



CHARLESTON VETERINARY REFERRAL CENTER

COMPASSIONATE CARE, ALWAYS HERE.



BEHAVIORIST OR TRAINER: WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Many pets require a variety of professionals throughout their lives to help keep them happy and healthy. Some of these professionals may include behaviorists and trainers. Let's understand the difference in how they help animals so you can choose the best option for your pet's individual needs and your family's goals.

Veterinary Behaviorist

Veterinary Behaviorists are veterinarians who have gone through advanced training to become board certified specialists through the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. These specialists are able to diagnose medical conditions that can affect a pet's behavior as well as treat conditions that are purely behavioral. As veterinarians, they are also able to prescribe medication, if needed, to be part of an integrated treatment program that includes custom behavioral modification plans.

Behavior Specialist

Behavior Specialists see animals that display troubling behaviors such as aggression, fear, separation anxiety and other anxious behaviors, noise phobia, resource guarding, excessive barking/howling/whining, etc. They have extensive training and knowledge of behavior principals, tactics, strategies, and procedures in non-coercive animal training, functional behavior assessment, case management, professional ethics, and species-specific behavior.

Dog Trainer

These professionals teach commands and cues, train polite manners, and coaches animals to participate in sports and activities. Dog trainers understand basic learning theory and have developed their handling and training skills. Most training is done in private lessons or group classes while others are taught through boarding school arrangements.

Things to Consider

When choosing a professional to work with, consider the following:

Type of Training

- Training methods are most effective when they focus on teaching the animal what to do, rather than punishing them for unwanted behaviors.
- Research shows a clear advantage of reward-based methods over aversive-based methods with respect to immediate and long-term welfare, training effectiveness, and the dog-human relationship.

Type of Education

The world of animal training is an unregulated industry. When selecting a professional for your pet, consider the following:

- What kind of education does the trainer or behaviorist have?
- Have they graduated or achieved accreditation from of the well-known training academies?
- Do they have a solid education and understanding of applied behavior analysis?

Meet the CVRC Behavior Specialist

Kristi Martin, LVT, CBST has trained both exotic and domestic animals for more than 20 years and holds a Diploma in Canine Behavior from the Companion Animal Science Institute. She is also a graduate of the esteemed, Dr. Susan Friedman's course, Living and Learning with Animals, and a member of the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants. In addition to extensive behavior training, she is a licensed veterinary technician and is Fear Free®-certified. Kristi utilizes a science and reward-based approach that focuses on the use of applied behavior analysis.



Kristi Martin, LVT, CBST

Referral Process

We encourage referrals to the Behavior Department so we may keep primary care veterinarians informed of behavioral assessments and treatment plans, as well as help to rule out any medical factors that may be contributing to the issues being addressed.

To refer a patient or make an appointment, please contact CVRC at 843.614.8387 or behavior@charlestonvrc.com



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