

Anthropomorphism

Anthropomorphism is a Latin word meaning to view as or compare to that as being human or human characteristic.

Many pet dog owners know very little about Anthropomorphism and the associated problems with ignoring it. The more a person learns about Anthropomorphism, the more you will see where it is involved in your interaction with dogs and animals in general. Dogs have a very fundamental and instinctual way of thinking; it is just that we, as humans do not. Our thinking is much more complex and much closer linked to our emotional state.

The main thing that stands us humans apart from other highly social beings is a part of our intellect that is often referred to as reasoning. Reasoning allows us to inquire into the unknown, and to give an **interpretation** of such. When we inquire, it is a process that relies not from past experience or knowledge, but generated from self. For example, the linking of a past event to solve a present problem is what is called an Instrumental response, a **learnt** response. Reasoning would be generated from one self **without** a link to past experience.

Most animals are social beings, which form of social behaviour depends on the species and their intrinsic aggressive tendencies. It has been theorised that the higher the level of social aggression, the closer the social bonding and more highly organised the social structure. Now, there are parallels between dogs and people, namely in their social behaviour and learning. Such as:

- High social bonding
- Various forms of aggression.
- Ranking within our communities or families.
- Allocation of jobs or we tend to take on specific roles.
- Gaining of positive and negative associations to experiences.
- Avoidance and Displacement behaviours.
- & many more.

The parallels stop at the point where learning turns to reasoning; this is where we can Anthropomorphise about dogs. Very often, when we are faced with circumstances that we have not learnt to deal with, we will reason and link it to a past experience consciously or unconsciously to come up with a solution. Our initial interpretation of a dog's behaviour is a combining of personal past experiences, and reasoning that dogs would behave the same way.

Right and wrong, good and bad (as in the verb "being good", "being bad") are purely interpretations. Dogs have no concept of these as behaviours. In some cultures, it is considered normal, or the right practice for men to have many wives, in our culture it is wrong. Right and wrong, each culture has their own **interpretation** of it. Dogs lack the ability to interpret a situation or event as right or wrong. What we interpret as their ability to comprehend right and wrong is actually their learning abilities working. Learning is described as their ability to distinguish events as positive or negative. This is the point where I will give an example, but first, know which part of your thinking is being used. Learning, reasoning or the combination of both. In this situation, first use your reasoning:

Associations

Association is a connection to an experience of a positive or a negative feeling. For example, when a dog sits then receives food. The effect is a positive association to sitting. A correction on a choker chain for not sitting is a negative association (pain association) to not sitting. To gain a connection of an association to an experience the timing of reinforcements is very important. A split second difference in time can affect the connecting of an association to the required behaviour.

Throwing a ball around for your dog to play and as you call him back he steps on a sharp piece of glass. What will happen? An association of pain can be connected to your recall word. Or you are correcting your dog for

dog aggression and he stops barking at a time just before you give him one more correction. You could have actually created an association of pain to **stopping** dog aggression instead of the actual dog aggression. The same can be applied to the positive side of associations. Patting your dog for being calm around other dogs, and then you stroke him just as he barks at another dog. This is praise for barking! Or comforting your dog with a pat in times of fear or avoidance is reinforcing the avoidance in that situation. Here is an example of good and bad associations to a situation.

You have had a very long, hard day at work and you finally walked out the door an hour and a half after your normal finishing time. You battle the traffic all the way home with cars just wanting to slow you down, and traffic lights turning red just as you approach. But finally you drive up your driveway, and through your gate you can see a shirt you hung out that morning on the ground. Your dog runs up to the gate to greet who ever it is, and upon seeing you, it cowers and slinks away.

Now look into this situation, it may have happened for you before. Maybe not clothes, but possibly plants or shoes. The interpretation we would give it is one of the dog "knowing he is done wrong".

He knows that it is wrong! Look at him; he is just trying me out!

Now after reading about interpretation and associations, and a dog's inability to reason right from wrong. What has just happened?

The dog has built an association of fear to a situation. This fear association will not be to the clothes or the clothesline. The fear association could be to many things in the environment, but with the central feature being you, your body language, and your facial expression. At some time in the past, the dog has had a connection of fear to your behaviour. It may not be purely your body language; it may be a combination of a number of things in the environment. For example a linking of a number of associations to equal fear might be:

- Car in drive \ car door opening \ your wearing a suit \ facial expression of anger \ body language of disbelief \ looking into backyard \ certain expletive words + come here \ clothes on ground.

In another similar situation, you **might** not generate the fear response. For example:

- Car in drive \ car door opening \ your wearing a tracksuit \ facial expression of anger (of losing a football match) \ looking at front door.

In many cases, the association to facial expression and posture is so strong it overrides any other associations. Dogs will just slink away in fear any time they see posture "a" and a facial expression "b".

An example can be drawn to a work bell for morning tea creating a hunger for food. Yet, if you hear that exact same bell outside of the working environment it means nothing. The association is sensitive to the location.

Clarity in Handling

Firstly, I will talk about the term "**Clarity**". Clarity is a word describing your ability to translate what you are asking of the dog in a way that he can understand with the least amount of stress.

Clarity in handling a strong working breed dog cannot be emphasised enough. To get the most out of your dog in all areas of training and have the dog clear on his task all is delivered from your clear handling skills. One rule many dog trainers adhere to is – do not get angry when a dog does not do what you want. Look to your training program, there is obviously something missing in the program. Another is never train a dog when you are angry at something else, walk back inside and have a cup of tea.

A few rules govern clarity in handling:

- Command before correction, as opposed to correction before command.
- No punishment (reprimanding your dog at a later date)
- Correction or praise immediately after behaviour.
- That you have control of your emotional displays while around the dog. (No anger outburst)

Taking on these basic rules can be more difficult than expected, for generally people must face their own fear of looking bad, or fear of not knowing enough. These theories regarding Anthropomorphism and its relationship to handler aggression are not well known in the community, and if not explained in detail to the layman person, may generally be disregarded.

Linked to Clarity is another behavioural trait, which is in all of us, by the name of Conflict Aggression.

Conflict Aggression

Conflict aggression is a term not often heard of in obedience training circles, but very much in the forefront of schutzhund training. The reason conflict has been brought up is because of the effect of it on dogs from strong working bloodlines. Conflict basically means a conflict in drives, where one drive is active and another stimulated at the same time.

There are situations that produce conflict aggression in humans too. For instance, there could be a conflict present in some conversations. We expect a conversation to head a certain way and when it does not we tend to get a little angry. Sometimes we may not even know why, and it is simply conflict at work.

Conflict is a term given to an inherent trait created through the presence of two opposing stimuli with the outcome of such possibly being aggression. For example, when your dog pulls clothes off the line at some stage in the day, then runs up to you when you get home from work and you administer compulsion as punishment. The dog would be in one frame of mind or drive that he is familiar with when you get home, and pain is inflicted. Hence, ...Conflict. You are giving a correction where a lack of clarity has the possibility to produce conflict aggression. In dogs with the possibility of being good working dogs, but maybe not of special class, this form of conflict can produce suppression of drive and or character, and a fear of working or specific situations. Therefore, as you see clarity in handling is very important in all levels of working dogs.

Here are a few examples of situations that can produce conflict in us:

- An expectation has not been met. E.g. dog does not do what you expected it to.
- Pain. E.g. dog jumps up and hits you between the legs.
- Equal but opposing situations. E.g., you want to cook dinner before it gets to late, but you also want to do some dog training.

Some examples that produce conflict in dogs:

- An expectation has not been met. E.g. dog drops but still gets a correction
- Pain. Being hurt with no previous association.
- Equal but opposing situations. E.g. someone calling dog, and you telling dog to drop.

Redirection of Aggression

Redirection of aggression is very common throughout all animal behaviours, including us. This is a term derived from the concept of aggression created through one stimulus, and redirected onto another. For example, after having a hard day at work, your boss has been on your back all day, and then you get home. How often does your wife or kids take the brunt of that hard day? This is redirection of aggression. Aggression directed at an object or organism much less threatening than the original stimulus. For the example with your boss, you could not vent your anger directly at your boss so you unconsciously direct it to less threatening subjects. Maybe you can start to see where all these subjects are heading to, a lack of clarity in handling you dog can produce a redirection of aggression to you or your family. With working dogs, it is very important to maintain a clear head in the upbringing of your dog, especially when training for work and having a family pet.

Once these behaviours have been stimulated and a foundation built on them through reinforcement, you will have trouble handling them for the life of the dog. What I mean by reinforcement is the fact that when your dog bites you, there is reinforcement in that. You will pull away or move which tends to reinforce the effect of biting you. Even the bite itself can be self-reinforcing, easing the stress of whatever the situation is. So as a final analysis stress is eased by biting can be a learnt response in an ever-broadening range of situations. So it can

start in one situation, say in a lack of clarity in obedience, and can be transferred to many other areas as a release to stress. For instance, your dog barking at someone then turning and biting you, biting you is less stressful, more to the point is that there is an association to stress and biting you. Another situation that can occur is when a dog has had conflict produced from one high ranked pack or family member, aggression can be re-directed to another family member.

Hierarchy

Equal opportunity and equal rights are exercised daily throughout our lives. With women and men deemed to be of equal standing in workplace and home. A point of view of ours is not shared by the canine world, where the strongest survives and propagates. You see, only the Alpha male and Alpha female will mate in a pack and there are continuous battles of supremacy throughout a dog's life in a pack. With these two fundamentally different ways of thinking, there is bound to be a clash, especially with a dose of Anthropomorphism thrown in. The problems only start when we treat dogs as equals, we have to treat them as their hierarchy determines, below the family members.

Dominance can be unwittingly created as a puppy by reinforcing inappropriate behaviours, and creating situations where the puppy can establish an elevated hierarchy position or perceived position.

From the behaviours described previously, dominance and power in an animal can be learnt. Lack of clarity can set a foundation of dominance through the reinforcement of redirected and conflict aggression. So the conflict aggression teaches the dog strength, which corresponds to dominance later on. I wonder why more people do not get bitten.

Reinforcement of inappropriate behaviour

This is behaviour that begins as play and elevates to dominance behaviour. There are a number of areas that this can develop. The first is when the pup is in the mouthy stage and he starts to grab anything on you that he can, now remember this is fine. However, you have to grit your teeth and bear it, or transfer the pup onto another object like a toy. If you scream and pull away, the pup learns OH! Look at that, and will repeat the behaviour and learn strength over you by doing so.

Another behaviour that can establish dominance is leaving food continuously with the pup. This is bad because the pup does not learn where its daily food comes from; it takes it for granted that it just appears there. Therefore has no survival connection with you. So what should you do? Just take and place the appropriate amount of food with the pup until finished. The appropriate amount of times per day.

Obedience

Obedience in dogs should not start generally until 5 or 6 months of age, and this is where a good foundation must be set. Unless it is done correctly, with clarity, you can set yourself up for problems much later. Obedience or not to do obedience, this is a much debated area of discussion which ultimately is your decision. Obedience started at a younger age **correctly**, will help keep dominance at a usable level. Also, consider that starting at a young age also can limit the availability of drive for working in adulthood. It has been noted that dogs left until later to start obedience have a much higher level of working ability. In addition, the obedience that you put in at that stage must be very clear otherwise, problems will occur and elevate very quickly. The best and easiest way is to have the breeder assess you and your pup on a predetermined schedule. Mistakes are going to be made; there is nothing wrong with that, just let your trainer or breeder know at each training session. This way, they can be rectified and your level of knowledge increased accordingly.



True Working Dogs

A breeders Point Of View

Copywrite Kris Kotsopoulos

The heart of a strong working dog is the foundation upon which the rest of its temperament depends. It is the essence of the animal. All of the dog's real power and strength depends on the depth and quality of two elements, a dog's nerve and resilience. These two qualities are vital to the success of any working dog.

The aim of this article is not to teach details about genetics but to prompt breeders and the community to take a deeper look at issues involved in our current breeding practises. The lack of understanding surrounding the field of breeding is not merely an Australian problem but a universal one. I have been fortunate enough to travel extensively, spending time with some of the foremost breeders and dog trainers from around world. Through my experiences it has become apparent that unless we as breeders do something drastic with our current breeding systems, our beloved working breeds will completely die off.

It has been proven beyond reasonable doubt that crossing of dogs bred specifically for showing with working dogs, does not work. Show dogs are breed for showing. Working dogs are breed for work. Both lines require different attributes in order to excel in their chosen field. To simply mate the two in the hope of breeding a good-looking working dog is both unrealistic and ineffective. Instead, breeders need to take a more methodical approach to breeding. They should take note of their breeding stock and work toward breeding dogs that are both sound in body and functional instead of breeding at either end of the scale. Having said that, I for one will never consciously lower the working standard of my stock just because they should look better, however, I am always searching for that extraordinary animal that will still give the right working behaviour and also improve on my current structure.

How do we do this?

When selecting a dog, one must be sure that the breeders stock does actually come from working bloodlines. There is a significant difference between Working and show bloodlines. In the late sixties there was a split in the breeding done in Germany the result of which was a complete difference in the structure and temperament of the two bloodlines. The reason a distinct difference eventually developed was because of the selection that show/working breeders made is their breeding stock. Without doubt, the show dogs are very impressive to look at. And this is why 95 % of breeding done anywhere in the world today is for show. Since 1970 we have grown up and led to believe that they are the true **Working German Shepherd**.

One of the main problems any breeder faces, is determining the quality of a dog /dogs in a new bloodline – particularly when the dog is an import, and most probably comes from a bloodline that is unrelated or unknown. We are then faced with the reality of accepting what the vendor or importer says as the truth. Problem being, we are dependent on what I call the evolutionary understanding of what a quality dog is. The differences from individual to individual may vary considerably. Therefore, the direction of a breeding program is directly proportional to the selection of behavioural and structural characteristics a breeder decides to breed on.

Selection of appropriate characteristics is of vital importance to anyone wishing to breed working dogs. However, due to the varying levels of understanding of canine attributes amongst breeders, people will interpret what others claim about a particular attribute/s in many different ways. Therefore, the best things one can do are to see and test the dogs first hand. This will immediately give you an indication of where the dog's strengths and weaknesses lay. If it is possible to see and test the dog's siblings, then do so. This will give you an indication of whether or not there is some form of consistency in the line, which incidentally is critical.

As a breeder of working dogs, I will elaborate on what I believe to be the traits that are desirable for any one attempting to breed genetically superior dogs.

Firstly, the dog must have an uncomplicated view of its world and must function for the purpose for which it was bred – "service". It must be useful for the individual or family as a companion and guardian. Equally, it should be serviceable to Law Enforcement personal regardless of the field of expertise. Bear in mind, it is not possible to achieve this in a dog without the appropriate genetics and the probability of getting a good serviceable dog without the appropriate genetics is very low, if not impossible.

Having said the above one must realize that show and working lines derived from the same lines prior to the split. So there are times when some show dogs do in fact display all the traits required by a working dog. One example of such a dog was Cliff v d Huhnegrab SchH 111 (Schutzhund 3). Cliff was considered to be an excellent dog of show stock and was highly respected as a working dog. However, just because the dog possessed the skills of a working dog, does not necessarily mean he has the ability to produce working dogs. A Schutzhund title does not mean the dog is a working dog, (bloodline determines that) it simply means it complied with a system of training that, these days, can be achieved by very skilled and talented trainers. Cliff went on to produce nothing of working value to the German shepherd breed despite his incredible talent in Schutzhund.

What is Schutzhund?



The word Schutzhund exactly translated from German to English means "**Protection Dog**". This literal translation is somewhat misleading, as there is much more to Schutzhund than just protection. Today in the USA, Europe, UK, Ireland, South Africa, Japan, Philippines, New Zealand and Australia Schutzhund is a fast growing competitive dog sport. It has been extremely popular in Europe since the early 1900's.

It gives breeders and trainers alike the ability to test their dogs to determine if the temperament is correct and also view their working ability for breeding suitability. The training involves three phases, Tracking, Obedience and Character Assessment. For your dog to be eligible to compete in the sport he must first undergo what is known as a BH. If this test is passed the dog is eligible to compete in schutthund one, two and three. Two and three being more advanced levels.

How do you tell a good working dog from a show dog?



Asa v Haus Gebets, Imported USA (East German Working Breeding)

There is a way of being able to determine show stock from working stock. Firstly, their bloodlines are different as they took on a different path from that of working dogs. Someone who is familiar with bloodlines can ascertain the difference between working and show dogs by looking at the pedigree of the dog in question.

Secondly, working lines are very different in appearance. For Example, Working dogs are also darkly pigmented and are shaped differently.

To highlight this point, there is an unwritten law amongst the top working dog breeders around the world that states, **"When you loose pigment, you are loosing working ability."**

In other words, they believe that the moment your breeding stock start to get lighter in pigment, chances are that you are loosing the working qualities you are striving for.

Desired traits for superior working dogs

When you eventually find the right lines, there are certain important traits to look for in working dogs. Traits that are heritable. In order for a dog to be successful as a breeding tool here are some traits it should posses.

- a) **An enthusiastic and untiring desire to chase and retrieve objects.** It is the instinct to chase that we are looking for not the fixation on one item such as ball.
- b) **A confident attitude in any given situation.**
- c) **A sound temperament and a sound structure.**

Aggression: This is a Grey area for most people as there are many types of aggression, for example, pain, fear, genetically inherited and so on. When looking at aggression exhibited by dogs, behaviourists advise that there are over 50 medical reasons for aggression. Therefore, it is wise to have an understanding of the medical reasons simply to help rule out some of the causes for the dog's aggression. For example, I know of a particular line that produces some particularly aggressive dogs. However it was later found that these dogs had elbow problems, and that most of the aggressive behaviour was actually pain induced.

It is important to remember: Aggression and Fear are somewhat related. It is said that fearfulness and sensitivity have a high likelihood of being inherited. Interestingly, fear appears to be inherited more from the male than the female based on a study conducted the "Guide Dogs Association".

- a) **Food Motivation:** A normal response to food as opposed to excessive response is desirable. Excessiveness seems to be linked to insecurity and generates speed, which conflicts with clarity.
- b) **Self-confidence:** reaction in any situation and recovery to stress.
- c) **Prey Drive:** every decent puppy and most dogs have "prey drive" (the desire to chase for example a ball). However, it is the strength of the response that is important (the level of commitment in chasing the ball).

- d) **Eye Contact:** puppies and dogs should like and want to make eye contact naturally. This denotes self-confidence.
- e) **Grip:** The depth, hardness, and calmness of the bite during training. (Be aware that a hard grip can also be a result of fear-based aggression, which is undesirable).
- f) **Social Confidence:** How they react to people and their environment.
- g) **Pain Threshold:** How they react to pain and the speed at which they recover from that pain with no detrimental side effects. In other words I like a dog that is uncomplicated.
- h) **Willingness:** Eagerness to perform tasks without resistance.
- i) **Nerve:** The ability to endure stress without any adverse physical or psychological effects. This is probably the most important aspect of a Working Dog. Without this you have nothing.

Having decided which animals to select as breeding stock for the production of the next generation, the breeder has to decide which breeding system to use. In other words which male to mate with which female and why.

This is an incredibly detailed subject that is worthy of an entire article of its own. However, balance is probably one of the most important aspects a breeder should look at.

Conclusion:

In all the years that I have been involved with dogs, I have realized one very important thing - it is very difficult to be a working dog breeder without being a trainer/helper. This is because training enables you to measure your working breeding progress. Of course, if you have access to very talented helpers/trainers with a wealth of experience it can help, however, the reality is that breeders outnumber skilled trainers/helpers many times over. Therefore, it is advisable for anyone interested in breeding to learn as much as possible about training as you may not always be able to rely on help from others.

Breeders need to work together for the common goal of improving the German Shepherd, Dobermann, Rottweiler and Malinois working lines to bring back many of the former traits lost over the last 30 years.

Expertise in breeding and training comes from many years of experience, lots of hard work in testing and evaluating literally thousands of dogs. It is my hope that in the future, breeders begin to pool their efforts and work towards breeding better dogs for the purpose they were originally intended - **"WORK!"**

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