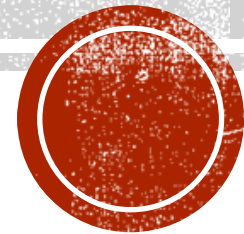


# WHAT THERAPY ANIMALS SHOULD LOOK LIKE!

Risë VanFleet, PhD, RPT-S, CDBC  
International Institute for Animal Assisted Play Therapy®



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR  
Animal  
Assisted  
Play Therapy®

Silhouettes of a horse and a dog, with a red ball between them, positioned to the left of the text.

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- IIAAPT – PO Box 613, Boiling Springs, Pennsylvania, USA. Risë VanFleet, PhD, RPT-S, CDBC, Founder and President, [rise@risevanfleet.com](mailto:rise@risevanfleet.com).

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# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

- Risë VanFleet, PhD, RPT-S, CDBC is a child/family psychologist, a registered play therapist-supervisor, and a certified dog behavior consultant with 45 years of experience in a variety of roles. She sees clients for psychotherapy, works with dogs with behavioral issues, and conducts and teaches Animal Assisted Play Therapy™.
- Dr. VanFleet is well-known internationally for her professional workshops and writing about a number of play therapy topics, Filial Therapy, dog behavior/training, traumatized animals, and Animal Assisted Play Therapy® (a field she co-founded and developed with Tracie Faa-Thompson of the UK).
- She has been given 14 state, national, and international awards for her teaching and writing. For example, she received the Pennsylvania Psychological Association's *Distinguished Contributions to the Science and Profession of Psychology Award*, as well as several Maxwell Awards and Special Awards for her writing from the Dog Writers Association of America.
- She is the author of dozens of books, articles, chapters, and video-based online courses. Her most recent book, coauthored with Tracie Faa-Thompson, is the acclaimed and Maxwell Award-winning *Animal Assisted Play Therapy*, published by Professional Resource Press.





# WHY THIS DOCUMENT?

- Far too often, we see photos and videos of therapy animals on the internet that suggest considerable stress in the animals. Many of these stressed images are followed by comments about how cute the animal is, apparently with little realization of what the animal is communicating through his or her body language.
- We know that people love their animals and mean well as they share them in various therapy programs. Some are involved in volunteer programs while others work with their animals in a professional therapy or educational context.
- Recently on facebook, I commented on the importance of learning animal body language so that we can ensure that our animals are enjoying the work we ask them to do and so we can advocate for our animals at the earliest moment that we recognize that they are showing signs of stress.
- In response to this, someone asked me where they could see photos of what therapy animals look like when they are enjoying their work. I posted some that I had, and it was so popular that I decided to formalize it into this document, in case it might be helpful to others.

--Risë

# LEARNING MORE ABOUT BODY LANGUAGE

- When we work with any species in Animal Assisted Interventions (AAI), we need to learn to read their body language fluently. This helps us take action to alleviate the sources of stress as early as possible.
- This helps with risk management and assures our attention to animal welfare.
- It also can be useful when working with clients to help them develop their empathy for animals.
- This document is not intended to be a study of body language – there are many good resources for that, some of which are listed at the end on the Resources pages.
- At IIAAPT, we have online courses about body language, and those will be listed in the Resources section as well.
- The focus of this document is simply to provide some images that show what animals look like when they are enjoying their roles in therapy.





It is one of the REQUIREMENTS of Animal Assisted Play Therapy™ that the animals truly ENJOY it, not merely tolerate it. Therapists must understand body language fluently so that they can tell the difference.

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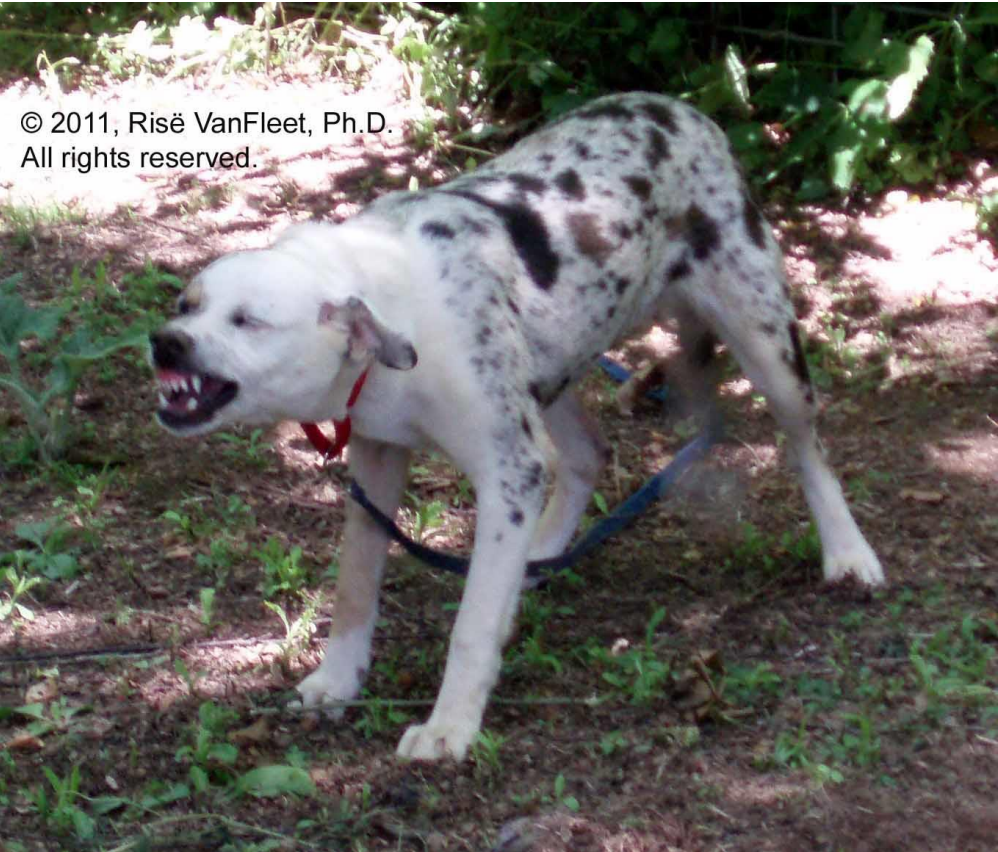
# WHAT DID YOU SEE IN THE PHOTO ON THE PREVIOUS SLIDE?



- In the photo on the previous page, Josie Patches was waiting for a client to teach her a new trick – how to unroll the “magic carpet.” She is sitting patiently, tail slowly wagging, body forward, ears forward but relaxed, eyes soft while watching what is going on. She is basically relaxed, but alert, completely engrossed in what is going on. She is allowed to set her own distance, not crowded, no leash or other device holding her in place.
- In most volunteer, visitation-type programs, leashes are required, such as for visits to hospitals. This makes sense for those programs, and the key is to keep the leashes loose at all times, and for people not to be tugging them or pulling them around.
- In our AAPT work, we need to work with more freedom for the animals, so we typically do not have the dogs on leash or horses on a rope very much at all.

# STRESS CAN CHANGE THE WHOLE APPEARANCE OF AN ANIMAL

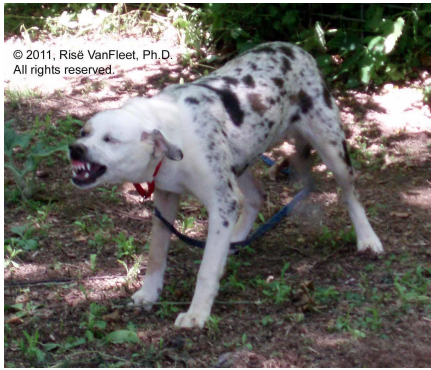
**BEFORE: STRESSED**



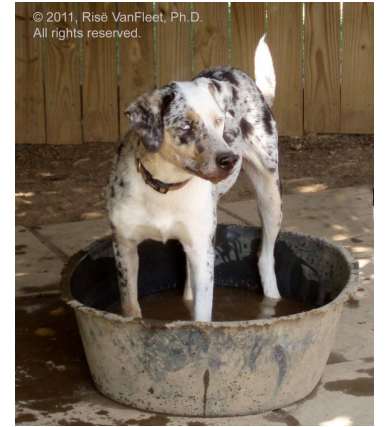
**AFTER: CONFIDENT**







## PICTURES ON THE PREVIOUS SLIDE



- Believe it or not, this is the same dog under two different environmental conditions.
- The first picture is after the dog was removed from a very bad situation and was brought into a rescue. She is showing lots of stress signals and appeasement behaviors to communicate, “I mean no harm, please don’t hurt me.”
- These stress signals include the ears back, tail tucked and wagging tightly (so you almost can’t see it in this still shot), squinty eyes, mouth showing all the teeth while commissures (where upper & lower lips meet) are drawn way back, entire body leaning backward, stiff body, body orienting away from the person standing with the camera.
- The second picture is after several weeks of living in a safe environment where no aversive methods were used to correct or scold. This dog bounced back quickly (not all do), and developed more confidence, as depicted in the second photo: tail at mid-range and relaxed, ears perked forward, eyes open and soft while watching something of interest, mouth relaxed and dripping after drinking water, stance is squarely over the feet.



# SOME PICTURES FROM THE INTERNET

- These show animals who are not enjoying what is happening, as seen in their stress signals and body language. Can you see the signs? If not, some of the resources in the back of this document are likely to be helpful as you continue your journey learning about the ways that animals communicate their feelings and reactions. (Images had been shared publicly, but I have removed identifying information to protect privacy.)





# AND A COUPLE MORE FROM THE INTERNET

Edited to remove any identifying information.



Do you see the signs of stress in the body language of these dogs?  
What do you notice about the environment that might relate to their reactions?

# DIFFERENT SPECIES CAN BE STRESSED IN THERAPY





# PREVIOUS 3 SLIDES

- These photos are taken from the internet (publicly posted), where people reacted with laughter or with comments about how wonderful the situation was. This is likely because they were looking at them from a human point of view and not the animals' points of view. They are included here for educational purposes only.
- The pictures were altered to protect the privacy of the people in them or the program being portrayed, and we must note that we do not know the full context under which the photos were taken. All we can say is that at the moment the photos were taken, the animals were displaying stress signals that most of the people who commented on the pictures seemed unaware of.
- The pictures show human behaviors that often are stressful to animals, such as hugging or lying on dogs, writing on animals, surrounding and crowding animals, using tight ropes or leashes, extensive and uncomfortable equipment to allow the therapy to occur, and dressing up animals who don't want to be dressed up.
- Before turning our attention to what therapy animals look like when they are enjoying themselves, I will share a few photos of my own that illustrate stress reactions. I will provide the context for these photos.

# SOME PHOTOS I'VE TAKEN OF STRESS IN ANIMALS

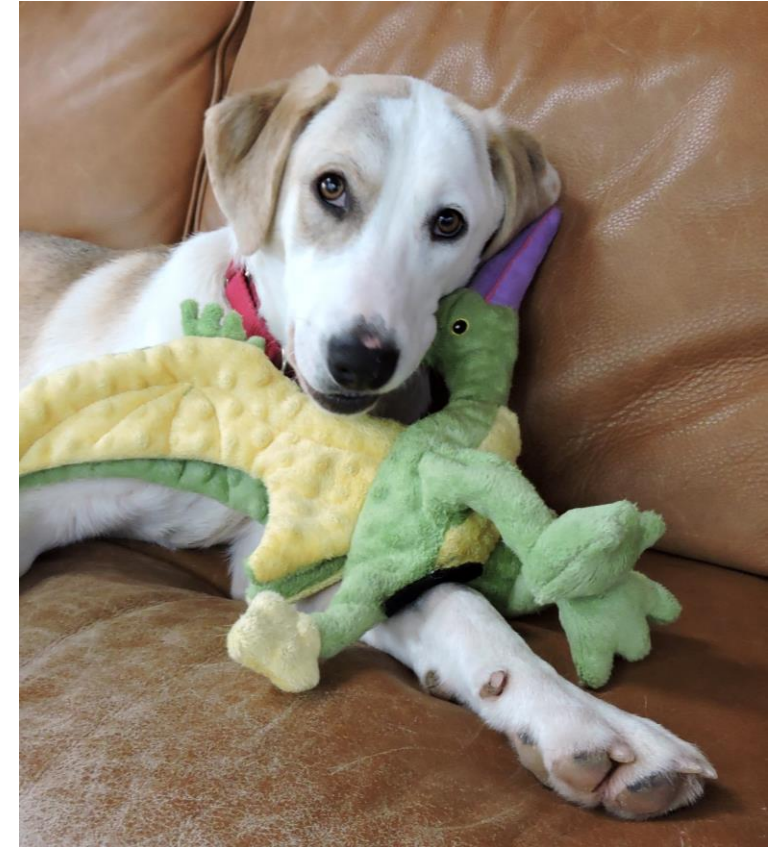
- These photos were taken by the author of horses presented by others as therapy horses or equine therapy prospects. At this point in time, these horses are showing that they were not at all interested in or appropriate for therapy work.
- The horse on the left showed no interest in the people who entered the field. He moved away and kept himself at this distance. He had poor associations with people and was pretty switched off when they were around. He chose to avoid them. The horse on the right is highly stressed (notice pinned ears, tense facial and neck muscles). A single person approached him but did not touch him while he was eating. (The hand was kept at least 12-18 inches away, and present for just a few seconds). He had previously been trained with pressure-and-release methods and was very wary of people, especially in the presence of food.





# INTRODUCING KIRRIE AND MURRIE

- Kirrie and Murrie are stable, happy dogs with whom I have a great two-way relationship. I'm putting typical photos of them here so you can see what they usually look like. In the 4 slides that follow, I did some minor things to add stress to our interaction, and you will be able to see how they react.
- This was done for educational purposes only and should not be repeated by others. I know these dogs extremely well, and I knew that a very short interaction like this would not have lasting effects because we just don't do these things. Plus, they were paid handsomely for their efforts with scratches, treats, and play.





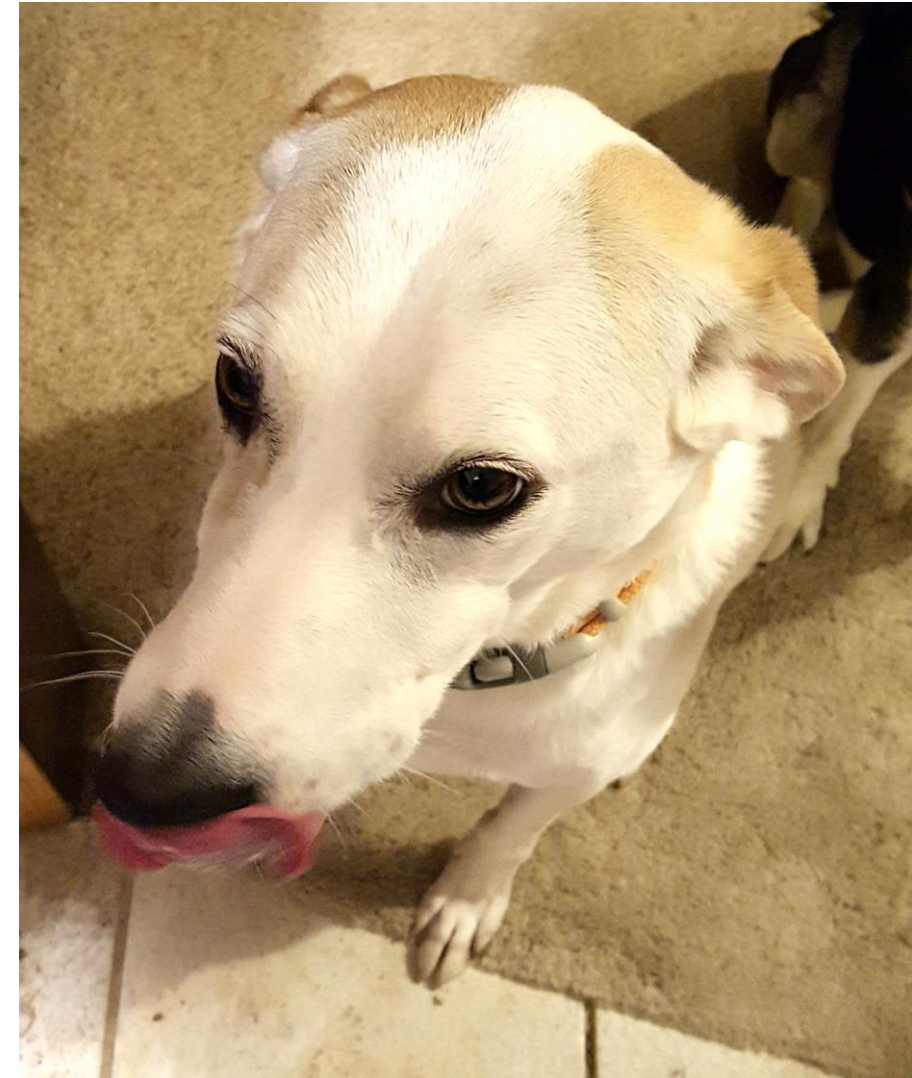
# DOG STRESS WITH A COMMON HUMAN BEHAVIOR



- This picture shows Murrie's reaction to "looming," meaning I was bent at the waist while facing him directly, leaning over him. I didn't touch him, nor speak to him, nor did I lean very far. Notice how his ears are lowered and pulled back, the round eyes and dilated pupils, the closed mouth. Most dogs do not like looming because it is far too direct for the ways that dogs usually communicate. Unfortunately, we humans do it all the time.
- Murrie has been trained using all positive reinforcement methods and loves being with people, but this simple act that is not dog-friendly brings this reaction. If a stable, well socialized dog reacts this way, how might dogs who are more stressed react? Because most dogs dislike looming, it's best if we and our clients avoid it entirely and instead approach less directly.
- Murrie was paid handsomely for participating in this 5-second "photo session."

# NOT A GUILTY DOG!

- Again, we see Murrie's ears lowered and pulled back. Also, he is doing a look-away (averting his gaze), with the pupils still dilated. He is engaging in a nose lick. These are all stress signals.
- The situation: I used a slightly displeased tone to say, "What did you do?" This is something I **never** do with him, but he recognized the tone of displeasure, even though I do not scold him at any other times. The photo was taken in just 5 seconds and then he was rewarded with lots of touch, treats, happy sounds, and a romp outdoors.
- This is what happens with all those "guilty dog" photos and videos. The dogs are reacting to the tone of voice, and probably do not have any idea about what is frustrating the humans!





# DRESS UP? MANY ANIMALS DON'T REALLY LIKE IT!



- I don't typically dress Kirrie up because I know she doesn't like it. For an educational "public service announcement" I very briefly put this crown on her, snapped a picture, and then gave her treats and some play outdoors.
- She has pulled her ears down and back (you can't really see that in the picture), closed her mouth, and tightened some of the muscles in her face. Katie, who has not seen the dogs in our family dressed up is sniffing, most likely out of curiosity. Immediately after this photo was taken, Kirrie shook this off and ran around freely (she had it on for 5 seconds).
- In Animal Assisted Play Therapy® we do not dress up any animals unless 3 conditions are met: (a) the animal has to LIKE it, (b) it cannot depersonalize the animal in any way, and (c) the activity must strengthen, not detract from, the relationship between human and animal. This rules out most dress-up in our work.



# HUGS: THEY DON'T MEAN THE SAME THING TO DOGS!

- Here's just one more of Murrie, taken a couple years ago, to illustrate the impact of hugs. He was paid handsomely for this, too.
- Humans love to hug dogs. Dogs are usually not so crazy about the round-the-neck type hugs.
- For more information, read the classic book, *The Other End of the Leash*, by Patricia McConnell.
- Sadly, hugs around the neck are the cause of many facial bites to children, so it's better to avoid them.
- Many dogs tolerate them, but they do not enjoy them. It's not a mutually enjoyable interaction!
- In the photo, I'm holding Murrie very loosely around the neck, just to get this photo for educational purposes.
- Murrie, who LOVES to be touched and petted, shows he is not keen on the hug: ears lowered, mouth closed, look away, and whale eye (the white showing at the side). (He has turned to look at a blank wall, not a person.)
- What do you think he did when I let go? He jumped down and away from me.



# ON TO OUR MAIN PURPOSE: WHAT DO WE WANT THERAPY ANIMALS TO LOOK LIKE WHEN THEY WORK WITH US?

- Now that we have covered some really basic elements of animal stress signals that might occur in therapy work of any kind, we urge you to do two things if you haven't already:
  - ✓ Go through a couple of the resources listed at the end of this document to learn more about body language, or find a similar and reputable resource for the species with which you live and work.
  - ✓ Begin observing your animals all the time for these signals. You'll probably notice more than you have in the past!
- In the slides that follow are photos of animals involved in work that they enjoy. Most of the photos were taken during workshops offered by the International Institute for Animal Assisted Play Therapy® where we demonstrate and teach how to recognize and react to stress signs in animals. The photos represent what might happen in therapy sessions as well. For all, we have written permission to share them to help educate others.
- As with the stressed animal photos, we can't really interpret accurately without a full knowledge of the context, but for each of the following photos, some of the context is provided.
- So, on to the photos of what we would like therapy animals to look like!



# WHAT THERAPY ANIMALS SHOULD LOOK LIKE



- In general, we want them to have the same appearance at home and at work.
- How we treat them at home shows up at work.
- Here are 4 dogs, asked to sit and stay, all showing relaxation and likely a bit of anticipation, as I often give them some treats after taking photos.
- Notice the soft eyes, open mouths on 3 of them, relaxed body postures, smooth foreheads, ears pricked forward.



# WHAT ABOUT EQUINES?

- Here we see Geronimo in the UK, showing some features that helped him become a lovely therapy horse despite his initial “cheekiness.”
- He is standing squarely over his feet, relaxed tail, ears forward (even though you can’t see them here), soft eye, and tossing the bucket around.
- Context: he and the other horses had finished eating, the buckets had been gathered, and he began picking them up and tossing them around.
- Playfulness is usually a sign that animals are relaxed. They do not play unless they are feeling safe.
- Geronimo’s playfulness served him well during the years he worked in Equine Assisted Play Therapy® with Tracie Faa-Thompson.



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# PREPPING ANIMALS -- FOR THE WORK

- Preparing animals to work with us means we create reciprocal, mutually-enjoyable relationships at home first.
- We also socialize them to other people, the work environment, and types of activities we might ask them to participate in.
- Left: Kirrie shows Murrie the ropes in the playroom before Murrie begins his AAPT work.
- Right: Murrie and Kirrie show Josie Patches the ropes.
- Note the relaxed faces, postures, ears forward, soft eyes.
- The dogs are not on leashes, as we train and socialize them properly so that they are under control, but have the freedom to move away as they wish—another way to ensure their enjoyment of the work at all times!



*As noted before, some programs require leashes, but those should always be kept loose, and the animals' desire to move away needs to be honored always.*



# A GOOD SIGN: ANIMALS CHOOSE TO BE PART OF THINGS

- We want therapy animals to truly enjoy the work and want to participate in it. This requires us to learn body language fluently to make sure we are seeing their true feelings.
- Pictured: Kirrie, a very sociable dog with wonderful play therapy skills, saw this group of professionals in an AAPT training program meeting as a small group to plan an activity. She saw a small opening on the ottoman and squeezed in between the two people sitting on it! While she has been trained to get down if asked, they were pleased that she so freely chose to join their group.



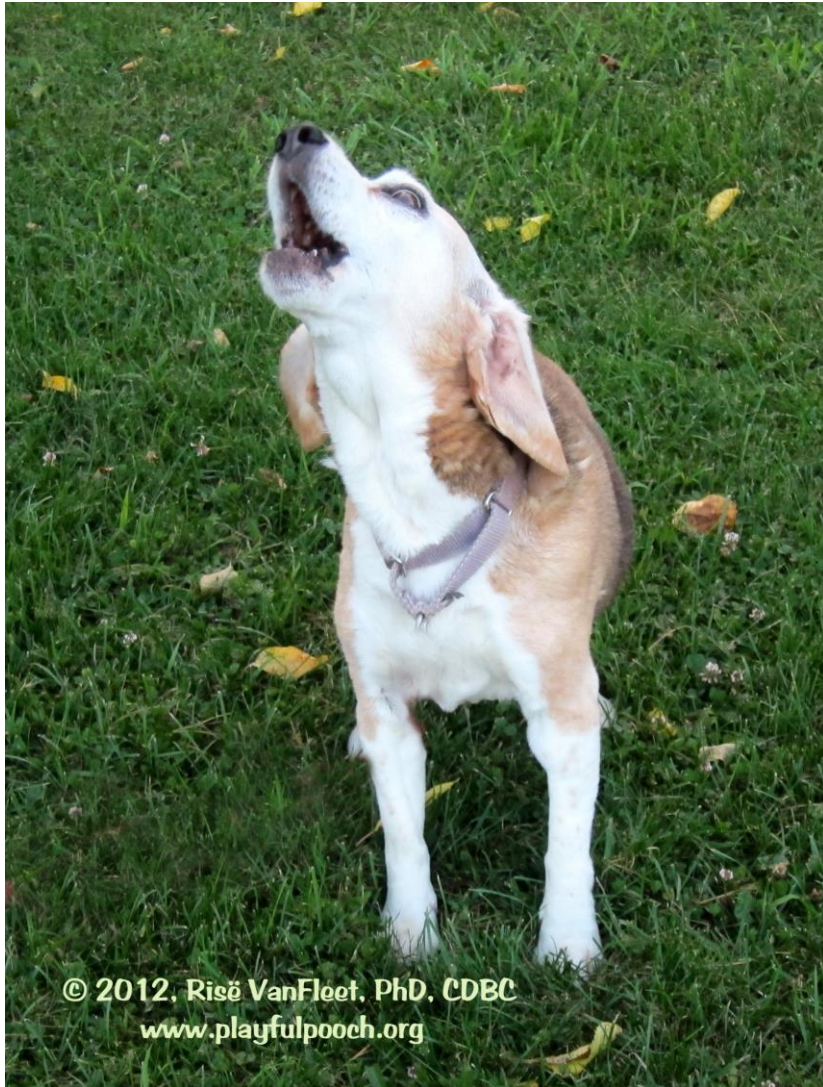
# DURING A SESSION...

- This occurred in the middle of a workshop where we were doing equine activities. This horse decided to lie down and roll around, and clearly was relaxed since he was putting himself in a position vulnerable for horses. We did not interfere, and mostly just stopped to watch what he was doing, to consider how he was feeling, and to think about how that relates to human life, too.
- We love seeing animals choose to do things that feel good to them!





# CAPITALIZING ON NATURAL BEHAVIORS...



- Corky and her sister, Jagen, both lived to age 17. They did not work very much as play therapy dogs with me, but they did work a little.
- Being Beagles, they both bayed/howled when they were excited. At home, we did “family baying” where we joined in when they began howling. Soon, we could howl, and they joined in with us. This was followed by something they enjoyed, such as going outdoors for a sniff or a romp.
- Eventually, I involved them in some sessions with shy or serious children, and the kids howled with me to see if the dogs would respond, and they always did. This always broke the ice and let the kids know that being playful and able to laugh were good things. The children concentrated on the dogs and forgot to be self-conscious, and it had a freeing impact.

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www.playfulpooch.org

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# PLAY IN ANY SPECIES...

- Play usually suggests that an animal feels safe and comfortable in the environment.
- Having animals exhibit playfulness is very valuable in Animal Assisted Play Therapy®, and it's a great way to build our own relationships with animals as well as for our clients.





# PLAY



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- We want to see animals having fun, as these two are. Note their forward positioning as they run after the ball, mouths open, eyes focused on the ball, sideways postures vis-à-vis each other, ears forward, alert play, but no stress signals.
- This is remarkable because the Australian Shepherd, Katie, used to be a highly fearful dog who froze at the sight of one leaf falling. They were not involved in therapy at the time this photo was taken, but this depicts the types of play that are healthy for dogs, where they can engage in it freely. Their body language is all about play, which is also a great way to relieve stress.



# EXPLORATION & CURIOSITY

- When animals feel free to explore their environment, including the people with whom they are working, it usually helps them feel safer and more comfortable.
- It's healthy for animals to be able to explore, so providing some opportunities for this is great for mental and physical stimulation.
- The photo shows the late great Sailor (Tracie Faa-Thompson's in the UK) during an AAPT workshop exploring the box of props to be used in an activity. We like therapy animals to feel free to do this!





- We were preparing for a workshop activity, one we also do with families. This pony, completely at liberty (no equipment or ropes) came over to the person and the tubs with toy items in them. The pony was curious and the person just stopped and let the pony sniff.
- The pony is relatively relaxed, stretching his head and neck forward, standing pretty squarely over his feet, tail relaxed, ears monitoring what is going on in the environment. The pony stopped a couple feet away, so there might be some tentativeness there, although there might have been some items in the way.
- There is no one asking the pony to move closer. The entire space behind and on the pony's left side is open so he can easily move away.

# MORE CURIOSITY



# CURIOSITY & PEOPLE



- Many things contribute to an animal's sociability, including basic personality, how well he/she has been socialized during the key developmental periods, and the quality of the relationships that they have developed with their humans.
- Showing curiosity with people is a sign that the animal is feeling comfortable enough to approach. In therapy, it is far more authentic when the animal approaches without being moved with equipment or cued to do so. It is valuable for clients to learn how to let the animals approach them.
- These photos show animals who have approached the people and have sought contact with them, rather than the other way around. It's a powerful message in therapy.



# GOATS ARE CURIOUS, TOO

- This goat just had some fun playing with several people in a big grassy area. We all then went inside my colleague's place, and the goat climbed some stairs and came to this window to see what we were doing. They call this their "drive thru." She was eager to continue interactions.
- You can see that the ears are forward, the body is leaning forward and on the windowsill, and the eyes are soft as she patiently waits and watches what we were doing inside.
- This goat works with Amanda Wolfe in Alaska, where we held a Level 2 AAPT workshop in 2019.





# ANIMAL-FRIENDLY TRAINING METHODS

- When we train our animals, we want them to enjoy it, just as we should.
- Dominance theory is outdated, and while we want our animals to listen to us, we don't try to control their every move. Instead, we build mutually respectful relationships with them. This provides our clients with both a model and a metaphor for healthy relationships.
- This means we try to avoid the use of punishment (P+) or corrections, aversive equipment or behaviors, scolding or telling them "no." What works far better to maintain animal eagerness to work with us is to show them what we want them to do **instead** of the unwanted behavior.
- We also avoid over-training animals, instead focusing on letting them be themselves.
- This type of training (see my article, *What Type of Training Do Therapy Animals Need?*) results in enthusiastic, happy animals.
- The picture shows Sarah Gordon with Frank in the UK, as she teaches him to come when called using positive reinforcement methods. You can see his relaxed eagerness in responding.





# CHOICES = A SENSE OF SAFETY FOR THE ANIMAL

- These two horses have chosen to be here. While one of them has a halter and rope across his neck, there is no one holding the rope. They are free to move away as they please. The woman, a participant in one of our workshops, is grooming the late great Sailor after an activity, and both Sailor and Purdy chose to stay with her for quite some time.
- Relaxed stances, choice to stay near, standing squarely over feet, relaxed musculature, ears forward, soft eyes are all signs that we like to see.
- Tracie Faa-Thompson in the UK creates superb relationships with her horses, and this is the result (these are hers). Both of these have been involved in lots of Equine Assisted Play Therapy® work as well as helping in many of our AAPT workshops.





# EAGER TO WORK

- This little guy, Winston, is one who is approved in our AAPT program and works actively in AAPT and has also been involved in a study by Dr. Katharine Wenocur (Certified Animal Assisted Play Therapist) on AAPT with children who are homeless.
- Winston is showing nice soft eyes, ears relaxed, alertness, mouth open, lying comfortably, but ready for action. He can get up to join in as he wishes.
- Thanks to Dr. Wenocur for the use of this photo.





# ENTHUSIASM AS WELL AS PATIENCE



- Josie Patches watches as the girl prepares something for her. JP is patient, but clearly engrossed in what is going on, body and ears forward, eyes bright, tail slowly wagging.
- They had just completed doing an obstacle course together, and the snuffle mat became a way for the girl to show nurturance and for JP to get in some good sniffing for treats.



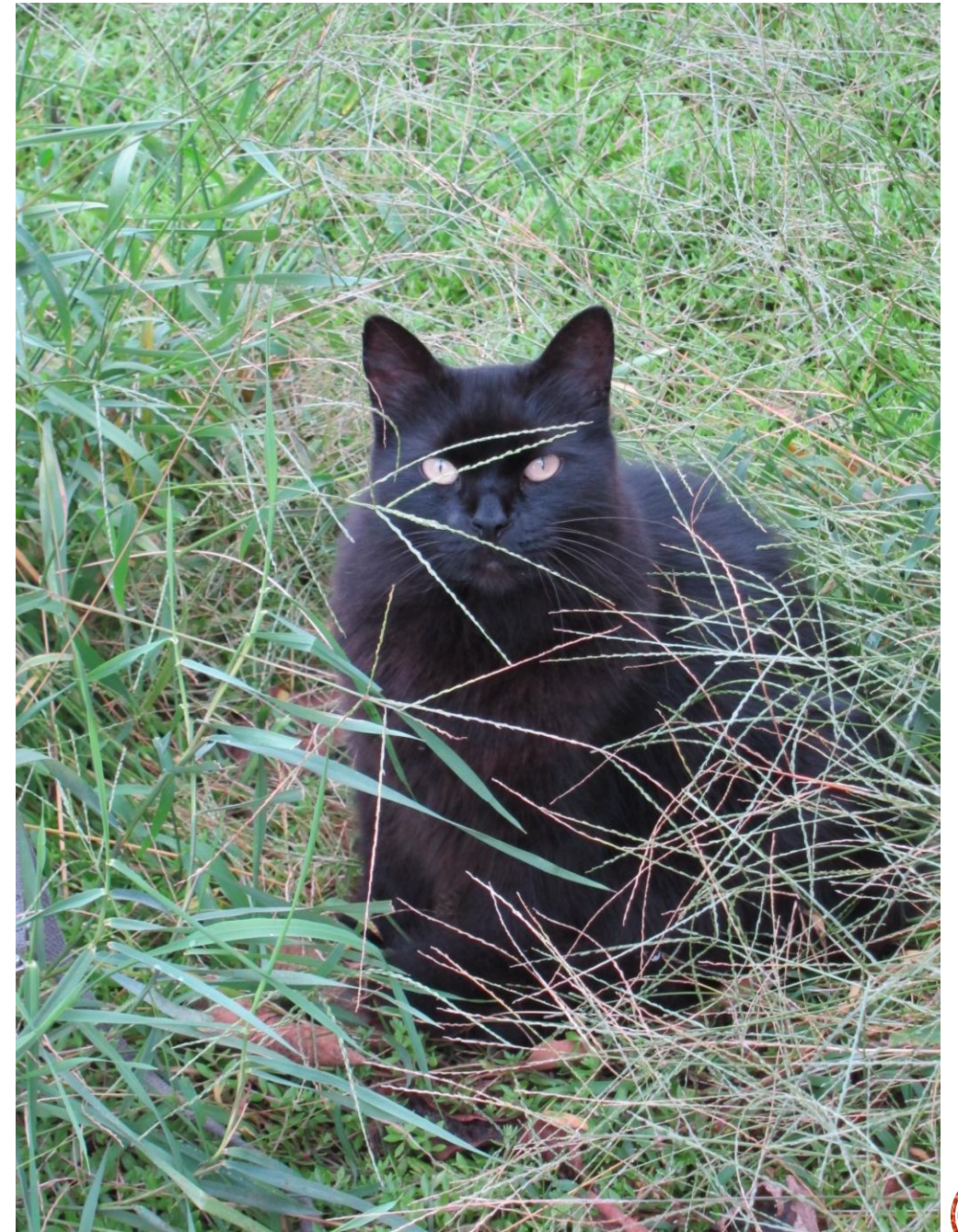
- Pugsy did some therapy work when he was alive. He was Mr. Unflappable when he wasn't being Mr. Resilience. He lost his eye due to an accident in the woods before he came to live with us, and eventually got glaucoma in his remaining eye.
- He always approached people with great enthusiasm, ears flapping, body forward. Here you can see his ears are relaxed, brow and top of head are smooth, very soft eye, head forward and tilted a bit.
- He helped a number of clients to accept their disabilities better, as he never let his disability get in his way. He loved to have his socket rubbed.





# CATS

- This is the late Bart, a highly sociable cat who did some therapy work with me from time to time. He always ran to people (clients, friends, us), rubbed up against them, threw himself down on the ground so they could rub his belly, followed them around.
- Here he is watching what is going on, ears forward, eyes soft, relaxed posture, whiskers relaxed, just watching to see what would happen next. No one was enticing him to come forward, but just letting him make that decision for himself.





# INTEREST & INITIATIVE



- This photo is of Kirrie in her working days. She found puppet shows fascinating as the figures popped out of the pink curtains. In this session, she positioned herself where she had been the week prior with the same client. She appears to be waiting for the show to begin. (I did not cue her to sit here.)
- The picture shows relaxed muscles, polite sitting, leaning forward a little, nose lifted. This level of genuine interest is lovely.
- Interestingly, at this moment there was no one behind the puppet theater!!



# CONSENT & EMPATHY

- This is the 3-second-rule, or consent test, in action. This workshop participant is scratching the pony for 3 seconds, then stopping to note his reaction. He is not held in place at all, yet he remained standing there. He also turned his head toward her when she stopped.
- Other signs are his partly closed (relaxed) eyelids and camel-lip (upper lip extending and very relaxed).
- This is a great method for bringing out client awareness and empathy for others, too.





# PARTNERSHIP

- Therapy partners pay attention to each other.
- Note the curve (or the smile) in the leash in the first photo.
- Once the audience had arrived (a guest lecture at a nearby university), I took her off leash for some demonstrations.



(I no longer use leashes attached to collars as I did when these were taken. There are risks to dogs' necks. If I need a leash, I'll use it with a harness.)



# ATTENTION TURNS EASILY TO OTHERS



- Pictures on the previous slide and this one are from a lecture I gave with Kirrie at a university. She was completely off leash once the 50-60 people had arrived. After I did some demonstrations, I invited some students to interact and try a few things with her. She turned all her attention to them, with quick little check-ins (glances) with me.
- In these pictures, you can see that she is alert, watching with interest, leaning forward or against the person, sitting calmly, and then interacting once she was released to do so. Even though Kirrie did not show stress signals in the picture to the left, I did suggest that the student scratch her on Kirrie's left side so she wouldn't have to reach across her back until they knew each other better.
- It's important that our animals pay attention to us but that they can easily shift their attention to others. This comes with a healthy relationship built on positive interactions and trust. This echoes the concept of a secure attachment relationship.

# VETERAN PLAY THERAPY DOG KIRRIE

- Kirrie, in her older years, came out of retirement a couple times to work with some clients I knew well at the time. She still was very happy to engage with the clients and the playroom.
- Here she is relaxed in a posture she chose herself, half in and half out of the dress-up area. All her muscles are relaxed, eyes are very soft, ears are forward, and she is watching with interest what is happening.





# THE CAT JUMPED UP AND CHOSE TO STAY



# THE UNEXPECTED

- The unexpected always happens with animals. Once safety is assured for all, the therapist allows the animals' natural personalities to come out and finds the metaphors or parallels that might fit with client goals.
- Here, a pony decides that this large stuffed toy dragon is worth a shake.





# “THAT’S A BETTER PLACE FOR A JOCKEY” SAYS CAESAR



- Caesar is showing interest in what this group is doing, following them around. He is reaching forward to sniff the toy jockey that’s on the woman’s back.
- Caesar is the wonderful horse of Karen Shenk of Stoneaire Farm, who has generously shared her farm & equines with us for our workshops in Pennsylvania.



# JACK TRIES THE DOGGIE GUMBALL MACHINE

- ...with the help of his AAPT-certified therapist mom, Cyndie Brashear Kieffer.
- This is an activity used in therapy, which often elicits helping or problem-solving behaviors from clients.





# TRYING NEW THINGS WITH INTEREST

- Our relationships with our animals show in the work we do with clients later.
- Here, Certified Animal Assisted Play Therapist Lucy Llewellyn and her dog, Lykke, try to figure out together how the flyball device works.
- We want to see this same level of interest and willingness to try new things in therapy sessions.



# RELAXATION

In this situation, the boy lay down first and the dog chose the position he wanted. There's no unwanted hugging or intrusiveness by either one of them.





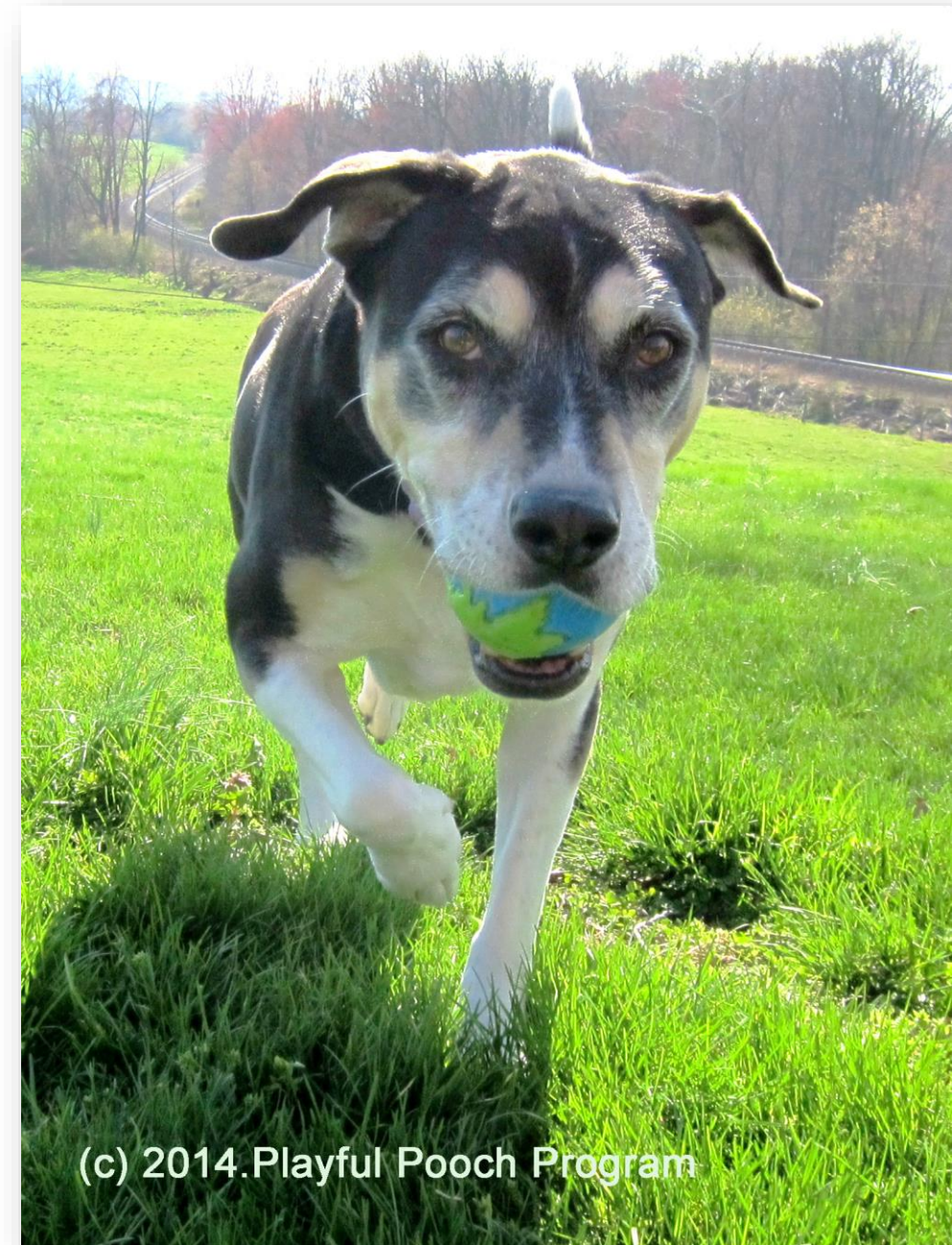
# GRAZING IS PERMITTED: SUCH NATURAL BEHAVIOR IS NEVER PREVENTED



(c) 2014, Risé VanFleet, PhD, RPT-S, CDBC & IIAAPTS



# SOMETIMES THE ANIMALS SELECT THE ACTIVITIES



(c) 2014. Playful Pooch Program





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# THE ANIMALS CHOOSE

- You'll see that most of Tracie Faa-Thompson's horses choose to be with the people who have just arrived for a workshop.
- One of the ponies has other things to do.
- There is always an exit route so the choice is theirs.















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"Perhaps the ultimate challenge in Animal Assisted Interventions is to develop the ability to see all situations from both human and nonhuman animals' points of view."



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--Risë VanFleet & Tracie Faa-Thompson (2017).  
Animal Assisted Play Therapy, page 337.



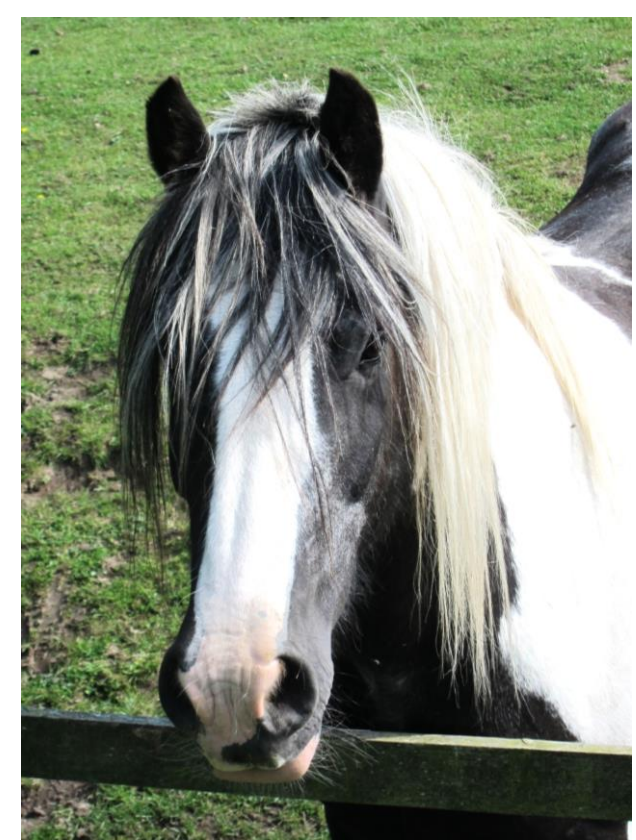
# RESOURCES RELATED TO THIS TOPIC

- VanFleet & Faa-Thompson (2017). *Animal Assisted Play Therapy*. Sarasota, FL: Professional Resource Press. [2018 winner of the Maxwell Award as the best book in the Human-Animal Bond Category, Dog Writers Association of America.]
- VanFleet (2013). *Canine Communication in Animal Assisted Play Therapy®: Recognizing, Understanding, and Responding to Body Language in Our Canine Assistants* [Online Course]. Boiling Springs, PA: Play Therapy Press.
- Faa-Thomson (coming in 2021). *Equine Communication in Animal Assisted Play Therapy®*. [Online Course]. Boiling Springs, PA: IIAAPT®.
- VanFleet (2017). *What Type of Training Do Therapy Animals Need?* Online article. Boiling Springs, PA: IIAAPT. [Finalist in the Training/Behavior Category, Dog Writers Association of America.]
- Byrnes (2013). *What Is My Dog Saying? Canine Communication 101* [CD]. Spokane, WA: Diamonds in the Rough. Also, *What Is My Cat Saying?*
- Rugaas (2006). *On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed). Wenatchee, WA: Dogwise Publishing.

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# RESOURCES, CONTINUED

- Rugaas (2006). *Calming Signals: What Your Dog Tells You* [DVD]. Wenatchee, WA: Dogwise.
- Käufer (2013). *Canine Play Behavior: The Science of Dogs at Play*. Wenatchee, WA: Dogwise.
- McConnell (2002). *The Other End of the Leash: Why We Do What We Do Around Dogs*. NY: Ballantine Books.
- **[www.iaapt.org](http://www.iaapt.org)** for more information about the International Institute for Animal Assisted Play Therapy®



INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR  
**Animal  
Assisted  
Play Therapy**®





# THAT'S IT!

- I hope that this has been helpful for you!
- If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at [rise@risevanfleet.com](mailto:rise@risevanfleet.com) or through [www.iaapt.org](http://www.iaapt.org).
- We hope to offer other free resources like this one in the future, along with our online courses, webinars, written materials, and in-person workshops!

