

A PROGRAM FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF BEHAVIOR EXHIBITS

Striking advances have been made in the science of behavior during the last ten or fifteen years. A vigorous experimental program in American universities has yielded a prodigious body of theoretical and empirical knowledge concerning the dynamics of animal behavior. Aside from the startling implications for human behavior, there are many striking possibilities for immediate application at the level of animal behavior itself.

The peculiarly powerful appeal of animals to all classes and ages of people is well recognized (particularly by newspapermen and advertisers) and needs no elaboration here. The new developments in behavioral science make possible the training and use of animals in many new and interesting ways. In brief, it may be said that it is now a relatively simple matter to train any animal to perform any act within its neurological and structural limits.

During the last two years we have been engaged in a development program predicated on this assumption. This program has involved:

- 1) Testing of the basic theory by extension to various levels of the animal kingdom.
- 2) Developing concrete training procedures.
- 3) Construction of training and performing apparatus.
- 4) Developing unusual trained animal acts using animals not ordinarily trained. This part of the program has resulted in developing
Chickens that play the piano, tap dance, "lay" eggs to order, beat the drum, play golf, answer questions, fire toy cannons, and operate a roulette wheel;
Pigs that turn on the radio, eat from a table, pick up dirty clothes and place them in a hamper, vacuum clean the floor, answer questions, and select a particular pig feed from ~~those~~ of several competitors;
Hamsters that swing on a trapeze, skin-the-cat, slide down a toy slide;
Numerous other responses in the dog, cat, and white rat.

General Mills, Inc., have made extensive use of these animal acts in advertising and promoting farm feeds. They have sent trained chickens and Priscilla the Fastidious Pig all over the United States, in the hands of salesmen with no particular education in the handling of animals. There have been no cases in which the animals have failed to perform, and the response of the public has, of course, been tremendous.

This program has demonstrated that

- 1) The basic theory holds at all levels of the phylogenetic scale tested.
- 2) Scientifically trained animals perform with a reliability similar to that of mechanical arrangements.
- 3) It is possible to train animals cheaply, quickly, and to release them to novices or for automatic operation.

We believe that the next step in our work is the education of the general public in the possibilities and implications of the science of behavior. Probably the greatest need of our generation is for education in psychology, the handling of behavior. The development of the theory and application of physics and chemistry has far outstripped our ability to handle the products of these sciences; the physicists themselves realize what has happened and are hunting in increasing numbers for an answer from psychology and the social sciences. It seems that the time has come to use the extraordinary appeal of performing animals to demonstrate what can be done with the rapidly developing science of behavior; to show that behavior also is the subject matter of a science, that it can be controlled in the same manner as the rest of the physical world.

As a first step in this direction, we are now establishing a non-profit educational and scientific corporation. This corporation will engage in commercial activities involving the use of trained animals and other applications of behavioral science, the proceeds of which will be used for further research in animal behavior and dissemination of information to the public.

At the present time we believe that the best method of introducing the general public to the field is to present a series of behavior exhibits. These exhibits would be both entertaining and scientific. They would have through their novelty a tremendous appeal both for adults and for children. Through appropriate selection of the behaviors to be exhibited and information given along with the exhibits, they would educate the public to the possibilities of behavioral science.

The exhibits should be permanently located in a convenient spot. They would through a small admission charge become self-supporting. It would be possible to change the exhibits continually to stimulate fresh interest and keep visitors returning to see the new acts.

The requirements for housing such an exhibit would not be elaborate. A floor space about 25' x 40' or more would be adequate. It could be out of the high rent district but should be near a street car line (somewhere in the Lake Street area might place it conveniently near the population center of the metropolitan area). Simple stage-like boxes would be used to present each unit of the exhibit. One attendant would probably be sufficient.

About 10 to 20 performing units are now available, as follows:

Chickens

- 1) Piano. A chicken plays a little tune on a toy piano.
- 2) Dancer. A chicken does a tap dance in shoes and dress.
- 3) Quiz. The chicken answers questions from the audience by turning on an electric sign reading yes or no.
- 4) Egg-laying. A chicken climbs up into a nest box and operates a mechanism to "lay" eggs to order, any number requested by the audience from one to six.
- 5) Cannon. The chicken fires a toy cannon which hurls peanuts or candy into the audience.

- 6) Drum. The chicken beats a toy drum.
- 7) Golf. A chicken actuates a pivoted golf club to roll a golf ball up an inclined plane and into the cup.
- 8) Walk the plank. Baby chicks about 10 days old are trained to ascend a ramp in order to eat at the top. The first chick to go up is bumped off by the second, the second by the third, and so on. The first then ascends the ramp again, and so on in an endless chain.

Golden Hamster

- 1) Trapeze. A hamster climbs up a pole, grasps the trapeze bar with his "hands" and swings across to a platform, then down a slide to floor level.

White Rat

- 1) Rat race. Four rats race down a track to a finish line, jumping hurdles on the way.
- 2) Psychic rat. A coin is dropped into one of two slots. The rat then "guesses" which one. If he guesses correctly he gets the coin; if he is wrong, the coin is returned.

Some other acts which might be made available in about 30 days:

Animal factory. Several animals, perhaps a pig, dog, and rat, working simultaneously in the performance of a complete industrial cycle from raw stock to packaged article. For example, the pig could operate a small punch press, stamping out a light gauge pendant. The dog would collect the pendants as they came from the press and place them in a rotating polishing drum. The rat would then pack them into boxes. Many variations of this arrangement could be worked out. The animals would print educational or advertising material on a small printing press and distribute it to the public. A factory run by dogs could make dog identification tags, etc.

Dog Statuary. A dog trained to hold with statue-like rigidity any shape into which the body is molded.

Dog Detective. A dog trained to pick out the owner of an article of clothing. Such a dog might on occasion prove valuable to the police force in solving crimes where a glove, hat, or other article is left at the scene of a crime.

There are, of course, innumerable possibilities for other acts using a great variety of animals. The acts mentioned above have been selected because they are, as noted in the first list, already available, or could be available with a minimum of apparatus work, and use animals which are appealing, hardy, and easy to house and care for. Other acts are also readily possible using these same animals.