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## Environmental Enrichment

Much priority has been placed on Environmental Enrichment in recent years. This contributes to a better quality of life for confined animals. Environmental Enrichment is providing stimulus and opportunities for activities in an animal's environment. These stimuli and opportunities are replacing what is a part of a 'wild animals' normal way of life.

Imagine what a wild animal, whether it be a monkey or a lion has to achieve in a day to survive. They must forage and hunt for food, climb trees, even travel distances for water-all these activities require choices and problem solving and every day is unpredictable.

Have you ever been to the zoo at feeding time and watched how the keepers distribute the food? Food is placed inside the tree trunks, on the highest rock or branches, honey is dribbled over the enclosure to leave trails. Polar Bears have their food frozen in buckets of ice! How does this benefit the animal? The animal has challenges, has to problem solve to find the food - it's day has now become very interesting and unpredictable. This in turn prevents such things as swaying in one position, or continual pacing in a cage which is a far too common sight in many of our confined animals.

Many dogs do not work, are not allowed to roam freely, and spend many hours alone. In the wild they would be in a pack, hunt for food and would roam exploring and marking territories - *this makes domestic life quite boring by comparison*. Many backyard dogs are bored.

Common signs a dog will show when suffering from boredom are digging, pulling washing from the line, destroying plants, tail chasing, compulsive licking or over grooming and running around the yard in the same repeated pattern. There are ways in which we can prevent such behavioural problems:

### 1. Dog obedience

A well trained, obedient dog is a pleasure to own. Training reinforces the bond between the handler and the dog. Dog training is also mentally stimulating. Short 10 minute sessions are recommended as ideal.

### 2. Free running exercise

Even the biggest backyard can become boring after many hours of investigating. Dogs really enjoy running free (off lead)- they can race around, follow their noses and mark new territories. This can be used to reward your dog and should be done several times per week.

### 3. Play

Provide entertainment for your dog when you are not at home. Toys are a good solution! Always rotate the dog's toys so it won't get bored with the same things - and toys that are food orientated work the best. Examples of these are the buster cubes, activity balls and kongs.

If your dog has a play friend with a compatible temperament, they could play together for a few hours a week. This helps the dog's social skills and prevents boredom.

#### 4. Provide a view

If your dog can see a busy street it has a pacifying effect on them. Much more interesting than staring at high boundary fences. Dogs like to see what is going on in the world around them. If your dog can see 'it' then they are less likely to bark at 'it' which means happy neighbors. Other dogs may be over stimulated with all the excitement on the other side of the fence and those dogs may need confinement inside during the busy periods.

#### 5. Provide things to be chewed

Dogs need to chew - so it is up to you to provide things to be chewed rather than your best pair of shoes. Ask your vet if raw bones are suitable for your pet (never cooked), pigs ears and Kongs are ideal and will keep your dog occupied for hours as well as provide good dental exercise and help prevent tartar build up on the teeth.



### Training classes available in Murray Bridge

For some help finding the right dog trainer visit [www.dogwelfarecampaign.org](http://www.dogwelfarecampaign.org)

#### Puppy Pre School (ages 6-14weeks)

These fun classes are run by our trained nurses. Your puppy learns essential social skills by playing with other puppies and other people within the group. They also learn basic 'manners' and you can learn more about the care of your puppy. A well adjusted and well behaved pup is a pleasure to own. Ages 6-14weeks

#### Positive Paws (all ages)

	<p>Murray Bridge - Reward based training Ph: Kirstie 0403 929 221</p> <p><b>FIND US ON FACEBOOK</b> </p>
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#### Scholars in Collars (all ages)

	<p><a href="http://www.scholarsincollars.com.au">www.scholarsincollars.com.au</a> <b>Alexis Davison</b> <b>Behavioural Dog Trainer</b> <b>PO Box 170 Birdwood SA 5234</b> <b>Tel: 0400 205 667 <a href="mailto:alexis@scholarsincollars.com.au">alexis@scholarsincollars.com.au</a></b></p>
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#### Reminders for a happy pet (and owner!)

- Have realistic expectations
- Remember to keep rewarding the behaviours you want to increase and ignore the ones you want to decrease
- Don't punish, if a behaviour is stopped it is often replaced with another one, often worse than the first
- Remember some behaviours are self rewarding
- Work with the behaviour to make it more socially acceptable
- Teach the dog where and when to perform the behaviours
- Always reward when your dog is calm and quiet, with a quiet whisper and praise
- Punishment??? The dog will still do the behaviour just not in front of you!!!

If you have any further questions please make an appointment with your Veterinarian or ask one of our friendly staff members.