



# Pet Behavior Counseling

*Helping you and your pet become best friends for life.*

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## **SELECTING A DOG BEHAVIOR CONSULTANT**

A Certified Dog Behavior Consultant (CDBC) will assist you in resolving your dog's problem behaviors. Typical behavior problems they deal with include aggression and biting, separation anxiety, inappropriate urination and defecation, obsessive compulsive behaviors, food or toy guarding, fears and phobias and other stress related behaviors.

A Certified Dog Behavior Consultant is different than a dog trainer. While a CDBC will be able to assist you with dog training issues, dog trainers, even those that are Certified Pet Dog Trainers (CPDT), are not necessarily qualified to deal with problems such as aggression, fears, phobias and anxiety. Training typically focuses on teaching a dog desirable behaviors and good manners like sitting on a cue, not jumping on people, walking nicely on a leash, and coming when called. A dog training class will seldom resolve behavior problems such as fear, anxiety or aggression and in fact is more likely to make those types of problems worse. Behavior counseling focuses on the animal's emotional state rather than looking only at teaching behaviors. Usually it is the dog's emotional state that is causing them to act out inappropriately.

Sadly there are a wide range of people claiming to be pet behavior counselors or animal behaviorists who do not have the requisite knowledge to truly and effectively help people and their pets. You would not select a heart surgeon who was not properly board certified in their field and it is equally unwise to select a pet behavior counselor without credentials.

There are three levels of qualified professionals that assist pets with behavioral problems who can legitimately claim to be certified. The level that is most accessible to people are practitioners who have been credentialed as Certified Dog Behavior Consultants (CDBC) or Certified Animal Behavior Consultants (CABC) by the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants. Those credentialed by the IAABC must demonstrate competency in counseling skills and social systems assessment, behavioral science, a general knowledge of animal behavior, genetics, neuropsychology, ethology and species-specific knowledge of healthcare, nutrition, husbandry, and behavior. Those certified are required to accumulate continuing education units on a regular basis. These individuals focus on the use of behavior modification protocols to treat animals.

The next tier of pet behavior counselors is Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists (CAAB). These individuals are credentialed by the Animal Behavior Society and typically have doctoral degrees in animal behavior or related fields. They focus on more difficult cases and the use of behavior modification protocols to treat animals. There are approximately 43 such individuals in the United States.

At the top level are those who are credentialed by the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists. A Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists uses the initials DACVB after their name. These are veterinarians who have completed an approved residency program in veterinary behavior and have passed a national board examination in that discipline. A board certified Veterinary Behaviorist specializes in clinical animal behavior and is able to diagnose and treat medical and behavioral problems, as well as prescribe medications to treat those problems. There are approximately 35 such individuals in the United States, most of them in larger cities, major universities or veterinary schools.

Green Acres' Don Hanson is a Certified Dog Behavior Consultant. Don is also a Bach Foundation Registered Practitioner (BFRP) animal specialist. This means he has completed the required courses and examinations to be credentialed by the Dr. Edward Bach Foundation in the use of the Bach Flower Remedies for the treatment of animals.