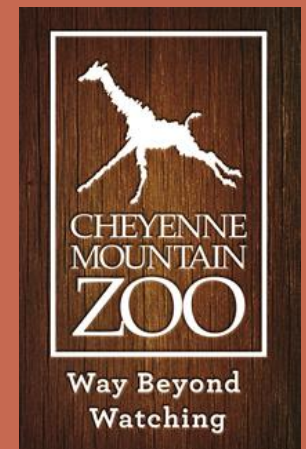


LABELS: SAFE FOR CHEMICALS, DANGEROUS FOR ANIMALS!!!



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WHAT IS A LABEL?

- A Concept that describes what an animal *IS*
- A description we give to an animal that behaves in a certain way
 - e.g. the orangutan that spits, slams mesh, grabs is labeled as “aggressive”



- the dog that approaches, wags tail, and licks hand is labeled as “friendly”

HAVE YOU EVER WORKED WITH AN ORANGUTAN THAT WAS...

sweet, stubborn, cranky, friendly, crazy,
outgoing, intraverted, mopey, aggressive,
grabby, nice, obstinate, shy, anti-social,
clingy, smart, dumb, suspicious, irritable,
territorial, mean, nice, hyper, calm,
impatient, angry, playful, happy, resistant

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH LABELS?

- We can't change what an animal *IS*
- We can't train an animal to *BE* something

SO...THEN WE'RE STUCK!

- When we use a label that describes what an animal *is*, we're stuck with it. There's nothing we can do to change it.
- This takes away any chance we have to change behavior- and any chance of us and our animals having success.
- We give up and stop looking for real causes of behavior- things we can do something about.



OTHER PROBLEMS WITH LABELS

- Labels can become a self-fulfilling prophecy- we treat an animal a certain way if we go into an interaction knowing the animal *is* “grumpy”.



- Labels give trainers an excuse to give up and not take responsibility for their animals' behavior.

SIDENOTES



- Labels can be a shortcut to describing behaviors. If everyone agrees on what exactly a label *looks like*, we can use the label in that context. Just be aware and use sparingly.
- We would never say animals don't think or feel- we know they do. But since we can't see inside their heads, the best way for us to be effective in changing behavior is looking at observable behavior.

WHAT CAN WE DO???

- Focus on observable behavior
- What does the animal *DO*? In what conditions?
- Look in the environment for why behavior is happening. Animals always behave for a purpose (i.e. to get something or escape something).
- Change the environment (conditions) to change behavior

THE ABC'S

- **Antecedent** - A stimulus or event that immediately precedes a behavior, which sets the occasion for the behavior to occur
- **Behavior** - Anything an individual does, given certain conditions, which can be observed or measured
- **Consequence** - An event or stimulus that immediately follows a behavior that influences the future strength of the behavior
 - Antecedents and consequences = the environment (conditions we can change to change behavior)

TWO EXAMPLES OF LABELED ANIMALS AT CHEYENNE MOUNTAIN ZOO

- Roxie- Gorilla, 38 years old. Labels- not smart, uninterested in training, untrainable
- Angie- African lion, 20 years old. Labels- aggressive, hates people, vicious



ROXIE (GORILLA)

“Not interested in training” OR

Antecedent: Keeper calls

Behavior: Roxie walks toward keeper

Consequence: Grunting (coughing) and approach from other gorilla

Prediction: Roxie will walk toward keeper less

CHANGING CONDITIONS TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR

Separating gorillas gave Roxie the opportunity to come to the door without another gorilla grunting and displacing her. Now we have:

Antecedent: Keeper calls

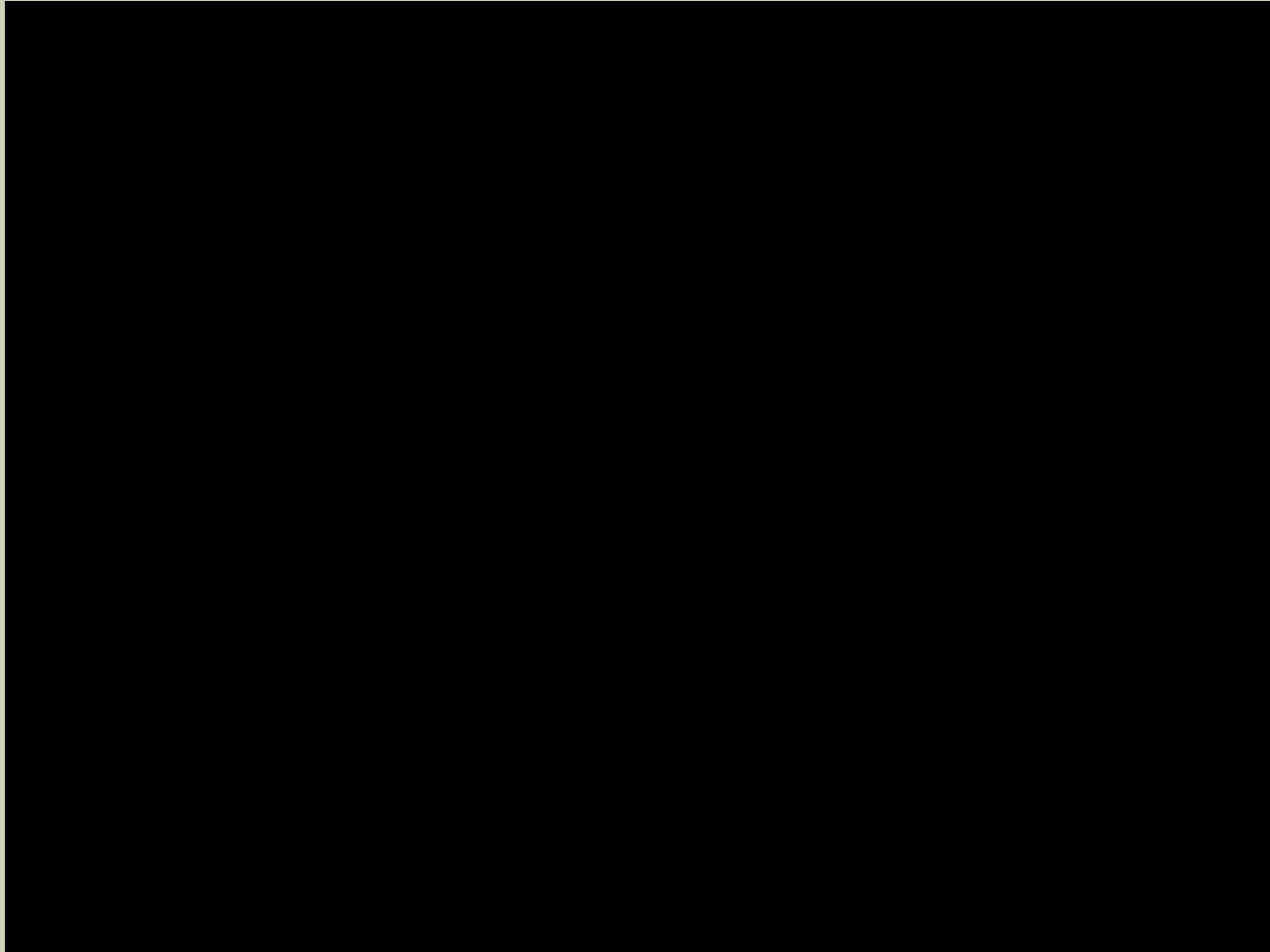
Behavior: Roxie walks to keeper

Consequence: A piece of fruit

Prediction: Roxie will walk to keeper more

And now...

ROXIE VIDEO NOW



ANGIE (LION)

Background: Angie was locked into a fairly small area and keeper approached her.

“Aggressive” OR

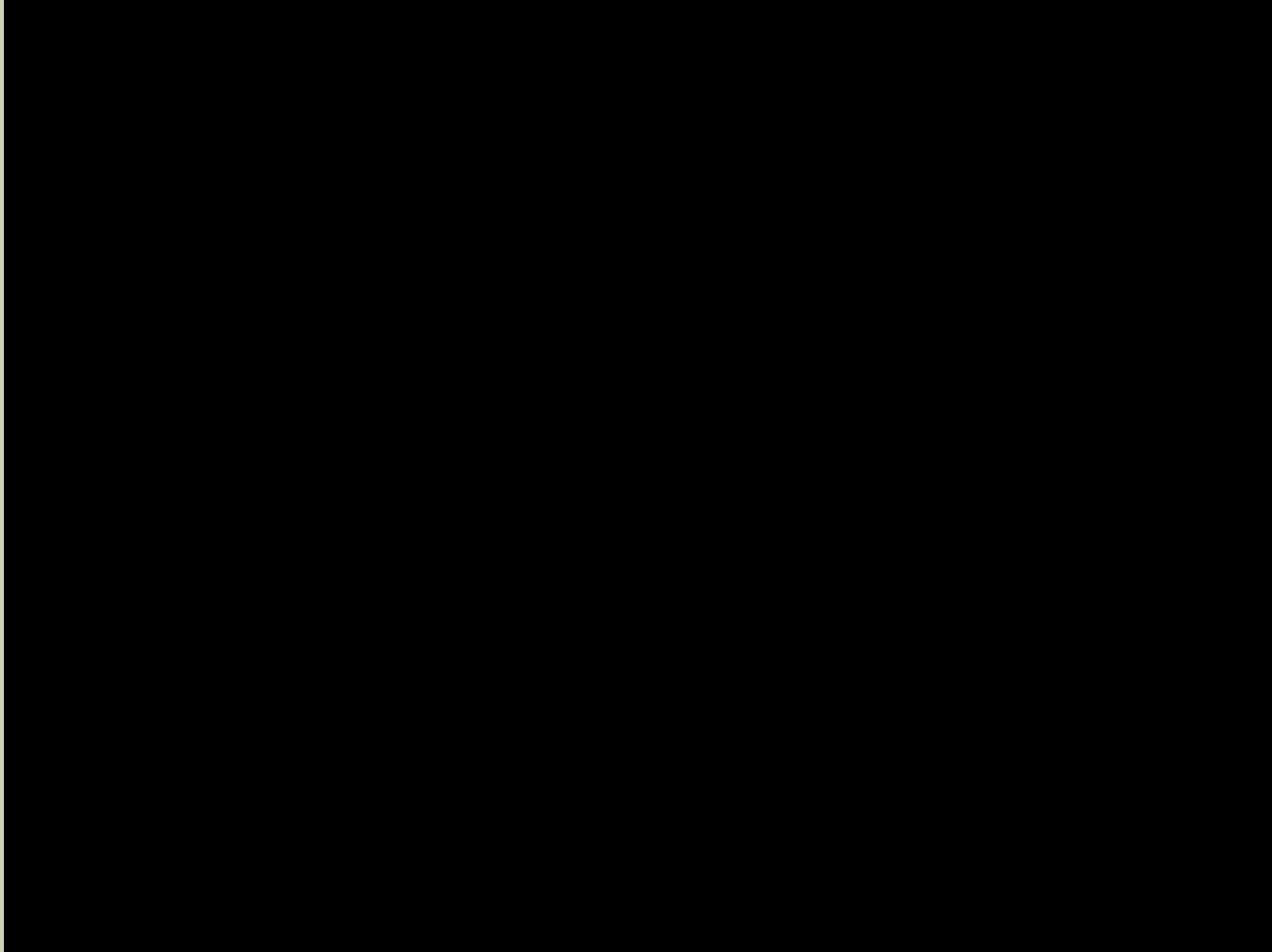
Antecedent: Keeper approaches

Behavior: Angie charges

Consequence: large quantity of meat and keeper goes away

Prediction: Angie will continue to charge

ANGIE VIDEO (2009)



CHANGING CONDITIONS TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR

- Keepers gave small amount of food for initial approach, even if it was a charge, then spent time feeding more and she stayed.
- Keepers give Angie the power to leave (bigger space) and ask her to come to them rather than approaching her.

Antecedent: Keeper calls

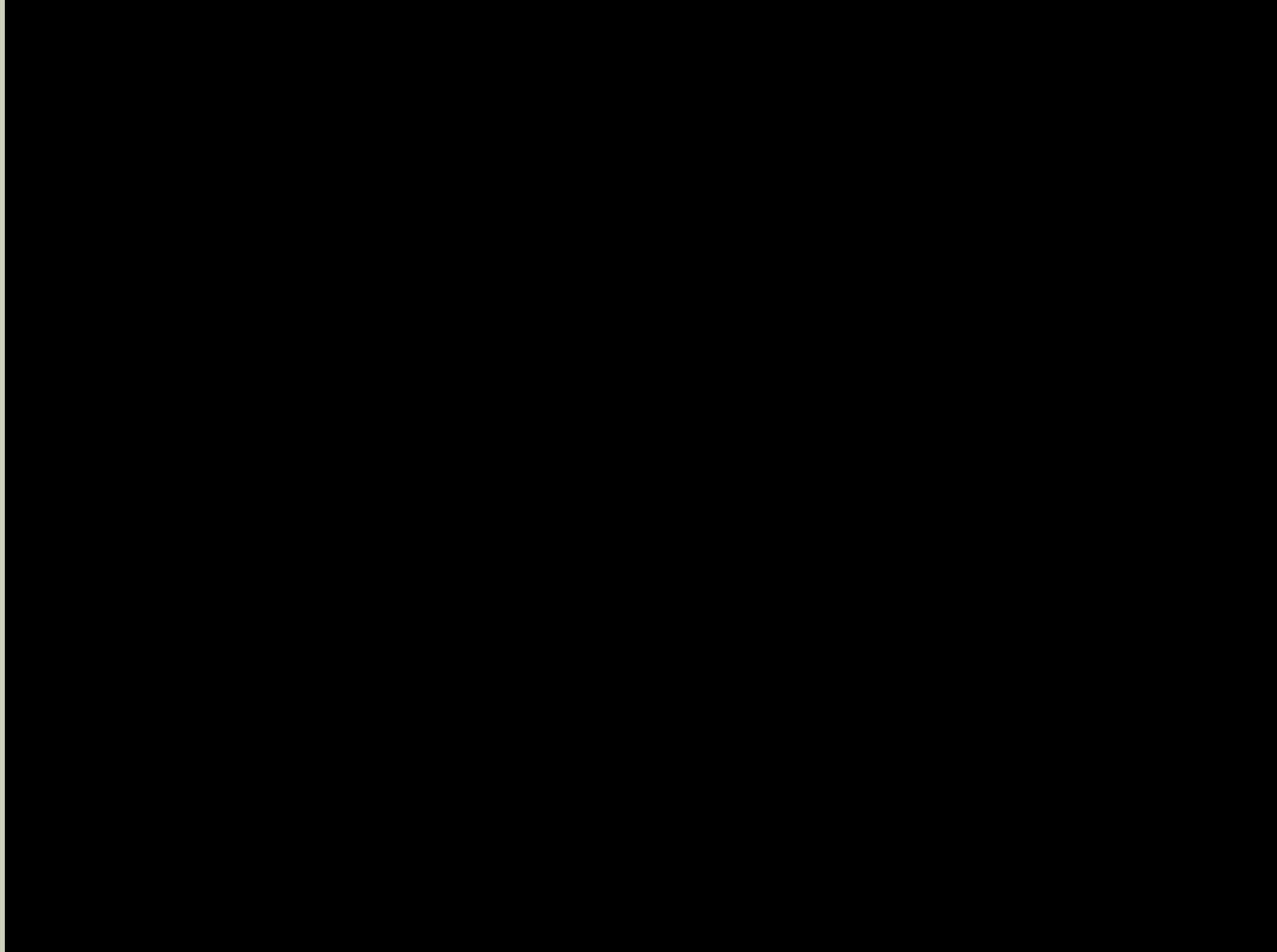
Behavior: Angie walks to keeper

Consequence: A piece of meat

Prediction: Angie will continue to walk to keeper

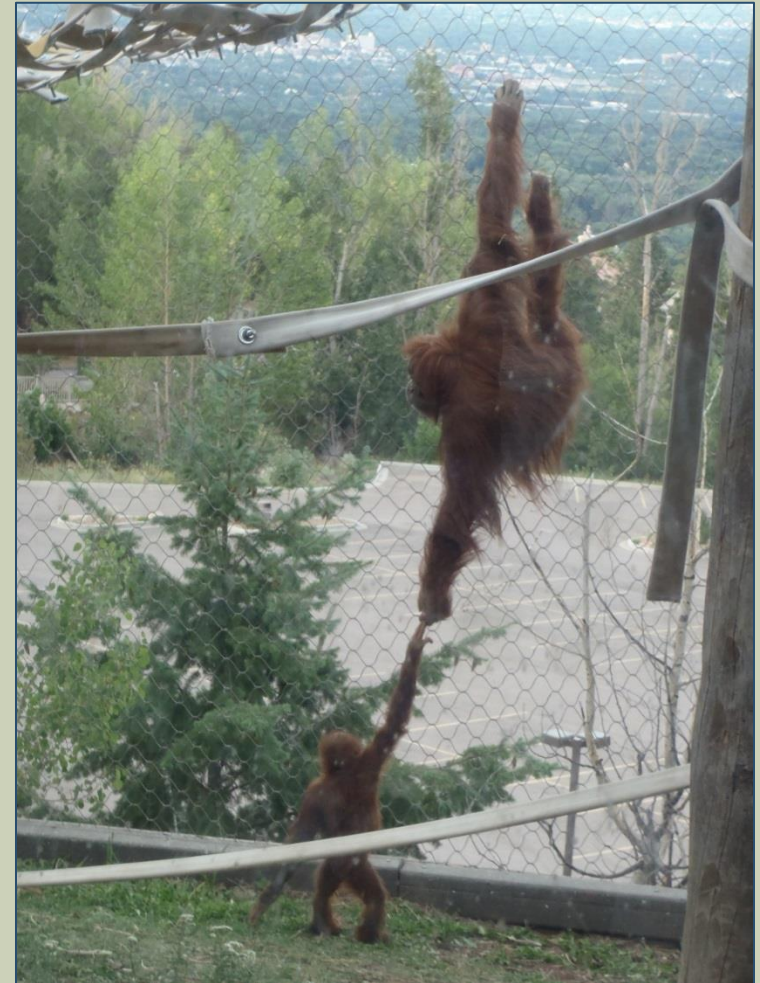
And now...

ANGIE VIDEO NOW



IT'S BETTER FOR EVERYONE!

- When we look at behavior in this way, it improves the quality of the animals' lives.
- It gives us success in changing behavior, which improves the quality of our lives.



IT'S UNIVERSAL!



- We can do these assessments in every day interactions, not just formal training sessions.
- This science applies to all living beings. Use it at work, at home, on yourself!

THE END

For information on Dr. Susan Friedman's on-line professional course, Living and Learning with Animals, go to www.behaviorworks.org

