at the other extreme are those who believe that dogs must be dominated and if necessary compelled to behave by use of painful devices such as choke chains and electric shock.

My belief and the belief of many other trainers around the world is that best practice lies somewhere in between these extremes, where the



purpose of training is to make dogs safe in a dangerous world where they do not chase bikes, do not ignore recall commands or kill farm animals.

The practical difficulty facing many pet dog owners is that they hear one version of training from the "tough" trainers as exemplified by Cesar Milan, and another from the "all kindness" approach of a TV trainer like Victoria Stilwell.

My practical experience over 34 years is that the increasing shift to exclusively reward-based methodologies has resulted in an overall deterioration in the behaviour of pet dogs. They are more likely now to pull on the lead, bark incessantly, rush up to and jump on strangers in the park or desert owners in favour of the playful company of other dogs. Too often, I see that there has been a failure to set boundaries within which the dog should behave. The parallel between this world of dog training and changes in fashions of parenting are all too obvious: spoiled brats vs the tough love approach.

Practically speaking, owners punish their dogs by shouting, alternatively by shaking, kicking or hitting them. At an extreme level, they might even use spike or electric shock collars.

The Pet Corrector provides a positive punishment (see the figure) which does not inflict harm upon the animal but which nevertheless interrupts unwanted behaviour .

The Pet Corrector: How does it work?

The Pet Corrector consists of an inert compressed gas (HFC 134a) that is released through a Venturi-style constrictive valve, and which produces a broad spectrum sound (white noise) , ranging from thunder-like low frequency rumbles and up to very high frequency ultrasound .

The overall effect of this complex hiss is to grab the attention of a dog, as it also does for most other species of animals. The Pet Corrector interrupts unwanted behaviour in cats, horses and even cattle, where it offers useful protection to dog owners who fear that they will be attacked when walking past cows. I am a farmer and the Pet Corrector probably saved my life in a dangerous confrontation with an overprotective bull.

Animals exhibit a wide range of reactions according to their hearing sensitivity and prior conditioning. Some react in a very fearful manner, so the device should be used only as a last resort or not at all. Other individuals have a low sound sensitivity or perhaps are deaf and quickly adapt to or ignore the hiss. Nevertheless, almost all mammals initially react to the Pet Corrector because the sound is genetically programmed to be associated with danger, such as from the hiss of a snake, a cat, an angry swan or the buzz of a dangerous insect.

The concept of the Pet Corrector was invented by me many years ago when I needed a practical means of interrupting extreme aggressive acts by dogs such as their fighting or liability to attack me. My early choice of protective stimulus was a compressed carbon dioxide (CO₂) fire extinguisher. These devices weigh of the order 10kg, being none-too convenient to carry in a pocket or handbag! Et voila the Pet Corrector, weighing a mere 100g and standing 15cm high.

Since invention of the patented Pet Corrector, our Company Of Animals has sold over 3 million units in most countries of the world. We barely ever receive complaints from dog owners that their animal was unduly stressed or otherwise adversely affected. A small number of dog owners inform us that their dog did not respond or ignored the sound. In other words, there was a nil effect rather than an adverse effect. We advise this small minority of owners to seek professional help from an accredited trainer or behaviourist.

The overwhelming feedback we receive from emails, letters and from reviews on Amazon is that a severely troublesome behaviour stopped and the change came remarkably quickly : in as few as 3 or 4 exposures. Thereafter, simply showing the Pet Corrector (i.e by holding it in the hand) is sufficient.

I encourage users to make the shortest possible duration of hiss from the Pet Corrector, and that it not be pointed directly at the pet. Timing of application is vital and if not perfectly associated with conduct of the “crime”, the Pet Corrector should not be used. All these does and don’ts are well covered in the packaging and associated training leaflet (excerpts reprinted below).

There is no doubt that the Pet Corrector has saved many dogs from other forms of unkind treatment, such as being hit, kicked or shouted at. It provides a “window of opportunity” for delivery of positive rewards, which can be used to create substitute or new and alternative behaviours that do not present a problem to their owners. Usually, it will be that the dog obeys a “sit” command and then receives a treat.

In summary, we need balance in dog training, just as we do in parenthood and in the education of our young people. Dogs are remarkably similar in their social outlook to humans, which is why they are so popular as companions. I advocate a thoughtful approach to dog training where the causes of unwanted behaviours are clearly understood, the objectives for behaviour modification are identified and well timed and well chosen payoffs and penalties are delivered. The Pet Corrector is just one of those penalties that may, under very many commonly occurring circumstances, be the appropriate training aid.

Our Company Of Animals is a responsible organisation that always seeks to do the best for the behaviour of pets in society. I consider that the Pet Corrector is just a key element in our overall strategy, which is to produce a better world for pets and for their people.

KEY DO'S AND DON'T'S OF THE PET CORRECTOR

DO:

- Test the animal’s sensitivity: operate at greater than one metre distance.
- Direct the spray away from your pet’s face (not directly towards it).
- Only use the PC to interrupt a serious misdemeanor.
- Timing of the hiss is crucial, it should only be used whilst the misbehavior is occurring. Ensure that you reward immediately when the misbehavior has ceased, ideally whilst he is performing a positive behavior.
- Use short bursts on the PC because the canister will chill with prolonged use.
- Work on correcting one behavior at a time: e.g. jumping up. Once this has been corrected, if required you can move on to the next behavior problem.
- Dispose of the aerosol responsibly when it is empty. Do not incinerate, burn or puncture.

DO NOT

- Use the PC without first reading the instructions, PC’s are unsuitable for use by children.
- Ever point directly towards you face or that of the pet.
- Leave the Pet Corrector in a hot car or expose to temperatures above 50 deg C.



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