

# Just say...



**I**n October 2009 the COAPE Association of Pet Behaviourists and Trainers (CAPBT) officially launches itself into the world of animal behaviour and training. With more than 300 members, it will be the largest group of specifically qualified behaviourists working on veterinary referral for pet behaviour and training problems in the UK.

Fancy words - but what does this mean for you? In a nutshell, it means that you can be assured of an organisation that uses methods that cause no fear, stress or cruelty to your pets. We are supported by scientific research that shows that cruelty does not work.

Like this magazine's editor,

Beverley Cuddy, I grew up in the world of dog training the Barbara Woodhouse way. When I arrived at training classes, I was given a choke chain to put on my terrier, Danny, which my father immediately took away, as he did not approve. We continued to go to the class, with Danny just wearing the choke chain at the classes - after all, they were the experts, weren't they? Danny, being a terrier, decided to 'go with the flow', despite the occasional yank on the chain, and he became very good at obedience and won some novice competitions. The downside of the choke chain experiences was that he tended to mutter as he worked. He received a fair amount

of attention as a result, and people smiled and laughed at his tacit complaints.

We enjoyed ourselves immensely, and we quietly abandoned the choke chain and he continued to work well. Then it all went wrong...

We moved up a class and here we met Jane, the trainer, who insisted the choke chain went back on and she couldn't stand Danny's muttering. She produced a water spray and sprayed him - not just with water, but with lemon juice and water. To say that we were both taken aback would be an understatement. I asked her not to repeat that, as my dog was doing what he was asked, it didn't matter that he was muttering.

With the knowledge I have now, I can see that we all rewarded Danny's muttering by laughing and giving him lots of attention, which he enjoyed and therefore continued to do!

She sprayed Danny again and I felt him stiffen. I asked her again not to do this, as I did not want to make him aggressive. The third time she sprayed him, he growled at her and I picked up my stuff and we left, never to return. I read books, experimented with training methods and found that rewarding good behaviour was definitely a far better way forward.

Finding COAPE (Centre of Applied Pet Ethology) and studying for their Diploma in Companion Animal

## A campaign launched by the new COAPE Association of Pet Behaviourists and Trainers urges us to speak up against old-school, cruel training methods...

Behaviour and Training was just such a relief. Here was an organisation saying that we should be looking at the animal's emotional state and what its breed and type should be doing. Last year, the COAPE directors approached me to ask if I would head up the CAPBT and work towards spreading the word about positive methods of working with all pet animals. I 'persuaded' some members to join me in this venture and together we started to draw up plans. You can see how far we have got already on our website [www.capbt.org](http://www.capbt.org).

In these 'enlightened times' we should all be working in a positive way with our dogs. After all, it is against the law to hit and abuse children - so why are some people still hitting and abusing their dogs? We are still very much up against the 'old school' type of trainer/behaviourist, it seems.

Some of these say that we should be treating our dogs like wolves. Well, I have been studying wolf behaviour for many years now, and can assure you that we shouldn't. In the trailer for Martin Clunes' recent series of programmes on dogs, he stated that he was living with wolves. It could be said that his dogs are living with a monkey. After all, humans and chimps share 96 per cent of the same genetic material, but that doesn't mean we should treat each other as monkeys. It's very crucial, that four per cent! Dogs and wolves share

a similar amount of genetic material, but that doesn't mean we should treat our dogs as wolves.

Sometimes my practice appears to be the 'last chance saloon' for dogs. Owners with a problem dog have already searched the internet, Yellow Pages or even the free local papers to find someone who can help. The dogs are then subjected to methods that can only be described as cruel. There is no 'cruel to be kind' only 'cruel to be cruel'.

In some instances, the 'trainer' will have a large dog of their own and subject the client's dog to bullying tactics from this other dog. Think about it: the owner has a dog with fear aggression towards other dogs, and is exposed to a large bully of a dog that terrifies him. He may even have a lump of chain thrown at him in an attempt to stop his behaviour. The owner goes away with a dog that appears to be 'cured' - probably frozen in fear. Off they go for a walk in the park and the 'cured' dog sees another dog and becomes extremely aggressive. Why? Because that is the only way the 'cured' dog knows of stopping the other dog from approaching.

Here are some other brief examples of why these methods hinder rather than help a dog in need; these dogs were all eventually referred to my practice and we were able to help them:

### Two Border Collies - frightened of people

Their behaviour deteriorated, and they began snapping at people's hands and arms. They attended training classes where they were sprayed with water. They hid behind a chair for three-quarters of an hour before one was brave enough to approach me. These are not the only dogs we have seen with aggressive behaviour to people as a result of being sprayed in class.

### Golden Retriever - guarding food and objects

The owners were told to reduce his position in the family pack, as he was 'dominant'. The behaviour started at five months of age. The owners were told to put food in the dog's bowl, eat it and then put the dog's food in, put it on the floor, and make the dog wait before giving him permission to eat. They castrated him. The owners were told to go through the door first, not allow him on the settee, etc. Retrievers are bred to hold things. They are, after all, gundogs. Sometimes this becomes very established. Careful handling and showing the dog that hands 'give' and don't 'take away' things from an early age helps with this problem. By making his food a temptation, the owners inadvertently reinforced the guarding behaviour. All the other recommendations would not have had any real effect in solving the problem.

### Terrier - fear aggression towards other dogs

The owner was recommended to contact a trainer/behaviourist who specialises in aggression. There was no assessment of what kind of aggression the dog was showing; the assumption was made that, as it was a terrier, it was 'just aggressive'. The owner's input was ignored. The terrier was placed in a muzzle, and another dog was brought out, also in a muzzle. The terrier reacted to the other dog, a chain was thrown at the terrier, and the other dog was then allowed to retaliate at the terrier. The terrier ran off screaming, being chased by the other dog. A total fear of other dogs was thereby established in the terrier!

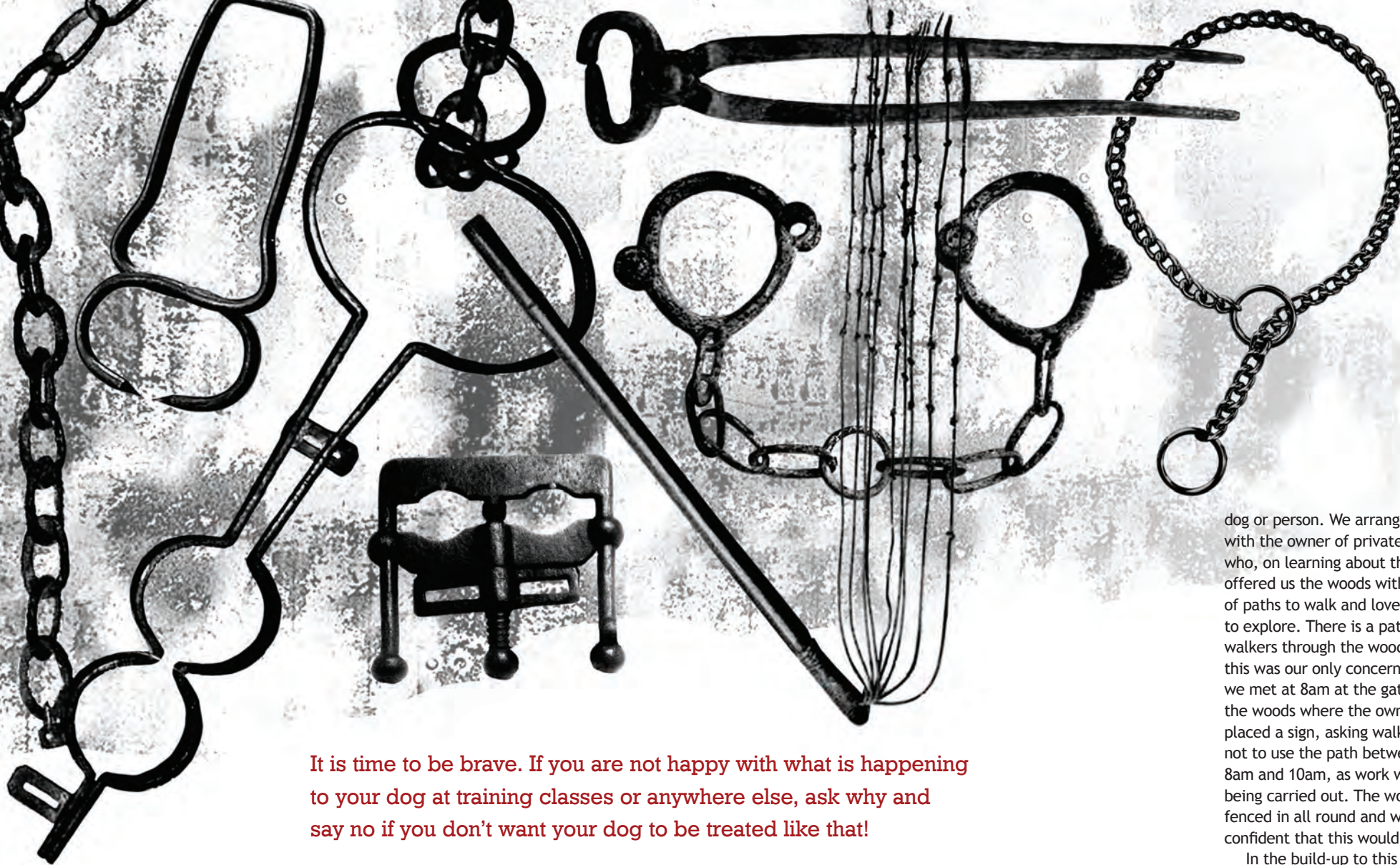
### Standard Poodle - nervous of people

The owners were recommended to use a rattle can, spray and rape alarm, resulting in the dog attacking people first and asking questions afterwards. The owners were also advised to use a 'nothing in life is free' approach to control all aspects of this dog's behaviour. The dog had to do something to be fed - sit and wait. Do something for attention - sit and wait. If it instigated attention or asked for anything, it was ignored. The dog now goes into another room on its own in the evening and forgets about its family because they are of no value. There is no bond between the owners and the dog at all as a result. ▶



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**It is time to be brave. If you are not happy with what is happening to your dog at training classes or anywhere else, ask why and say no if you don't want your dog to be treated like that!**

**W**here is the kindness in the treatment offered by 'experts' in these cases? Perhaps the saddest case we have had in the practice is the one we have just started to work on, which shows just how dangerous these techniques can be. A family bought a GSD puppy. They lived in a remote part of the country and wanted security around the property when the husband went off to work. The puppy grew up, he didn't attend any puppy classes and was trained at home. They had to move back into an urban environment when the dog was eight months old. Here they started to take him for walks in the park and around the nearby town. The family noticed that when they had visitors (postman, deliveries, friends) the dog was beginning to overreact by lunging and barking at them, sounding and looking quite ferocious. This behaviour was also evident when out and about, and he was now reacting to other dogs as well.

When he had had seven fights with other dogs, they decided to seek help. Here's a summary of the advice they received:

- **Don't take him out for a month and feed him a natural diet.** **Result:** he was even worse when he went back out, having had a month of being confined to a garden for exercise.
- **An ex-professional dog handler 'introduced' the GSD to his Rottweiler in the hope that the Rottweiler would 'educate' the GSD.** **Result:** there was an enormous fight, despite water spray and chains being chucked. The GSD ended up at the vet's for costly treatment.
- **Choke chain. When the GSD reacts to other dogs, yank it back hard, shout at it, and, if that doesn't work, put an electric collar on it.** **Result:** the owners were reluctant to take him out, as his behaviour was so bad. They did not go down the route of the electric collar.

The dog appeared to be very quiet at home.

- **Carry a bucket with them when they walk the dog. In the bucket there should be plastic bags filled with water. When the GSD goes for another dog, put down the bucket and take a water bomb and throw it at the GSD.** **Result:** waste of time and GSD still very quiet at home. Owners now walking him very early in the morning to avoid other dogs. The dogs he is meeting now are other dogs in the same boat. Walks are extremely stressful.

The owners then spoke to their vet about euthanasia for the GSD, who sent them and their GSD to us. Our immediate reaction on meeting the dog was that he had 'shut down'. This was a seriously depressed dog. His initial behaviour, through lack of early socialising, had been completely mismanaged and had now grown into a massive fear aggression. The moment the lead

was produced he got up and his body language just shouted, "I am stressed." Leaving the house, the dog was up on his toes, looking everywhere and reacting to every noise. This dog had no pleasure in his life. We needed to construct a pleasure scale for him. How is this done? Using us as an example - take a fruit sundae glass. This comprises of ice cream, various types of fruit, cream, and, if you are lucky, clotted cream. Each of us will like different proportions of the ingredients. The important point to remember, though, is that the glass has to be full. It is exactly the same for a dog, only their 'glass' has to be full of hunting/exploring/play/social contact/chewing/eating/rest/sleeping. Not only does each breed have specific likes, but each dog within that breed will have his or her own likes and dislikes. Our first step with the GSD was to show him that outside was not threatening. We needed to take him out where we were guaranteed not to meet another

dog or person. We arranged this with the owner of private woods, who, on learning about the case, offered us the woods with lots of paths to walk and lovely areas to explore. There is a path for walkers through the woods and this was our only concern, so we met at 8am at the gate to the woods where the owner had placed a sign, asking walkers not to use the path between 8am and 10am, as work was being carried out. The woods are fenced in all round and we were confident that this would work. In the build-up to this event

we had discussed the case with the veterinary practice and they had agreed with us to place the dog on medication that would boost the 'feel good' feeling in his brain.

He was very tense going into the woods. We walked quietly around and allowed him to sniff, stop, and look around whenever he wanted. We were not going to push this dog at all - we were his last chance. He set the pace, and, little by little, he started to relax. We sat down at about nine for a coffee from a flask and let him wander about on a long line. Initially, he stayed close to his owner, but then moved away about four feet, sniffing and exploring. Then we headed home. The next time we repeated this, he did wag his tail slightly.

This is just the start of what will be a long therapeutic process to first try to overcome the damage done by those who have 'advised' the owners with their barbarous approaches and only then getting to the original problems. Will he ever be a normal, confident dog that will mix with others? I doubt it very much, because of what has been done to him. Will we manage to give him a pleasure scale that will enhance his lifestyle? We are

confident that we can achieve this.

Why do owners let this happen to their dogs? On a recent trip to the USA, three colleagues and I attended a 'dog clinic' given by a behaviourist/trainer, who claimed not to use aversive methods. There was a lady sitting in the middle of the front row with a five-month-old Tibetan Terrier who had never been to anything like this before. Next to it was a very large Rottweiler cross just lying there, and on the other side was another dog, who was a bit more fidgety. The Tibetan was a bit overwhelmed by all this and started to bark. The speaker immediately strode forward, removed the dog from the owner, took the lead off the dog, reversed it and put the clasp end through the loop, thus making a crude choke chain. She then put this on the dog, high up around its neck (in fact, on its laryngeal area) and pulled.

No aversive methods? Not only did she choke it for barking, it also got choked for moving. The look on this dog's face as it looked at its owner was awful - I wanted to get up there and 'save' it from the speaker. Eventually she got so frustrated with this dog that she then

proceeded to drag it all the way around the hall, past all these dogs.

I did ask her if she considered the dog's emotions at all. She replied that she did, and I told her that, in my opinion, the emotion currently being displayed by the Tibetan was that of fear. She disagreed and told me that the dog was trying to dominate the owner. One of my colleagues then got up and left, saying that she could not sit there and watch this cruelty.

Why do owners let this happen? Like my muttering terrier, and me with the check chain, is it because we consider that these people must know what they are doing because they are running the class or giving a talk?

It is time to be brave. If you are not happy with what is happening to your dog at training classes or anywhere else, ask why and say no if you don't want your dog to be treated like that! Always check the Code of Practice of an individual - if they or their organisation haven't published one, ask why, say no, and walk away if you don't like the sound of what that person might do to your dog. Love and protect your dog, and he'll love you in return! ■



**Kirsty Peake has lived with many animals: dogs, cats, rabbits, horses, cattle and sheep. She currently has four Lakeland Terriers, one 62-year-old parrot, and a very tolerant husband! Kirsty is the current chairperson of the COAPE Association of Pet Behaviourists and Trainers (CAPBT) and now runs a busy full-time animal behaviour referral and training practice with two colleagues, mainly in the south-west of England. She also helps out with dog behaviour problems on a voluntary basis from her second home in Montana, near Yellowstone Park in the USA.**

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