

ANIMAL BEHAVIOR CONSULTANTS OF THE CHESAPEAKE, LLC

Connecting people and their pets

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Enrichment Categories and Schedules

- Enrichment is important and fundamental to animal welfare and health. It provides opportunity for animals to behave and to have increased control over the environment. In other words, we want to create environments where the animal has the power to use behavior for effect - to get reinforcement (rewards, something it likes).
- Enrichment is often defined as environmental changes that allow animals to exhibit species typical behaviors. But in a captive setting, it should be this and much more. It's okay to allow them to do non-typical behaviors as well...to do new things in new ways. Anything that helps to increase the behavioral repertoire of the animal.
- Creating enriching environments takes some thought and focus. Categorizing enrichment and ensuring that new enrichment opportunities are available daily will help ensure that enrichment doesn't cease when schedules get busy. As always, the caregiver must monitor the animal's response to enrichment to understand what is appropriate for any given animal.
- There are various ways to categorize enrichment, and many fall in more than one category. One example is below, feel free to make your own. Putting enrichment into a planned weekly rotation can make it easier to implement enrichment programs. Just as planning meals ahead of time can reduce the likelihood you will snack on foods you're trying to avoid, planning enrichment ahead of time makes it easier to actually do!
- The schedule should represent the minimum obviously you may have time and desire to do so much more. But a schedule helps ensure at least a few things get changed daily!
- You may find it easier to approach the schedule as part of a training tool for yourself. Implement it for a few weeks to get into the habit and then perhaps you fade it out and see if you can maintain your new behavior of providing more enrichment. In a month or two, if enrichment has dropped off, you can do a schedule again.

The following are examples only. Please add/modify in ways that make sense to you. I would greatly appreciate learning about what you do!

Foraging, formal training, and deliberate reinforcement should ideally happen daily for most animals

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Enrichment Categories

Type of Enrichment	Wild behavior examples	What I can do
Food (obtaining/eating)	Foraging	Multiple bowls Covering food bowls Wooden beads in bowls Hanging food items Puzzle toys
Sensory	Seeing Hearing Feeling Tasting Smelling?	Foot toys Sm amts of novel/rarely encounter flavors Different types of perches Music Bathing
Social	Grooming (self/other) Sleeping Playing Parenting	Bathing (shower, pool) Vocal exchanges Training session
Physical/Structural	Destroy material with beak (esp as foraging or nest building) Climbing Flying Walking	Vary perches – types and location Modify play gym location/orientation Flight practice/recall Climbing cargo net
Occupational	Retrieving items Discarding items	Practice moving items in cage Train fetch Train clean up
Learning (training)	Learn from experience (operant conditioning)	Formal training sessions (at least 5 min daily) to maintain or increase specific behavior Deliberate reinforcement of desired behavior outside of session

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Enrichment Schedule

Day	Category/Item	Notes (reaction, other)
Sunday		
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		

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One final tip to help you “attend” to behavior you WANT from your animal.

Concept:

Attend to behavior you want. If you reinforce the behavior you do want, you’ll get more of it.

Action:

It’s hard to remember to actually do this. So much easier to pay attention to the animal when it does something that intrudes into your thoughts – generally by doing something inappropriate such as barking. In order to overcome this tendency, try this game.

Get two bowls and place 10 candies (or whatever you want to use) in one bowl. Each time you ‘catch your animal being good’ move a candy to the other bowl. Make sure you’ve moved them all by the end of your designated time period (such as after you get home and before you go to bed). If it’s 5 minutes before bed and you’ve only moved 3 candies, then you’re going to do some rapid fire reinforcement. That’s fine. If you like candy, then reward yourself by eating them once you’re done. ☺

Repeat this one or two times daily for a two weeks. See if you’ve improved your ability to notice your animal being good. And if your animal is doing more of behaviors you want (which you may notice because it’s doing less of the behavior you don’t want).

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Inspiration On-line

Combination of free and for profit sites for information, inspiration, and application

http://www.clemetzoo.com/animal_plant/enrichment/enrichmentpets.asp

great application of more formal enrichment plans for pets. click on the links to take you to more detailed information about pet enrichment plans to help you fine tune your thoughts for your pet

<http://www.parrotenrichment.com/>

parrot enrichment ideas, including foraging and training. pdf enrichment “books” to help inspire you (go to the book link). These books are referenced by many other sites. Lots of how to advice and ways to take regular objects and make them into great enrichment objects. Wonderful foraging advice.

<http://www.birdsjustwannahavefun.com/>

good toys, good ideas, good safety information

<http://foragingforparrots.com/>

foraging ideas for you to try

<http://estarbird.com/>

parrot enrichment objects, particularly the climbing nets (“get a grip”)

<http://www.caitec.com/>

parrot and other animal enrichment objects, including puzzle feeders

Captive Foraging DVD by M Scott Echols, DVM

Available on various websites, excellent ideas on integrating foraging into how you feed the basic diet

<http://www.onafricanwings.com/playtime.htm>

helpful ideas