



Animal Enrichment Best Practice

Enrichment Defined



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



Purpose of Enrichment



- Reduce Stress
- Provide physical and mental stimulation
- Encourage species-typical behaviors
- Allow animals more control over their environment



Importance of Enrichment



Mitigate the development and expression of abnormal and/or problematic behavior and contribute to the overall wellbeing of the animals.



History of Enrichment



Farm animals - Five Freedoms

- Freedom from hunger and thirst
- Freedom from discomfort
- Freedom from pain, injury or disease
- Freedom to express normal behavior
- Freedom from fear and distress



Limitations of Enrichment



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

- Provide variety
- Beware of overstimulation
- Consider individual preferences
- Keep it positive



Key Considerations

Special considerations for individuals

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



Key Considerations

Sanitation and Safety

- Disinfection of items and areas
- Monitor individuals (i.e. ingesting items)
- Safe animal handling skills
- Protective equipment (contagious animals)
- Follow restricted diets
- Follow medical protocols



Goals and Outcomes

What should you expect to invest?

1. Staff training
1. Financial investment (equipment, housing modifications, etc.)
2. 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. Overall increase in adoption rates
6. Reduction of euthanasia for health and behavior
7. More engaged and observant workforce
8. 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 (reactive barking, destruction, stereotypic action patterns, hiding, aggression).
2. More animals exhibiting relaxed body postures, calm demeanor, normal sleep patterns, and interest in social interaction.
1. More animals expressing normal behaviors for the species or individual.



Monitoring the effectiveness of enrichment

1. Is the animal utilizing the enrichment?
2. Is the animal interacting with/responding to the enrichment in a positive manner?
3. Is the animal exhibiting healthy social behavior?
4. How are the enrichment strategies affecting the animal's behavior?



Monitoring the effectiveness of enrichment

Animals whose behavioral needs are satisfied display the following:

1. Good appetite
2. Normal activity level
3. Sociability with people or other animals
4. Normal healthy play
5. Normal grooming behavior
6. Restful sleep
7. Normal species-typical behaviors in appropriate contexts (i.e. chewing in dogs, scratching posts in cats)



Monitoring the effectiveness of enrichment

Behavioral indicators of stress:

1. Poor appetite
2. Persistent retreat or hiding
3. Hostile interactions with people or animals
4. Reduced activity
5. Increased hyper-arousal
6. Social withdrawal
7. Barrier frustration-related behavior
8. Compulsive behavior
9. Body language and behavioral signals indicating fear or anxiety
10. Physical ailments (i.e. diarrhea)



Monitoring the effectiveness of enrichment

Critically important to monitor program to ensure you are reaching desired outcome

- Regular assessments
- Programmatic and individual level
- Make necessary adjustments



General Components and Requirements

MUST be provided on a daily basis

Providing guidelines for frequency and duration proves difficult

Must consider:

- Individual's life stage (age)
- Physical condition
- Emotional state (i.e. fearful)



General Components and Requirements

Enrichment plan for each dog and cat should satisfy the following needs starting at intake:

- comfortable resting/sleeping surface
- access to hiding place (cats)
- access to chew items (dogs)
- access to scratching surface (cats)
- access to one toy (rotated daily)
- daily social interaction
- daily sensory enrichment
- daily mental stimulation
- regular physical exercise
- exposure to novel environments
- variety of strategies employed



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

- Daily social interaction with human for minimum of 15 minutes
- Regular social interaction with conspecifics
- Critical socialization for puppies and kittens
 - Puppies – 3-12 weeks
 - Kittens – 2-7 weeks

Equally important for young animals in isolation because of contagious disease.



Cognitive Enrichment

- Engage the brain in healthy stimulating ways to encourage expression of normal species-typical behaviors
 - Daily investigatory opportunities
 - Problem solving challenges
 - Operant training sessions



Feeding Enrichment



Presenting meals in ways that encourage animals to work for their food.

- puzzle feeders
- stuffed Kong®
- frozen food-cycles
- scattered/hidden food



Physical Exercise



Dogs – minimum of 15 minutes each day

- vigorous walk or run
- fetch game
- agility equipment
- play groups

Cats – minimum 2 hours per week
(individually caged cats)

- play
- running wheel



Novel Experiences



Active stimulation

- physical exercise
- field trip
- play yard
- digging pit

Passive stimulation

- watching prey (bird feeders)
- exploring environment



Sensory Stimulation Enrichment

Consider all of the senses

- Visual
- Auditory
- Taste
- Olfactory



Visual Stimulation

Visual access to interesting stimuli

- hanging mobiles
- lava lamps
- perpetual motion toys
- aquariums
- televisions
- hanging bird feeders



Auditory Stimulation

Interesting and/or calming sounds

- soothing music (low volume)
- sound machines
- water fountains
- audio books
- bird song CD (cat)



Taste Stimulation



Novel edible items

- treats
- flavored ice blocks
- variety in daily diet



Olfactory Stimulation



Daily novel scents stimulate very acute sense of smell for both dogs and cat

- essential oils (ex: chamomile, lavender)
- extracts mixed in water (ex: vanilla, banana, almond)
- dry spices (ex: cinnamon, nutmeg)
- synthetic prey scents (rodent bedding)

Activities:

- hidden treats, tracking games, scent boxes



Q & A

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