

Season 5 Episode 6
LOVE with Zazie Todd, PhD

Guests include Jessy Tarver

DESCRIPTION

Pet retail has this peculiar truth: the customer with the wallet is always trying to understand the one that doesn't have one. Season 5, Episode 6 is about LOVE, and what a store has to do to deserve it.

Jessy Tarver (and her bearded dragon, Mango) drives 45 minutes past closer stores to shop at That Pet Place. Price isn't the reason. Trust is. Then social psychologist and certified dog trainer Zazie Todd, PhD, author of *Bark!*, explains how to tell which stores have earned that trust. They're the ones that upsell you to the bigger cage, refuse to sell shock collars, and know that the best enrichment can be free.

Love is why we walk in. Trust is why we come back.

SHOW NOTES
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Testimonial:
[00:00] Cristene: Hi Jeff.

[00:02] Jeff: Hello, Cristene.

[00:03] Cristene: Today, we're going to talk about something a little different. We're going to talk about our critters, and they can have four legs, they can have no legs, they can be... well, everybody who listens to this podcast has heard Bella Sophia bark before. We all know I have a dog. But I want to introduce you to somebody who has a slightly different pet.

[00:25] Jeff: Okay, so please tell more.

[00:29] Cristene: Okay. Hey Jess, why don't you tell the story? Pick it up here.

Jess: I have a zoo. Not just one pet. I have three dogs, three cats, three fish, one bearded dragon. And the pet we're here to talk about today is my bearded dragon, Mango.

[00:51] Host: Tell me about Mango. Is he a she or a he? How did she get her name?

[00:57] Jess: Because we had originally bought Mango for my son Ethan, and at the time he had just finished eating peppered mangoes, and he absolutely loved them. And when he picked out his bearded dragon, he named her Mango.

[01:15] Host: That's awesome. I love it.

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Jess: Very bright.

Host: Very practical. Yeah. Love equals love.

[01:21] Cristene: So, menagerie aside, tell me a little bit about the bearded dragon.

[01:27] Jess: She's seven years old. She feels like a diva or a queen. You can take her outside, but you cannot put her on the ground. Otherwise, she will get mad. She'll go dark and start trying to bite at whatever touches her once she hits the ground. But once you pick her up, she's giving you kisses and cuddling you, and just relaxing.

[01:50] Cristene: Just the thought of a cuddly bearded dragon is just sort of... I'm trying to reconcile that in my head.

[01:56] Jess: Yeah, it's tough. If I'm sat back on the couch, she'll, like, crawl up my chest and then rest her head right on my lips.

[02:05] Host: Oh my goodness. That is so sweet.

[02:06] Jess: Just for me to sit there and pet her and love on her. She's the sweetest thing as can be. She'll run around the house, she'll try and play with the dogs.

[02:17] Host: What size is Mango?

[02:19] Jess: She's full grown. I wanna say she's, like, eighteen inches maybe.

[02:26] Host: Little bigger than I thought. Little bigger than I thought.

[02:28] Cristene: Okay. So clearly you and Mango have developed a system to communicate.

Jess: Yes.

Cristene: How does she tell you she's hungry? How does she tell you anything else?

[02:37] Jess: She doesn't really communicate that she's hungry, because we keep up on feeding her hornworms or crickets or... yeah, salads, her greens, all that stuff, her fruits. But when she wants attention, she'll go and beat the side of the tank with her tail.

[02:53] Jeff: Oh my. So she gives you very strong cues.

[02:57] Jess: Yes. Unmistakable. If it's, like, food that she doesn't like, she will turn her nose to it and, like, hit it with her paws, per se. If it's food that she really likes, then she'll follow it and trail it around, and she'll try to jump, but she's roughly the size of a pancake.

[03:18] Jeff: We had our dog Lucy, who we lost earlier this year, and we were told when she was younger that green beans were really good for dogs. So we mixed green beans in with her dinner, and we then proceeded to watch her pick every single green bean out and put it on the side of the bowl and continue to eat her regular food. So I understand the kids that you're describing very, very well.

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[03:46] Jess: Oh yes, Mango does that. One thing my partner George does is he'll take the hornworms and he'll stick them underneath her greens or things like that. And he'll make sure she sees him do that, so that then she'll try and scatter and eat everything on top to get to the hornworms.

[04:06] Host: Mm, that's awesome. Where does one get hornworms?

[04:09] Jess: That Pet Place.

[04:11] Jeff: Which is your favorite and trusted pet supplier store?

[04:17] Jess: And so it's called That... That Pet Place.

[04:19] Jeff: It's called That Pet Place, not That Bird Place, That Fish Place?

Jess: That Bird Place, That Fish Place, yes.

Jeff: Yes, I love it. The official name.

[04:25] Jess: And that's what the sign says.

Jeff: So that's real. Okay. And why there?

[04:31] Jess: Because when they get animals in, they will actually quarantine them for a couple of weeks to make sure there's no transmittable diseases, no health complications, none of that. The animals all get handled daily and get fresh, like, fruits, vegetables, or whatever their diets require. They get that every day, and it's very trustworthy.

[04:57] Jeff: Just above and beyond just the hornworms, which I think is what you said. What else? Why go there? Because it's not... is That Pet Place close to you?

[05:08] Jess: About a half hour, 45 minutes.

[05:10] Jeff: There's probably pet stores closer, so you're making a decision to go there.

[05:16] Jess: That Pet Place is guaranteed to have what we need for our animals in stock. And because, as I said earlier, I have a plethora of animals, we have to make sure that whatever store we go to has that variety of food for us to get.

[05:33] Host: That makes sense.

[05:34] Cristene: Yeah, that's fabulous. I am so excited to sort of visit and see it. Now, they have a manta ray tank.

[05:43] Jess: Yes, hands on. You can reach in and pet the manta rays, you can pet the starfish, you can... whatever you can reach without falling into the tank, you can pet.

[05:55] Jeff: But just for the record, you don't have a manta ray at home.

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Jess: Not yet.

Jeff: I love it.

[06:03] Jeff: Is their customer service, like, amazing, and do you have somebody that's very trusted there as well? Is there another reason, other than the menagerie of pets and the specific diets and needs that they offer you?

[06:18] Jess: Everybody in each department is very knowledgeable for the area that they work in. Like, they can tell you, if you look at certain fish, they'll be like, "Oh, well, you need a tank this size. It gets along with this kind of a community. These are its needs," things like that. If you look at a reptile, they'll be able to tell you the age of the reptile, the specific breed, if it's, like, a special kind of ball python, or a hybrid for, like, say, iguanas or things like that. And they just... they don't make you feel like you're the dumb one. Like, they share this knowledge, and they make you feel like asking questions is supposed to be done.

[07:02] Jeff: And they have the knowledge, and it sounds like the care and the personal experience to really then want to share that with you as well.

[07:12] Jess: Oh yeah. For instance, we had another toy poodle named Ginger. We had gotten her back, and she was malnourished. I went to That Pet Place with her to get her specific foods and covers and things like that, to help boost her up and all of that, make her healthier. And they immediately gave me a care package, where they helped me pick out wet food, they helped me pick out dry food. They helped me through the entire process, went down a checklist of things that I could bring home for her.

[07:45] Host: Well, that's true.

[07:47] Jeff: Really, that's above and beyond.

[07:50] Cristene: Jess, thank you so much for kind of walking us through your menagerie and for sharing Mango with us. We look forward to meeting her.

[08:00] Jeff: Absolutely.

[08:01] Host: Thank you, sweet girl. We appreciate you.

[08:04] Jeff: Yeah, wonderful to meet you. Thank you so much.

[08:06] Jess: Wonderful meeting you too, Jeff.

Transcript: interview with Zazie Todd

[08:11] Jeff: Today, we welcome Zazie Todd, a social psychologist, certified dog trainer, founder of the blog Companion Animal Psychology, and author of multiple books, including her latest, *Bark!: The Science of Helping Your Anxious, Fearful, or Reactive Dog*. Zazie, welcome to Retail Done Right.

[08:29] Zazie Todd: Thank you for having me on the show.

Cristene: It's our pleasure, because we are animal people.

Jeff: Yes, we are.

[08:36] Cristene: I'll start it off. We know in broad contours when our pets are happy, okay? But how does an owner really know? And does it differ for cats and dogs, and for something like bearded dragons, like Mango from our opening conversation with Jess? Pet retail has this peculiar truth: the customer with the wallet is always trying to understand the one that doesn't have one. You've spent your career in that gap. How does an owner really know what their pet wants? And how often do we get it wrong? I hate to think about that.

[09:17] Zazie Todd: I think it's a really important question. And the good news is it's also a question that I think everybody wants to know. Like, a few years ago, there was a survey by Dogs Trust in the UK, and they asked, "What would you most like to know if your dog could speak? What would you ask them?" And it's, "Are you happy?" I think everybody wants to know that their pet is happy. I mean, after all, this is why we get pets, because we love them. Of course, we want to make them happy. And I think people get a lot of things right, but in order to know if they're happy in the moment, you actually have to be quite practiced at reading your pet's body language, and that is actually a skill. It can take time and experience to learn to do that.

So I think one thing is to not simply assume that they're happy, but actually to ask a few questions. And you can look at their body language. So, for example, with a dog, if they've got a loose wagging tail, that's one sign. You would be looking for an open, relaxed mouth, a relaxed kind of body posture. And if they're getting tense and fearful, then you tend to see the body posture goes down and the tail goes down. The tail going down is one that a lot of people recognize, but some of the other things, like maybe just yawning, can sometimes be a sign of stress. It doesn't necessarily mean that the dog is tired. Or sometimes just looking away can be a sign of stress. And these are things that people don't always pick up on.

And then, with a cat, it's kind of like the more open the body language, the more relaxed they are. So we're used to seeing our cats walk towards us with their tail high, maybe with a little hook at the top, like a question mark. That's a lovely greeting signal from them, and that's also a very relaxed, comfortable kind of greeting signal. And the more they're kind of curled up in a ball, with their paws tucked in and their tail close to their body, that could be a sign of stress. And of course, also, if their tail is swishing quite wildly, that could be a sign of stress, that they're not happy. And people aren't always very good at picking up on these signs.

But then the other thing to ask: it's not just what is their body language in the moment, but it's also what does their day look like? Are they engaging in normal behaviours for their species? That's obviously going to be quite different for a bearded dragon compared to a cat or a dog or a rabbit. But, you know, your pet should be doing things. They shouldn't be sleeping all day. They should be using the space that's available to them, so moving around in your home, using toys that you've provided for

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them, for example, and engaging in lots of different activities throughout the day, and coming and choosing to spend some time with you as well. Those are all things to look for. And if you're not sure, ask an expert. So ask your veterinarian, speak to your dog trainer or a cat behaviorist, or find some expert to help you understand.

[12:07] Host: Follow your blog.

Zazie Todd: My blog, actually, yes.

[12:11] Jeff: It's being aware. It's being present. I love the paying attention to that body language. I completely agree with you. It's like we get ourselves into routines, right, as opposed to really, really giving them the attention that they rightfully deserve. *Bark!* is about fear, anxiety and reactivity, and the internet is full of bad information on all three. When a worried owner walks into a pet store with a fearful dog, what does a well-meaning employee usually get wrong? And how can an owner protect against that?

[12:42] Zazie Todd: I think the thing that most people get wrong, whether they're an employee or someone else, about fearful and anxious pets is that they think the solution is going to be to expose the animal to more of the thing that they're afraid of, and they'll just get used to it. And they wish that that would happen. And unfortunately, that's not likely to be the case, because if they're already fearful and already anxious, then simply exposing them to more of it is likely to make that fear and anxiety worse. It's like if we're afraid of something, like if we're afraid of a spider, and someone says, "Oh, the solution is that I put this spider right in your face," you know, that's not actually going to make us feel better.

[13:21] Host: May not work.

[13:22] Zazie Todd: No. And it's the same for the pet. So fear and anxiety, unfortunately, they can actually be quite severe problems, and sometimes they can take a long time to resolve, and sometimes it can need an expert to be involved. So I think the big thing is that people need to do something. And the vet is very often the first place to start, actually, because sometimes fear and anxiety is actually related to a medical issue. Like, if the animal is in pain or something like that, that can be contributing to it. So it's good to get that ruled out. But also, in the case of more severe fear and anxiety, the vet might want to recommend psychoactive medications, which can help a lot. Just like they can help people a lot, they also can work for our pets.

And then the other thing is that you need to help your pet to feel safe. That's the most important thing you can do for them, is to help them feel safe. And you're part of that, especially with a pet like a cat or a dog who has a really strong bond with you. Your presence can simply help your pet to feel more safe, more comfortable, less stressed. And then the technical side of actually working on it can actually be quite technical. So often I advise people to get a good dog trainer to help them with fear and anxiety, especially if it's a severe problem, because you'll make quicker progress that way. And otherwise, it can unfortunately sometimes take a long time to deal with it.

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[14:47] Jeff: Really interesting. Your work is about translating the science for everyday owners. What's missing in the pet store experience, based on what you've seen? There is a gap there. There must be.

[15:00] Zazie Todd: Yeah, I think, well, what I really like in a good pet store is when they have good connections to their local community. I think we see a lot of pet stores providing, you know, training and grooming and things like that as well now. But I also like it when they have good connections to their local shelter and rescue, for example. And dog training is quite tricky sometimes, so it's important for any dog training that they're offering, or any dog training cards that they're giving out, to be for people who are going to use methods that are recommended by science. So that would be reward-based methods, basically positive reinforcement. But I really love those connections with the local community, and when the pet store is also raising funds, for example, for local charities and things like that. I think that's a really nice thing.

I think one thing that's missing is that these days we know a lot more about the importance of enrichment for pets. All pet stores, obviously, they have toys, and they do have some enrichment things. But these days, there's a much wider variety of toys than there used to be, and I think we don't necessarily see some of those in the stores. Some of them tend more often to be online. So some of the puzzle toys for dogs and cats, for example, food puzzle toys that make them have to work to get their food.

[16:18] Host: Like snuffle mats.

[16:19] Jeff: I think Cristene actually has a puzzle toy, actually.

Zazie Todd: Amazing.

[16:23] Cristene: Every night we have a game. And if it's not done by 8 p.m., then there's a problem. It's part of the schedule now.

[16:31] Host: It's good for their brain health, their intellectual stimulation as well, right? The challenge.

[16:38] Zazie Todd: Especially for cats who are indoors only, because they can't go outside and hunt. Like, you know, we used to value their hunting prowess, but these days they don't have those opportunities. So we need to provide them, and give their brains something to do. And also dogs, they can get quite bored otherwise. So food puzzle toys is one of the ways of providing that. And so I think I'd like to see a wider variety of those. I mean, it probably varies depending on the store, but there is a really wide variety of those available now, and it would be nice to see more of those in store, I think, because it just provides great opportunities for our pets, and also for us to enjoy spending time with our pets, because it's fun to watch our pets engage with these toys.

And you mentioned scent work as well, and scent is so important for dogs. Obviously, it's their most important sense. Not many people realize how important it is for cats as well. And actually, for lots of animals, opportunities to use their nose, maybe to find food, you know, is really good for them, really important for their welfare. And so being able to emphasize that, and provide those kinds of things, I think, is really important.

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[17:46] Host: Wow, okay, that's very exciting.

[17:49] Jeff: You're a good pet owner, Cristene.

[17:51] Zazie Todd: You are, yes. And the other thing is, going back to scent work, because you mentioned scent work: scent work classes for dogs. Cats can do it as well; there are online classes for cats to do it too. But scent work classes for dogs basically involve them learning how to find a particular scent. Or initially, usually, it's finding a bit of food in a room that's laid out with lots of boxes or something. People get really hooked on this. Most people I know who've been to a scent work class, they just totally get hooked, because they really enjoy watching their dog do this. So, you know, dog training isn't just about obedience. It's also about finding fun activities to do with your dog.

[18:29] Jeff: Yeah, that makes all the sense in the world.

[18:32] Cristene: Oh, I've never done that. We can have fun with that. I know exactly what her high-value rewards are. So what's the one piece of intelligence an owner can walk into a store with that helps the personnel there get it right more quickly?

[18:49] Zazie Todd: I think know your pet, and know your budget as well. So know what kinds of things your pet likes. And if you're looking for new toys, for example, especially for your cat: cats like to have a range of toys. Most cats have a toy mouse, but they like to have toys that resemble prey. And there are some really lovely toys that are kind of like a snake or like a lizard, or big ones that they can kick at as if they were kicking at a rabbit or something like that. So knowing what you've already got, and then finding something new that you can add to that, I think is really good.

But also, the pet's personality matters. So, sticking with cat toys, we get some really amazing toys that have batteries in, and they move, and they flap their wings, or they flop about like a fish or something. And a bold, confident cat will absolutely love that, but a more nervous kind of cat might actually think, "Oh, this is too loud for me, this is too noisy," or a bit too much for me, and not want to play with it. So knowing the personality of your pet might be quite helpful as well, I think.

[19:49] Host: So again, paying attention.

[19:51] Zazie Todd: Yeah, so again, yes, it's really getting to know your pet as well as you can. And in terms of food, I think it's a very personal thing for people, how they decide to feed their pet, because our pets are family. So the way we think about feeding our human family also then gets kind of laid onto how we're thinking about feeding our fur babies, or whatever animals we've got. And so that's kind of part of what it is as well. And really, in terms of the main food, so long as it's been assessed as complete and balanced, then we've got a huge variety of choices. And it's your own personal preferences, as much as what you think your pet will like, that kind of come into that. So just thinking a bit more about what you might want and what you might like, I think, is helpful. It's just knowing your pet, knowing yourself.

[20:38] Cristene: Oh, wow. So, while we're here on this topic in particular, it strikes me that some people say that they feel their pet needs to have multiple flavors, versus eating the same thing every

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day, because we would get bored with that. I've heard both sides of that: like, the dog doesn't care, the dog just wants something they like, and you know they'll eat it, versus having beef one day and chicken the next day and then salmon the third.

[21:08] Zazie Todd: I think it varies depending on the pet. So I think there are those pets that love the same thing every day, and that's what they prefer, and they might not like a change or appreciate a change. And then I think most pets, though, would like variety, and most pets would like some kind of change in what they're getting.

I can give you an example. I used to have a cat called Harley, who was very, very fussy. He wanted his kibble; he didn't want anything else. We would try and give him bits of tuna and chicken, and he was not interested at all. He was like, "This is not my kibble. I want my kibble." But over the years, he would watch our other cat gobbling down the tuna or gobbling down the chicken, and it was as if he was thinking, "Why don't I like this?" I mean, of course, I don't know what was in his mind, but it felt like he was thinking, "I should be enjoying this too." And we started tearing it into the tiniest pieces, and we taught him to eat tuna, and we taught him to eat chicken. But he wasn't interested before that. You know, he just wanted the same thing every day. He was a real creature of habit. And so I think it's a case of knowing what your pet wants. Our other cat, she did want different things all the time, and it's the same with dogs.

And there is actually a really nice piece of research about how fast dogs will run to get preferred food choices. It was done in a lab, where they set the room up with the dog at one end and a bowl with food in at the other end. And they used coloured bowls, so that the dog would learn over time that this type of bowl always means this type of food. And they timed how long it would take the dog to get there. And they found that most dogs, if they used a rotating variety of three of their favourite treats, most dogs preferred that variety, as in they would run faster to get the treats. But there were some dogs that just had the one preferred treat, and they would run faster for that specific treat and not for the other ones. So I think that kind of is a scientific answer to your question, as to what dogs prefer.

[23:05] Jeff: I love it. I will say, going back to the toys, our dog's favorite toy, didn't matter which additional toy we brought in, was a stuffed rat. She just loved that rat. We obviously still have her most favorite rat with us. But it didn't matter which additional toy or even treat; she always went back to that rat. So I completely get that. And she would just tear it apart. It was just fantastic. I think it was a little animal instinct on that.

[23:37] Zazie Todd: Yeah, and that's exactly the kind of thing that people should learn about their pet. And, you know, some dogs will absolutely tear toys to pieces, and that's the part of the toy that they enjoy, so they need toys that are going to be safe for them to rip to shreds. Whereas some dogs will not tear things to pieces. They might squeak them, they might shake them about, but actually the toy will last for a long, long period of time. So they can have kind of softer toys, and it doesn't matter if the toy might fall apart, because they're going to look after it carefully. So again, knowing what your dog is likely to do with the toy is quite important.

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[24:09] Jeff: Absolutely. Pet care has become somewhat fragmented: a groomer here, a trainer there, a vet somewhere else, and staff that turn over constantly. When the faces keep changing, how do you judge the quality of a place, let alone trust it?

[24:25] Zazie Todd: Yeah, I think that's a challenge in so many fields these days. I think, ideally, for a pet store, you would see some of those faces popping up later. Like, there would be people starting out, and then they would pop up as a vet tech in your local vet, or something like that, or working at your local shelter, and then you would know that they had given people a good training to help them get started in a career with pets. But I do think it's challenging. I think we can't necessarily expect pet store employees to be up to date on the latest science about pets, for example.

One thing I like to look for: I think it's always a good sign if a chain is not selling shock collars and prong collars. I know there are not many places like that, but there are some. For example, in 2020, Petco stopped selling shock collars, electronic collars, because these days we have quite strong guidance from groups like the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior and the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists about the kinds of training that should be provided for pets, and the risks if people are using aversive methods. So I always like it if a pet store has a good range of treats, for starters, but also they're kind of geared up, like they will sell bait bags and things as well, so that you have places to keep your treats to help you with that training. And it's really geared more towards the positive side of looking after pets. I think that's an important sign, because it shows that they know a bit more about the behavior side of animals as well.

[25:51] Jeff: I was actually going to ask you about that: a lot of pet stores still sell prong or shock collars right next to the training treats, and what a shopper should take away from that. And I think you just addressed that. That should be a little bit of a red flag for you as a pet owner.

[26:08] Zazie Todd: Yeah, I think so. I mean, obviously they're still making money from them, and that's why they're selling them. But these guidelines from the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and from AvSAB, they're very, very clear about the kinds of methods that we should be using to train dogs. And I think these days most vets have caught up with those guidelines as well, and they have clear guidelines as well. And it's unfortunate that pet stores and the dog training profession itself is not regulated. So that's part of the problem, I think, because there are still, in most communities, some dog trainers who are using those approaches, unfortunately. So it's not just a problem linked to pet stores; it's a wider thing that the dog training profession needs to sort out and resolve. And I think there have been big changes, and there are definitely big changes in public awareness on the importance of using reward-based training methods, but there's still a lot of work to be done to help make sure that everybody knows about that.

[27:03] Host: That's great insight.

[27:04] Zazie Todd: And another thing I would add, for kind of smaller animals, is that in general, most of the cages or enclosures for them tend to be quite small. And it's always a good sign, I think, if they're trying to upsell you to a much bigger enclosure, because the bigger the enclosure, generally, the better. And many of the enclosures and cages that are available are actually smaller than would be

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advisable for the animal. So if you've got a pet rat or a pet rabbit or something like that, you want as big a space for them as possible, so that they've got enough space to move around and to engage in normal behaviours for the species. So I can see that some people might be a bit suspicious, like, "You're just trying to make more money by selling me this bigger cage." But in this case, it would actually be much better for your pet if you did that. So that would be a good sign, I think.

[27:51] Host: That's great insight.

[27:53] Cristene: Yeah, and I think that you've started to go where I was going to go next. How do you look at a well-run pet store, and kind of, what's the tell? I started out by saying we have this place called That Pet Place near me, apparently the world's largest pet store. But the one thing I noticed when I went into it was it has tons of information everywhere. Like, you know, you can pick up information, whether it's about a rabbit or about a snake or about fish, or even different dog breeds. They also have staff; like, you could find people. Now, those are very obvious things, but what else should we be looking for?

[28:33] Zazie Todd: I think those are important things, and I think a lot of places don't actually provide that much information, but some do, and I think it's really helpful when they do. I'm actually going to start with something really basic, which is cleanliness. It needs to be clean. And that sounds so obvious, but I have walked into pet stores that have appeared to have a bit of a rodent problem, for example. And I think that's probably a common thing that people have to deal with. So cleanliness is obviously important.

I think a wide variety of things. I think it should be nice and bright, full of nice toys and things. I think pets should feel comfortable going in. I think sometimes, for cats, there are some very lovely cat-specific pet stores, and I think that's very nice for cat guardians, especially these days, when you get more cats who are leash trained. If they want to take their cat into the pet store, if it's cat only, they probably feel safer doing that than if they're going into a pet store where there might be dogs on leash. Although, of course, if the dog is on leash, it should be fine, but that sometimes is better. And I think also sometimes some of these stores can be more specialist, and I think that can be quite helpful if you've got a higher level of knowledge from the staff there. Yeah. And I think we can't expect pet stores to tell us everything about our pet, but it's just really good when they have lots of things about enrichment, and good treats and good food, and they can tell you they've got information about it. I think that is very helpful.

[30:03] Jeff: Zazie, every owner thinks they know their pet and their needs deeply. Can you give us three things we get right most of the time, and maybe one thing we almost always get wrong?

[30:14] Zazie Todd: I love that question, because I think it's so important to celebrate what people do get right. So I think one thing people get right these days is that they want their pet to be happy. And if you think back, in the past people probably mostly just expected their pet to behave themselves and not be too much of a trouble, whereas these days, they actually care about whether their pet is happy. They recognize that pets can be happy. So I think that's important, and that can spur people to do a bit more for their pet.

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I think people are doing a good job of providing more enrichment for their pet. So we talked about food puzzle toys, we talked about scent work; there's all kinds of activities that can be enrichment. For the smaller creatures, it might simply be, like, shredding cardboard or paper or something like that. I think people understand more now that they need to provide enrichment for their pet, and it helps their pet to engage in species-specific behaviours. So I think that's really important. And what goes along with that is we have a better understanding of the fact that our pets do have needs, and that it's up to us to provide for those needs. And that's important, because when we provide for the things that our pet needs, then they are less likely to have behavior issues, and they're more likely to have a good relationship with us. And it does involve learning a bit more about the pet, so reading about them, for example, online or in books, whatever. That can be really helpful.

I think one thing that people often get wrong is, if they have a behavior issue with their pet, they kind of wait and hope that it will get better. And I completely understand that. I think that's a very natural thing to do. But the problem is that whatever is causing that behavior issue in the first place is not changing, because you're not doing anything about it, and therefore that behavior issue is likely to keep on getting worse. And so it's a good idea to do something about it sooner rather than later, because not only will you solve the problem sooner, but it doesn't have this chance to develop. So a fear might get much worse, for example. Or a dog who is jumping up and mouthy because they don't have enough to do, they're just going to keep on being mouthy, and you might need to provide them a lot more enrichment, as well as training on what to do instead, for example. And the sooner you get started on that, the better, especially bearing in mind that sometimes medical issues play a role too, so you might need to start with your vet as well.

[32:37] Jeff: Yeah, that makes all the sense in the world.

[32:39] Cristene: I have two questions that kind of go together. The one thing we're seeing is obviously this rise of, like, pheromone therapy for dogs or for cats. True, not true? What should we be thinking about there? We have three dogs, and one of them is very reactive. So clearly I bought the book, and I want to ask you about that next. We found that she actually does okay with a... you know, she's a little better with it. You know, she had a very rough start; she's a rescue. But are these things helpful or not helpful?

[33:15] Zazie Todd: Yeah, that's a great question. What I often say to people is that they're worth a try. So you might not expect them to solve the problem on their own, but they do seem to be able to help, certainly in some cases. The evidence has been a little bit mixed from the scientific research, but some of it does show some benefits. So, for dogs and for cats: we get pheromones for dogs, and we get pheromones for cats. You get them as plug-ins; you can get them as sprays these days as well. They come in different forms. And I think on their own, it probably would not be enough to solve something, but certainly it can't hurt, and it does seem to help in some cases. So if you have a cat who's nervous, for example, you might want to plug in a pheromone, or for a dog.

If you have a dog and a cat in your home, then you don't know which species to get the pheromone for, because it's only relevant to that one species. One can detect it, and the other one can't. So I would go with whichever one seems to be having the bigger problem or the biggest struggle. So if it's

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the cat, get the pheromones for the cat. And if it's the dog, get it for the dog. But still take the time to learn what else you need to do, because it's probably, on its own, not enough. It might help, and it might help get you started on things, but you probably also have to do some extra behaviour work too.

[34:31] Cristene: Absolutely. Where can people find more of your work, and how should they be looking at that?

[34:37] Zazie Todd: So the best place to go is my website, which is companionanimalpsychology.com. And I have a newsletter and a podcast and a blog, and a Psychology Today blog. And my books are available wherever books are sold. You can get those wherever you prefer to buy your books.

[34:52] Cristene: We'll drop all of that in the show links so that people can find them, because I find that people are clearly interested in that. And, you know, you are the second guest we've had this season with a column in Psychology Today. So clearly, you know, I feel that that's important. So if, in fact, the pet category were to think about one or two things that they could do differently, what would that be? Where would you start?

[35:21] Zazie Todd: I would start with emphasizing... well, actually, two things. I would start with emphasizing more enrichment for pets, first of all, because that's so important for pets to be comfortable and happy and have good welfare. And I do think they could do more to encourage people to buy more toys. Obviously, they have a vested interest in encouraging people to buy more toys and things. And also, some of those might be experiences, like a nose work class or something like that. And I think that's important for the welfare of pets: they do need to have more enrichment.

But the other thing is, these days, I think people are struggling financially. A lot of people are finding it difficult. And I know that the American Pet Products Association is still expecting spending on pets to rise this year compared to last year. But I think at the same time, people are having to make more considered choices. And the good thing about enrichment is that you actually don't have to spend money to make enrichment. You can just drop some treats in the grass for your dog to sniff out with their nose. You can hide treats around the house for your cat or your rabbit or rat or whatever to find and search out in the house. And I actually think it is also fun to make toys. Like, you can make food puzzle toys; you can make your own snuffle mat. You can make food puzzle toys just with some cardboard tubes, blocking the ends off and hiding treats in them and having holes for them to fall out. Wouldn't it be lovely to have classes where people could go and practice making these? I think that would be a lovely event for people, and it could bring people into a pet store. I bet people would spend money in the pet store while they were there learning how to do these things too. But it would just be a lovely experience for the person, making something nice for their pet too.

[37:05] Cristene: Yeah, and you said something, and I just want to double down for a second. If people are struggling to feed their pets... you know, we're very blessed. As I said, we have a place in Lancaster called the Pet Pantry, which helps families keep their beloved pets at home: pet food assistance, affordable veterinary care, animal rescue. But the pet assistance in particular allows families who have those sorts of hardships to provide food, where they can come pick it up so that the pet stays with its

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owner. And I would encourage people, before surrendering a pet, to at least see if there's a local program that can help with that, because we want to keep pets with loving owners.

[37:47] Zazie Todd: Yeah, I agree. I think these days there are a lot of local programmes, like pet food banks. Or sometimes there can be support for training; sometimes local shelters have low-cost training classes or low-cost access to behavior assistance as well. And I think usually there are lots of things that can be explored, but it can be quite hard finding where to go to get this information. But it is definitely worth looking for it, because there is a lot more support available. I've seen there being a lot more support available than there used to be, say, ten years ago, for example.

[38:20] Jeff: Zazie, thank you so much for joining Retail Done Right. I actually wrote down "enrichment for pets," so I love the fact that you came back to that at the end. Happiness: is your pet happy? Paying attention to the body language, and really, really being present for your pet. I just love the conversation, so thank you so much. This was wonderful.

[38:42] Zazie Todd: This was so much fun. Thank you for having me on the show. It's been a pleasure to chat with you.

Transcript: wrap and sign-off

[38:50] Cristene: So Jess drives 45 minutes, past closer stores, to get to That Pet Place. Not for price.

[38:57] Cristene: For trust.

[38:59] Jeff: And she can tell you exactly why. They quarantine new animals, handle them every day, and nobody makes her feel dumb for asking. That's trust she can see and feel.

[39:09] Cristene: Zazie gave us the other side: how to tell whether a store deserves that trust. My favorite sign: they try to upsell you the bigger cage.

[39:18] Jeff: I loved that, because that upsell is for the animal. The same goes for what a store won't sell, like shock collars. Trust comes from taking the pet's side, even when it costs you a sale.

[39:31] Host: Which makes sense.

Cristene: In a category where the customer with the wallet is shopping for someone who can't talk.

[39:37] Jeff: And every owner wants to know one thing: is my pet happy? The store that helps answer that question wins.

[39:45] Cristene: And the answer isn't always another product. One of my favorite moments in this episode was Zazie talking about how enrichment can be free. Treats hidden in the grass, a cardboard tube.

[39:57] Jeff: That's the bigger idea. A craft night where people make puzzle toys for their pets, or a scent work class. That isn't lost revenue; it's a reason to come in.

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[40:08] Cristene: So do we call this episode Trust or Love?

[40:11] Jeff: Love is why we walk in. Trust is why we come back. The best stores earn the second by honoring the first.

[40:19] Host: Love it is, then. But you gotta earn it.

[40:24] Jeff: Thank you to Jess, and to Mango, and to Zazie Todd. You'll find Zazie at companionanimalpsychology.com, and her book *Bark!* wherever books are sold. Links are in our show notes.

[40:38] Cristene: Yeah, and she also has a column in Psychology Today. But you can find us at retaildoneright.net, and at Retail Done Right on Instagram.

[40:49] Jeff: Shopping is human.

[40:51] Cristene: Yeah, and let's keep it that way.

RESEARCH, REFERENCES & SOURCES

- Companion Animal Psychology
- About Zazie Todd PhD
- Zazie Todd Ph.D. | Psychology Today
- Visit That Fish Place - That Pet Place - 237 Centerville Road, Lancaster, PA 17603
- Pet Pantry

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