

Cracking The Canine Code: Prey Drive In Border Collies, Malinois And Other Breeds

Speaker Key

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Transcript

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Do you know that a Beagle, a Boston Terrier, a Border Collie, and a Belgian Malinois, [I just picked four breeds with B names], all four of those dogs are going to present very different training challenges to you. And there's a reason for it and that is the topic of today's podcast.

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Hi, I am Susan Garrett. Welcome to Shaped by Dog. Today we're going to be talking about something that is called the 'predatory motor sequence' or some people call it 'predation sequence'. It's actually a pattern of behavior that goes back to wolves. It's how wolves hunt. It's how wolves stay alive. And you may be thinking, "Hey Susan, I thought like we shouldn't draw many conclusions from wolves because our dogs are so far away from them?"

They are. And here's the thing, the predatory sequence has changed dramatically in domesticated dogs because of the intense breeding for certain traits that people loved. So let me walk you through what the sequence looks like.

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First of all, I think the acronym that is most commonly used is kind of crap, the PMS, it's predation motor sequence and it's described as eight different unique events. First one is *orient*. So, imagine your dog's out in the field and something just catches their eye, they orient their body and their head to that. They could hear something, they could see something, they could smell something. I guess they could also have something touch them but that wouldn't be very normal.

Now, orient is the first event in the sequence. Orient turns into *eye*, which really is focus. So, they orient to something's out there, boom, "Alright I gotcha." So as soon as they start to eye then that will lead into *stalking*.

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Stalking is creeping up on whatever. What triggers the stalking? The ability to eye. So, you're not going to see even a Border Collie who is probably the best-known stalker in the canine world, you're not going to see them just randomly start stalking and looking for something. They stalk after the trigger of the eye.

The fourth element in this sequence is *chase*. So, they stalk until they chase. And then it moves into two different ways of biting. So, element number five is the *bite to grab*. Element number six is the *bite to kill*. Okay, it's getting a little gruesome I know.

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You know what, I'm pretty sure that your domesticated dog, not many of them are going to go through this entire cycle. Some will though. After the bite to kill or the kill bite as it's better known, leads to the *evisceration*, the dissection of the animal. And that leads to the *consumption of the animal*. So that's the eight events that happen in this predatory motor sequence. Now, as I mentioned before, because of the intense breeding that humans have done to the domestic dog, they've actually accentuated some parts of the sequence. They've actually removed other parts of it.



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And in some breeds rearranged the sequence. Why should you care? “Susan, I just came here to learn how to train my pet dog.” It's super, super important. Because as I mentioned off the top, different breeds have been bred to actually highlight different parts of the sequence.

Knowing that will help you to bring the best enrichment to your dog, to not fight against what's there, and hopefully not to deny, nor reinforce randomly the things that the dog is innately driven to do. More on that later. Because it's really important, it's really going to affect your ability to train your dog to the best of your ability.

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I'm also going to give you some ideas of what you can do to [redirect your dog](#) if they predominantly are one of these. I'm going to give you an example. Let's take the Border Collie. Alright, so Border Collies are bred to herd with their eye, believe it or not, especially those that are working sheep dogs, they're not really supposed to use their mouth until they absolutely need it.

So, the [grab and the bite](#), and particularly the grab to kill has really been diluted in Border Collies that are working sheep dogs. And so, they've got very strong eye. They orient and they quickly lock on eye. And that very quickly turns to a stalk.

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A stalk is like a very slow-motion movement and that stalk behavior, especially in [the sport of dog agility](#), creates a lot of headaches for people. I'm going to give you some insight on how you can maybe get around that today. So then what a Border Collie really wants is for the thing they're stalking to not move. But what do sheep do? They move. Which means the border Collie can quickly adjust and get the sheep to stop moving.

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If a Border Collie could just all day long sit and look at whatever they're stalking and have that thing never move, they would be happy. Now, of course, they're amazing at chasing, but they're chasing in order to cut the animal off and stalk again.

Which is why [squealing children](#) with Border Collies don't always make the best combination because that Border Collie is constantly cutting off your child and potentially knocking them down. Or if the predatory sequence has escalated with your Border Collie, you might get [a little bit of a nip](#) in there or a grab.

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So, if you really don't understand this sequence and how it's brought to life in your dog, then it's very likely you're going to deny something that the dog really, really wants. For example, dogs who have a very strong genetic link to say, dissection, or a kill bite.

It doesn't mean that they're going to kill things in your home, but they may work a squeaky to the point of annoying the crap out of you. Because that could be their expression of that part of the sequence. So, you could say, “I'm never buying you a squeaky again.” Well, that's fine.

But you are denying the dog something that they instinctually really, really want. I'm not telling you to go out and buy squeakies for your dog. I'm saying we need to try to at least replace that need to squeak a squeaky. More on that later.



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So different breeds have different drives. A Beagle isn't going to have that instinct to eye stalk, but they are going to have an amazing instinct to orient. And likewise, a Belgian Malinois is going to have many parts of this sequence, very, very active, including a very, very strong bite.

But you could have a Pomeranian or a Poodle that has super, super strong intact need for the seventh element of the sequence, which is the need to dissect. But they don't have any of the things above it. They just want to grab a stuffed animal, rip it apart, and pull out all the stuffing out of it. They have no desire to orient or eye or stalk anything.

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So, do you see what I mean? With domesticated dogs, the way they've been bred, different parts of the sequence are going to be apparent to you in your dog. Alright, now what can we do about that? Knowing what you're being presented, you can say, "Okay. I know that I just bought myself a Border Collie. I would prefer it not stalk. So, what I'm going to do is I'm going to interrupt that sequence when I get to eye."

"I'm going to interrupt it by, I see my dog eye and maybe I'm going to ask for [a hand touch](#). And then I'm going to ask for some other fun behaviors." Because they also have great chase instinct so we can reinforce them for coming back to us and touching with [a game of tug](#), or a game of chase, something else like a flirt pole.

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Now, dogs who have a very, very strong orient, you can replace the need for the dog to go off scenting all over the neighborhood. Or if you have a Sighthound that need to track everything that moves, you can replace that with something like a hide and seek game. Where you can actually have your dog in the crate with the door open, you hide, and give them the release cue while they find you.

Or you can do [food toys](#) are really, really good for dogs who like to use their nose. Lure coursing might be another really, really good one for dogs that like to orient. For dogs who love to lock on and eye, things that require great focus. So, a lot of competition obedience skills have things what we call focus forward, so does dog agility.

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But with those dogs, we don't want to reinforce them just locking in. As I said, we want to break it off as well. So they can lock in maybe you throw a cookie, they lock in on that cookie, you tell them get it, and then they chase you. That's a great game.

Or they can lock in on something in the distance, you step behind them, call their name, and have them break it off for a game of tug. So that you are breaking what is their natural cycle and replacing something like the stalking or the chasing with them redirecting and chasing you.

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Okay, so stalking for dogs who love to stalk, I would catch it at the eye phase and redirect them to something on me. 'Jump up and touch my hand' or 'circle around behind me'. I would use a flirt pole with dogs like that so that they would be chasing, and then you might ask them to stop in the middle of a chase. So, build in, 'Listen to me when you are in these modes.' Remember that the initiation to one phase of the sequence is what starts the second. So as soon as the dog starts the eye, they are going to go into the stalk, if they're [genetically programmed](#) to do that.



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So, we may want to catch them as soon as we get the eye before they get a chance to do the stalk. Now, stalking doesn't always look like a Border Collie creeping. Stalking can be a dog sitting super, super slowly or starting to lay down and get frozen.

All of those things are going to interrupt with the way you want to live your life with your dog. And you want to do it in a way that's engaging the dog rather than [frustrating the dog](#). And that's why training with games I think is amazing because you can highlight the things that you want in the sequence and redirect before you get to a part that you don't like.

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So, dogs who love to stalk, I also play a game, one of our Recaller games is the 'Smoke Ya' game where I will run away from the dog. They can be in their crate if they know [Crate Games](#), you could have somebody holding them and I'll run around something like I used to have an apartment that had a little circuit dining room, kitchen, hallway, living room circuit, and I used to play the Smoke Ya game there. Dogs who love to stalk and chase would love that game.

Next, dogs who love to chase. I would definitely do you flirt pole. All of our Recaller games. Games that we are infusing their need to chase with control that comes back through you. So that they aren't just going to [chase a rabbit](#), they're not going to just chase a squirrel. If they get into mid-run chasing, you can just say "sit" or redirect back to me. That's the ultimate goal.

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Dogs who love to chase as well, I find things like [food puzzles](#) are really, really good. Obviously for dogs who love to use their nose at any level.

There are dogs who love to chase moving things, but they have zero interest once it stopped. So, you need to identify what one of your dogs is that. So, dogs who love to chase moving things, playing with like a flying disc is probably better than [throwing a toy](#) that's just going to stop.

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And a lot of dogs, think of dogs that they might chase after prey, but if that prey stops and looks at them, they're like, "Yeah, just kidding, just kidding." That predation sequence is going to stop. There is no kill bite in that dog. So, they love the chase and then they're like, "Oh, what have I got myself into? It's looking at me now."

So, any of the following, the chase, the grab bite, the kill bite, the evisceration, I find using things like that are both engaging that chase, but also engaging the need to hunt. So, the puppy bombs that I've mentioned many times on the podcast with toilet paper rolls, those are great because they get to eviscerate all the paper but then they get you know, something yummy inside.

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Just know that we're giving the dog an outlet for something they naturally want to do. But you can't leave you know, your special report on the floor because there's a chance if it's paper it might get you know, dissected. Just think it's your dog dissecting what they're driven to do, it's all okay.

So, for any of these dogs also I think digging pits are really good because it's giving the dog an outlet for something they naturally want to do. Digging is part of the hunting process for a lot of dogs. Like the Boston Terrier that I mentioned off the top. A lot of Terriers love to dig.



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Give them an outlet for that digging and build the digging, the active digging into a sequence where you send them to dig and then you can call them out, so that the value they have for digging comes back through you. Super important.

Any dogs that love that bite tugging is great again with an 'out – get it – out'. Obviously, bity sports are great for dogs who just love and have that really hard mouth that they love to come in and bite and tug super hard.

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But any [games that build in anticipation](#) are great for these dogs where they have to sit and hold a position or a down or a stand, be on a platform and then you release them, boom. Then they can come and fly at the tug or they're chasing you and you're running, and they get to fly at that.

Obviously, you are going to decide based on what your household looks like, the number of small children you have, how much of this is going to get redirected into something that isn't about chase and bite things and is more about digging and dissecting things.

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And most dogs are not going to consume the things that they've dissected. If they pull apart [a squeaky toy](#), they're unlikely to do that. But remember, in this predation motor sequence, a lot of times the initiation of one event triggers the next.

So even if a dog found like the stuffing from a toy on the floor and they wouldn't go, "Oh, I'm going to eat that.", if they were in the midst of this, they may swallow pieces of that because they're in the midst of this sequence.

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It doesn't happen very often but for me, I don't like my dogs degutting stuffed animals. I much prefer to give them things like food toys and [stuffed Kongs](#), [Stuffed Toppls](#) are really, really good for dogs who love the hunt for something.

You can freeze them, put goodies in there. And of course, the puppy bombs. There's things that you can do. There's lots of enrichment things you can do with paper.

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And my newest puppy, Prophet, has got a new toy, he hasn't even seen it yet because he hasn't arrived here. But my friend Lynda Orton-Hill just gave me a [hol-ee roller](#), and it's got these long pieces of felt that I can roll up cookies inside that he can have fun pulling them out and hunting for the cookies that are in that.

Is that naturally something a Border Collie would want? It's not really about eyeing or stalking, but guess what, it's all about giving that dog something enriching to do and fulfilling a need in them so that they don't have to start herding the kids.

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And not saying that this is going to stop it. I'm saying rather than just denying what the dog wants, we're giving them enriching alternatives. And knowing this now, it should help you understand and be able to prevent behavior challenge, especially with [new puppies](#).



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Or if you already have [a behavior challenge](#), you now can know where you're going to plan. You're going to see where, is it, in this sequence that your dog tends to hang out. And you're [going to plan](#) to build that in through games with you.

I hope this makes sense. It's all about bringing more joy to our dog's life as we [decrease any anxiety they have](#) about living in our home. I'll see you next time right here on Shaped by Dog.

Resources:

[Crate Games Online](#)

[Podcast Episode 104: Naughty Dog Behaviors And How To Deal With Them](#)

[Podcast Episode 25: How All Dogs Can Bite and How to Reduce the Risk with R.E.A.D.](#)

[Podcast Episode 105: Your Dog Agility And Dog Sports Questions Covered](#)

[Podcast Episode 58: How to Create Kid Friendly Dogs and Dog Friendly Kids](#)

[Podcast Episode 18: 4 Puppy and Dog Training Games for Acquired Bite Inhibition](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Target Training for Dogs with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 89: Why Dogs Should Not Tug: The Truth Revealed](#)

[Podcast Episode 55: Pro Dog Trainer's Guide to Toy Selection](#)

[Podcast Episode 189: All The Things That Influence Your Dog's Behavior And What Behavior Tells You](#)

[Podcast Episode 217: Understanding Emotional Regulation In Dogs To Create Calm](#)

[Podcast Episode 24: Help for Dogs who Chase Chipmunks, Bicycles, and Neighbor's Cats \(Distraction Intensity Index\)](#)

[Nina Ottosson Puzzles](#)

[Podcast Episode 226: Safe Toys For Dogs And Why To Avoid Tennis Balls And Sticks](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Dog Training Games with Susan Garrett](#)

[Podcast Episode 54: Dog Toy Checklist: What's Good and What to Avoid](#)

[Kong Toys](#)

[Toppl Toys](#)

[JW Hol-ee Roller](#)

[YouTube Playlist: Puppy Essentials with Susan Garrett Dog Training](#)

[Podcast Episode 221: Mindshifting Dog Behavior Problems To Overcome Extreme Training Challenges](#)

[Podcast Episode 131: How Would Susan Garrett Plan Your Dog Training Sessions?](#)

[YouTube Video: Calm Your Reactive Or Anxious Dog And Reduce Your Stress About Lunging, Barking, Growling](#)



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About Susan

A world-leading educator of dog trainers, Susan is also one of the most successful agility competitors of the last three decades. She has won multiple Gold Medals at National or World Championship events with every dog she has ever owned over the past 30 years. Susan was one of the very first dog trainers to share knowledge online when she opened her "Clicker Dogs" website many years ago. Susan has helped hundreds of thousands of people enjoy a great relationship with their dogs through her workshops and keynote speaking around the world, award winning books, DVDs, magazine articles, blog posts, podcasts, free dog training and dog agility video series, and online dog training programs.



A natural teacher and an entertaining speaker, Susan is world renowned for her dog training knowledge and practical application of that knowledge. Her understanding of how to apply science-based learning principles to both competitive and family pet dog training has been pivotal in changing how dogs are trained.

Susan is now helping many thousands of dog owners in 82 countries have the best relationship possible with their dogs. The real joy for her comes from bringing confidence to dogs and their owner through playful interactions and relationship building games that are grounded firmly in the science of how animals learn.



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