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BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION STRATEGIES

1. Remove the cause - digging - an example

ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT - ONE ALTERNATIVE TO PUNISHMENT

This is a post a made to Facebook, in reply to someone with a Cattle Dog that was digging up her back yard. The dog was left outside while they went to work.

"I agree with the general comments of others. Definitely, dogs do not dig out of spite. They do it because they are bored, to relieve stress, or simply because it is fun.

I find generally it is easier to teach a dog to behave inside the house than it is to deal with all the problems that are created by putting them outside (such as digging, destructive chewing and nuisance barking). However, I do understand that they need to learn to be outside some of the time.

All the environmental enrichment strategies (a digging pit, scattering food on the lawn, many available activity toys etc) will help give your dog something to do instead of digging up the garden. But you need to address the issue of stress. Sometimes have the dogs inside, but teach them to settle down on a mat. In the warmer weather, go into the back yard and sit around having a drink, so it is a shared living area for you and your dog. Not a place of banishment and isolation. Sometimes, instead of going out for a walk, play some active games, maybe fetch or tug, with your dog, or do a bit of fun tricks training, so the message is "good stuff happens in the back yard" not just when they go out."