

The cat is old. The treats are small. But, for more than one reason, those little Temptations have caused me some distress.

And, I didn't buy them for the cat at all. Muzzy was perfectly happy without treats, because he had never been exposed to them. His treat was catching a mouse and consuming it under the pickup, watched by two dogs that had no access to his position.

No, I bought those cat treats for Blue and Kete, the border collies. The small bits of something that apparently is tasty are really quite good for clicker training of canines as well as cats. That project eventually was sidelined by one thing or another, but in the meantime, Muzzy the cat became addicted.

Muzzy knows where the treats are kept. The large box stands on the filing cabinet next to the wood burning cookstove. Whenever it crosses his mind, Muzzy tries to lead me to that location, meowing all the way and checking back at each step to be sure that I am following.

Mornings are the worst. I have learned to always put my socks on first when I get up. Muzzy goes for the Achilles first, though he is not opposed to biting toes or calves, either. As soon as my socks are on, I feel that I have a few seconds to finish dressing before I follow Muzzy to the corner where he expects his Temptations to drop in front of him.

Every time Muzzy gets a treat, though, Blue is there, as well, if she is in the house. So, a couple of cat treats have to go her way, too. With Blue, it is different, though. The cat punishes if he does not get treats; Blue thanks by "sitting up pretty" if she gets some. One works with negative reinforcement, the other with positive. Both get results.

I am not so sure about giving dogs cat treats, though. We were sitting here a few evenings ago, visiting, when my niece looked out of the window and said, "Blue is in the tree."

I wondered what she was talking about. Then I looked out and saw the slim blue merle border collie sitting silhouetted against the evening sky. She was sitting about ten feet from the ground in the stub of the old silver maple. There was no ladder, and the tree has no limbs. She climbed the tree—straight up.

Today, I had just eaten a bowl of chili for my noon meal. Runo and our beekeeper friend were in the bee yard, and I had not waited for them to come before eating my lunch. But, as soon as I had food on my plate, Kate emerged from her under-chair-den to demand her dinner. So I put a spoonful of chili on her kibble and one on Blue's dish and went to the door to call Blue.

She was nowhere to be seen. I could not find a place where she might have gone under the fence, but there was neither hide nor hair of her in the yard. I went to the barn to see if she might have gone there looking for cats. No Blue there, either, or anywhere else around the farm buildings.

When I came into the yard, I decided to put the leash on Kate and take her out. She might trail Blue.

Rattling the chain, though, resulted in whining—but not from Kate. After looking in every direction, I happened to look up. There sat Blue in the tree. She had apparently decided that Kate was going to have fun, and she was

not. She'd had a hard landing a few days ago when she exited the tree, and I guess it had made her cautious. Runo came out to help me. He reached up and grasped her paws and dragged her down far enough so he could grab her.

Maybe the Temptations had nothing to do with this at all, but I guess I should have known that cat treats would, at the least, encourage a dog to engage in catlike behavior—in this case, tree climbing. If only she had meowed to let me know where she was, it would have been no trouble.