Animal Enrichment Best Practice

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A process for improving the environment and behavioral care of confined animals within the context of their behavioral needs.
Purpose of Enrichment

- Reduce stress
- Enhance behavioral health
- Decrease illness
- Shorten length of stay
Mitigate the development and expression of abnormal and/or problematic behavior and contribute to the overall wellbeing of the animals
Five Freedoms

1. Freedom from hunger and thirst
2. Freedom from discomfort
3. Freedom from pain, injury or disease
4. Freedom to express normal behavior
5. Freedom from fear and distress
Even the best enrichment program will not overcome the need for companion animals to be in a home or natural environment.

Long-term or lifetime housing is not recommended for companion animals.
Key Considerations

General Tips for Success

• Consider individual preferences
• Provide variety
• Keep it positive
Special Considerations for Individuals

• Stress and fear
• Reducing stimulation can be as important as increasing stimulation
• Safety for staff and other animals
• High energy dogs
Sanitation and Safety

- Disinfection of items and areas
- Monitor individuals
- Safe animal handling skills
- Protective equipment
- Follow restricted diets
- Follow medical protocols
Goals and Outcomes

What should you expect to invest?

1. Staff training

2. Financial investment (equipment, housing modifications, etc.)

1. Staff time for implementation and oversight
Goals and Outcomes

What are the potential benefits?

1. Reduction of stress
2. Reduction of behavioral deterioration
3. Reduction of illness
4. Reduction of length of stay
5. Present better for adoption
6. More engaged and observant workforce
7. Improvement of overall QOL
Goals and Outcomes

What are the measures we may be able to observe?

1. Reduction of behaviors that indicate stress, fear or boredom

2. More animals exhibiting relaxed body postures, calm demeanor, normal sleep patterns and interest in social interaction

3. More animals expressing normal behaviors for the species or individual.
Monitoring the Effectiveness of Enrichment

Observe and Record

1. Is the animal utilizing the enrichment?

2. Is the animal exhibiting healthy social behavior?

2. Are the enrichment strategies improving the animal’s behavior (reducing signs of stress, fear and boredom)
Good Signs

- Good appetite
- More relaxed body language
- Healthy species-specific behavior
- Normal grooming behavior
- Normal activity level
- Normal social behavior
- Ability to sleep/rest
Monitoring the Effectiveness of Enrichment

Bad Signs

- Poor appetite
- Fearful/anxious body language
- Retreat or hiding
- Aggressive behavior or reactivity
- Inactivity
- Hyperarousal
- Compulsive behavior
- Social withdrawal
- Physical ailments (e.g., diarrhea)
Monitoring the Effectiveness of Enrichment

When and How

• Schedule regular assessments
  ✓ Individual level
  ✓ Programmatic level

• Include all 4 steps
  1. OBSERVE
  2. RECORD
  3. REVIEW
  4. ADJUST
Enrichment Basics

- Starts at intake
- Provided daily
- Structured but with room for flexibility and individuality
Our Requirements

- Comfortable resting area
- Hiding spot (especially cats)
- Things to chew (dogs)
- Scratching surfaces (cats)
- At least one toy, rotated daily
- Daily social interaction
- Daily sensory enrichment
- Daily mental stimulation
- Regular physical exercise
- Exposure to enjoyable novelty
Enclosure Enhancements and Features

 ✓ Clean, dry comfortable living space
 ✓ Soft bedding/raised platform
 ✓ Perch and hiding place
 ✓ Separate eating/drinking/resting areas from elimination areas
 ✓ Light and darkness should support natural circadian rhythms.
Social Interaction

With People

• Daily
• Minimum 15 minutes
• Can pair with other requirements
Social Interaction

With Conspecifics

• Regularly
• Can pair with other requirements
• Cohousing…maybe
• Playgroups and monitored interaction
A Word About the Young

• Sensitive socialization periods
  o Puppies: 3–12 weeks
  o Kittens: 2–7 weeks

• What they need: 30 minutes daily *minimum*
  ✓ People/animals
  ✓ Handling
  ✓ Places, experiences
Social Interaction

What About Iso?

CAT SICK

*Gowns, Booties, and Gloves must be worn before entering.
Cognitive Enrichment

Engage the Brain
Investigation and exploration
Cognitive Enrichment

Engage the Brain

Training
Cognitive Enrichment

Engage the Brain

Problem-solving challenges
Feeding Enrichment

- Stuffed Kongs®
- Other food puzzles
- Frozen “pupcicles”
- Scattered food
- Hidden food
Physical Exercise

Dogs

- Daily
- Minimum 15 min.
- Ideas
  -Walks/runs
  - Playgroups
  - Fetch/tug
  - Agility, etc.
  - Solo object play
Physical Exercise

Cats

• Minimum 2 hours per week (cumulative)

• Ideas
  ✓ Interactive play
  ✓ Solo-play toys
  ✓ Agility (no, seriously)
  ✓ Running wheel
  ✓ Walks??!
Novel Experiences

• Field trips
• Play yard
• Digging pit
• Exploring new environments
• New visual stimuli
• Novel objects
Sensory Stimulation Enrichment

Stimulate ALL of the Senses

- Sight
- Sound
- Taste
- Smell
Visual Access to Interesting Stimuli

• Perpetual motion toys
• Hanging mobiles
• Lava lamps
• Aquariums
• Televisions
• Bird Feeders
• Be creative
Auditory Stimulation

Interesting and/or Calming Sounds

• Soothing music (low volume)
• Water fountains (visually stimulating, too)
• Wind chimes
• Sound machines
• Audiobooks
• Birdsong CD (cat)
Novel Edible Items

• Treats
• Flavored ice blocks
• Variety in daily diet
• Cat grass
Daily novel scents stimulate dogs’ and cats’ very acute sense of smell.

- Essential oils
- Extracts mixed in water
- Dry spices
- Prey scents
- Pheromones
Enrichment Best Practice Committee

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