

The Whole Dog Journal™



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A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

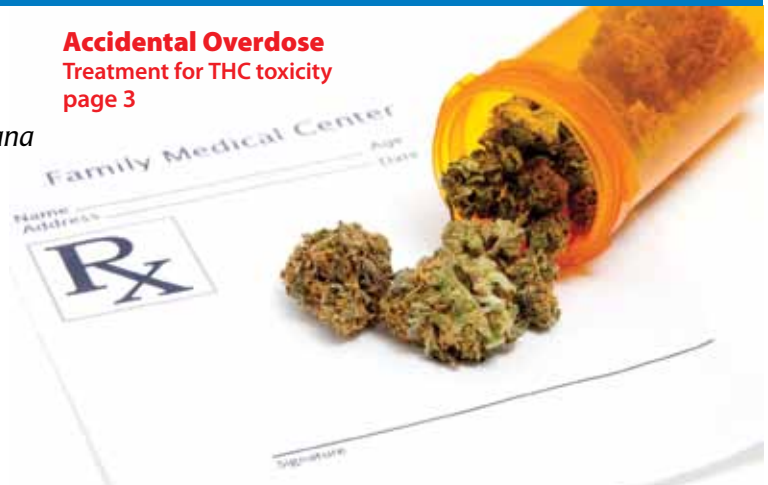
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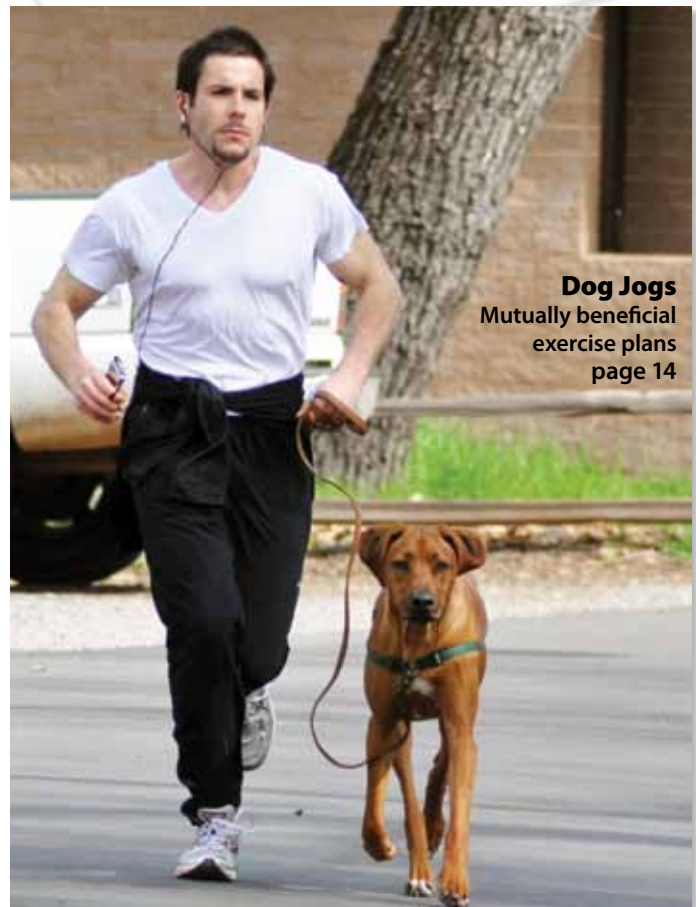
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Do You Recall?

All pet food recalls are not equal.

BY NANCY KERNS

Thanks to Facebook, Twitter, and automated news feeds set up to email reports to me any time there is pet food-related news, I hear about pet food recalls almost weekly. But I don't worry about most of them – because most of them have to do with contamination with a bacteria called *Salmonella*, and I'm not convinced that this is a serious concern for dogs. It's also not a concern for anyone who washes their hands after handling *Salmonella*-contaminated food or dishes, and keeps said dishes away from babies or toddlers.

Before I discuss this further, a few facts about *Salmonella*.

Can we get sick from *Salmonella*? Yes; according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, humans infected with *Salmonella* develop diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramps 12 to 72 hours after infection. The illness usually lasts 4 to 7 days, and most persons recover without treatment. In some persons, the diarrhea may be so severe that the patient needs to be hospitalized and vulnerable individuals can die.

Can dogs get infected with it? Yes, but only if it's a whopping dose and the dog is immune-compromised; the digestive system of healthy dogs renders this bacteria harmless. And when you think about what dogs eat with few ill effects – feces of all and every species of animal they can find, long-dead animals, long-buried bones, and so on – it makes sense that a bit of *Salmonella* in otherwise wholesome food won't hurt most dogs.

Salmonella is in pet food because it's present in the human food supply. The foods that are most commonly contaminated with it (chicken is public enemy #1 here) are generally cooked before they are consumed. *Salmonella* in raw supermarket chicken is practically assumed today. As just one example, according to *Food Safety News*, the Institute for Environmental Health tested 100 retail chickens in 2011 and found 19 percent of the samples tested positive for *Salmonella* – right on the money; Federal standards tolerated 20 percent contamination with *Salmonella* in raw chicken at that time. (The standard was reduced to 7.5 percent in July 2012.)

The heat of the cooking methods used by most home cooks, restaurants, and human food producers kills *Salmonella*, but the bacteria has a leg up in pet food. Meat used in pet food is more likely to be infected; little of the meat used in pet food is kept clean and chilled all through the production process, like it is for human food, and it may be days before the raw ingredients are rendered into pet food, during which time the *Salmonella* can multiply. And killing *Salmonella* in high-fat foods (such as kibble) is difficult.

But, again, it's not a significant problem for dogs – though I do suggest that *people* handle kibble and dried chews that are made from animals (such as pig ears and bull "pizzles") more like they would handle raw chicken, and wash their hands after handling these dog products.

The only recalls that *do* concern me when it comes to pet food are the non-*Salmonella*-related ones. They are a lot less common and a lot more serious. Foods that contain **overly high or overly low vitamin or mineral levels** can have serious health consequences for pets (especially ones who are subjected to the same diet month in and month out). **Aflatoxin** is a *huge* concern; it kills dogs. **Antibiotic residues and unapproved antibiotics** in foods signify the use of unregulated ingredients (most likely from foreign-sourced meats) and are another huge concern. Recalls involving *these* substances should trigger immediate action by dog owners.

Unfortunately, many of us are so fatigued by the constant stream of *Salmonella*-related recalls, that we fail to pay proper attention when it counts.

NK

Dogs Going to Pot?

Legalization may increase accidental incidents in dogs, but may also lead to use of medical marijuana to relieve pain and suffering.

BY MARY STRAUS

I was watching a television show about a veterinary clinic the evening after completing an early draft of this article. One of the clients was a young man with a very sick dog, who lay at his feet, moaning softly. “He’s not himself,” the man said, his voice choked with emotion. “He’s hardly moving, and when he did move, it was like his joints weren’t working. He can’t control his bladder, he’s peeing all over.” *Oh my gosh, I thought to myself, I know what’s wrong with that dog!*

Legalization of medical marijuana in 18 states and the District of Columbia has been a blessing for many people, but it is also a concern for veterinarians. Marijuana ingestion can cause toxicity in dogs, and it’s more important than ever for vets to be able to recognize the signs of marijuana toxicosis now that recreational use has also been approved in two states.

Reports of dogs being affected by marijuana (*Cannabis sativa*) have been rising for a decade. The ASPCA’s Animal Poison Control Center received 309 calls about dogs consuming marijuana in 2011, compared to 96 cases in 2002. A recent study found that the number of dogs treated for marijuana toxicosis at two Colorado veterinary clinics quadrupled between 2005 and 2010 (medical marijuana was approved there in 2000). The number of cases of marijuana toxicosis at the two facilities increased from 1.5 to 4.5 and from 0.16 to 0.81 per 1,000 emergency cases during that period, indicating that this was not just a matter of seeing more patients in general.

Laws about medical and recreational marijuana are relaxing – and so are some dog owners, when it comes to the safe storage of the herb. Accidental overdoses are increasingly common in dogs.

It’s possible that the increase could be at least partly due to greater awareness of the possibility of marijuana toxicity among veterinarians, or greater openness from owners about the probable cause of their dogs’ symptoms.

Dogs can get into trouble after they raid their owner’s stash, eat food infused with marijuana, or munch on the plants as they’re growing. Even if you don’t have the drug at home, your dog could

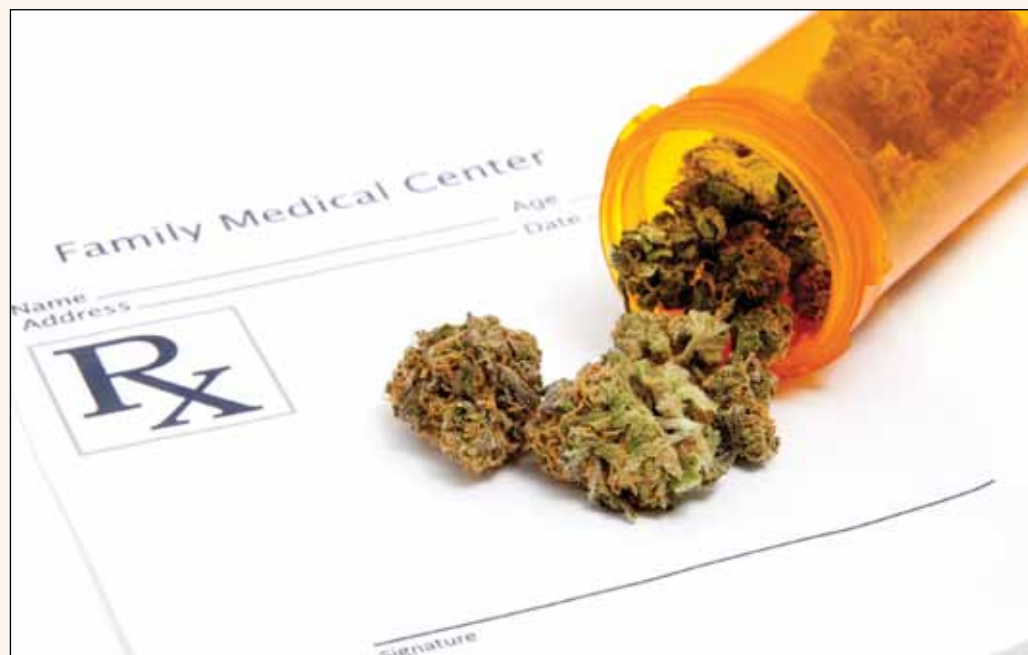
be exposed by eating something found in a park or on a walk. Dogs are the most commonly affected pets, accounting for 96 percent of 250 cases studied in 2002, but cats and other animals can also be affected (3 percent of those cases were cats). Signs can start within minutes or hours and can last for hours or days, partly because THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, can be stored in fat in the body.

SIGNS OF POSSIBLE TOXICITY

The mildest signs of marijuana ingestion in dogs include lethargy (sleepiness), reddened eyes from blood-engorged conjunctiva, disorientation, and other behavior changes, such as overreaction to touch, sound, or visual stimuli. Dogs may become agitated and hyperactive, or sedated.

More severe signs include ataxia (loss of balance, staggering, incoordination, difficulty walking), drooling, dilated pupils, vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, and sometimes vocalization. A vet may find hypothermia (low body temperature), hypotension (low blood pressure), and tachycardia or bradycardia (fast or slow heart rate). In the worst cases, coma, seizures, and death can occur.

In one study done in 2004, neurologic signs, such as lethargy (or depression alternating with excitement), ataxia, and



Dogs can sleep off the effects of a marijuana overdose most of the time, but your vet may need to provide supportive care and treatment if symptoms are severe or long-lasting.

dilated pupils, were seen in 99 percent of dogs after ingesting marijuana. Gastrointestinal signs, such as vomiting and drooling, were seen in 30 percent of those dogs.

One classic sign observed in most dogs after marijuana ingestion is dribbling urine. Since it's unusual to see a combination of urine dribbling with neurological symptoms in dogs, this can help to differentiate marijuana toxicity from other possible causes.

Fortunately, dogs can sleep off the effects most of the time. But since these signs can indicate other types of poisoning and medical conditions, it's important to have your dog checked by a vet unless you know for sure what happened and your dog's symptoms are mild.

DIAGNOSIS

THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, can be easily detected in blood or urine, but most veterinarians do not have this test readily available to them. Other drugs and toxins can cause similar clinical signs, including stimulants, chocolate, opioids, anti-anxiety drugs, antidepressants, amitraz (found in the Preventic collar and some newer tick control medications), rat poison, antifreeze, and alcohol poisoning (which can come from consuming rotting fruit or bread dough).

Eating marijuana-infused goodies that are high in fat or contain chocolate may also increase the risk of digestive upset and pancreatitis. Blood tests can help to rule out causes linked to metabolic changes, and x-rays may be done to look for gastrointestinal foreign bodies or other abnormalities that might cause similar signs.

TREATMENT

If it has been less than two hours since the drug was ingested, your veterinarian may induce vomiting. Some veterinary resources recommend that vomiting should only be induced within 30 minutes of ingestion, as once clinical signs are seen, the anti-nausea effects of marijuana can make this difficult. Vomiting is



also dangerous for dogs who are severely sedated, as it can lead to aspiration (inhalation of vomitus into the lungs).

Veterinarians can also give activated charcoal in liquid form to help reduce the amount of THC that is absorbed. After that, most dogs can just sleep off the effects, with full recovery within 24 hours. In rare cases, dogs may be unconscious for several hours to a few days. Supportive care given during this time may include a urinary catheter for cleanliness, and repositioning every few hours to avoid circulatory problems.

When signs are severe, such as an extremely slow heart rate, inability to swallow or stand, repeated vomiting, or hypothermia, your veterinarian may recommend hospitalization with intravenous fluids, anti-nausea medications, thermoregulation to control body temperature, and sedation, as needed. In the worst cases, a type of intravenous lipid therapy can be used to help remove the toxic substance from the blood.

Rarely, dogs can go into a coma and die due to heart failure or respiratory arrest. Aspiration of vomitus can also lead to serious breathing problems and even death. Two accounts of death due to marijuana ingestion occurred after the dogs ingested products made with marijuana-infused butter. One was a Schipperke who ate half a dozen chocolate chip cookies, and the other a Cocker Spaniel who ate half a pan of brownies, both made with butter that had been infused with THC. Both died despite receiving veterinary treatment.

Reports of amounts needed to cause toxicity vary. According to one study of

213 dogs who ingested marijuana, the lowest dose that caused clinical signs was 84.7 mg/kg (38.5 mg/pound, or about 1 gram per 26 pounds of body weight). This study further found that the onset of signs occurred in as little as 5 minutes and lasted anywhere from 30 minutes to 96 hours (4 days), with most signs occurring within 1 to 3 hours after ingestion.

Many sources state that the lethal dose is thought to be 1.5 grams of marijuana per pound of body weight, but the study above found that the highest reported dose was 26.8 grams/kg (12.2 grams, or almost half an ounce, per pound of body weight), and all dogs made full recoveries with appropriate treatment.

HONESTY, BEST POLICY

For those who have marijuana in the home, it should be treated as any other medication or toxic substance and stored out of the reach of pets. If your dog shows clinical signs after possibly ingesting marijuana, be honest with your veterinarian about what may have happened. Even in states that have not yet legalized medical marijuana, veterinarians want to help your dog, not turn you in. It's important for them to have all the information they need in order to properly diagnose and treat your dog.

The veterinarian was very worried about the dog on the television show, but after blood and urine tests came back normal, and a bottle of pills that the dog might possibly have ingested were identified as antibiotics, which would not cause the symptoms seen, she questioned the owner more carefully about what else the dog could have gotten into. He admitted

finding a chewed up cup that his roommate used as an ashtray after smoking marijuana, and the mystery was solved. Since the dog's heart rate, respiration, and temperature were all normal, he was sent home to sleep it off, while his very relieved owner prepared to have a serious talk with his roommate.

WHAT ABOUT MEDICAL MARIJUANA FOR DOGS?

Marijuana can be toxic to dogs, but advocates say that it also has medicinal effects in pets similar to those found in humans. Medical marijuana may help with pain control, nausea relief, and appetite stimulation, while causing few adverse side effects, when used in appropriate dosages.

Most veterinarians want nothing to do with medical marijuana for pets due to its illegality (marijuana remains the target of federal laws even in states that have approved its use for medical or recreational purposes) and the dearth of clinical trials. But a few vets believe that marijuana can provide palliative care to reduce pain and suffering for some animals, and are hoping that medical marijuana may soon be available as a treatment option for pets.

Dr. Douglas Kramer, a veterinarian who works in the Los Angeles area, believes that "the combination of modern medications and traditional therapeutics produces the best clinical results." He started Vet Guru, an online source of information and products relating to "fusion veterinary medicine," integrating modern and traditional herbal therapies in a holistic approach. Dr. Kramer developed Rapid Dissolve Pet Strips, blends of herbal products with natural flavorings that dissolve in seconds in the mouth, where they are absorbed sublingually rather than through the stomach, making them more effective and quicker acting, as well as avoiding the potential for stomach upset.

Vet Guru also offers other products via innovative delivery systems that ease administration.

Dr. Kramer's interest in medical marijuana for pets started when his own dog, a Siberian Husky named Nikita, was suffering from cancer. Despite the use of all conventional pain control medication and therapies available, Nikita had reached the point where she spent most of her time lying on the floor, moaning. As a last resort, Dr. Kramer tried giving her a medical marijuana tincture in the hopes that it would improve her quality of life. The results were nothing short of amazing. Within hours of the first treatment, Nikita's appetite returned and she appeared to be much more comfortable overall, with the moaning ceasing entirely. Of course, cannabis did not cure the cancer, but it afforded Nikita and her family several more months of quality time together.

Following Nikita's death, Dr. Kramer dedicated himself to researching and documenting the therapeutic benefits of medical marijuana for pets for the benefit of his other patients. He founded Enlightened Veterinary Therapeutics in order to provide the same high level of palliative and hospice care for pets as for humans. Its stated goal is "relieving pain and suffering while enhancing the quality of life for pets and their families."

As enthusiastic as he may be about the potential benefits of medical marijuana for dogs, Dr. Kramer is concerned about safety and efficacy of products developed without veterinary involvement. He is also concerned that pet owners are experimenting with the effect of medical marijuana on their pets. Dr. Kramer feels that clinical trials are needed so that veterinarians will know more about the effects of marijuana on pets. So far, the only trials that have been done on pets were those used indirectly for human studies, in which dogs and many other animals were found to have the same

cannabinoid receptors as humans.

Dr. Kramer wants to see clear data in order to understand how marijuana may help relieve pain and suffering in dogs. He has interviewed dozens of owners who have reported improvements such as reduced anxiety and increased appetite, primarily in pets suffering from cancer. He is currently conducting a survey of owners who have used medical marijuana on their pets. (See vetguru.com/2011/10/15/pet-survey/ if you would like to participate in the survey or post its link.)

Cannabis has the potential for benefits beyond pain relief and appetite enhancement. There is evidence that, in humans, cannabinoids may help to control nausea and vomiting, reduce inflammation with less risk of gastrointestinal upset compared to non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), and reduce anxiety.

There is also evidence that cannabinoids may act synergistically with opioids, such as morphine, enhancing the effect of the pain narcotics, allowing them to be used at lower doses, as well as possibly mitigating some of their adverse side effects. In addition, new studies show promise for using topical, unheated cannabis to treat skin cancer. When it comes to topical treatment for dogs, however, additional risk arises from the potential for ingestion of toxic amounts of the drug.

It must be said that there is no reliable information about what dosage of marijuana is safe and effective for pets. This problem is further complicated by the wide variety of products, including flower buds, oils, tinctures, and other extracts, as well as the variation in strengths for each of these based on the strain of marijuana grown, the timing of the harvest, and the preparation of the medical product. Concentrated forms in particular can cause toxicity even in small amounts.

If your pet needs palliative or hospice care, Enlightened Veterinary Therapeutics offers consultations. While they cannot prescribe or provide medical marijuana for pets, they will help develop an individualized treatment plan that incorporates conventional and natural therapies. 🐾

Mary Straus is the owner of DogAware.com. She and her Norwich Terrier, Ella, live in the San Francisco Bay Area.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

❖ DR. DOUGLAS KRAMER, ENLIGHTENED VETERINARY THERAPEUTICS

(855) 237-3754; enlightenedveterinarytherapeutics.com

Also may be reached through Vet Guru, (855) VET-GURU; vetguru.com

❖ SHOULD MEDICAL MARIJUANA BE LEGALIZED FOR DOGS?

dogster.com/lifestyle/medical-marijuana-for-dogs

Across a Threshold

Does your dog sometimes “lose it” or shut down? Understanding his “thresholds” will help you teach him to stay calm and happy.

BY MARDI RICHMOND, MA, CPDT-KA

The term “threshold” is often tossed around by dog behavior experts when they talk about working through a canine behavior issue. When you work with your dog on, for example, reactivity with other dogs or fear of children, the usual recommendation is to work with the dog “under threshold.”

The concept is most often used in relationship to canine aggression, fear, and reactivity. But understanding a behavior “threshold” is helpful for everyday training and learning situations, too. It can be a key element when socializing puppies or young dogs, instrumental in teaching excitable dogs to be calm, and essential for insecure dogs to find confidence.

What exactly is a threshold? Consider the threshold of a front door. When you cross a threshold, you move from one space to another. A behavior threshold is a similar concept; it’s when your dog crosses from one emotional state to another. If you spend time with a dog who is concerned about other dogs, you have probably witnessed the moment when he or she moves from seemingly okay into out-of-control behavior. That is going over threshold.

Here are five things that everyone can benefit from knowing about thresholds.

1 IT’S NOT ALWAYS ABOUT BARKING AND LUNGING. When talking about “going over threshold,” most people picture a dog that suddenly becomes reactive: barking, lunging, and snarling. But there are many other expressions of being over threshold. Some include:

- ✓ Shutting down or freezing.
- ✓ Being overexcited (for example jumping or mouthing).

- ✓ Being distracted to the point of no connection.
- ✓ Doing “zoomies” (zipping around crazily).

When you are with your dog, you may notice when your dog stops taking treats, stops playing, or suddenly is calmer than usual. These may be a signal that your dog is approaching a threshold, or has even already moved from a comfortable emotional state into an uncomfortable state.

2 OVER THRESHOLD IS MORE THAN BEHAVING BADLY. When a dog is over threshold it generally means that the dog is behaving in a way that we don’t like. More importantly, it means the dog is in a state of distress.

When a dog crosses an emotional threshold, certain physiological and psychological effects begin to take place. The dog may breathe more heavily and his heart rate may increase. A dog who is over threshold is *reacting* rather than thinking; he is in a fight, flight, freeze, or fool-around state. He may not be able to listen to you (or even hear you). In addition, when a dog is over threshold, you cannot *teach* him to behave differently. A dog will not be able to learn until he back under threshold.

3 THRESHOLDS CHANGE CONSTANTLY! Unlike the threshold of your front door, an emotional or behavior threshold doesn’t stay in the same place; it can change from minute to minute and from one situation to the next.

The setting for a dog’s threshold at a particular moment depends on a variety of criteria. For example, take a dog I will call River. He is a little insecure in new places, does not particularly like other dogs, and he becomes very excited by movement. Alone, none of these are a problem for River. He may be nervous in new places, but generally, he just gets a little extra sniffy. He’s not happy about other dogs, but will usually tolerate them. He gets excited when a bicycle goes by, but can still listen when called away.

But if all of these things happen at once – walking in a new place, several bikes speed by very close, and a young dog suddenly intrudes on his space – it’s too much for River to handle. The combination may cause him to go over threshold and snarl at the young dog.

Some of the things that can affect threshold are:



This dog has a past history as a highly reactive dog. Indeed, it appears that he’s moments away from “going over threshold.” He’s spotted a dog on the far side of the field, has tuned out his owner, and seems to be ready to start barking and lunging in excitement and/or frustration.

✓ **The number of triggers** (the more, the bigger the risk). As in the example above, a lot of small triggers at the same time pushed River over threshold. Note: A trigger is not always something your dog is nervous about or afraid of; a trigger can be anything that increases your dog's arousal or excitement. For example, rowdy play can cause some dogs to go over threshold!

✓ **Proximity** or how close a dog is to the trigger. In most cases, closer is more difficult. But with some dogs, something farther away can actually be more difficult. For example, something farther away may be less identifiable (and so more scary).

✓ **Frequency** (how often the trigger happens). If a dog faces the same trigger repeatedly, especially in a short period, he may react more strongly.

✓ **The intensity** of the trigger. For example, if the trigger is a sound, how loud it is or how long it lasts might affect the dog's reaction.

✓ **Being hungry, thirsty, tired, or in pain**, can all impact a dog's threshold.

✓ **Accumulated stress** can also affect a dog's threshold. For example, if your dog has a fun but stressful weekend at an agility trial, he may go over threshold more quickly if spooked by a loud sound on Monday morning. (It may take several days for his stress hormones to return to normal, so accumulated stress responses are not always easy to trace.)

4 YOU CAN HELP YOUR DOG STAY UNDER THRESHOLD. To help your dog stay under threshold, you can learn what types of things might be triggers for your dog. Anything that creates stress, high arousal or overexcitement is a possible trigger. Identify both positive stressors (like rowdy play, chasing toys or hunting) and negative stressors (like

scary dogs, strangers, or loud noises).

In addition, learn your dog's body language, and what signals precede your dog's going over threshold. For some dogs, you may notice tension, some may become more excited, and some may try to move away or start sniffing the ground. Most dogs take treats more roughly when they are getting close to threshold.

Stay focused on your dog. Any time you are in the presence of your dog's triggers, pay attention so you will notice if your dog's behavior or energy level shifts or you see stress signals.

If you notice your dog's arousal increasing, take action; don't wait for him to go over threshold. If your dog is getting close to threshold, you can:

- ✓ Create distance between your dog and the trigger.
- ✓ Do focus exercises to bring your dog into a thinking state.
- ✓ If necessary, leave the situation altogether.



Thanks to trainer Ruthanna Levy, of Bravo!pup in Berkeley, CA for demonstrating with her dog, Ziggy. See page 24 for contact information.

Fortunately, his owner/trainer has trained him (first, in a zero-stress environment, and then in incrementally more stressful situations) to respond to her cues. Here, she asks him to lie down and put his head down, giving him something to focus on, to help him stay in a thinking and learning state rather than reactive one.

Training and behavior modification are key tools when it comes to helping your dog stay under threshold. Over time, training can change a dog's threshold levels around certain triggers. Plus, when you are around a trigger, actively training can help keep your dog focused and in a less reactive state.

Should you work your dog close to threshold? If you are working with your dog on a particular behavioral challenge, you may purposely expose your dog to certain triggers. Ideally, you will find that

balance of exposing your dog enough that he or she builds confidence and makes progress, but not so much that it causes undue stress.

Very important note: **If you are working on fear or reactivity, going over threshold frequently will slow your dog's progress.** If you see little or no improvement in a problem area, consider that you may be working your dog too close to threshold, or over threshold.

5 IF YOUR DOG GOES OVER THRESHOLD, TAKE ACTION. Let's face it: We cannot control everything that happens in our lives or our dog's lives. As much as we may try to help our dog stay under threshold, there may be times that he or she steps over and behaves badly. What can you do in that moment?

- ✓ Get your dog out of the situation immediately. This is not a time for training, learning, or fixing problems.
- ✓ Take note of all of the factors that led to your dog going over threshold.

✓ Make a plan for the next time you are in that situation, so that you can prevent it from happening again if at all possible.

Understanding the concept of thresholds can help in everyday learning situations for all of our dogs. Keeping a dog under threshold can promote an optimum learning state, which can make training happen faster and with less stress. For dogs with behavior challenges such as fear and reactivity, understanding

the concept of thresholds and making an effort to keep the dog under threshold while you work through challenges can make a huge difference in progress and success. Understanding thresholds gives you an advantage when it comes to training and to helping your puppy or dog be calm and confident. 🐾

Mardi Richmond, MA, CPDT-KA, is a writer and trainer living in Santa Cruz, California with her partner and a wonderful heeler-mix named Chance.

Sniff This; You'll Feel Better

How a simple, fun scenting game can help shelter dogs cope (and get adopted!).

BY LISA RODIER

Shelter volunteer Katherine Kekel stood at the end of a long hallway and struggled to keep a grip on Tia, a pit bull-mix, as the dog strained at her harness. Unable to contain the dog any longer, Katherine let go. The well-muscled dog sprinted down the hallway, put on the brakes, and made a sharp right turn into a small room. The hunt was on! Tia was playing K9 Nose Work® at the Cherokee County Animal Shelter (CCAS) in Canton, Georgia. Her prey? A cotton swab scented with birch essential oil.

K9 Nose Work (K9NW™), a fun search and scenting activity that thousands of dogs and their people have discovered over the past few years, has increasingly nosed its way into animal shelters. An enrichment game that allows a dog to

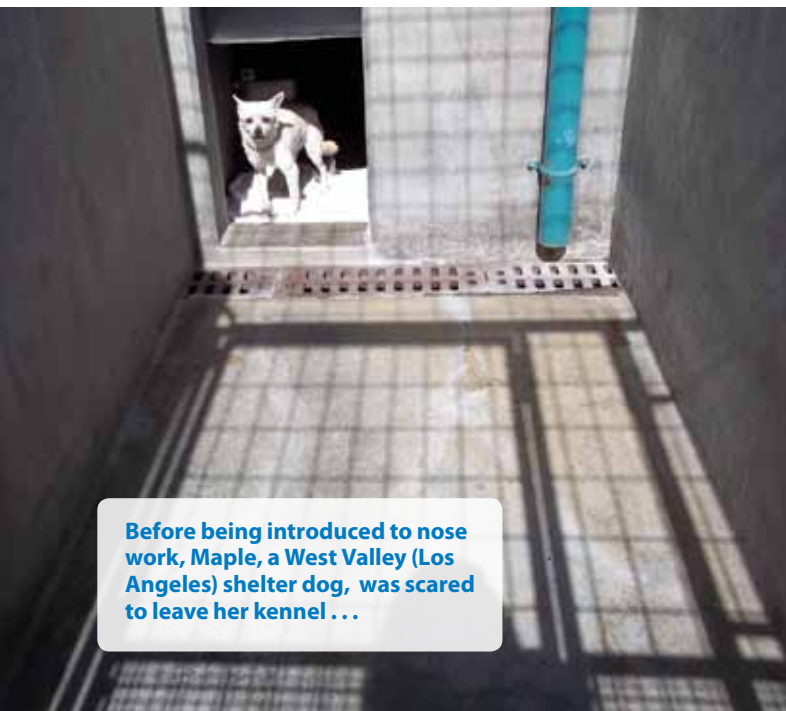
use his nose to “hunt,” K9NW has helped transform many shelter dogs who were out-of-control and unsure how to interact appropriately with people, into dogs who learn to work independently and possess much improved people skills.

PERMISSION TO SNIFF

Jill Marie O’Brien, one of the co-founders of the activity and presenter of “K9 Nose Work for Shelter Dogs” workshops, started experimenting with K9NW concepts several years ago when she was Director of Animal Behavior and Training Services at a shelter in southern California. She soon realized that the game was a relatively easy and low-cost way to engage dogs away from their kennels; it requires just food treats and cardboard boxes. At a minimum, she knew the game would give shelter dogs something engaging and enjoyable to do with their time.

“The shelter is such an incredibly stressful and limiting environment for dogs, even in those facilities that offer what we consider high end accommodations,” O’Brien says. “A dog’s sense of smell is his tool for acquiring information and navigating his environment, and the act of sniffing is a focused activity from which dogs, regardless of energy level and temperament, appear to find benefit. K9NW gives dogs permission to engage in an activity that they are typically not permitted to enjoy (i.e., ‘don’t sniff,’ ‘leave it’). The activity can be used with insecure and timid dogs to build confidence, relieve stress, burn mental and physical energy, and focus the mind.”

K9NW requires a dog to use his mind,



Before being introduced to nose work, Maple, a West Valley (Los Angeles) shelter dog, was scared to leave her kennel . . .



After just five sessions, however, she was confident and engaged enough in the game to stick her head into a box!

PHOTOS BY HEIDI OKUHARA, WEST VALLEY ANIMAL SHELTER, CHATSWORTH, CA

body, and respiration – all at once. “In the early phases when the game is being built, the dogs get very tired after just a few minutes of playing,” says O’Brien. “As time goes on and the dog gets more experience and builds conditioning, she is able to handle longer and more challenging searches. What we have seen, anecdotally, is that dogs who play K9NW in the shelter continue to be more relaxed and willing to settle after searching and even after returning to their kennels.”

GOING ON INSTINCT

Ron Gaunt, one of three cofounders of the organized sport of K9NW, explains how the activity taps into a dog’s instinctual behavior. “The activity of hunting is instinctual in all dogs, but on the other side of that instinct is survival. ‘How can I survive another moment?’ . . . The success we see with K9NW in terms of behavioral changes comes from the dog’s instinct to solve a problem that *he* perceives as a problem, not what *we* see as a problem. In K9NW, we give the dog a ‘problem’ to solve that lets him obtain a reward in a safe manner. This permits the dog to use his survival instincts to control his environment and food.”

Some dogs are in shelters for a reason – whether because the dog has learned that it’s more rewarding to live on his own (runner/stray) or perhaps due to a behavior issue (withdrawn, aggressive/defensive), says Gaunt. He believes that if the shelter allows the dog to begin to solve “problems” with humans in a game, the odds increase that the dog will begin to enjoy interacting with humans and therefore become a better candidate for adoption.

“The big success stories are dogs with unknown backgrounds,” says Gaunt. “The activity of K9NW allows the dog to build trust and begin to re-establish a bond with humans. . . . Overcoming the history and baggage that comes with shelter dogs is where we can see the effects of K9NW pay off the most.”

SENSE OF SMELL

The activity not only taps into a dog’s instinctual behavior, it also gives the dog carte blanche to use his sense of smell, arguably his keenest sense. According to veterinary behaviorist Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, MRCVS, about 30 percent of a dog’s brain is comprised of the olfactory lobe – the part of the brain involved in interpreting odors. Compare



Nose work is suitable for dogs of all sizes, breeds, and temperaments.

PHOTO BY BLUE AMRICH STUDIO

that to a human, and you’ll find that the percentage of the dog’s brain devoted to analyzing smells is actually 40 times larger than ours. In a NOVA interview, James Walker, former director of the Sensory Research Institute at Florida State University, described the incredible abilities of the canine nose by making an analogy to vision: “What you and I can see at a third of a mile, a dog could see more than 3,000 miles away.”

The activity of “smelling” is hooked into the most primitive areas of an animal’s brain and involves the cortex, according to Randy Kidd, DVM (see “The Canine Sense of Smell,” in the November 2004 issue of WDJ). The cortex is the part of the brain where the highest level of processing occurs.

Dr. Kidd explains, “Once in the olfactory bulb [in the dog’s brain], scents are transported to the frontal cortex for recognition as well as to other regions of the brain that include the brain’s centers for emotions, memory, and pleasure.”

Suffice it to say, the dog’s sense of smell is likely her most underutilized when she’s living in the human world and playing by our rules. K9NW allows the dog to use her nose to her heart’s content!

URBAN HUNTING

In the fall of 2010, I invited Kekel, an aspiring dog trainer, to attend a K9NW workshop I was hosting outside Atlanta. I’d already been involved with the activity for close to a year, and had

seen how much dogs enjoyed playing the game and how positively it affected them. Kekel was hooked, and both of us, as volunteers, teamed up to play the game with dogs at CCAS.

The premise behind the game, as Gaunt described, is to allow the dog to tap into his natural desire to hunt. Through the use of boxes to capture and hold scent and high-value food (the “prey”), along with little to no human intervention, we build focus and motivation in the dog to search. Two concepts are critical to the game:

- ✓ The dog is allowed to independently search the boxes for treats.
- ✓ The dog “self-rewards” when he finds them.

Doing so allows the dog to discover, on his own, his inner hunter. This approach is in contrast to teaching the dog a targeting behavior (i.e., a trained alert behavior to a particular odor) first, which creates further reliance on the human. Instead, with time, patience, and little to no obvious direction from us, the dogs learn to focus on the game and become efficient, methodical hunters and along the way, gain confidence, focus, and the ability to interact with human beings in a positive manner. As the dog progresses and becomes more focused and motivated, we can introduce a particular scent or “odor” to the game.

BASIC INGREDIENTS

Any dog can participate in K9NW, even those who are mobility impaired, blind, or deaf. When playing, we take into account the dog's breed, history, and temperament, as these factors will impact how he approaches the game. Across the board, when I talked with individuals who engage shelter dogs in K9NW, dogs selected to play are often withdrawn, shy, anxious, showing signs of stress or deterioration, and/or longer-term residents.

Often, very active dogs who require extra stimulation are good candidates, too. Certified Nose Work Instructor (CNWI) Karen Reilly, CPDT-KSA, concurs. Reilly started a K9NW program at the SPCA of Westchester, Inc. in Briarcliff Manor, New York, in 2010. "The dogs we work are often dogs who did not get out that day or for a few days. We also use dogs who have started to deteriorate in the shelter setting, and those who are timid. Many of them are 'pitties'."

Any space can be utilized for nose work training. As is the case in the majority of shelters, space is at a premium at the shelter where I volunteer in Canton, Georgia. We found a home in a small "meet and greet" room, roughly 8 x 12 feet. With the advanced dogs, we work outdoors, inside the senior center next door, and across the street at a

picnic pavilion. While it's best to start the game indoors so that the dogs can work off-leash and in a less-distracting environment, it's possible to start outside, on-leash, as well; the game might be a little more challenging there, but the dogs adapt.

In Chatsworth, California, Heidi Okuhara started an all-volunteer K9NW program at West Valley Animal Shelter. When the weather is nice, volunteers there work dogs on a covered walkway; when the weather is bad or windy, they're able to work indoors in a small section of a community room.

The primary consideration for space is that the search area is away from other dogs and kennel runs. Because K9NW taps into a dog's hunt drive, any other dog in the immediate area can be viewed as competition to the hunter. Such a threat can cause the working dog to lose focus and become anxious; the antithesis to what K9NW is all about. In general, with a dog just starting out, the fewer distractions, the better, particularly for the benefit of dogs who are easily distracted, reactive, or anxious.

As a Certified Nose Work Instructor (CNWI), my preference when teaching classes is to **co-teach with another individual**, in order to facilitate sharing ideas as well as to have a second set of eyes

and hands for assessing dogs and hiding the food treats or odors. In the shelter environment, handlers should always pair up – first and foremost from a safety perspective, but also to be able to help one another work through challenging situations, such as with fearful dogs who are reluctant to get started.

Ideally, your team will include someone who has K9 Nose Work experience – either a CNWI or an Associate Nose Work Instructor (ANWI), or someone who has been to a K9NW workshop or class with a CNWI. For example, Heidi Okuhara, a long-time dog enthusiast and competitor, is not a certified instructor, but has taken classes with K9NW co-founders Jill Marie O'Brien and Amy Herot.

We start the game with a **few plain old cardboard boxes**, free and readily available from the recycling bin or virtually any store. The second item required is **high-value food**, cut up into small pieces; though some dogs will work for a toy reward, in the shelter environment, food is often a more efficient choice. I'd usually provide a stinky delicacy such as liverwurst or garlic chicken.

Once in a great while, I encounter a dog to whom human food is so foreign that she spits it out in favor of something really "high value" like "Moist & Meaty

Volunteers who play nose work with shelter residents often find that pit bulls and pit-mixes are superstars at the game.



The activity taps into a dog's natural instinct to hunt; self reward is a hallmark of the game.



This dog displays a classic "head snap" as he detects the odor in the box.



After establishing a solid Nose Work foundation, dogs are trained to search vehicle exteriors. It's fun – and it looks very cool!



NOSE WORK TALES FROM THE TRENCHES

Joyce Biethan, MPT, CPDT-KA, CNWI, recently introduced K9NW to the Oregon Humane Society in Portland, Oregon, recognizing the enrichment value of the activity for dogs living in a shelter environment. One of her K9NW students, Kathy Lillis, was a volunteer at the shelter, and paved the way for Biethan.

Biethan also recommended K9NW classes to the Humane Society of Southwest Washington after the shelter contacted her about teaching Pet Manners classes. Her approach is a win-win; there, she teaches a six-week class that combines dog owners from the community who work their own dogs and pay to attend class, shelter volunteers who work their own dogs and pay a discounted rate, and volunteers who work with shelter dogs for free.

Biethan's group also targets highly stressed, very active, and long-term shelter residents as candidates to play the game. Although still somewhat new, the shelter K9NW program seems to be helping with adoption rates, with Biethan estimating that about 75 percent of dogs who play the game are adopted within a few weeks of becoming involved. That, for her, is success!

Heidi Okuhara, a volunteer at West Valley Animal Shelter (one of six Los Angeles shelters) knew that K9NW would be a great enrichment activity for the shelter's dogs, and an opportunity for fearful, shy, reactive, and long-term resident dogs to get some attention. She got the green light from shelter management in late 2010 to start up an all-volunteer-run program.

Okuhara works primarily with small, fearful or shy dogs; dogs who have been at the shelter for a long time; and dogs who otherwise need positive stimulation. "Because we're working with smaller, fearful dogs, I keep the box tops folded down so the dog doesn't have to work as hard to get to the food container when we start. Some dogs are too short to put their heads in the boxes, even though the boxes aren't very tall. Many of the dogs don't want to put their heads into the box, even if they want the treats. We use different strategies to make it easier for the dog to start off right if it's having a problem working with the boxes."

Small dogs at Okuhara's shelter are usually housed in groups of four to five per kennel. She notes, "The more shy the dog is, the less likely she is to be noticed. K9NW is a great activity because fearful dogs typically become more confident, are more likely to go to the front of the kennel when visitors come by, and are more outgoing and friendly when potential adopters meet with them.

"Dogs who 'slink around' stand taller. A dog we're working with now is a great example. Week one, she slinked and would lie down as we walked her from her kennel to the training area. Week two, she did a lot less slinking and didn't stop or lie down on the way to the training area," says Okuhara.

Karen Reilly, CPDT-KSA, CNWI, along with **Kathe Baxter**, KPA, CPDT-KA, CNWI, and **Alison Waszmer**, CTC, introduced K9NW to the SPCA of Westchester in the fall of 2010. Today, Reilly works alongside shelter trainer **Dot Baisly**, MS, CPDT-KA, and other volunteers. As is typical with shelter K9NW, Reilly reports that it can take some dogs a couple of sessions to relax and play the game, although, "Most of our high drive dogs

(pitties) seem to just be naturals at it and come out hunting. We have had a few who were shy or timid and have seen them progress to being less suspicious, willing to reach a box under a chair, or push a box off the top of the hide box to gain access to the reward. Actually, I have a harder time making challenges for those who are really into it!"

Baisly has observed that K9NW dogs, in general, seem more relaxed the day after they work in K9NW. And all of us who play the game with shelter dogs have at least one favorite story, typically involving a reticent or out-of-control dog, who, with time, really shines at the game.

For Reilly, one dog who stands out was a very shy/fearful hound-mix. "When we brought him into the room, he headed straight for the door, not showing interest in the boxes, and doing so on all three passes for the first round. On his second round [dogs typically are taken out of the search room between rounds to 'meditate'], he first moved quickly toward the door again, but then noticed the boxes and turned to hunt. What a thrill!"

Reilly goes on to say that he came out "ready to hunt" on the last round and – call it K9NW magic – he was adopted before they could even do a second session of K9NW with him. In Baisly's opinion, the dog's exposure to nose work helped his kennel presentation.

Reilly also worked with the first two shelter dogs to pass an "Odor Recognition Test" (ORT) under the newly minted Shelter Dog Registration. Belle and Cricket, pit bulls whom Reilly and her team trained in K9NW since 2010, passed their birch ORTs in April 2011 and were subsequently adopted.



PHOTO BY MAUREEN LYONS

K9NW helps dogs build confidence – including feeling brave enough to put their heads in 'scary' places!

NOT JUST FOR SHELTER DOGS!

Nose work is not just for shelter dogs, though I've found it to be very therapeutic for them. It's also a fantastic activity for pet dogs and their owners. Senior dogs, too, enjoy the game, and, in fact, I first started the activity in 2010 with my Bouviers, who were then 13 and 14 years old.

After losing Axel in 2010, and then 15-year-old Jolie in late 2011, my husband and I remained dogless for nine months until "Atle," a 12-week-old Bouvier pup, came



tumbling into our lives. It was culture shock for all of us: *he* was transplanted to the hot, humid south in July from the cool climes of Maine; we had long forgotten what puppyhood entailed, having lived with two geriatric Bouviers for many years. We were taken aback by the demands of this hairy little creature. Enter K9 Nose Work!

I started playing the game with Atle virtually the day he arrived. It has been a life saver, helping to tire out a heat-averse, active puppy while enabling him to gain confidence and focus, have fun, and be comfortable in a variety of environments.

He comes to the K9NW classes I teach when he can, has "searched" in a number of novel environments, and will join me this year at K9 Nose Work Camp in north Georgia. He has been a fabulous teacher, and for that, I am grateful. We both love the game and my hope is that we'll continue to play for many years to come!

For more information on nose work for pet dogs, see "Your Dog Nose No Bounds," WDJ August 2009.

Burger" dog food. Chemical-filled dog food may not be high-value to us, but what matters is whether it's high value for her. Another memorable dog offered an odd reaction to a novel food: The smell of bleu cheese prompted him to roll in it; I suppose it smelled so deliciously foul that he couldn't resist!

Not required, but very helpful, is a **video camera** (or cellphone video). I videotape all of the dogs' runs so that we can track their progress from week to week; this practice also gives us the ability to post short video clips of the dogs working with their bios on the shelter website. It's an intriguing enough activity that potential adopters might take a second look!

HOW TO START

At CCAS (the shelter where I volunteer), during a dog's first session we run him on leash. I test the treat to see if the dog is willing to eat it; if he does, I put a treat in a cardboard box – often a low box with the flaps folded down to start – and see if he will eat that. If he is up to that chal-

lenge, we load that box (a dedicated food box) with several small bits of food, and place it on the floor along with a few other boxes. Often, at that point, the dog's interest is sufficiently piqued that he strains at the leash and is ready to move into the search area to independently search the boxes for treats, and reward himself (by eating them) when found.

For beginning dogs, we often don't "re-start" the dog between runs; we just keep loading a box (or a few boxes in some cases) while the dog searches the floor. Once he seems to really engage with us in the activity, we remove the leash for searches; in between searches, we re-leash the dog and remove him from the search area.

What to do for the dog who isn't comfortable engaging with humans? In the shelter, this happens frequently. In one case, a dog was so shy and hesitant that she could not bring herself to try the lovely garlic chicken I'd prepared. I baited the floor with food, and my fellow volunteer Kekel and I chatted and ignored

her. After close to 10 minutes, she began eating the food and subsequently, searching boxes.

Another dog, a hound-mix, was so high-strung that I'm sure he was seeing double as he entered the room and ricocheted off the sofa and walls. Even with all his frenetic activity, he couldn't muster the courage to put his head in a box. We made it even easier for him; we put the food treats on a completely flat piece of cardboard, and he finally slowed down long enough to eat the treats and look for more. The change in his behavior from week one to two to three was impressive! We commonly see amazing progress in this high-reward, low-stress activity with just about every dog.

For dogs who remain at the shelter and come back week after week to play, we do several things to make the game more challenging. For example, we put the search boxes on other things in the room (such as a coffee-table or sofa), turn the boxes on their sides, and make "puzzles" with the boxes (by positioning other boxes around the one with the food in it). We also might add a lot more boxes in the room, increasing the size of the search area; introduce other items to the room (such as a broom, bucket, traffic cone, or vacuum), so the dogs have to work around other objects or obstacles in their search; take the game outside; or take it to a new environment. But the beauty of K9NW is that even if all we do is to put out five to seven boxes week after week, the dogs still have a blast.

ADDITIONAL POINTERS

Do dogs try to solicit treats from us or jump up on us? Yes, but we just ignore those behaviors. Also, the dogs quickly figure out that they are never rewarded directly from the handler (except for the very first time I give them treats, trying to discover one they like enough to search for). They learn quickly that the only time they ever get "payment" (food rewards) is when they self-reward from a cardboard box.

Since they are initially on-leash, the dogs are prevented from leaving the search area. For dogs who temporarily lose interest, some movement from me, or a light toss of a box, is often enough to re-engage them in the search.

Prior to or during searches, the dogs aren't given any verbal cues, not even "Off" if they jump up (we simply turn away), nor are they expected to "Stay,"

“Sit” or “Look” before being released. “Leave it” is not in our vocabulary during a search! I like to explain this by saying that the dog has the keys to the car and he’s driving – a concept that seemingly blows many dogs’ minds.

I’ve noticed that this is when the dog makes huge gains in confidence. He learns that in this game, he is the master; he gets to “hunt” independently and he, alone, finds and captures his “prey.” He also works without verbal direction or interference from humans; we neither tell him what to do nor what *not* to do. He’s in charge. And as Amy Herot likes to say, it’s as if the dog suddenly realizes, “I’ve got this! I can do it!”

One of the mantras of K9NW is “it depends on the dog.” Particularly when playing the game with shelter dogs in such an unusual environment, we need to be flexible, responsive to the dog, and ready to adapt the game so that she can be successful. This might mean baiting the floor with food, using a flat box, removing flaps from boxes, or other techniques that perhaps we wouldn’t use in a typical K9NW class environment with “pet” dogs.

Ideally, dogs should be crated between nose work sessions (or “runs”) to allow some down time and time for processing. At my shelter, we did not have the ability to do this, so dogs were either taken from the room briefly after a run, or, especially when starting out, simply held in the room from run to run.

Once a dog understands the game well and has learned to search for the food in the face of increasingly distract-

ing environments and situations, we introduce a new “prey.” Dogs are encouraged to search for a new source of “odor” (including birch, anise, and clove essential oils), which is done initially by pairing primary reward with the odor.

AFTER NOSE WORK

Frequently, dogs at the shelter who have been there for weeks (if not months) get adopted *right after* playing K9NW with us for just one or two sessions. Rarely, if ever, does the adoption happen because the adopters specifically want a K9NW dog; I think it happens because playing the game has changed the dog’s behavior; she exhibits a calmer demeanor in the kennel, and has higher confidence with people, helping her “show” better.

Such was the case with Tia, the rocket dog I described at the beginning of this article. She was one of our first dogs to do nose work, and one of our strongest. Tia was a plain brown, unluckily non-descript pit-mix who had been at the shelter for about eight months when we began playing. She caught on quickly and loved the game. My fellow shelter volunteer Katherine Kekel claimed that Tia knew it was K9NW day (always a Tuesday at 11 am) long before I’d even show up.

After close to two months of weekly practice, we introduced Tia to birch odor, a step not too many shelter dogs make because of the time required to get there. Not long after, she was adopted. We’d posted her K9NW videos along with her bio, and although her adopter didn’t continue with the game, her video helped attract him to her!

What you can do . . .

To bring K9NW to a shelter near you, O’Brien recommends the following:

- Team up with an individual who is familiar with the activity.
- Attend a K9 Nose Work for Shelter Dogs workshop or an Introduction to K9 Nose Work workshop.
- Partner with an NACSW instructor (CNWI or ANWI) in your area.
- Engage shelter volunteers and staff.



AFTER THE SHELTER

As K9NW cofounder Ron Gaunt notes, ideally adopters would continue playing the game with their new dogs, or, at the very least, engage in training to continue to cement the bond they have begun to build with humans.

For the dogs and people who get hooked on the game, the sky is the limit. Dogs can be trained to search interior and exterior environments, vehicles and “containers” such as luggage. For the competition-minded, the National Association of Canine Scent Work (NACSW), the organization that sets the standards governing the sport of K9NW, offers trials of varying levels. This year the NACSW will be hosting their first-ever National Invitational in California.

I’d be lying if I said that K9NW saved every dog I worked with at my shelter. The sad reality is that by the time we begin working with some dogs, the shelter environment is taking its toll. If behavioral issues emerge or intensify, I take what little comfort I can in knowing that our sessions give the dog a temporary reprieve from stress, and that she takes pleasure in being allowed to use her nose the way she was born to do. 🐾

Lisa Rodier is a freelance writer from Alpharetta, Georgia where she lives with her very patient husband and almost one year old Bouvier, Atle. She is a Certified Nose Work Instructor, teaches K9 Nose Work classes, and is hooked on the sport.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

❖ K9 NOSE WORK

Information and workshop listings available at: k9nosework.com

❖ NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CANINE SCENT WORK (NACSW)

Instructor listing by state, and information on competitions and membership: nacsw.net

❖ THE PARKER VIDEOS: HOW ONE DOG GOT STARTED IN K9 NOSE WORK

by NACSW and Christy Waehner. 2012 DVD, 41 minutes, \$20. This introductory DVD shows the progression of a dog, Parker, and her handler, Christy, who, after attending an Introduction to K9 Nose Work workshop, went home and over the next eight months, put into practice what they learned on that one day. The video diary Christy kept shows the progression of how to play and develop the game. (Disclaimer: I was fortunate to be allowed to participate in the making of this DVD!) Available from Dogwise.com: (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com



Fitness Together

How to turn your dog's walk into a workout.

BY MARDI RICHMOND, MA, CPDT-KA

I confess: I have a hard time fitting in enough exercise for myself and my dog. Nothing earth-shattering about this admission; I think not getting enough exercise is a universal condition. Even though my dog and I walk daily, life and age just keep creeping up, making it harder and harder for me to stay fit. And, my high-energy herding dog seems to always need just a little more in the way of activity than I have time and energy to provide.

You can imagine how I feel if I try to sneak out of the house and head off to the gym without her. That look! You probably know the one: perked up ears, soft eyes, and the head tilt that asks, "Can't I please come?" Of course, just heading out for a regular walk isn't really the answer either; dog walks are not always the best exercise. On our daily walks, my dog enjoys sniffing and checking p-mail. We both stop and talk to neighbors. I

admire the gardens while she checks out the squirrels. She probably fares a little better than I do exercise-wise because she inevitably talks me into chucking the ball at the park or snapping the leash off for a little wave-chasing at the beach. But both of us could use more.

So when I recently heard about a movement to turn dog walks into a more gym-like workout, I thought, what a great idea!

Not everyone has access to open space where they can jog with their dog off-leash – or a dog who is trained well enough to stay at his or her side. The combination is fitness heaven for many dog owners.

DOGS MAKE GREAT PERSONAL TRAINERS!

This is not news for those who hike or run with their dogs. But you don't have to be a serious athlete to gain the benefit of dog as personal trainer. Dogs can be terrific fitness partners for all activity levels. They seldom cancel last minute, and are not likely to let you cancel either. Dogs thrive on routine, so if you get distracted or procrastinate, your dog will likely remind you when it is time to get moving.

For both of you, working out together may bring significant health benefits such as a lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, arthritis, and other chronic conditions. You may sleep better, your weight may improve, and your stress levels may go down. The extra activity and mental stimulation may also help your dog relax and behave better, too.

Since you won't be splitting your energy between the gym and your dog, workout walks may lead to more together time, more activity overall for your dog, and greater opportunities for practicing basic skills.

GET YOUR DOG ON BOARD

One of the great things about the workout walk is that it really doesn't take a lot of training for your dog. However, there are a few basics that will help you get the most from your exercise time together.

If your dog has enjoyed leisurely walks, complete with lots of stopping and sniffing, you can insure the success of your workout by taking the time to teach your dog that the workout walk is a different activity. It may take your dog a few sessions to learn the new rules. Take your time at first and focus on your dog's skills (instead of on the exercising) and you will both get more out of the workout down the line.

Consider also that some of your walks may be workout walks, but other walks may remain casual, full of sniffing and exploring. How will your dog know which is which?

In our household, we have found it helpful to use a cue to let our dog know which type of walk is afoot. We may take a sniffing and potty walk in the morning, and a workout walk in the afternoon, and some of our walks are a combo of both. If we say, "Your choice!" and head out in a leisurely fashion, our dog knows she can weigh in on which path we follow and sniff and explore to her heart's content. If we say, "Let's walk!" and step off at a fast stride and with purpose, she knows we will be moving quickly, and the sniffing will need to wait until we take a break. By cueing our dog at the start of the walk, or when we are switching walking modes within a walk, we help her understand what is expected.

LEARN TO MOVE TOGETHER

A great skill for a dog to attain for a workout walk is the ability to move in tandem with you. When we are out for a stroll with our dogs, a lot of us are pretty happy with them walking in front, behind, or even off to the side as long as the leash is loose and they are not pulling us off our feet. However, when you are walking, jogging, or running with your dog for a workout, having him walk close to you in the "shoulder at knee" heel position can be a great advantage. Your dog can see where you are going and can move, turn, or change speeds more easily. The heel position sets you up to move as one. It also helps reduce the possibility of tripping over each other.

If your dog doesn't know this behavior, you will need to teach it to him before you head out on your exercise walks. Start in a quiet environment where your dog will not be tempted by great smells or other distractions. Teach your dog where you would like him to be by stepping out ahead of your dog and encouraging him to follow. As your dog catches up, click and treat when his shoulder is in line with your leg. Then, while he is focused on the treat, quickly step off again and repeat. Once your dog gets the idea, add in a few steps before you click and treat.

Expect that your dog will have a harder time once you start to walk together away from your low distraction environment. Great smells on a walk, for example, may be some of the toughest distractions your dog will have to deal with. Try keeping the leash a little shorter than you might normally to prevent your dog digging into a great smell or moving out ahead. But if your dog does move ahead of you, simply back up or turn the other direction (with a *very* gentle pressure on the leash) until your dog returns to your side, then click and treat and move forward again. If your dog lags behind, make a fun or exciting noise to get his attention, then click and treat when he catches up.

Once your dog has the idea, try using the great smells on a walk as the reward. Ask your dog to "Let's walk," and move together quickly (travel just a few feet for a novice dogs and as much as a few blocks for experienced dogs). Then give the cue to "Go sniff!" as a reward.

Tip: If your dog doesn't have a lot of

experience moving quickly or running with you, he or she may, at first, get overexcited and jump up or playfully grab at you when you move quickly – especially young dogs and herding dogs! To eliminate this problem from the start, at first take just one or two quick steps, click (or use another "reward marker" such as the word "Yes!") while your dog's feet are on the ground, and follow by giving him a treat low – at his chest height. Gradually add in more steps and faster speeds as your dog gets the concept of moving with you without jumping up.

STAY FOR THE STRETCH!

Another important skill for your dog to have for workout walks is the ability to wait in one spot while you do an activity without him (for example, a down stay while you do a few quick calf-stretches or knee lifts). Pick a position your dog will find comfortable in most situations (it can be a stand, sit or down) and practice at home first while you do exercise-like behaviors.

For example, if the position you choose is a sit, have your dog sit while you raise your arms over your head, bend over and touch your toes, or jump up and down. Gradually build up your dog's ability to wait quietly while you do several activities over the course of one to two minutes. Don't expect, when you are on your workout walks, that your dog will hold a position in public for more than a minute or two. It is much harder out in the world than at home! Besides, you'll both be happier if your dog is moving more than staying.

PUT THE WORK INTO THE WORKOUT

Walking is one of the best forms of exercise there is, but for workout walks to be a fitness building experience, you will need to do more than just a regular walk at your regular pace. As with any workout, aiming for a variety of aerobic activity, some strength building, and some flexibility exercises will give you a well-rounded fitness routine.

Training your dog to stay at your side and match your pace will greatly increase your safety and enjoyment. Most trainers recommend using a fixed-length leash; retractable leashes are responsible for many accidents and injuries.



Keep in mind that most health experts recommend that we exercise at a moderate intensity. What does that mean? For the human half of the team, a good rule of thumb is that if you can talk while you walk, you are moving at about the right pace. However, each of us is an individual, so you may want to talk with your health care provider or fitness trainer to develop your personal goals.

There are several strategies for turning a basic dog walk into a fitness-building workout. A great idea is to vary your approach and try for one or more of the below suggestions on different days of the week.

■ **STEP UP THE PACE.** Perhaps this is obvious – but it is also one of the best strategies for building fitness. When you head out for a walk, warm up for the first 5 to 10 minutes, and then challenge yourself to move at a quicker pace than you normally would.

■ **GO LONG.** Increasing distance is another great strategy. Make some days your long walk days, and increase your normal distance or time.

■ **TRY INTERVALS.** Interval training is when you take small chunks of time – say

30 seconds to several minutes – and work out at a higher intensity, followed by a rest cycle. So, for example, on a walk, you could walk fast or even jog for one block getting your heart rate up, and the next two blocks walk at a normal speed to let your heart rate recover (go back to normal).

■ **CLIMB TO NEW HEIGHTS.** Walking hills (assuming your knees and back can handle it!) are a great way to add difficulty to your workout and also some strength training for your legs.

■ **THROW IN SOME STRENGTH TRAINING AND STRETCHING.** While out on your walk, at a park or other quiet location, give your dog a sniff break or ask for a stay while you do some calisthenics, stretching or strength building exercises. Try squats, lunges, calf-raises. Add in some vertical push-ups off of a building or pole and some leg-lifts and tricep dips on a park bench for a full body workout.

These are tips that will get both you and your dog moving in a fitness direction, but it may not sound like much fun for your canine pal. In order to make it a positive experience for you both, add in some fun time.

LET'S PLAY!

Remember the workout walk is for your dog too! It is important to reward dogs – especially when they are just learning about workout walks – but too many treats when your dog is exercising may be counter productive (and might cause a tummy ache!). So consider using very small treats, and instead, adding in more play time. Playtime rewards during a workout walk might include brief games of tug or a short chase game.

In addition, adding play to a workout walk might just increase your fitness! Don't take a break from exercising while your dog runs in the park, for example; join in the fun. Try the following games to keep you moving and your dog having fun:

■ **BALL RACING WIND SPRINTS.** If your dog loves to chase a ball or toy, don't just stand there while he runs. You can have your dog wait while you toss the ball, then race together to see who gets there first.

If your dog needs more exercise than you (mine does!), toss the ball in one direction and then instead of standing still waiting for your dog to come back to you, run the other way. When your dog catches up, repeat in the opposite

EXERCISE SAFETY TIPS

- ✓ Before starting a new exercise program, be sure to get the green light from your doctor and your dog's vet.
- ✓ If you or your dog has not exercised much in the recent past, build up gradually. Nothing will ruin a good fitness routine faster than being too tired or sore!
- ✓ Always warm up and cool down to help avoid injury.
- ✓ Remember, dogs can't sweat to cool themselves, so it's incumbent upon you to make sure they don't overheat. Avoid exercising in the heat when possible.



- ✓ Watch out for brachycephalic (short-faced) breeds, such as bulldogs and boxers; they are especially vulnerable to overheating.
- ✓ Pay attention to your dog's limits (they sometimes won't set

their own!). It is easy to get into the exercise zone and want to push on. Make sure your dog is up for it too. If your dog slows down or shows signs of fatigue, stop!

- ✓ If you are older or in less than the best shape, don't try to keep up with an energetic, young dog. Balance exercising together with your youngster's need for additional activity such as running with his pals.
- ✓ Hydration is important for you both! Take frequent water breaks.
- ✓ Watch out for the weekend warrior syndrome; overdoing it can lead to injuries for both you and your dog.
- ✓ Be careful exercising with a young dog because their joints are not fully matured. 18 months old is generally considered a pretty safe age to add in more intensive exercise, but check with your vet to be sure.
- ✓ Use common sense. Remember that smaller dogs can't go as far. Short haired dogs get cold more easily. Be gentle with older dogs, offering lower impact activities.



To keep a game of fetch fast-paced, bring more than one fetch item. As soon as your dog has caught or retrieved one, throw the other, and jog to the first one (which he most likely dropped in favor of the second one). Repeat as you are able!

direction. If you aren't into running, try doing other exercises, such as squats or jumping jacks while your dog chases the ball.

■ RAISE YOUR HEART RATE FRISBEE.

Have you ever seen those Frisbee dog demonstrations? If you have, you've also seen just how quickly the handlers are moving! You, too, can turn a relaxed game of Frisbee into a heart rate booster.

Try using two flying discs. (The soft type stuff into a fanny pack easily and can be brought out at good times during your workout walk. For the safest and most-throwable discs, see WDJ's review of flying toys for dogs in the August 2012 issue.) As soon as your dog catches the first, ask for a drop and toss the second. While your dog is racing after the second Frisbee, you race to collect the first. Continue on in this manner until you both collapse into a happy puddle! I guarantee that this game is fun as well as heart-pumping!

■ TUG FOR YOUR UPPER BODY.

If your dog enjoys tug games, consider incorporating them into your workout too. Even a small dog can add some gentle resistance and help with upper body strengthening. You can also try tug-stay-run games to add more movement for you both.

WHEN YOU WANT MORE THAN A WALK...

For many of us, a walking workout offers a simple and easy way to add fitness building into our time with our dogs. But options for getting active with your dog outdoors, hiking, skijoring and canoeing are all fun and dog-friendly choices. Into training and dog sports? Agility can be a great workout for both dog and handler. Sprinting around a course will get your heart rate up, and the competitive aspect can be a great fitness motivator.

For a lower-impact sport, musical freestyle can get your body moving. How about canine boot camp classes? In these classes, you and your dog engage in a full hour of fitness together. Or how about Doga, the yoga classes where downward dog takes on a whole new meaning?

However, if (like me), you struggle to get enough exercise, yet you want to add fitness into something you already do every day, the workout walk can't be beat. It is a fun and interesting way to exercise, and most dogs won't let you forget when it is time to go out and get active! 🐾

Mardi Richmond, MA, CPDT-KA, is a trainer and a professional writer who specializes in health and dog-related topics. She enjoys getting active with her dog Chance, who won't ever let her hang out on the couch for long.

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BEWARE OF **Dangerous Dog** (LAWS)

Local laws to protect the public from dogs who have bitten can be good and fair, or arbitrary and onerous.

BY PAT MILLER

Anyone who has ever been bitten (or owned a dog who has been bitten) by a dog, or owned a dog who bit someone (human or canine) – or even just had a good look into a dog’s mouth! – understands that dogs have the potential to harm others. The vast majority of dogs are not dangerous. But, because of the minority who are, there are hundreds of laws, varying state by state and community by community, that attempt to define what dangerous dogs are, and address the consequences of a “dangerous dog” designation to the dogs’ owners and the dogs themselves.

Some of these laws are well-written and appropriately enforced, helping protect the community at large from truly dangerous dogs – laws that impose reasonable restrictions on the care and keeping of those dogs – while giving good dogs (and their owners) caught in bad circumstances a chance to redeem themselves. (See the California statutes, as a good example, on page 22.)

In contrast, poorly crafted laws put good dogs at risk and/or fail to protect anyone from dogs who pose a serious threat to other humans or dogs who cross their paths. Poorly crafted and over-zealously enforced laws may unfairly, sometimes arbitrarily, set up dogs to fail and burden their owners with sanctions so onerous that they have no choice but to give up, even euthanize, their dogs.

Do you know what kind of laws govern the area where you and your dogs live? You should. Because whether you

and your dog got attacked by a stray dog on the street who had a past history of the same behavior, or your dog accidentally nipped a neighbor’s child who was holding your dog’s tennis ball in the air above your dog’s head, the “dangerous dog” laws in your area might have consequences that range from inconvenient

to deadly (such as forced euthanasia for the offending dog).

EXPERTS DISCUSS DANGEROUS DOG LAWS

I interviewed two animal professionals who are familiar with different aspects of dangerous dog laws.

The first is an attorney licensed to practice in Virginia, Maryland, the District of Columbia, and Washington State. **Heidi Meiner** has been practicing law since 2000, and began practicing animal law in 2010. Heidi represents companion animal owners, trainers, veterinarians, pet care industry companies, and rescues. In March of 2013 she opened her own law firm in Alexandria, Virginia in order to focus her practice on animal law issues. Heidi says, “I have the greatest second job anyone could ask for, as an assistant dog trainer with Fur-Get Me Not, an award winning dog training facility in Arlington, Virginia.” (See meinerlaw.com and petlawblog.com for information about Heidi’s practice.)

Paul Miller is a lifetime animal welfare professional, with more than 30 years of experience working at and with humane societies and animal care and control agencies. (Full disclosure, he is also my husband!) Miller began his animal protection career at the Humane Society of Carroll County (Maryland), did undercover investigative work for the Humane Society of the United States (dogfighting, cockfighting, and livestock transport), and has worked at shelters

Posting a warning sign such as this one may be just one of many sanctions imposed by your local animal control agency if your dog is declared dangerous.

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in Arizona, California, Tennessee, and most recently, back in Maryland. His experience with dangerous dog laws is primarily on the enforcement end, which gives him a different perspective from Meinzer's.

Q. Heidi, what led you to include a focus on animal law in your law practice?

MEINZER: Five years ago, I adopted a beautiful German Shepherd-mix puppy, Sophie. She struggled during fear periods through puppyhood, and around the time she turned two, our older and steadfast Golden Retriever passed away, leaving Sophie to fend for herself. Sophie began showing reactivity to dogs and strangers, leading me to work with several renowned trainers in the Washington, DC, Metro area. Sophie opened my eyes to the world of dog training and behavior, and introduced me to many wonderful professionals.

At about the same time, local rescues involved in a heartbreaking hoarding case in rural Virginia asked me to help them with their efforts to prosecute the hoarder for animal neglect. All of these circumstances made me realize that I could merge my love of dogs and other animals with my legal profession.

Q. Paul, how did you come to be knowledgeable about dangerous dog laws?

MILLER: Thirty years experience in enforcement of animal control laws around the country. Most recently, in my positions as director of Chattanooga's (Tennessee) municipal animal control program and then as executive director of Washington County's (Maryland) humane society (with an animal contract), I played a significant role in getting modern dangerous dog laws passed in those two communities.

Q. In general, what do you think of the concept of dangerous dog laws?

MEINZER: When I first became aware of Virginia's dangerous dog law, my gut reaction was that the law was overly harsh. In addition, some provisions of dangerous dog laws can be very onerous and lead to such a financial burden that some owners agree to the dangerous designation when they may in fact have a winnable case, or may even choose to surrender or euthanize their companions. However, I now

believe that well-crafted dangerous dog laws with strong procedural protections can serve to balance the rights of dog bite victims and dog owners.

MILLER: Unfortunately these laws are a necessity, due to the many dog owners who fail to socialize, train, and/or properly manage their dogs. Without this valuable tool, which gives us the ability to hold the owner responsible for the actions of the dog, it is likely we would have even more severe attacks on humans and other animals.

Q. Heidi, based on your experience with the laws in your area, what do you think of the enforcement/implementation of dangerous dog laws from a defense attorney perspective?

MEINZER: This really varies by state, and then by each locality within each state. Virginia has a statewide dangerous dog statute that cannot be changed on the local level, so the law itself is uniform across all jurisdictions. That said, enforcement and implementation can and does still vary, within the local jurisdictions in Virginia. By contrast, Maryland localities have considerable discretion with their dangerous dog laws. So the local laws themselves, as well as enforcement and implementation, vary tremendously by locality.

In some ways, Virginia's system is preferable, so that at the very least each locality is governed by a uniform law. However, you lose the benefit of flexibility that you have when a state allows localities to pass their own ordinances. For instance, Washington County, Maryland, passed an ordinance that allows for a "potentially dangerous" designation in which dog owners could "work off" the designation by focusing on training and behavior issues with their dogs. This is something that is missing from Virginia's statute – but that some creative Virginia prosecutors still accomplish through prosecutorial discretion.

Q. Paul, what, if any, are the negatives about these laws, from an enforcement perspective?

MILLER: There are several things:

A lot can depend on the training, experience, and knowledge of the investigating officer in regards to canine and human behavior, so application and

enforcement can be uneven, even within the same jurisdiction.

Some of the laws aren't as well-written as others. Definition of terms such as "provocation" may be poorly worded or absent altogether, which can leave it up to the individual officer's discretion to define and interpret the law.

Dangerous dog laws tend to be reactive rather than proactive – responding to a problem rather than teaching the owner a better way to handle and train his dog. The owner often gives up the dangerous dog only to acquire another dog, and repeat the mistakes that caused the first one to be designated as dangerous.

It makes the dog the victim, when in reality most were just dogs being dogs.

Once a dog is designated as dangerous, most laws do not contain a provision to allow for rehabilitative effort and eventual removal of the designation.

A dangerous dog designation can impact on an owner's ability to get homeowner's or renter's insurance, forcing them to rehome or euthanize the dog.

Q. Heidi, what are the most important things for a dog owner to know about dangerous dog laws?

MEINZER: The consequences of dangerous dog laws are often substantial. During the pendency of the case, your dog may be seized and detained at the local pound. If your dog is deemed dangerous, you may have to keep him muzzled in public, hang signs on your property, register with a statewide dangerous dog statute, make potentially expensive changes to your home environment, carry considerable liability insurance that can be quite costly, and comply with a variety of other requirements.

You may be liable for more than just the consequences of dangerous dog laws. Civil liability to the victim is a totally separate matter. Additionally, other laws – such as leash laws or running at large laws – often come into play.

Circumstances leading up to dangerous dog designations often could have been avoided. Not all dog bites are avoidable. But I have seen several cases that would not have occurred if only, for instance, the owner had kept the dog on a leash in a public area.

Q. What should an owner do to avoid coming into conflict with local dangerous dog laws?

MEINZER: Be a responsible dog owner, plain and simple. The most common factors in dog bite cases include: (1) dogs who are not neutered; (2) dogs who are chained or tethered; (3) selective breeding; (4) dogs suffering from abuse or neglect; and (5) inadequate socialization, training, and supervision. Consider what these factors mean to you as a dog owner.

Get to know as much about your dog as possible before you adopt – and research all that you can about the breeder, rescue, or shelter where you plan to get your dog. Neuter your dog. Keep your dog on leash any time your dog is not in a fully enclosed area, and do not leave her chained or tethered. Properly socialize and train your dog right away. Proactively get a professional opinion from a good trainer and/or behaviorist about any red flags about your dog's behavior, and address those issues immediately.

Do everything you can to enrich your dog's world and foster a positive relationship and bond with her. And always take care when interacting with dogs and people wherever you are, including in your own home. If your dog shows any hesitation when meeting another dog or a person, do not force her to interact. Be your dog's advocate and kindly tell the person that your dog needs space. As another example, set up supervised play dates with people who you know well and who have dogs who are appropriate playmates for your dog instead of going to places like dog parks where the situation is much less under your control.

MILLER: I'd suggest making sure your dogs are well socialized; lack of socialization/fearfulness is one of the most common causes of dog bites. Your dogs should also be trained to respond with appropriate and acceptable behavior at home and in public, and well-managed – kept safely confined at home and on-leash in public (unless in designated off-leash areas). Dogs whose owners respect and obey local animal control ordinances are much less likely to get into trouble.

Q. What do you suggest an owner do if her dog is designated as “dangerous” by a local animal law enforcement agency?

MEINZER: Get professional help right away. Contact an attorney who understands not only the law, but also dog behavior. And contact an experienced trainer who can assess your dog's behav-

ior and point you in the right direction. Evaluate what actions you can take to ensure the safety of your dog and the public, such as desensitizing your dog to a muzzle and walking your dog with proper equipment such as a double leash system with a martingale collar and a front clip harness. Also consider changes to your home environment – such as adding a second storm door or putting up a visible fence – to ensure that your dog will be safely confined on your property.

All of these changes may help convince local animal control officers to allow you to keep your dog at home pending the outcome of dangerous dog proceedings. If your dog is designated as dangerous at the end of the proceedings, make sure that you understand exactly what is expected of you and comply with those requirements. Depending on the applicable laws, failure to comply often can lead to criminal charges against you and the possible euthanasia of your dog.

MILLER: I agree. Seek legal counsel, and have your dog evaluated by a qualified/competent animal behavior professional.

Q. Does society have a realistic or appropriate perspective on dogs who bite?

MEINZER: It seems the pendulum swings drastically in opposite directions regarding dog bites. Some people do not take dog bites and incidents seriously enough. Other times, dog bites are overly dramatized. There's no doubt that the number of dog bite insurance claims is rising, leading many states to consider dog bite liability and insurance laws in a whole new light. Trainers can take action by educating legislators about dog bites so that new laws will actually serve to reduce the number and severity of dog bites.

MILLER: I don't think so. In general the public has limited knowledge of how to develop good behavior in a dog, and/or how to appropriately change or manage unacceptable or undesirable behaviors. They often don't even recognize or are in denial about the precursor behaviors that are leading up to the incident that's going to get their dog (and them) in trouble. In most of the media reports on dog-related fatalities, for example, the dog owner claims the dog had never shown any previous danger signs for aggression. In reality, there were likely lots of signals that just were ignored or not recognized

by the owner as warning signs. On the other hand, some people seriously overreact to normal dog behavior – owners get sued for a minor nip that, 30 years ago, no one would have thought twice about.

Q. Anything else you would like to say about dangerous dog laws?

MEINZER: As society evolves, we put more and more pressure and expectations on our dogs. We need to realize that this only increases our responsibilities. Build that bond with your dog, and be your dog's advocate any time your dog seems to be uncomfortable. Accept your dog for who she is, and don't set goals and expectations based on what you want. Rather, set goals and expectations based on your dog's needs and desires.

MILLER: Dangerous dog laws and other appropriate animal control ordinances should incorporate, whenever possible, an educational component that will help resolve the problem. I have always advocated for a two-tier dangerous dog law. Level One, sometimes called “Potentially Dangerous,” would address the onset of inappropriate behavior prior to a bite or attack, often during a dog's adolescence, and require the owner to attend training classes or private behavior consults. If, after successful completion of the training requirement and passage of a certain period of time (perhaps 18 months), during which there are no more reported offenses, the designation of Potentially Dangerous could be lifted. Level Two, called “Dangerous” or “Vicious” would address dog behavior that results in serious injury or death to victims.

Some jurisdictions have a “dog school” for animal control violations – like traffic school for traffic violation – that educate owners and allow violations to be removed from their dogs' records. These are wonderful programs. Whenever possible, the goal should be education, rehabilitation, and helping owners succeed with their dogs, not the imposition of burdensome penalties just for the sake of enforcement. 🐾

Pat Miller, CBCG-KA, CPDT-KA, CDBC, is WDJ's Training Editor. She lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center, where she offers dog training classes and courses for trainers. See page 24 for more information.

A LOOK AT ONE STATE'S DANGEROUS DOG LAWS

California has a well-written, fair and comprehensive dangerous dog law. Some of most notable provisions are below (with my comments added). The law can be found in its entirety here: animallaw.info/statutes/stuscafoodagcode31601.htm

§ 31601. Legislative declarations and findings

The Legislature finds and declares all of the following:

(a) Potentially dangerous and vicious dogs have become a serious and widespread threat to the safety and welfare of citizens of this state. In recent years, they have assaulted without provocation and seriously injured numerous individuals, particularly children, and have killed numerous dogs. Many of these attacks have occurred in public places.

(b) The number and severity of these attacks are attributable to the failure of owners to register, confine, and properly control vicious and potentially dangerous dogs.

(c) The necessity for the regulation and control of vicious and potentially dangerous dogs is a statewide problem, requiring statewide regulation, and existing laws are inadequate to deal with the threat to public health and safety posed by vicious and potentially dangerous dogs.

Comment: It is common for legislatures to write a brief statement justifying the need for the law that follows. This can help you understand what they were thinking when they passed the law.

§ 31602. Potentially dangerous dog defined

"Potentially dangerous dog" means any of the following:

(a) Any dog which, when unprovoked, on two separate occasions within the prior 36-month period, engages in any behavior that requires a defensive action by any person to prevent bodily injury when the person and the dog are off the property of the owner or keeper of the dog.

(b) Any dog which, when unprovoked, bites a person causing a less severe injury than as defined in Section 31604.

(c) Any dog which, when unprovoked, on two separate occasions within the prior 36-month period, has killed, seriously bitten, inflicted injury, or otherwise caused injury attacking a domestic animal off the property of the owner or keeper of the dog.

Comment: These definitions are critically important to understanding and enforcement of the law. If, for example, a law includes the term "provoked," then provocation should be clearly explained within the language, in order to avoid large loopholes. A behavior professional could argue that a dog doesn't bite unless provoked, therefore all bites are provoked. The law can and should be clear about what constitutes provocation for the purposes of this specific statute. The California law is a good example of a two-tiered system as mentioned in the article on the previous pages.

§ 31603. Vicious dog defined

"Vicious dog" means any of the following:

(a) Any dog seized under Section 599aa of the Penal Code and upon the sustaining of a conviction of the owner or keeper under subdivision (a) of Section 597.5 of the Penal Code.

Comment: This section (a) pertains to dogfighting.

(b) Any dog which, when unprovoked, in an aggressive manner, inflicts severe injury on or kills a human being.

(c) Any dog previously determined to be and currently listed as a potentially dangerous dog which, after its owner or keeper has been notified of this determination, continues the behavior described in Section 31602 or is maintained in violation of Section 31641, 31642, or 31643.

§ 31604. Severe injury defined

"Severe injury" means any physical injury to a human being that results in muscle tears or disfiguring lacerations or requires multiple sutures or corrective or cosmetic surgery.

§ 31605. Enclosure defined

"Enclosure" means a fence or structure suitable to prevent the entry of young children, and which is suitable to confine a vicious dog in conjunction with other measures which may be taken by the owner or keeper of the dog. The enclosure shall be designed in order to prevent the animal from escaping. The animal shall be housed pursuant to Section 597t of the Penal Code.

§ 31621. Hearing on declaration of dog as potentially dangerous or vicious

If an animal control officer or a law enforcement officer has investigated and determined that there exists probable cause to believe that a dog is potentially dangerous or vicious the chief officer of the public pound or animal control department or his or her immediate supervisor or the head of the local law enforcement agency, or his or her designee, shall petition the superior court of the county wherein the dog is owned or kept for a hearing for the purpose of determining whether or not the dog in question should be declared potentially dangerous or vicious. . .

...The chief officer of the public pound or animal control department or head of the local law enforcement agency shall notify the owner or keeper of the dog that a hearing will be held by the superior court or the hearing entity, as the case may be, at which time he or she may present evidence as to why the dog should not be declared potentially dangerous or vicious. The owner or keeper of the dog shall be served with notice of the hearing and a copy of the petition, either personally or by first-class mail with return receipt requested. The hearing shall be held promptly within no less than five working days nor more than 10 working days after service of

notice upon the owner or keeper of the dog. The hearing shall be open to the public...

...The court may find, upon a preponderance of the evidence, that the dog is potentially dangerous or vicious and make other orders authorized by this chapter.

Comment: This is not the entire section regarding the notice and scheduling of a hearing. The important point is that law enforcement must give you "due process" before depriving you of your "property" – in this case, your dog. This is where you need a good attorney. A well-written law requires that hearing to be held promptly, so that you are not deprived of your dog indefinitely.

§ 31622. Determination & orders; notice; compliance; appeal

(a) After the hearing conducted pursuant to Section 31621, the owner or keeper of the dog shall be notified in writing of the determination and orders issued, either personally or by first-class mail postage prepaid by the court or hearing entity. If a determination is made that the dog is potentially dangerous or vicious, the owner or keeper shall comply with Article 3 (commencing with Section 31641) in accordance with a time schedule established by the chief officer of the public pound or animal control department or the head of the local law enforcement agency, but in no case more than 30 days after the date of the determination or 35 days if notice of the determination is mailed to the owner or keeper of the dog. If the petitioner or the owner or keeper of the dog contests the determination, he or she may, within five days of the receipt of the notice of determination, appeal the decision of the court or hearing entity of original jurisdiction...

Comment: Again, this is not the entire section. The important point is that there should be some avenue for appeal – the law cannot take your dog away from you without due process. A good attorney will serve you well here, too.

§ 31623. Failure of owner or keeper to appear; decision **§ 31625. Seizure and impoundment pending hearing**

(a) If upon investigation it is determined by the animal control officer or law enforcement officer that probable cause exists to believe the dog in question poses an immediate threat to public safety, then the animal control officer or law enforcement officer may seize and impound the dog pending the hearings to be held pursuant to this article. The owner or keeper of the dog shall be liable to the city or county where the dog is impounded for the costs and expenses of keeping the dog, if the dog is later adjudicated potentially dangerous or vicious.

(b) When a dog has been impounded pursuant to subdivision (a) and it is not contrary to public safety, the chief animal control officer shall permit the animal to be confined at the owner's expense in a department approved kennel or veterinary facility.

Comment: This is the very scary part. Yes, they can come and demand that you turn your dog over to them. You can insist they wait while you get your attorney on the phone.

§ 31626. Circumstances under which dogs may not be declared potentially dangerous or vicious

(a) No dog may be declared potentially dangerous or vicious if any injury or damage is sustained by a person who, at the time the injury or damage was sustained, was committing a willful trespass or other tort upon premises occupied by the owner or keeper of the dog, or was teasing, tormenting, abusing, or assaulting the dog, or was committing or attempting to commit a crime. No dog may be declared potentially dangerous or vicious if the dog was protecting or defending a person within the immediate vicinity of the dog from an unjustified attack or assault. No dog may be declared potentially dangerous or vicious if an injury or damage was sustained by a domestic animal which at the time the injury or damage was sustained was teasing, tormenting, abusing, or assaulting the dog.

Comment: This is the language in this statute that clarifies what the court would consider "provocation."

§ 31642. Keeping, controlling potentially dangerous dogs

A potentially dangerous dog, while on the owner's property, shall, at all times, be kept indoors, or in a securely fenced yard from which the dog cannot escape, and into which children cannot trespass. A potentially dangerous animal may be off the owner's premises only if it is restrained by a substantial leash, of appropriate length, and if it is under the control of a responsible adult.

Comment: Pay attention to the sanctions placed on your dog. Failure to do so can result in further legal action against you, including seizure and, worst case scenario, euthanasia of the dog.

§ 31644. Removal from list of potentially dangerous dogs

If there are no additional instances of the behavior described in Section 31602 within a 36-month period from the date of designation as a potentially dangerous dog, the dog shall be removed from the list of potentially dangerous dogs. The dog may, but is not required to be, removed from the list of potentially dangerous dogs prior to the expiration of the 36-month period if the owner or keeper of the dog demonstrates to the animal control department that changes in circumstances or measures taken by the owner or keeper, such as training of the dog, have mitigated the risk to the public safety.

Comment: Here's that valuable rehabilitation component discussed in the accompanying article.

YOUR LOCAL LAWS

There is much more to the California statute, but of more relevance to you and your dog are the dangerous dog designations in your own jurisdiction. You may think your dog will never be the subject of such an action. But, just in case, it's a good idea to research the laws that pertain to you, and do everything you can to make sure your dog never enters the dangerous dog law spotlight. It's also a good idea to identify attorneys in your area who, like Heidi Meinzer, dedicate their careers to animal law. Ask for their thoughts on your local dangerous dog laws. If they are poorly written you can be part of the force for changing them to ensure better protection for the dogs in your community as well as the humans. 🐾

 RESOURCES 

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

- ❖ **Pat Miller**, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, CDBC, Peaceable Paws Dog and Puppy Training, Fairplay, MD. Group and private training, rally, behavior modification, workshops, intern and apprentice programs. Trainers can become “Pat Miller Certified Trainers” (PMCT) by successfully completing Pat’s Level 1 (Basic Dog Training and Behavior) and both Level 2 Academies (Behavior Modification and Instructors Course). (301) 582-9420; peaceablepaws.com
- ❖ **Ruthanna Levy**, CTC, Bravo!pup Puppy and Dog Training, Berkeley, CA. Training, puppy classes, socialization sessions; force-free, fun, positive training. (415) 613-8241; RuthannaLevy@gmail.com; bravopup.com

HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

- ❖ **American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association** (AHVMA). PO Box 630, Abingdon, MD 21009. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a list of holistic veterinarians in your area, or search ahvma.org

BOOKS AND DVDS

- ❖ WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog*; *Positive Perspectives 2: Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog*; *Power of Positive Dog Training*; *Play With Your Dog*; and *Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First Class Life*. Available from dogwise.com or wholedogjournal.com

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