Lacy - Fear and Anxiety

When treating an animal with the Bach Flower Remedies it is important to do a thorough evaluation of the animal, its environment and the behaviors of concern prior to selecting the appropriate Bach Flower Remedies. The behaviors being treated may be very similar, but the remedies selected may vary depending on different factors. Even if your pet’s case seems very similar to this case study, the remedies used here may not be the best choice for your pet.

If your pet has bitten or is seriously threatening to bite, you need to be working with a qualified animal behavior professional. For information on locating such a person, check the Consultation section of this web site at www.bachflowersforpets.com.

Biographical Information

At the time of the initial consultation, Lacy was a 3 year and 3 month old, spayed female, Flat Coat Retriever/Labrador Retriever mix seen in consultation on May 14, 2003. Her veterinarian provided a written referral for Lacy to participate in this field study on May 8, 2003.

Lacy is an especially interesting case because I have known her since she was an 8- week- old puppy. She attended our Puppy
Kindergarten and Basic Behaviors Plus classes and has been a regular (1 to 2
days a week) in our doggie daycare program since that time.

Lacy presented with severe hip dysplasia and had a femoral head ostectomy on
both hips when she was 19 months old. Based on my limited experience of
having been able to observe three other dogs that have undergone this
procedure, Lacy’s recovery seemed slower and more difficult than the others
have.

While Lacy had always played well with all other dogs at playtime, since her
surgery she has been much less predictable, and has occasionally shown
aggressive behavior towards other dogs in her playgroups. Her guardian Bonnie
had also commented that Lacy’s behavior at home had also changed.

**Discussed During Initial Phone Consult**

Knowing of Lacy’s behavioral issues, I asked Bonnie if she and Lacy would like
to participate in a field study of the Bach Flower Remedies. During the initial
consultation, I explained the following.

1. A veterinary referral is required.
2. Bach Flower Remedies are used to treat behavioral/emotional issues and
   not physical illness.
3. Bach Flower Remedies will not interfere with other medications that Lacy
   is receiving.
4. I reviewed the process for bringing Lacy in for her consultation to ensure
   safety and comfort of all concerned. I expected Lacy to react to the
   presence of a stranger with a video camera in the training room.

**Behavioral Consultation**

Bonnie and Lacy arrived for our consultation on May 14, 2003. A videographer
videotaped the consultation. The consultation was conducted in the Green
Acres training room. Both the Videographer and I were in the training room as
Bonnie and Lacy entered.

Bonnie indicated that she had two primary concerns with Lacy’s behavior; 1) Lacy
will not recall reliably when off leash and 2) Lacy exhibits anxiety when:

- people come to their home
- in the presence of loud vibrating noises
- in the car
- when encountering cars on her walks
Lacy exhibited anxiety at the videographer presence in the training room during most of the consultation. Almost constant barking and pacing were observed. Lacy did however distract easily out of the situation when I offered her treats, which I did frequently so our voices could be heard on the tape. Bonnie indicated the behavior around the videographer was very typical of what they see when they have visitors in their home.

We first discussed Lacy’s failure to recall, as Bonnie was the most concerned about this issue. Based on our discussion, my observations of Lacy, and my knowledge of Lacy, I explained that this was primarily a training problem and provided Bonnie with a copy of our Recall handout.

We then discussed Lacy’s anxiety issues. Based on information provided on the questionnaires, information provided by Bonnie, observation of Lacy at the consultation, observation of Lacy at Daycare by Green Acres staff, and personal observations of Lacy at Daycare, I recommended the following remedies:

- **Aspen & Mimulus** are both remedies for fear and anxiety. Many of the behavioral issues we discussed about Lacy appear to be fear driven. These include her reactions to people coming over, sounds and vibrations, people and dogs walking by, rides in the car, and lunging at cars while on walks.

- **Beech** is a remedy for intolerance and irritability and can be helpful for those pets who are overly sensitive to sound, sight and touch. Lacy was described as being very sensitive to sound and vibration, which also appears to feed her anxiety.

- **Scleranthus** is a remedy for unpredictability, mood swings, and difficulty making decisions. As we have observed, Lacy’s behavior with other dogs can be unpredictable and her mood changes quickly when playing.

- **Star of Bethlehem** is a remedy used for severe shock or trauma, whether recent or in the past. Bonnie indicated that Lacy’s hip surgery was a significantly traumatic event for her and that many of the behavior problems showed up after the surgery or became which more pronounced after the surgery.

This information was provided to Bonnie in printed form, along with dosing instructions, and with a treatment bottle of the appropriate remedies.

**Follow-Up**

Since Lacy was a regular Daycare client, she and Bonnie were at Green Acres almost once every week. This made follow-up easy.
05/28/03 – Bonnie reports Lacy is doing very well at home. She is no longer barking when kids come in the morning for school. Overall Lacy seems more relaxed and is sleeping better at night. Green Acres Pet Care Technician BM reports that Lacy is doing much better at Daycare and did very well today when out with her usual Daycare playgroup.

06/10/03 – Bonnie reports there have possibly some setbacks. Lacy is still not barking as much as she did in the past, but suddenly seems afraid of her food dish when she can see the bottom of bowl. I suggested Bonnie try a different bowl and the problem resolved. Green Acres staff indicate Lacy continues to do much better at Daycare.

07/23/03 – Bonnie reports Lacy is doing much better overall. Specifically, Lacy is much less reactive to new things, and has been exposed to several over the summer. She is doing very well when meeting other dogs at their camp and has had no aggressive incidents. Lacy is much less stressed during storms, and rather than running and hiding will stay with the family during the storm. Green Acres kennel staff report Lacy is doing very well with other dogs at playtime. She is much more tolerant and is exhibiting no aggressive behavior. Today a male dog sniffed her. In the past this would have resulted in lots of barking followed by lunging and snapping. Today it resulted in one quick bark and that was it. Bonnie and I agreed she would finish using the second bottle of remedies and then see what happens.

08/04/03 – Lacy is doing very well; however, they are going on vacation and there will be many new things going on, so I prepared a 3rd bottle and advised Bonnie to use it if needed. Post vacation reports indicate Lacy did exceedingly well. I advised Bonnie I want to know how well she does after school starts, as the kids coming and going were a major trigger to her behavior.

09/03/03 – School in session and Lacy doing very well.

10/29/03 – I asked Bonnie for feedback on how Lacy was doing in the five areas we discussed at our consultation. She indicated that Lacy has improved when people come into their home or on their property, has improved in the car, and has improved when encountering cars on her walks. Bonnie says Lacy is greatly improved in the presence of loud and vibrating noises. Both Bonnie and Green Acres kennel staff report Lacy’s interaction with other dogs at playtime is greatly improved.

Today when of the local TV stations interviewed me, Bonnie, Bonnie’s daughter Rhonda and Lacy on behavior consultation and the use of the Bach Flower Remedies. Lacy was very relaxed for the interview as compared to the anxiety she exhibited towards the camera and videographer at her consultation.

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