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
- Increase behavioral health
- Decrease illness
- Reduce 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
The shelter is not home.

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

General Tips for Success

• Beware of overstimulation
• 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
What should you expect to invest?

1. Staff training
2. Financial investment
3. 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 coping well with their environment
Monitoring the Effectiveness of Enrichment

Observe and Record

- Item use?
- Good behavior and body language
- Signs of stress: up or down?

No thanks.
Monitoring the Effectiveness of Enrichment

Good Signs

- Good appetite
- Body language indicating lack of stress
- Healthy species-specific behavior
- Normal grooming behavior
- Normal activity level
- Sociability
- Sleep/rest
- Play
Monitoring the Effectiveness of Enrichment

Bad Signs

- Poor appetite
- Fearful/anxious body language
- Retreat or hiding
- New 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
General Components and Requirements

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, with comfort in mind
- Natural light and darkness
- Separate functional areas
Enclosure Enhancements and Features

- Soft bedding/raised platforms
- Perches and hiding places
- Toys/objects
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 developmental periods
  - Puppies: 3 – 12 weeks
  - Kittens: 2 – 7 weeks

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

What About Iso?
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 Stimulation

Visual Access to Interesting Stimuli

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

Interesting and/or Calming Sounds

- Soothing music (low volume)
- Water fountains (visually stimulating, too)
- Sound machines
- Audiobooks
- Birdsong CD (cat)
Taste Stimulation

Novel Edible Items

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

- Essential oils
- Extracts mixed in water
- Dry spices
- Prey scents
- Pheromones
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