

Hey, everyone.

Welcome to this lesson on Feng shui. Here you will learn about how good environmental arrangement is a crucial ingredient in the successful behavior management of animals in our care.

My name is Ryan Cartlidge and I'm the director and founder of Animal Training Academy and It's a pleasure to have you all here.

You have likely heard about Feng Shui in relation to topics such as interior design for example or how you might go about setting up your house and/or living and working spaces. Have you ever heard about it with relation to animal training, though?

Chances are you have it just might have been called something different for example environmental or antecedent arrangement.

I started using the term Feng Shui after working with the team at Natureland Zoo in Nelson New Zealand. We were setting up a learning space for me to conduct a series of workshops for the team. We were utilising the zoo's staff room and kitchenette as our learning environment. There were many challenges to using this space as opposed to using a traditional classroom setting. Myself and the team started joking about how we were challenged to achieve good Feng Shui.

This got us thinking about its application to animal training and how when training our animals, it's important to set the environment up for success. Consequently, for the rest of my time at Natureland Zoo before we did any training we were constantly asking ourselves the question, "have we got good Feng Shui" and the idea was born.

Feng Shui is a Chinese philosophy that promotes setting up your environment in a way that promotes its use. It's believed that by proper environmental arrangement you can make spaces more comfortable. Feng Shui is also said to improve physical and mental health. Relationships are additionally believed to improve with good Feng Shui. Ultimately by improving all of the above, this helps lead to success. How can we, therefore, implement these principles with your Animal Training?

Feng Shui is important when setting up your animals environments.

You should endeavour to set Animals environments up in a way that makes desirable behaviors easier to perform. Furthermore, we need to make desirable behaviors more reinforcing than undesirable behaviors.

We make it easier for our animals to do what we want. We pair correct behavior with positive reinforcement. This combination helps us empower our Animals in a positive way. In my experience, this is one of the most robust methods to achieve success. Correct environment arrangement and positive reinforcement Animal Training help augment high animal welfare.

Watch the video from this lesson on the website to learn more about Feng Shui and Animal Training. The Video has an example of good and bad Feng Shui in action with Molly the Morepork owl.

The first thing you should do before you start any training project is to examine your environmental arrangement. Ensure that your animal can move freely within their environments. Make sure that there's nothing unsafe, ensure that the behaviour you are asking for is able to be performed easily. Check for unstable surfaces. Make sure there is enough freedom of movement for you and your animals so that you can both move freely within the training environment.

An example I can share with you is my current situation at home. We have two cats living with us and they've been living with us for a while now and then we have recently added a dog to our family

as well. Now obviously bringing a dog into the house has changed things significantly. Our cats are house cats and they don't actually leave our property. However, previous to our dog joining our family the cats would go outside into our back yard every day. The yard area they would go into is fully fenced and we would have an eye on them the whole time they were outside.

When our dog arrived we were suddenly faced with a whole host of behavioral changes and I'm going to talk about a few of the undesirable ones now and how we have dealt with them via developing better Feng Shui on our property. Fibi the dog was eight months old when we got her and she wasn't toilet trained. Consequently, at times, she would spoil on the carpet. Furthermore, we couldn't detect any communication from her that she wanted to go she would just creep off to the corner and leave us some nice little presents.

Additionally, at around about the same time every night, there was a lot of undesirable interactions occurring between the dog and the two cats. This included behaviors such as but not limited to chasing, snarling, snapping and swiping.

And Thirdly T-lo the cat was scratching at the bedroom door every morning after I had gotten up and my partner was still sleeping.

Now when we first got the dog we often had our back door shut as the cats could get out and there was a risk they could jump the fence and get off the property, So the environmental change we made was installing a net over the entire back outdoor area of the house. The net starts at the roof of the house and goes all the way to the fence and encompasses the entire outdoor area.

The netting now means that we can now leave the back door open. The dog can, therefore, let herself out to go to the bathroom. Paired with a few other environmental changes the extra space available to the animals significantly decreased undesirable cat and dog interactions in the evening. And last but not least I get up early every morning and open our back door letting the cats outside which has significantly decreased scratching at bedroom doors. There are still environmental changes we need to make to improve on what's already been a great success but the point is one of the first things I always look at when dealing with behaviour is how can we set the environment up for our animals that facilitate and reinforce desirable behaviours and ensure good Feng Shui.

I hope you have enjoyed the audio recording for this lesson. Good luck with all your training endeavours and we will catch you again next time.



*Figure 1 T-Lo the cat.*



*Figure 2 Bagheera*



*Figure 3 Fibi*



*Figure 4 The netting installed in our backyard.*