The Whole Dog Journal™

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A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Rule # 1:

Do NOT lose the new dog.

BY NANCY KERNS

This issue has a loose theme of responsible ownership. Trainer and occasional breeder Heather Houlahan discusses the ethical sourcing of purpose-bred puppies. Breeder (and breed rescue coordinator) Denise Flaim offers sage advice about helping a new adult dog smoothly settle into your home. And trainer and WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller offers helpful information about what to do in the painful event that it's necessary to re-home a dog. I'll jump in with my most critical advice: Do NOT lose your new dog.

Sound easy? It must not be, because I know at least three people who lost their new dogs within a week. Three! Each of the dogs was found, but each case has made me even more vehement when advising new dog owners.

The clincher was Tule, a dog I fostered for a few weeks last year. Tule was a beautiful but obese yellow Labrador. Her owner had to go into a long-term care facility and was not expected to recover. He asked his vet to euthanize poor Tule, as he had no relatives and he could not stand the idea of the sweet, spoiled dog (who had spent all of her three years on the sofa with him) in a shelter. Tule's vet talked her owner into allowing him to find Tule a new home, instead. Then the vet called the director of the shelter where I volunteer, and asked if she could please find a home for Tule, without making the dog stay at the shelter. Which is how Tule ended up at my house while we tried to find someone who wanted a sweet but untrained, super-fat Lab.

After a few weeks, we had a lead: One of our shelter volunteers knew a middle-aged couple who lived on a few acres in the country and who were looking for a nice adult Lab. We set up a meet and greet with the husband, and he thought Tule was just perfect.

A day or so later, he came to the shelter to fill out paperwork to foster Tule; he couldn't adopt her until she was spayed, and she was still too fat to spay safely. I made a point of telling him again and again that Tule had led a very protected life until just a few weeks' prior, and that she was apt to be confused about her newest living situation. After a few days of seeming to search for her former owner, she had attached herself very firmly to me; I was confident she would just as firmly attach to her new owners in a few weeks. In the meantime, I stressed, they should be very careful about keeping her collar and ID on, and keeping her on-leash any time she wasn't secure in the house or fenced yard. And I gave him my number and encouraged him to call me for free "tech support" of any kind.

Less than two hours later, I got a call from the shelter receptionist. "You're not going to believe this," she said. "That guy lost Tule."

"WHAT?!"

Long story short: As soon as she acted like she had to go potty, the guy opened his front door and let her out. Without a leash. Or a fenced yard. And then was shocked when the rotund (but athletic!) dog bolted down his driveway, down the country road, through a fence, and out of sight, with him in (supposedly) hot pursuit.

After my volunteer friend, her husband, and I spent five hours of searching and calling for Tule, I found her. Given that the guy A) lost her and B) didn't join us in the search, I did not return her to his house, but brought her back to mine. I was thrilled to find her, but *livid* that she had experienced such a stressful event so soon after her formerly plush life imploded.

Happily, a couple weeks later, we found her a spot with a rescue group, and a couple months later I learned that she had been spayed and placed in a forever home.

Hang onto those new dogs! They should be microchipped and wear ID at all times. Keep them on-leash for a few weeks, until you're certain you're bonded and they know where their home is.

NK

Hire the Lasers

Light therapy proves valuable in many veterinary and rehabilitation clinics.

BY BARBARA DOBBINS

The author's 11½-year-old Border Collie, Duncan, receives monthly laser treatments on his paws, elbows, shoulders, back, and ears.

One look at the x-rays of my Border Collie's phalanges make many people cringe and say "Ouch!" Those visible boney growths on his toes have been confirmed by biopsy as osteoarthritis. This disease is present in both of his front paws and his pain is evident after too much exercise. My friends with arthritis describe their pain as often being excruciating and so when Duncan shows pain, I can only imagine what he must be feeling. At 11½, Duncan – a.k.a. "Dutaro" – can still snag a ball like the San Francisco Giant's second baseman and never wants the game to end. In an effort to keep him as pain-free as possible, and thus active, healthy and happy, I incorporated laser therapy into his treatment program. Playing ball is in his blood; by adding the effects of laser therapy, he's able to stay off the disabled list.

The idea of laser (light) as a therapeutic method has been around for thousands of years – the Egyptians were known to use solar therapy. After observing that ultraviolet light killed bacteria, Niels Ryberg Finsen began employing UV rays to treat diseases in England in the 1890s, receiving the Nobel Prize in Physiology/Medicine in 1903.

In 1917 Albert Einstein theorized about the process of lasers through stimulated emissions of light; the term "laser" was first used in a scientific paper in 1959 (as an acronym for "light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation"). The first working lasers were developed in the early 1960s and laser therapy entered into its modern form in 1967 when Hungarian physician Endre Mester, considered the pioneer of laser medicine and credited as the discoverer of the positive biological effects of low-power laser, began his early science experiments. While applying lasers to the backs of mice whose fur had been shaved to see if laser irradiation caused cancer, Mester noticed that the shaved fur grew back faster on the treated group (who, by the way, did not get cancer) than on the untreated group. With other experiments he found that lasers could stimulate wound healing.

Laser therapy is akin to photosynthesis in plants in that the light delivered by the laser converts to energy that the body can use. It is *not* heat therapy, and therapeutic lasers are different than those lasers used for ablation, cutting, and thermally coagulating tissue.

A laser is an amplifier of light, emitted in the form of photons (discrete packets of electromagnetic energy). The absorption and penetration levels of each these photons is determined by its wavelength (light energy exhibits wave-like behavior as it travels through

space and is measured in wavelengths, categorized by color and visibility). When the photons, in the form of light, come into contact with biological tissue, part of it is absorbed, part is reflected or scattered, and part is further transmitted.

The primary effects of laser therapy start with those photons that are absorbed, inducing activity at the molecular, cellular, and tissue levels. Damaged or compromised cells and tissues have been shown to have a significantly higher response to laser therapy than normal healthy structures.

BIOSTIMULATORY EFFECTS

Laser therapy does three things: increases healing, decreases inflammation, and decreases pain. One way laser therapy accomplishes these objectives is by generating an increase in localized blood flow, which normalizes and heals damaged cells. In the body, blood transports oxygen and nutrients to cells and carries waste products away; laser therapy increases this process, resulting in more oxygen being delivered to cells to be converted into cellular energy.

Perhaps the most essential action of laser therapy is the photochemical stimulation caused by the administration of infrared light in the 800-1000 nanometers (nm) range, which interacts with cytochrome C, located in the mitochondria (the cellular power plants) of cells, catalyzing several reactions. This interaction results in the formation of adenosine triphosphate (ATP), a coenzyme that stores and transports energy for various metabolic process; nitric oxide (NO), a cellular signaling molecule involved in many physiological and pathological processes; and reactive oxygen species (ROS), chemically reactive molecules involved in cell signaling and homeostasis.

Protein synthesis can follow, triggering further effects such as increased oxygenation, increased cell generation and migration and regulation of the levels of growth factors, cytokines (molecules of protein, peptides, and glycoproteins that provide communication between cells) and inflammatory mediators, all of which stimulate cellular metabolism and the healing response.

Other effects have been documented, particularly as they relate to decreasing pain: increased endorphin and serotonin production, normalization of nerve cell action potentials, blocking of nerve cells and decreased bradykinin (peptides that causes blood vessels to dilate) production. Angiogenesis (the process of forming new blood vessels) and neurogenesis (the process of generating neurons) are also confirmed effects. Simply put, laser therapy means more energy is available for cells to conduct their processes.

LASER DEVICES

Laser therapy, especially as part of physical therapy, has been used in many parts of the world including Canada, Australia, Europe, and some Asian countries for many years. It wasn't until 2002 that the FDA cleared the first therapeutic laser, with a power output of 5 milliwatts (mW), for use in the United States. Today, lasers can range up to 15,000 mW (15 watts) in power. Because lasers are regulated by the FDA, they must be classified according to their power output level and the potential to cause eye injury.

Most therapeutic lasers used in clinical practice fall into one of two classifications: Class 3B lasers, which can have a power output level anywhere from of 5 to 500 mW; or Class 4, which is any laser with a power level of 500 mW or more. Class 3B lasers can be hazardous to the eyes if directly exposed and are sometimes referred to as "cold" lasers because they generate no significant thermal effect. Class 4 lasers can cause permanent eye damage from direct, diffuse, or indirect beam viewing (thus great care must be taken to control the light beam path); these lasers have the potential to increase the temperature of tissues and cause burning, though this is extremely rare.

LASER THERAPY'S OTHER NAMES

Cold Laser Therapy (CLT)
Laser Irradiation (LI)
Low Intensity Laser Therapy
Low Level Laser (or Light) Therapy (LLLT)
Low Power Laser Therapy
Photo Radiation
Phototherapy
Photobiomodulation
Photobiostimulation
Soft Laser Therapy

Class 3B laser machine shown with multi-emitter probe and optional 500 Mw single emitter probe for focal treatments; the protective eyewear is worn during treatment by the practitioner and any other person present. The patient, too, is sometimes outfitted with protective goggles.

Practitioners of laser therapy tend to align themselves with either one or the other class of lasers. One is not necessarily better than the other; it's really a matter of preference. Each have their advantages and disadvantages, but both can produce positive results.

Laser machines also come standard with one or multiple sets of predetermined wavelengths. The wavelength of the laser light determines the distance that the light penetrates through tissue. The laws of laser physics have demonstrated that the higher the wavelength, the deeper the penetration. The wavelengths of light used for laser therapy fall into an optical window of near-infrared wavelengths measuring in the range of 600-1070 nm.

Wavelengths within the 600 nm range do not directly penetrate more than 0.5 to 2 centimeters (cm), or indirectly up to 5 cm. Wavelengths in the mid 700 to low 1000 nm range penetrate deeper, directly affecting tissues up to 5 cm and indirectly up to 10 cm. Wavelengths in the 600-700 nm range can only be used for treating skin and subcutaneous tissue and wavelengths of 780-980 nm are preferable for the deeper stimulation required of the musculoskeletal, vascular, lymphatic, and neurological structures to initiate the physiological processes necessary for pain/inflammation reduction and accelerated tissue healing.

Laser devices can be operated in either continuous wave or pulsed mode, depending on whether the power output is essentially continuous over time or whether it takes the form of incremental emissions of light. There are also super pulsed lasers in which a high-powered high-dose beam of light is administered in timed bursts interspersed with large pauses. Research has not shown pulsing of any type to be more beneficial than continuous wave.

DOSAGE

Another primary component to the practice of laser therapy is the length of time the laser is administered. This, combined with power and wavelength, is referred to as the dosage. The World Association of Laser Therapy (WALT) provides a list of recommended treatment dosages for a variety of conditions in humans; because these are derived from clinical trials and studies on animals with similar pathologies, the recommendations for use of lasers in veterinary settings are based on these guidelines. The amount and strength of light used depends on the pathology being treated and in particular how deep the light is thought to need to penetrate into the tissue. Correct dosage is vital to the success of laser therapy.

LASER THERAPY IN VETERINARY PRACTICE

Laser therapy has been used as a modality in veterinary practices for decades, but only recently has it has gained mainstream acceptance and become readily available, largely because the technology and science have evolved to the point to make its use scientifically valid and repeatable.

The interest in its potential has also resulted in an upsurge in the availability of training and education; today, veterinary conferences have full sections on laser therapy and schools of veterinary medicine offer courses as part of their curriculum. It is used to treat a wide spectrum of conditions in companion animals, ranging from skin issues to

VETERINARY APPLICATIONS OF LASER THERAPY

ACUPUNCTURE POINTS AND TRIGGER POINTS: Traditional Chinese acupuncture points are stimulated by a focused laser beam, used solely or in combination with acupuncture needles, to produce a systemic effect; high doses of laser therapy may be used to deactivate trigger points (hyperirritable spots that induce pain elsewhere in the body) found in muscle, ligaments, tendons, and periosteum.

ANTI-INFLAMMATORY: Creates vasodilation, activates the drainage process of the lymphatic system, reduces the mediators that incite irritation.

BONE REPAIR: Improves healing times after trauma or orthopedic surgery (can be used over metal hardware).

INFECTIONS: Viral, fungal, bacterial (laser therapy stimulates the immune system).

INTRAOPERATIONAL PROCEDURES: Can be used during surgery to directly affect damaged tissues.

MUSCULOSKELETAL SYSTEM: Sprains, strains, fractures, ruptures, disorders, degenerative conditions.

NEUROLOGICAL: Remediation of peripheral nerve injuries and spinal cord lesions; improves nerve function; accelerates nerve regeneration.

ORAL PROBLEMS: Gingivitis, stomatitis.

PAIN MANAGEMENT: For acute or chronic conditions, especially beneficial in reducing pain from arthritis and neurological pathologies; can reduce or eliminate the need for pharmaceuticals in certain cases.

SKIN CONDITIONS: Ulcers, dermatitis, lick granulomas, burns, hot spots, pressure sores.

TISSUE HEALING: Accelerates cellular reproduction and growth, reduces inflammation, swelling and formation of scar tissue, prevents tissue damage and death.

WOUND HEALING: Induces cellular proliferation; increases formation of new blood vessels, activates collagen (the protein necessary for tissue replacement and repair) and DNA synthesis; prompts growth factor release; reduces wound closure time; increases breaking strength of the wound.

Duncan receives a laser treatment on his arthritic front paws.

chronic pain to acute injury. A response to laser therapy is usually seen within one to three sessions.

Jeffrey Smith, DVM, is the owner of Middletown Animal Hospital in Middletown, California, a past president of the California Veterinary Medical Association, and a representative for Companion Therapy Laser® (a division of LiteCure, LLC). Dr. Smith reports that 98 percent of cases should show remarkable improvement by the third treatment. If some response to laser therapy has not been seen by this point, the case is re-evaluated to make sure the correct diagnosis has been made and that the correct location is being treated with the correct dose.

With chronic conditions, the patient may receive up to 12 treatments before a plateau is reached; the treatment then shifts to a maintenance phase – typically once per month. Chronic conditions, such as arthritis, chronic dermatitis, back injuries, inflammatory bowel disease, chronic cystitis, inherently require ongoing treatment. Dr. Smith points out, for example, that with arthritis, the boney pathology that can be seen on x-rays won't be changed, but instead laser therapy will affect the soft tissue inflammation and chronic maladaptive pain associated with the condition.

To determine the efficacy of therapeutic laser treatment, Dr. Smith refers to the growing body of clinical studies that validate and quantify the effects. He notes that the understanding of laser science has advanced tremendously within the last five years and the technology has likewise followed. According to Dr. Smith, "Clinical experience and case studies are undeniable, especially for those difficult, chronic cases that traditional remedies have failed to treat adequately."

Integrative pracitioner Dale Olm, DVM, of Southampton Pet Hospital in Benicia, California, finds additional support for the efficacy of laser therapy through the resolution of clinical symptoms and by the owner's perception of their pet's condition. Dr. Olm's clinic often combines laser therapy with both conventional medical treatment and acupuncture and chiropractic modalities, finding that they work synergistically to produce effective results.

When she's not administering laser therapy to elephant seals (!), Sandy Gregory treats pets at Scout's House, a rehabilitation center in Menlo Park, California.

When one of his patients presented with a severe yeast ear infection, Dr. Olm expected that the dog would require weeks of conventional treatment. After one laser therapy session and one week of conventional medical therapy, the condition was fully resolved. In yet other cases, it can be used as the sole treatment when other treatments are impractical or not tolerated by the patient.

Dr. Olm likens the administration of laser therapy to an art form. Similar to acupuncture, the experience, knowledge, and skill of the practitioner affects the outcome of the treatment. While there is no specific training required for an individual to use a therapeutic laser (note that Class 3B and Class 4 lasers are FDA-approved devices that require administration by a veterinarian or under the supervision of a veterinarian), Dr. Olm feels that it should only be administered by a licensed medical practitioner who can evaluate the medical condition, understand the pathology involved, and can evaluate response to therapy.

Sandy Gregory, RVT, echoes this observation. Gregory works as an exercise physiologist and animal rehabilitation therapist, at Scout's House, an animal rehabilitation center in Menlo Park, California. She believes that training should be required to use the equipment and views it as similar to "prescribing and administering a medication" that should be done only by an individual with the appropriate expertise.

Gregory points out that determining dosage can be a complex charting process given the multitude of parameters that need to be considered: power density, wavelength, and pulse structure of unit; anatomical location; whether the problem is acute or chronic; type, condition, and depth of the tissue to be treated; pigmentation of the skin (dark pigmentation can be burned); frequency and length of treatment; and treatment technique.

Laser manufacturers provide dosage guides for using their particular devices and many units have presets that can be selected, but a good practitioner will understand the evaluating factors that go into each patient's dosage determination. Knowing the parameters gives the practitioner insight on how to specifically treat a condition, especially as each laser manufacturer has its own approach to dosing. Understanding the nuances of treatment can mean the difference between effectiveness and ineffectiveness.

PAIN MANAGEMENT

Laser therapy is becoming a huge component of pain management and rehabilitation. Gregory, who has been administering therapeutic laser therapy for over eight years to pets and wildlife (including elephant seals at the The Marine Mammal Center), finds it to be one of the most rewarding modalities that she uses because the results can be visible, sometimes even immediately, and the effects can provide great improvement in quality of life.

The biomechanisms of laser therapy can reduce pain in several ways. One study cites the anti-inflammatory effects of laser therapy as being similar to those of pharmacological agents for treating pain. This safe non-drug option is a welcome alternative to prescription medications that have the potential for serious adverse effects, especially when taken long-term.

Laser therapy can also control pain by

reducing oxidative stress, increasing the release of endorphins, improving blood vessel formation, and promoting collagen synthesis and skeletal repair.

A randomized controlled trial showed that lasers were able to suppress the activity of nociceptors (sensory receptors that send signals that cause the perception of pain) thereby reducing nerve firing and pain signaling and, as a result, providing relief of acute and chronic pain. In humans, laser therapy has been shown to decrease neck pain immediately, with the positive effects lasting up to three months after the end of a treatment series; it is thought that this same benefit occurs in animals.

SCIENTIFIC SUPPORT

The multitude of clinical trials, high-quality peer-reviewed research, systematic reviews, and analyses supporting the effectiveness of lasers in many applications in both human and veterinary medicine are countering the criticisms of the therapeutic laser treatment. Since it is now scientifically demonstrated that light has biological effects, studies have shifted to investigating how energy from lasers functions at the cellular and organism levels. Determination of optimal parameters for application to different pathologies is also being explored.

Despite the evidence, the use of therapeutic lasers is still sometimes considered controversial. One of the reasons for this is probably because the biomechanics of the effects are not yet fully understood. The large number of interconnected parameters involved in laser therapy application makes it essentially impossible to conduct a comprehensive study of the effect of varying all the individual parameters one by one.

Evidential support in veterinary clinical settings is growing; current clinical trials include studies on peripheral nerve injury, nervous system pain, muscle cell response, post-TPLO pain relief, and cell proliferation. Colorado State University is conducting a randomized, controlled clinical trial on the effectiveness of laser therapy in rattlesnake bite treatment for dogs. This study is investigating the possibility that laser therapy may decrease the length of stays in the clinic as well as lower the impact of snake venom in the dog's body. Because laser therapy increases the cellular repair process and the metabolism within cells, it is theorized that it can reduce the pain and swelling from bites and help affected tissue heal more quickly.

Therapeutic laser treatment on dogs with intervertebral disk disease was the focus of a recent study at the University of Florida. This controlled study showed that dogs who received laser therapy after spinal cord injury and surgery had no medical complications, walked sooner, and were discharged earlier than dogs who did not receive laser therapy. The results were so impressive that laser therapy has been incorporated as part of the treatment protocol for every dog at the study center presenting with the condition.

The potential of laser therapy is nowhere close to being reached. New therapeutic strategies are being developed from studies on the variables of parameters. Exciting avenues are being explored including the possibility of using laser therapy as a viable treatment for serious neurological conditions such as traumatic brain injury, stroke and spinal cord injury, as well as for degenerative brain disorders. This is pretty impressive for a modality Dr. Smith describes as "a drug-free, surgery-free, non-invasive therapy with no known negative side effects – the worst result is that it could fail to do its job."

Barbara Dobbins is a San Francisco Bay Area dog trainer on hiatus.

CONTRAINDICATIONS AND PRECAUTIONS

- ✓ The eyes are never treated due to the potential for retinal damage.
- ✓ Laser therapy should not be used over reproductive organs and caution for use is recommended during pregnancy, even when the target tissue is not in the reproductive region.
- ✓ Laser therapy should not be used in cases where cancer is suspected or confirmed because it can theoretically stimulate the cancerous cell activity and growth of that cancer. In end stage cases, it has been used as palliative care.
- ✓ Laser therapy should not be used on growth plates as the effect is not documented at this time.
- ✓ Laser therapy is not safe to use in patients with hemorrhagic disorders or with actively bleeding tissues because lasers can cause vasodilation and it is uncertain whether they have an adverse effect on coagulation. Lasers can however be used to promote resolution of hematomas once bleeding has ceased.
- ✓ Caution should be taken in cases of undiagnosed pain combined with a history of cancer within last five years.
- ✓ Caution should be taken in patients with photosensitivity disorders.
- ✓ Caution should be taken when using Class 4 lasers in animals with dark fur and skin due to the potential of a thermal reaction from a greater absorption of light.
- ✓ If the wavelength light is not sufficient or the irradiation time is too short, there is the potential for no response.
- ✓ Wait at least seven days after a cortisone injection before having laser therapy administered. Research has suggested that because both the laser and the steroid suppress prostaglandin E-2, it results in a zero net gain.
- ✓ Protective goggles, specific to the wavelength of light in use, should be worn during administration.
- ✓ The laser device should be activated only when the probe tip or array surface is applied to the tissue surface.

A Field Guide to Ethical Breeders

And how to detect the profiteers and puppymillers who wear the costume.

BY HEATHER HOULAHAN

You are a conscientious and skeptical consumer. Whenever you have a choice, you buy quality products that are made to last, by manufacturers who take good care of their workers and the environment, who are mindful of safety, who stand behind their products, and generally follow the best practices to produce them sustainably and ethically. Since you invest more in each purchase, you also invest more in caring for that purchase, whether by maintaining a pricey hand-crafted tool or carefully cooking that expensive local grass-fed steak. You know that by taking extra care, you not only meet high ethical standards, you get a better product for *you*. Who wants a bunch of shiny junk that will break and end up in a landfill, with the seller gone as soon as your payment clears? Not you.

You also know that there are costs to being conscientious. You will pay more up-front, sometimes a lot more. You have to put in a lot more effort to get the product; it isn't waiting for you on the shelf at Walmart 24 hours a day. You have to research and weigh values against one another. You may have to wait a long time to get just the product you want. And you *must* hone your radar for advertising claims that mean nothing (cholesterol-free apples?) and scrutinize various allegedly independent seals of approval that serve as marketing smokescreens for sellers who want to exploit your conscientiousness.

Here's a challenge, though: Can you apply that smart, honed, skeptical consumer consciousness to the next dog or puppy that you buy or adopt? Can you resist the first adorable puppy that is plopped into your arms, or the desperate sad story on a Petfinder entry?

Not only *can* it be done, it *must* be done, if you are deeply involved with your own dogs and care a great deal about the welfare and future of dogs in general. This is *the* acquisition that most demands a restrained, educated, skeptical approach that serves your own self-interest as well as supporting practices that are good for dogs. For no other purchase does intelligent self-interest mesh so closely with good social ethics, whether you are buying a purpose-bred puppy or selecting the best-for-you "used" dog from a shelter or rescue.

Here's how to identify an ethical breeder – one whose concern for the welfare of her dogs and devotion to the future of her breed extends to the well-being of those dogs' owners. Next month, we'll describe how to identify legitimate, top-quality rescues, and avoid those that apply more sentiment than expertise, as well as frank swindlers who prey on animals and kind-hearted people.

FINDING ETHICAL BREEDERS

It can be difficult to give useful generic advice about many aspects of buying a purpose-bred puppy. The husbandry practices, selection criteria, and to some extent the attitudes that make a great Bichon breeder would be anathema to someone breeding Belgian Malinois. Different breeds have different cultures. I can't tell you the fair price for a puppy – what is highway robbery and what is alarmingly cheap. I don't know what health conditions beset the breed of your choice. I don't know whether the breed club offers transparent guidance or is purely a marketing smokescreen.

Buy a puppy from someone who brings her up in such a way that you wish *every* puppy could be raised that way. Australian Cattle Dog puppies bred by and photo taken by Ingrid Rosenquist.

(I *can* tell you with reasonable certainty that the search terms "<insert breed> puppies for sale" or "<insert breed> puppies <your location>" will bring you almost exclusively the new marketing-savvy Internet-based puppymillers, who now know how to work search engine optimization.) I don't know which Yahoo list or Facebook group offers the best discussion and the most honest direction. You are going to have to find out the *specifics* for the kind of dog you seek; I recommend that you find guides and mentors who know the breed well and *have nothing to sell you.*

That said, some field marks of the ethical breeder *are* general in nature. Her opposite number is the puppymilling profiteer. Both self-interest and social responsibility depend on you avoiding that puppymiller.

Here are some feathers and crests to look for as you winnow through the information overload:

■ **THE BREEDER DOES *SOMETHING* WITH HER DOGS.** I mean, other than make puppies with them. She's part of a community of dog-lovers, hobbyists, and professionals who compete or perform service with their own dogs. Their dogs are seen and assessed by other experts, and there are thresholds – a working title or certificate, a conformation championship, breed-survey rating, temperament tests, qualifying in a trial – that dogs achieve before being bred.

Veteran French Bulldog breeder and rescuer Carol Gravestock and I come from radically different tribes of the dog nation (that's why I asked her for input). For the two working breeds that I own, a conformation (show ring) championship is a clear signal to *avoid* the dog's progeny and the breeder, because of health, temperament, and breed conservation considerations. In Carol's world, with a breed designed from the outset purely as house pets, "You *have to* show. It's how you earn the right to breed a litter."

As you scrutinize the performance claims about the breeder's sires and dams, though, beware of "champion lines." How many of those champions – or obedience-titled dogs, police canines, hunt-tested retrievers, etc. – are or were owned by the seller? Do the pup's parents number among them? Alas, it is not difficult to buy the grandson of champions to spruce up the ol' pedigree charts on the website. Your questions about a pup's ancestry should be guided by the principle, "What have you done for me lately?"

It's not terrribly impressive for puppies to have grandparents or great-grandparents who were "Grand Champions" or qualified at some canine job. Instead, look for puppies from accomplished *parents*. Bred by and photo by B.J. Apostol, Seawind Bull Terriers.

■ **THE BREEDER HAS AS MANY, OR MORE, QUESTIONS FOR YOU THAN YOU DO FOR HER.** She's nosy. All up in your underwear drawer. Seems judgmental. Probably has an application that you must fill out, sometimes before she will talk to you or correspond at any length. You feel a bit violated. Like you have to prove to her that you are worthy of one of her pups. Because you *do.*

(Please refrain from snorting, "This is worse than adopting a child!" People who have adopted a human child, or who have tried to adopt and been unable to do so, don't find it a bit funny.)

In contrast, says Gravestock, "With puppymills, the dogs are their job, and they *work that job.* That means answering the phone and returning emails in 30 seconds flat, and being charming. They have a product to sell; their product is a puppy, and they are salesmen.

"Ethical breeders work to support their dogs; their dogs do not support them," says Gravestock. They may not get back to you the day you call, and they will not be charming and aggressive in their eagerness to sell you a puppy, because that breeder's number one goal is to ensure that every puppy goes to a lifetime excellent home, not getting every puppy paid for and out the door the moment he is weaned.

"Good breeders are paranoid – we are downright *afraid of you,* puppy buyers of the universe! Those of us who do rescue have *seen* the worst-case scenarios."

The benefit to you of cultivating a relationship with someone this cautious? A breeder who is very careful about where her puppies go is the same breeder who is there for the life of the dog, to answer your questions, help you with any problems, cheer you on in your endeavors, and take away the worry of what would happen if you could no longer keep your dog. Every one of her puppy-buyers is a dog-in-law.

■ **A GOOD BREEDER CHECKS REFERENCES.** You provide personal and veterinary references, and she calls those people and grills them about you, your character, your experience as an animal owner, and even your personality. She may also insist on visiting your home, or sending someone she designates who is near you.

Note that puppymills are increasingly sophisticated about aping the surface plumage of good breeders. Many now have applications on their "click & buy" websites, and some of those applications ask for references. But they will *not* actually call the references you provide. When you provide references to a breeder, let those people know you have done so (that's just polite), and ask them to call you after they speak to the breeder so you can find out what the conversation was about. I've found conversations with personal references to be extremely valuable in matching pups to new families.

■ **THE BREEDER IS ALSO VERY HAPPY TO *PROVIDE* REFERENCES.** Call and question the breeder's references! For example: "Would you buy another puppy from this breeder? Why?"

I always advise puppy-buyers, and dog owners looking for a trainer, to ask for references. In 20 years of professional training and nine years of breeding, I have never had anyone ask me for a reference. Not one person.

■ **THE BREEDER USES A SALES CONTRACT THAT PROTECTS THE PUPPY'S WELFARE, THE BREED'S WELFARE, YOUR INTERESTS, AND HER INTERESTS – IN ABOUT THAT ORDER.**

Review the contract. What does the "health guarantee" cover? Puppymillers have discovered that written contracts not only make them look legit, they can be used to weasel out of obligations that would otherwise be presumptive under

law. Carol Gravestock cautions buyers to look for the "dead dog clause" in any health guarantee. If the breeder requires you to return the puppy to her in order to receive anything back, she is using the "health guarantee" to guarantee that you will *not* invoke the contract and she can keep your money. Who would send back his beloved ill pet to a breeder who will have the dog put down, and then accept another puppy from the same person as "replacement?" Not *you,* right? The profiteering puppymiller is counting on that.

Also, if you live in Florida and have the pup shipped from Missouri, you won't be able to return the pup with parvo to the seller because no vet will sign a travel health certificate for him. Catch-22.

Good breeder contracts are well-meaning, if (unfortunately) not always well-written. (If you are a lawyer, paralegal, or just good with contracts, do your new dog-in-law a kindness and offer to help her with her puppy contract. There is a 98% probability that hers is vague, unenforceable, and generally terrible, concealing rather than advancing her best intentions. In contract law, the thought does *not* count.)

Talk with the breeder about the terms of the contract, and what is guaranteed by the breeder, as well as the obligations you take on. The best breeders will want you to agree to provide good husbandry to the pup, to accept limits on the circumstances under which the pup might be bred, to perform specific health tests, and *share* the health test results when the pup is of the appropriate age. And *every ethical breeder obliges herself to take back your puppy if you ever cannot keep him,* often requiring that you give her the right of first refusal before the dog ever changes hands.

If the contract does not include an RTB – a "return to breeder" clause – walk away. It is your dog's ultimate safety net, and the surest field mark of a breeder who puts dogs before her own profit and convenience. If every dog breeder enforced an RTB, there would be no Part II of this article (regarding ethical rescue groups and shelters).

■ THE BREEDER SPEAKS MORE ABOUT HER ADULT DOGS, THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, BACKGROUNDS, QUALITIES, AND SHORTCOMINGS, THAN ABOUT ANY PUPPIES FOR SALE, PRESENT OR FUTURE. Your poor brain will throb as the breeder spins out a story of ancestors and relatives in a pedigree that you cannot hope to parse; this is a sign that the breeder is more concerned with the character of her dogs than with the perishable marketability of a puppy.

We tried to simulate the classic puppymill puppy portrait – the kind with cute props and a pup that looks like it's never been handled before and is stunned by the process. But we couldn't get this *shelter puppy* to look that shellshocked!

In contrast, a puppymill's website will almost invariably consist of pages of individual mugshot photos of each freshly bathed, shell-shocked pup, showing color and markings, with a draped background or sofa cushions, and often with adorable props. There may be a payment button next to each photo. Adult dogs, if present at all, are relegated to the background of the marketing efforts. (Betsy and Ranger had eight darling puppies, ready for adoption just in time for Christmas!) When you speak to this breeder, she will have a lot to say about the pups that she currently has for sale, but little that is insightful about their parents, older siblings, ancestors, uncles, and aunts.

■ GOOD BREEDERS PERFORM THE APPROPRIATE HEALTH TESTS FOR THE BREED, SHARE THE RESULTS OPENLY, PROVIDE DOCUMENTATION OF THOSE RESULTS, AND CAN JUSTIFY THEIR DECISIONS TO BREED EACH INDIVIDUAL DOG.

Don't fall for claims that the pups are "health tested" and "DNA verified." So? *What* health tests? Some puppymillers market pups as "health tested" because they have the federally required health certificate for shipping before they board the airplane! (We have now entered the realm of certified low-sodium broccoli.) And yes, all animals have DNA; I can verify that for you right now.

And what of the *results?* A breeder who has her dogs' hips radiographed and rated by OFA or PennHIP, and then breeds each dog *regardless* of the results of the test, is not performing due diligence. (The good hip scores become marketing fodder, while the bad ones are buried in silence and denial.)

The appropriate health tests vary widely by breed; this is why you must research the breed or type of dog thoroughly before contacting breeders. A Saluki breeder who doesn't check hips is normal, because Salukis do not have an issue with poor hips in their gene pool; it would be an expensive diagnostic test performed for no purpose. But a Labrador breeder who skips this test "because my dogs have never had a problem," or who spins a tale about how it's *all* feeding them right and keeping them off slippery floors, is selling snake oil. If a breeder doesn't health test, doesn't share the results, won't give you documentation unless you buy a puppy or put down a deposit, or is any way cagey, walk away.

Most health tests do *not* guarantee that your pup will be unaffected by the problem that the test evaluates. Only a few tests for simple genetic mutations can determine that. However, good test results increase your odds of getting a pup who is free of that issue – and you support someone who follows best practices.

Once you have the results of the parents' health data (and, ideally, grandparents, uncles and aunts, and any older siblings if applicable), you should ask someone who is an expert in the breed and *has nothing to sell you* to explain them, ideally without letting on who the dogs or breeder are. This is likely not your veterinarian – unless she owns that breed and has an interest in breeding and genetics. Another breeder, or a trainer, dog sports competitor, or other professional who has a lot of experience with the breed, is often your best source for disinterested information.

And no matter how many Good Housekeeping Seals a pup's parents can present, you still need to inquire pointedly about overall health in his family. Who cares if the parents have fantastic hips, eyes, elbows, knees, and cardiac

function if all four grandparents died of cancer by age six, Dad has epilepsy, and Mom has a running bar tab at the vet?

■ **THE BREEDER BREEDS ONE BREED OF DOGS.** Maybe two. Probably just one.

It takes years to become an expert in just one breed of dog; a breeder may own one or two dogs of other breeds, but she's a specialist in just one.

Puppymillers know that buyers will encounter this advice, so they now separate the websites of their different breeds. *Google is your friend;* check phone numbers, business names, individual names, and any other keywords you can glean for signs that the breeder has multiple websites for different breeds of dog. Hiding these parallel websites is a sign that there is something *to* hide.

■ **THE BREEDER BREEDS ONLY MATURE DOGS, AND EACH FEMALE IS BRED INFREQUENTLY.** (Certainly no more than once a year.)

No puppies having puppies. That means, at minimum, that each dog is two years old before being bred. Older is better, especially in slow-maturing breeds. Males, in particular, may be quite mature before siring puppies. If your pup's parents are mature, ask about their reproductive history. If Momma, or any other bitch the breeder owns, is on her fourth litter at age five, you have your answer. If the breeder is cagey about answering, walk away.

■ **THE BREEDER HAS LITTERS INFREQUENTLY, ONE AT A TIME.** You are likely to have to wait, possibly a considerable time, for a pup to be available to you.

Puppies take a lot of care, and it's not just constant feeding and cleaning. A good breeder spends hours every day observing and interacting with the pups to learn as much as possible about each one and to socialize them thoroughly. They have puppy socialization parties with friends, take the tykes on field trips, and lose countless hours to puppy reverie.

Even a house full of highly disciplined home-schooled children can't properly socialize, much less assess, 20 or 30 pups at a time. And there is no way that a breeder can effectively screen potential homes with diligence with so many pups at once. Ethical breeders all report being drained and exhausted after raising a litter, mostly due to the hours spent screening potential buyers and agonizing over puppy matches. Puppymillers like to produce in big batches for efficiency.

Occasionally a breeder plans two litters in a year for compelling reasons, and her bitches synchronize so that the only way to manage it is to have them close together. But the breeder should present this as an exception without prompting. Most who try it once swear "never again" while lying in a dark room with a cold compress on their foreheads.

A home visit to see the puppies (or to meet the parents before the puppies are born) is a must. Puppies should be living in a house, clean, and happy. If they aren't, walk away. These pups bred by and photo by Christine Kemper, Blackthorn Kennel.

■ **YOU ARE ENCOURAGED, IN SOME CASES *REQUIRED*, TO VISIT THE BREEDER'S HOME TO PICK UP YOUR PUPPY.** (This is *always* where the puppies and their mother live, by the way.) Preferably, you visit before picking up the puppy – perhaps even before pups are born or conceived. This can vary depending on how common the breed is and how far you have to go, but you are always welcome to visit with polite notice at a mutually convenient time.

If the breeder offers to meet you somewhere off-site "to save you driving time" or to deliver the puppy to you, proceed with great caution. Sometimes these offers are sincere; say, the breeder is traveling for a dog show to your area anyway. Tell her that you'd rather come to her and meet the pup's mother and other relatives. If she is resistant, walk away.

If you get as far as visiting the breeder's home and the pups or adult dogs are dirty, crowded, stinky, isolated, caged, scary, fearful or in any way *not what you would wish for every puppy, everywhere,* walk away.

If you can't meet the adult dogs, walk away.

If you would not wish to own the puppies' dam, walk away.

■ **THE CHANCE THAT A BREEDER WHO IS USDA-LICENSED IS NOT A PUPPYMILLER IS ESSENTIALLY NIL.** Ethical breeders do not produce enough puppies to require this licensure.

■ **IF THERE IS ANY INDICATION THAT THE SALE OF PUPPIES IS PAYING THE MORTGAGE, THAT THE DOGS ARE SUPPORTING THE BREEDER, WALK AWAY.** You can be sure that the dogs' dependent is making compromises about the dogs' welfare: whether to breed that bitch who had a litter six months ago, what brand of dog food to buy, does this pup really need to see a vet? And if you find that you must return your puppy a year or 10 after bringing him home, you will also find that that charming aw shucks farm lady who just loved all her li'l puppies to death when they were ripe and shiny and for sale is not returning your calls; if you catch her, you can expect, at best, a referral to a breed rescue.

An ethical breeder, a great breeder, doesn't just take her own puppies back at any age, for any reason, she supports breed rescue and other animal welfare causes. She may pull, evaluate, transport, and foster dogs that puppymillers forgot about the minute the check cleared. She might sit on the board, fundraise, or just cut a check at Christmas. She helps salvage the mess created by those "other" breeders.

NEXT MONTH

Speaking of rescue, those who prefer a quality recycled companion can learn how to recognize her among the official nonprofits. I'll discuss the hallmarks of quality rescues and shelters in next month's WDJ.

Heather Houlahan is the proprietor of First Friend Dog Training. She has been a search and rescue dog handler for 22 years, and is the canine director of Allegheny Mountain Rescue Group. She lives with three English shepherds, one German shepherd, a revolving cast of foster dogs from National English Shepherd Rescue, and a mostly housetrained husband on Brandywine Farm, north of Pittsburgh, PA. Contrary to rumor, she has never required colonoscopy results from her puppy applicants.

Rehoming Responsibly

There are a number of sad but legitimate reasons for giving a dog up. If it must be done, protect everyone involved by taking these steps.

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

A client sent me an e-mail recently to tell me that she has been unable to implement our agreed-upon behavior modification program due to the full-time responsibility of caring for an elderly parent. Barb* said she is looking to rehome her dog. Bailey*, an otherwise delightful one-year-old Labrador Retriever, has mild-to-moderate dog-reactive behavior and separation distress, as well as the high energy level typical of an adolescent Lab. Barb has been bringing him to Peaceable Paws since puppy class. I was saddened to hear she was giving him up. It's always sad for a dog, and the humans who know him, when the promise of a lifelong loving home falls through. *(*Their names have been changed.)*

Ask any animal shelter or rescue group, and they will tell you that owners surrender their dogs for a myriad of reasons. More common ones include: Moving, can't keep; landlord won't allow; not enough time; and can't afford.

Although those are the reasons commonly given, the underlying cause far more often in those cases, is that something interfered with the development of the all-important bond between dog and human that ensures the dog a lifelong, loving home. Every day thousands of dog lovers move and take their dogs with them, find a new place to live where dogs are allowed, rearrange busy schedules to make time for their dogs, and reprioritize budgets to cover their dog-care expenses.

Animal protection and rescue workers often become cynical about, and unsympathetic toward, those who give up their dogs. Many of us who love our dogs find it difficult to imagine any legitimate reason for giving them up. While it's true that many dogs are given up for seemingly frivolous reasons, there are times when it is the right thing to do, including the following:

■ TWO (OR MORE) DOGS IN THE FAMILY ARE SERIOUSLY FIGHTING

Although it's not uncommon for two dogs in a family to have occasional squabbles, there are also times when knock-down-drag-out battles – or even rough play – can put one or more canine family members at risk of serious injury or even death (not to mention the risk of injury to the humans who have to intervene in the dog fights). This can be especially life-threatening when a size differential almost guarantees that a smaller dog will be injured – or killed – by a larger dog who plays too roughly or has mayhem in mind. Plus there is the risk of predatory drift, where the larger dog sees a significantly smaller playmate dash across the yard and his brain kicks into "Squirrel!" mode. He perceives his smaller canine companion as "prey" instead of "playmate," and tragedy strikes.

Whether due to size difference or not, conflict and potential injury between canine family members calls for careful management protocols, implementation of a behavior modification program to reduce or remove tension when possible, and if necessary, rehoming of one dog to prevent tragedy. If modification isn't successful and management isn't realistic, it is only fair to give both dogs a chance at long and happy lives by rehoming one. (I usually recommend rehoming the easier of the two dogs rather than the more problematic one, because it's much more difficult to find a new home for a dog with problematic behavior; you are probably that dog's best option.)

Some dogs who initially did not get along can be taught to co-exist peacefully, or be managed in such a way as to keep both of them safe. But rehoming one of the dogs is a valid option if the task proves to be too difficult, and one of the dogs (or other family members) is at risk of being hurt or killed in a fight.

THE DOG IS A DANGER TO SOMEONE IN THE HOUSEHOLD, OR TO THE COMMUNITY.

This often entails aggressive behavior, but not always. Sometimes an aging dog-lover makes the mistake of replacing her beloved senior dog who recently passed away with a puppy of the same breed, forgetting that she was 15 years younger the last time she had a bouncing adolescent canine underfoot. If the human's dexterity and balance is beginning to fail her, and/or if she is physically unable to meet the dog's activity needs, rehoming may be the best option.

While daycare, pet walkers, and sympathetic family members and friends may be able to help with some of the exercise, the dog might still present too great a threat to the owner's safety. If that's the case, rehoming is the right choice.

A rowdy dog may also present some physical risk to small children in the home. Good management can often minimize the danger while the child grows and the dog matures and learns his good manners behaviors. Aggression, however, is another matter.

Aggression alone is not necessarily a reason to give up your dog. It is irresponsible parenting *and* dog-owning, however, to keep a dog who shows a willingness to bite kids in a home with children. Dogs who live in homes with small children must adore them, or the child's safety is at significant risk. Anything less than "adore" means the dog should be rehomed, or at least sent off to stay with relatives until the child is old enough to no longer be at risk, and/or the dog has learned to love children. It's a lot easier to rehome a dog *before* he bites a child.

A dog with aggressive behaviors presents a risk to the community if the owner is unwilling or unable to take necessary management steps to keep the community (and the dog) safe. While this can be due to a lack of concern on the owner's part, it can also be a result of denial and/or lack of education. When aggressive behaviors have been identified in a dog, it is critically important that the owners prevent the dog from having any opportunity to bite, and seek assistance from a qualified positive behavior professional for help in managing and modifying the behavior.

The more medical and/or behavioral "issues" a dog has, the harder she will be to rehome. Dogs who are very old, unattractive, or who have high grooming needs may also have a difficult time finding someone to take them home. Their best chance is with their long-term owners.

AN UNAVOIDABLE CHANGE IN LIFE CIRCUMSTANCES PRECLUDES KEEPING THE DOG.

Stuff happens. You may have the strongest commitment in the world to your dog, and if life circumstances change and you can truly no longer care for him, then rehoming is the responsible decision. I'm not talking about simple priority choices ("We can't afford the dog's ACL surgery because we want to go to Europe this summer"); I'm talking about unavoidable life events such as heart attacks, strokes, foreclosure, moving to a long-term care facility, and other life-shattering occurrences. Sometimes, tragically, you really *can't* care for your beloved canine any longer.

THE DOG HAS A HEALTH OR BEHAVIOR PROBLEM THAT IS BEYOND THE MEANS OF THE OWNER TO RESOLVE.

Quality of life is an important consideration for dog and humans. If you really can't afford the care your dog needs, you either provide it anyway, perhaps at the cost of your own health or diet, or you don't provide it and your dog suffers. You can choose to make sacrifices in order to provide for your beloved dog, but there may come a legitimate time when the sacrifice is too great, or the challenge too difficult. Some medical procedures now available for dogs cost tens of thousands of dollars. Just because we *can* try to fix something and prolong life, doesn't always mean we should. A loving owner may be completely willing to work with her difficult dog's behaviors, but physically unable to do so. In those cases, rehoming or even euthanasia may well be the best choice.

Aggression, severe separation anxiety, and a variety of canine obsessive-compulsive disorders can be extremely difficult behavior challenges. While these sometimes respond to treatment, often with the help of behavior modification drugs, they don't always, and quality of life can be greatly damaged for both dog and owner.

For more information on separation anxiety, see "Scared to Be Home Alone," WDJ July 2008 and "Surviving Severe Separation Anxiety," September 2012. For more on canine OCD, see "Really Obsessed," September 2010.

WRONG DOG FOR THE SITUATION

Sometimes, humans acquire a dog for a specific purpose – to be a service dog, do narcotics detection, or to fulfill some other working or competition goals. Sometimes the chosen dog turns out to be totally unsuited for the desired

purpose, and the human doesn't have the luxury of keeping the newly acquired dog while seeking another one who is more suited for the training goal. In such cases, it may be absolutely necessary, or at least fully justifiable, to return or rehome the unsuitable dog in order to allow the person to seek and select a more appropriate candidate.

OPTIONS FOR REHOMING

It can be a challenging proposition to rehome a dog, especially one with major health or behavior problems. Here are options to consider when you must give up your dog:

1 RETURN HER TO THE BREEDER, SHELTER, OR RESCUE GROUP YOU ACQUIRED HER FROM. Responsible breeders and adoption organizations contractually require this, although some may allow you to rehome to someone you know that they pre-approve. **Caveats:** If the place where you got your dog was less than reputable (for example, with overcrowded, poor conditions) you won't want to return the dog there. If you got her from a pet store or puppy mill (oh dear), returning is not an option.

2 PLACE HER WITH A TRUSTED FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER. Well-loved, well-behaved, healthy dogs usually have a circle of admirers who would jump at the chance to adopt. **Caveats:** Even your best friend or favorite relative may decline to take on a dog with major health or behavior challenges. You must be honest about these challenges.

3 ADVERTISE FOR SOMEONE TO ADOPT HER. People sometimes have success with rehoming dogs by advertising on Craigslist or with fliers posted on the bulletin board at local pet supply stores or veterinary offices. Social media can be a huge help, too; put together some good pictures and complete description of your dog (and the reasons you have to rehome her) and ask your friends to share. You never know, a friend of a friend may have a perfect spot for the dog.

Caveats: Try to allow for plenty of time (weeks or even months) to network in search of a perfect new owner for your dog. It's not easy to screen potential adopters – you risk placing your dog with someone who won't provide the kind of loving care you want for her, despite their assurances (this goes triple if she has health or behavior issues). There have been recent news stories about dogs placed in new homes free of charge by owners, shelters, and rescue groups, only to have to purported adopters "flip" (sell) the free dogs.

4 TAKE HER TO A GOOD SHELTER OR RESCUE. There are thousands of excellent dog adoption services around the country. Many provide medical treatment for at least some of the dogs in their care that owners couldn't afford. The best have behavior departments or working relationships with qualified professionals to modify difficult behaviors in order to make dogs more likely to succeed in their next, hopefully final, homes. Not everything is fixable, and responsible groups still have to make difficult euthanasia decisions, but your dog might be one they can help.

Caveats: Be sure you research these groups diligently. Visit the facility to see that it's clean and well run. If you can't visit, don't leave your dog there. If they won't give you straight answers about their willingness to treat medical issues or modify difficult behaviors, don't leave your dog there. If your dog isn't adopted, she may suffer in a cage at a "no-kill" shelter for the rest of her life, or worse, in the hands of a hoarder posing as a shelter or rescue. Again, you must be brutally honest about your dog's health or behavior problems.

5 HAVE HER EUTHANIZED. As painful as this, it may be the kindest thing you can do if your dog has significant health and/or behavior issues. It may not be realistic to ask someone else to care for such a dog, and she could be abused or neglected in the process. Dying peacefully in the arms of someone who loves her is better than dying neglected in someone's backyard, or after spending weeks, months, or years in the stressful environment of a shelter.

When I have a client considering this option because of difficult canine behaviors, I gently suggest that euthanasia is not an inappropriate choice for a loved dog if the client is unable to do the things necessary to restore her dog to physical health, or to manage and/or modify behaviors. I don't tell her she should make that choice, but I let her know I'll support her if she does.

DIFFICULT DECISION

Any one of these decisions (obviously the last) can be irrevocable. Before giving her up, be sure you've thought it through carefully and truly exhausted all your options for fulfilling the commitment you made to your dog when you adopted her. You don't want this to be a decision you regret for the rest of your life – and hers.

I received another e-mail from Barb this morning. A family decision to place the parent in a long term care facility has given Barb new resources, new energy, and a renewed commitment to work with Bailey. For now, he's staying in his home. Cross your fingers.

Be honest but persistent when advertising your dog for a new home; share his photo and information as widely as you can. The perfect home may be just one more friend of a friend away.

Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, 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. Pat is also author of many books on positive training, including her newest, Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First-Class Life. *See page 24 for more information.*

RESPONSIBLE REHOMES

Here are some examples from my world, of times when re-homing was necessary, responsible and appropriate. Names are changed to protect the privacy of my clients in all except the first example:

CARETAKER HEALTH ISSUES

More than a decade ago, my then-45-year-old brother had a series of major strokes from which he would never fully recover. He was placed in a long-term care facility where pets were allowed, but only if the resident could care for them, which my brother was unable to do. When my sisters and I visited Bill, he kept asking for his two well-loved Pomeranians. It broke my heart.

I tracked them down – they had been sent to a Pomeranian rescue group – and convinced the rescue (via a significant donation) to let me rehome the dogs with one of the staff at the facility. For many years she brought the dogs with her to work and Bill was able to keep them in his life. Although his dogs are gone now, other staff members continue to visit him with their dogs, knowing how much it means to him.

WRONG DOG FOR THE JOB

A good friend recently purchased an Australian Shepherd puppy from a breeder she thought she had carefully researched. Julie already had two adult dogs with behavioral issues that she had worked long and hard with, one adopted from a "no-kill" facility to save him from spending the rest of his life there. Although she's been successful enough with her behavior modification work that she is able to compete with her two dogs in agility and rally obedience, she had her heart set on starting with a properly raised and socialized puppy who could grow up to be a really solid dog.

Imagine her dismay when the 10-week-old pup turned out to have significant fear behaviors – far greater than one should expect if he was simply going through a developmental fear period. After much soul-searching, she returned the pup to the breeder. Her decision to do so was sealed when, upon contacting the breeder to let her know of the pup's behavior, the breeder advised her that she was trying to socialize him "too early." This is a nonsensical excuse; it's never too early for appropriate, carefully managed socializing, and truly good breeders go to great lengths to provide this early socialization foundation.

Dogs who live with small children need to LOVE kids – something trainers wish people who are considering having children "someday" would keep in mind when selecting their dogs (even if the "someday" seems far off, given that a dog should live into his teens).

PUTTING OTHERS AT RISK IN THE HOME

A client brought her just-adopted adolescent Border Collie-mix to see me because the young dog was acting very fearful of men. Linda had adopted Freddie (names changed) less than a month prior, and he already had *seven* biting incidents, including one bite that had broken skin. She has two small children in her home, but so far the dog had been relaxed and appropriate with kids. Freddie was a delightful dog with many good attributes, and Linda was committed to keeping him, if at all possible. We worked out a behavior modification program, and this exceptionally knowledgeable client went home, fully committed to working through her dog's behavioral issues.

A week later during a stressful day in the home, Freddie bit one of the kids – twice. Although neither bite required medical attention, it was clear that he wasn't safe in a home with children. The client was fortunately able to place Freddie in a dog-savvy home with no children despite his bite history.

PUTTING OTHERS AT RISK IN SOCIETY

A young couple adopted a dog a year ago from a "no-kill" group – a dog who, in my opinion, should not have been made available for adoption without first undergoing significant behavior modification. The couple, who were my clients, simply wanted a canine companion they could enjoy and share with friends and family. The Lab/Pit-mix they adopted was so defensively aggressive they were unable to have visitors at their home. If they tried to put him away in a "safe room" so they could enjoy their friends and family, the dog shrieked and became destructive – to his environment if he was left free in the room, and to himself if he was crated.

After 10 months of dedicated behavior modification work, including medication for the dog, they sadly decided that neither they nor their dog was enjoying an acceptable quality of life, and chose to have him euthanized.

THE EXCEPTION, NOT THE RULE

Let me assure you that in my behavior practice these cases are the exception, not the rule. I am fortunate to be blessed with clients who are far above average in the commitment they make to their dogs. Their decisions to rehome are difficult, and invariably made only after much thought, discussion and angst. They are never made lightly by my clients, and never without considerable pain.

Rescue Me!

Tips for surviving the early days with a newly adopted adult dog, and for helping her find a secure spot in your family.

BY DENISE FLAIM

For a dog with such a demure name, Nora was, in the words of her new owner, *purely awful.* "There was not a thing that she got to that she did not destroy," remembers Donna Hess of Basking Ridge, New Jersey, of the first few weeks with her newly adopted Basenji. "She ripped any pillow she could get to shreds, and then started on the comforters and blankets. She knocked over the garbage can 50 times a day. She chewed the other dogs' collars off their necks. Tissues, toilet paper, knickknacks, throw rugs, small objects of all kinds were stolen or destroyed. Putting stuff up high did not help; she climbed all over the tables and counters. She literally could not be left alone for a second. And the worst thing was if you tried to catch her to confine her, she bit!"

Nora didn't seem to want to interact with her new owners, refusing to make eye contact or respond to her name. Petting was out of the question. But at the same time, she had intense separation anxiety. "The minute she was alone, she pitched a holy fit, screaming and urinating in her crate, then destroying her bedding," Hess remembers.

After weeks of this adoptive "Nora'easter," Hess seriously contemplated returning her to the rescue group that had placed her. "I was making no progress whatsoever."

While Nora is an extreme case, adopter's remorse is hardly an uncommon phenomenon among those who bring an adult shelter, rescue, or foster dog into their lives and homes. Like any major life change, the adjustment period is not always pretty, and you can expect more than a few bumps along the way.

But there are many things you can do – or at least be aware of – that can make the process easier on both you and your new addition. With some hard work and more than a little patience from Hess, Nora eventually settled into her new home. And your dog can, too.

Many owners fall in love with a dog in a shelter or rescue group's on-line listing, only to discover that the dog that seemed so perfect in theory is, in fact, a real dog! And most dogs need some time to adjust to a new home and family.

GREAT EXPECTATIONS – The groundwork for a successful arrival starts well before your new dog's paws hit the driveway (or the apartment lobby). Advance planning is always a good idea, and not just in terms of logistics, like figuring out where the dog will sleep or checking to be sure the house is sufficiently dog-proof.

Just as important – and frequently overlooked – is a once-over of your own emotions: You'll need to manage your expectations about your new buddy, who at best may not be on the top of his game and at worst may be traumatized about being in an unfamiliar environment, no matter how cushy the digs or solicitous the humans.

"A lot of people expect their new dog to follow them everywhere, like a puppy would," says certified applied animal behaviorist and author Patricia McConnell. "But unlike puppies, who almost always come with boundless enthusiasm, older dogs have no idea what is happening to them. A lot of them are in shock and are really sort of stunned."

Like a second marriage, where both partners are fully formed individuals with their own life experiences and preferences, your relationship with your new dog is going to involve coming to terms with his "previous life." You don't know what baggage he is carrying, or

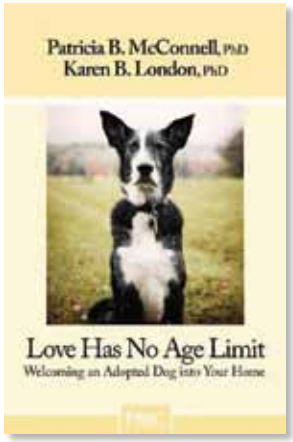
Don't spend every minute of that first weekend with the new dog; it can be very scary for her to go from 24/7 full family contact to sudden abandonment on Monday morning (kids to school, parents to work). Instead, start teaching her to spend increasingly longer quiet time alone in a crate or a dog-proofed room.

what pushes his buttons. Decoding your dog's reactions, habits, and world view will likely take some time.

"An important part of the process is understanding that you are bringing in an animal that has a history," McConnell explains. "You may know some of it, but you may not know enough. Slowly let your dog become your dog. You're trying to figure out who it is that you've got here."

IT'S ABOUT TIME – Behaviorist Karen London, who with McConnell is the author of *Love Has No Age Limit: Welcoming an Adopted Dog into Your Home,* has observed that adopted dogs tend to come out of their shells during the "magic three" – the third day, the third week, and the third month.

Those junctures "seem to be major landmarks for a dog to reveal who he or she is," London explains. For example, for the first couple of days in a new home, a normally happy-go-lucky pooch may be shy, timid, or aloof. By the third day, once she gets her bearings, she may regain most of the bounce in her step. Conversely, a dog whose reaction to the stress of relocation is to bark excessively may very likely calm down within a few days, once he's acclimated to his surroundings.



At the third-week mark, London says she often notices more changes. Metaphorically, the honeymoon is over and the dog feels comfortable enough with the relationship to start leaving dirty underwear on the floor (or running off to her crate with it, as the case may be). And finally, after three months, if you are paying close enough attention, you may see still more evidence of your dog settling into her new role in your household, as if she is permitting herself to finally, freely exhale.

London notes that these timelines aren't written in stone, but they do appear to be reliable patterns that many dogs follow when acclimating to their new homes.

PAST IMPERFECT – One more point before we leave the pasts of these dogs behind: Do just that. While you need to recognize that your dog's past informs her present, don't get mired down in what she has been through to the point where it impedes where she is going.

"See the dog, not the story," wrote one visitor to McConnell's blog. In other words, be careful not to romanticize your dog's previous life.

"People often get lost in a dog's story and get overwhelmed with compassion," McConnell says. "There's a feeling of 'I know they've been abused, and I'll make up for it by being extra sweet and loving all the time.'"

But instead of giving the dog a sense of safety and protection, this kind of uber-reassurance, without a set of clear and benevolent rules, often makes the situation worse.

In some respects, London sees a parallel with rescue dogs who have had a rough start and human beings who have had some sort of traumatic experience. "People who have been traumatized or assaulted or injured say, 'See me – don't just see what happened to me.' And I think it's the same thing with the dog."

McConnell has a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel who was rescued from a commercial puppy mill. For most of her life, Tootsie "lived in a crate the size of a bread box, and had a litter every year, as far as we know," she says. When Tootsie was rescued, her head was so severely infected it looked like a "cesspool," McConnell remembers.

Today, Tootsie "is the happiest, friendliest dog, she loves everybody, and she's even house trained," McConnell says. Tootsie hasn't been defined by her life story – you should want the same for your dog, too.

P IS FOR . . . WELL, YOU KNOW – If there is one Waterloo among adopters, it is housetraining – or, more specifically, the lack thereof.

"People hear the dog is housetrained at his foster home, and then the dog comes to their home and within 12 hours has peed all over the house," McConnell says. "What is critical to understand is that dogs haven't necessarily generalized houses. Just because they're housetrained in the foster home doesn't mean they're housetrained in your house. This is one case where they are like puppies."

Just as with an 8-week-old puppy, an adult adoptee benefits from consistency, plenty of opportunities to do the right thing, and being rewarded profusely for doing so. McConnell thinks one of the first things a dog should do when she

arrives at her new home is to be walked on leash in her potty area. Being taken outside as often as physically possible also gives the dog a chance to eliminate in the right place.

"Some people are shocked that it takes them four days to house-train their dog," McConnell muses. "But that's an eyeblink compared to the time it takes to train a puppy."

■ **A SEPARATE PEACE –** It's of course natural and probably irresistible to want to lavish all your time and affection on your new dog as soon as she arrives. But trainer Denise Herman of Empire of the Dog in Brooklyn, New York, reminds that you should also build in some time for natural separation.

"You definitely want to bond with the dog, so it's hard to put the dog away, but you can't Velcro them to you for the first three days and then suddenly leave them," she advises. "A lot times you're stuck with a really ugly separation problem that could have been avoided if you had played it looser for the first couple of days."

Herman advises "mixing it up a lot" – have the dog in and out of the crate (provided, of course, that she is crate-trained). She also recommends using lots of chew toys, which "tire them out mentally, not just physically, and build up focus. I 'big heart' chew toys so much!"

As with any new arrival, be cautious about triggering possessiveness over these new and valuable objects. "Resource guarding is one of the big ones I see change when dogs come out of shelter, often for the better, but sometimes for the worse," Herman says. "Assume the dog hasn't had many of [these high-value chew toys], and confine or supervise the dog when you give them." If you do discover an issue, "try flooding the dog's environment with them, and see if that helps," she suggests. "If you lay it on thick, sometimes they decide it's no big deal anymore."

Involving the kids in the new dog's care is important. But do *not* put them into potentially dangerous situations, such as sending them on a walk with the new dog without adult supervision. Until you know your how your new dog handles meeting other dogs and people and stressful situations (a loud motorcycle driving by, a nearby police siren, etc.), you need to be present.

■ **RUNNING ON EMPTY –** You see the stories on Facebook and Internet email groups all the time: A newly adopted rescue suddenly bolts from his new home, and a frantic search begins.

McConnell points out that runaway rescues are not uncommon at all, and for good reason. "The dogs have no idea where home is, have no connection to their new human yet, and very well might have been terrified, traumatized, disoriented, or scared. One of the most common responses to fear is to run away. Why wouldn't they?"

An ounce of prevention is the ideal prescription: Make sure your new dog has a microchip and an ID tag with your current cell phone number on it, from the first *minute* you take possession of the dog. Use baby gates to block exit doors that see a lot of traffic, particularly if you live in a home with small children who can't be expected to police foot traffic as diligently as adults would. Before turning a dog out into a fenced yard, make sure all the gates are securely closed. McConnell reminds us that dogs are particularly good at going over, under and through obstacles, and at squeezing past openings that might seem far too small for them to escape through. "If you hear yourself saying, 'I think it will be fine,' that's your clue that it probably won't be," she says.

Having the dog slip out of his collar is another concern. If you're worried your dog might be a flight risk, Herman recommends "double-lockdown" – walking him with both a collar and a harness. She suggests a flat martingale collar, which is similar to a flat buckle collar but tightens when a dog pulls. Herman notes that she has seen some harnesses pull off entirely, so look for a brand that has a strap between the legs, like the Wiggles, Wags and Wiggles No Pull Harness (see wiggleswagswhiskers.com or call 866-944-9247).

■ **PARTY ANIMAL . . . NOT –** It should go without saying, but let's say it anyway: The last thing your adopted dog needs is a huge welcome party to add to his sense of being overwhelmed. Keep visitors to a minimum the first few days – one person at a time, two maximum. "Stay low key and quiet and let your dog get her paws on the ground," McConnell advises.

Similarly, avoid trying or high-stress scenarios until the dog has been settled for a few weeks. McConnell recalls the client who adopted a huge Labrador Retriever and took him to obedience class the next day. The instructor told her to her wrap her arm around the dog to maneuver him into a particular position, and the dog "sunk his teeth into her and shook her like a rat," McConnell recalls. "It not only injured her, but it injured her confidence and trust. The dog was put down that day. Who knows what would have happened had she waited two weeks to take him to that class?"

McConnell is quick to note that this is an isolated case, and that it is not a foregone conclusion that all rescue dogs will have behavioral problems. But the drumbeat to have all dogs be super-socialized and interacting with everyone and everything around them can be a prescription for disaster with

Taking your new dog outside to potty on-leash many times a day is a great idea. Taking the dog out to explore his new neighborhood on his first days with you is not a good idea. Get to know him better, and establish a bit of a bond before you subject him to the street.

some dogs – particularly those who are already in a state of stress and confusion. Be thoughtful about what contexts you put your dog in, particularly at the outset.

Though it's one of the first things most people do with a new dog, McConnell also suggests rethinking a run to the vet's office in those first fragile days. Certainly, if the dog is ill, needs treatment, or if there is any question about his health status, do not delay. But if the dog has already been vet-checked by the shelter or rescue group, and you are just going for a recheck, or to have some nails or grooming done, let a couple of weeks pass and then "go to the vet for a meet and greet," McConnell advises. "Then they can literally do nothing but say, 'Hi! What a cute dog!' You only have one chance at a first impression."

■ **WALK THIS WAY –** Similarly, London advises putting off that most iconic of canine-human endeavors: the walk around town.

Instead of being a gentle jaunt around the new neighborhood, for some rescue dogs a leashed walk can be "like taking them to the gladiator pit," she says. While you might be in control of your dog, at least in terms of keeping him restrained with a leash, you most assuredly are not in control of the other people, animals and stimuli that might engage him.

"The average adopted dog is already on complete sensory overload – there's no reason to add to that," London says. So wait a few days to a week, once your dog has settled in a bit, before taking him on his first walk.

In the meantime, look for clues of potential issues around the house. "Hopefully you can see if the dog goes bananas when she sees kids walking by or charges at the window when she sees a truck," London says. "That will give you some information: Which is more of a problem on a walk, trucks or kids?"

■ **LESS IS MORE –** Though it's tempting to let your new dog have free run of the house – maybe not so tempting when you contemplate the Aubusson rug in the dining room – Herman recommends keeping him as close as possible. "A lot of people favor walking the dog around on a leash first, to see if he has any concept of what a house is," she says. "Many a person has been surprised to see the dog leap up on the dining-room table."

If the dog is crate trained, or willing to be crated, use that for times when you can't supervise him directly. "Usually it's a positive contract," Herman says about the incentive for the dog to learn to like his crate. "Here's a bone full of wet dog food; you can enjoy it in here, where it's calm and quiet and soft and clean."

McConnell adds that it's "so much easier to expand the house than to close it down" once the dog has been given free rein. Restrict the dog to one or two dog-proofed rooms that he feels secure in, and then, as he proves himself, you can open up access to more rooms.

■ **DON'T PANIC –** Easier said than done, but it may comfort you to know that even the pros have that moment of "What have I done?" when first incorporating that new dog into their household.

"I think the first three days are panic, panic, panic" – on the part of the human, that is, Herman says. "You think, 'I'm in over my head, maybe I was too rash.' Unless the dog is flat out Lassie, which is rare, you're going to have barking or house-training accidents."

Whatever you do, don't go it alone. "Be open to the idea of seeking resources," London urges. "A lot of knowledge, skill, and experience go into making the transition as smooth as possible. Seek help, whether it's a training or behavior professional, or rescue or foster people. I wish we didn't all try to figure it out in a vacuum."

And remember that the best view is the long one. Sometimes love is a bit of a battlefield until you work out a truce.

"It takes time to figure out how to live together," McConnell reminds. "Figure it will take about a year until you can look back and go, 'Wow, this dog is totally part of the family.'"

Now-beloved Nora.

Nora, the bad-to-the-bone Basenji, is a case in point. Her owner sought out help from another savvy Basenji owner, and consistently ignoring Nora's bad behavior led to a turn-around. Today, while Nora still has "bad days" and her own little quirks, "she flings herself into our laps whenever we sit down, and contentedly falls asleep," Hess reports. "She is still a work in progress . . . but Nora is home."

Denise Flaim of Revodana Ridgebacks in Long Island, New York, shares her home with three Ridgebacks, three 9-year-old children, and a very patient husband.

When Nicole and her husband adopted Sierra, the shelter informed them she had been impounded four times previously. Once home, it soon became clear that this had probably been due to a combination of separation anxiety and being an accomplished escape artist.

Seven Separation Anxiety Myths

Some "sep anx" dogs are exceptions to the rules.

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS BY NICOLE WILDE, CPDT-KA

As a canine behavior specialist, I've seen my share of dogs over the years who suffered from separation anxiety. The vast majority of my clients have been able to modify their dog's distress when left alone, and I felt confident in my knowledge of the issue. Then my husband and I adopted a two-year-old Husky-mix from our local shelter, and everything changed.

Sierra didn't exhibit the classic signs of separation anxiety, namely, destruction, urination and/or defecation, and vocalization. We'd leave her loose in the house alone and return to find everything intact, no mess, and no complaints from the neighbors about noise. I never would have suspected there was a problem except that when I was gone, even for short periods, I'd find her panting heavily. It wasn't due to hot weather – we adopted her in late December – so I set up a video camera to monitor her activity.

Here's what I discovered: Immediately after my departure, Sierra began pacing between the window where she could see my car pull out, and the French doors, where she could view it disappearing down the hill to the main road. The vocalizing that accompanied the pacing went from soft whimpering to a pronounced series of whines, and soon turned into barking. The barks became more urgent. Finally, she melted into a series of pitiful howls. Reviewing the footage tore at my heart. My girl was clearly suffering.

Donning my red cape, I instantly morphed from Dog Mom into Behavior Woman, able to solve tall canine conundrums in a single leap of logic. I used the same types of solutions that had worked for many of my clients, while simultaneously ensuring that Sierra was never left alone unless we were practicing our protocols.

But it soon became obvious that Sierra just hadn't read the right books; she not only didn't show typical symptoms, but she also didn't respond to many of the things that normally worked. My red cape obviously needed some sprucing up.

Living with a dog who has separation issues is very different than giving someone else advice about doing so, and I soon developed deep empathy for owners. I also became a one-woman research and development team. I scoured the latest studies, read and re-read all the available literature, and tried out a variety of tools and techniques.

I eventually redesigned parts of my protocols, created outside-the-box tactics and, eventually, wrote a book about separation anxiety, *Don't Leave Me! Step by Step Help for Your Dog's Separation Anxiety* (Phantom Publishing, 2011). Along the way, I discovered that some of the long-held, traditionally accepted truths about separation issues just aren't valid, at least for some dogs.

Here are seven common myths, and why you shouldn't take them at face value:

1 DOGS WHO HAVE SEPARATION ANXIETY ARE ALWAYS "VELCRO" DOGS. This is a term commonly used for dogs who stick close by your side, not wanting to be away from you even

for a moment. It's true that many dogs with separation issues follow their owners around the house. Some owners can't shower in peace, while others can't even use the bathroom without taking their dogs in with them. And a 2001 study (see "Resources," next page) by Gerard Flannigan and Nicholas Dodman did find that hyperattachment to the owner was significantly associated with separation anxiety. With all of that, it makes sense to believe that all dogs with separation issues must be Velcro dogs.

Sierra shattered that particular myth for me. A true predator at heart, she enjoys nothing better than lying on the ramp outside the back door and surveying her domain. The hills that surround our house are plentiful with lizards, mice, bunnies, and other assorted critters. Sierra is very patient and lightning fast, and more than once I've found her with a hapless lizard hanging out of her mouth. (I keep threatening to sign her up for Predators Anonymous, but so far my warnings haven't been heeded.) Suffice it to say that following me around the house is pretty boring compared to watching over her Wild Kingdom, and she'd prefer to be outside; that is, as long as she knows I'm in the house. Once she hears the car pull away it's game over, and the stress of separation kicks in.

Sierra's not the only one. There are plenty of other dogs who, while they might not be strongly predatory, are just fine in or outside the house a long as they know someone is at home. So don't jump to conclusions. If your dog follows you around like drama follows Lindsay Lohan, it could be separation anxiety, but it's not necessarily the case. And if your dog doesn't shadow your every move, that doesn't mean separation issues can be ruled out, either.

2 LETTING YOUR DOG SLEEP IN YOUR BED WILL CAUSE SEPARATION ANXIETY. I can't tell you the number of times I've heard trainers advise owners not to allow their dogs to sleep with them, for fear the dog would become so bonded that being left alone would become unbearable. Nothing could be further from the truth. The above-referenced study also concluded that "activities such as allowing the dog on the owner's bed . . . were not associated with separation anxiety."

While it's true that sleeping in the owner's bed won't cause separation anxiety, if your dog already suffers from the issue, all of that nighttime closeness won't help. After all, the goal is for your dog to learn to feel relaxed when alone, and if he can't even be physically separated from you overnight, how can he remain calm by himself during the day when you're gone? Start by giving your dog an alternate sleeping space. Don't worry; it can be right by your bed at first. Place a dog bed next to yours and gently coax your dog back into his own bed each time he tries to climb up into yours; or, if necessary, use a short leash to tether him in place nearby. You might eventually choose to have him sleep farther away or outside the room altogether, but getting him out of your bed is a good start.

3 IF YOUR DOG HAS SEPARATION ANXIETY, HE WON'T EAT WHILE YOU'RE GONE. Think back to a situation where you were extremely worried or afraid. Chances are, a tasty pizza wasn't the first thing on your mind. For many stressed-out dogs, the same mechanism is at work. But chewing provides stress relief for dogs, and in many cases, despite their stress, dogs will excavate stuffed Kongs, gnaw on chew bones, or work at food-dispensing toys. If you stuff a Kong or other food dispenser for your dog, place the item within easy reach and lay out a short trail of super yummy treats leading to it. This trail o' treats is more likely to entice your dog to begin chewing than leaving the Kong lying there by itself.

Some dogs are too wound up to stay in one place to chew. For those dogs, a food dispenser that can be batted around, such as the Molecuball or Kong Wobbler, is a better choice. These products allow the dog to expend that anxious energy in a more active way, and by providing that focus, may even prevent destruction.

4 IF YOUR DOG DESTROYS THINGS WHILE YOU'RE AWAY, HE MUST HAVE SEPARATION ANXIETY. I once had an owner tell me that his dog was suffering from separation anxiety. When I asked how he knew, he said he'd discussed it with his veterinarian, who had put the dog on medication. I asked how the problem had been diagnosed. What were the symptoms? The dog, he informed me, had chewed a shoe while he was gone. I waited. And? Well...that was it. The dog had destroyed a shoe. The man had heard that dogs with separation anxiety chew things, had put two and two together, and had, with the veterinarian's assistance, come to this conclusion. While it's true that destructiveness is the number one symptom of separation anxiety, many dogs are destructive for other reasons, including boredom, under-stimulation, or not being completely trained.

In cases of true separation anxiety, destruction is often focused on the

Dogs who will eat, even in the throes of an anxiety attack, may benefit from the distraction of a food-filled toy. Freeze the food-filled Kongs for dogs who are accomplished at excavating them, to make them last even longer!

Destruction often occurs around the door where the owner has exited, or the window through which the dog can see the owners' departure.

owner's belongings, since the scent is comforting to the dog, or around doors and windows where the owner has left or can be seen leaving. Destruction of other items is possible, of course, but again, destructiveness in and of itself is not necessarily a sign of a separation issue. As with other clues, it must be factored in to the total case history.

5 GETTING ANOTHER DOG WILL SOLVE THE PROBLEM. Oh, if only this one was always true! Whether getting a second dog will alleviate the anxiety of the first depends largely on whether the original dog's distress stems from being separated from a particular person (what we typically think of as separation anxiety), or from simply not wanting to be left alone, which is more accurately called isolation distress. In the case of the latter, any warm body will do.

That's good news, as the problem might be solved by the presence of a different person, another dog, or, in some cases, even a cat. So for a dog with isolation distress, getting another dog certainly could help; but there is always the chance that it won't; and, in the worst-case scenario, you could end up with two dogs with separation issues!

Unless you were planning to add another dog to the family anyway, it's better to do a bit of experimenting first. Consider fostering a dog for a rescue organization or borrowing a friend's sturdy, non-anxious dog for a short time. That way, you'll find out whether your dog is more relaxed with a buddy while you're gone. (Just be careful to end the experiment if your dog makes the guest dog anxious.) Who knows, if it works out, you might even decide to adopt the foster dog permanently!

6 A DOG WITH SEPARATION ANXIETY SHOULD NEVER BE LEFT IN A CRATE WHEN ALONE. This one is another partial myth. There are dogs who, if left crated, will frantically try to escape, and may injure themselves in the process. Others will chew themselves to the point of self-mutilation. Clearly, for those dogs, crating is not a good option. But for a dog who is comfortable in her crate, who sleeps in it at night, and doesn't mind being contained there for brief periods during the day, the crate might just be a saving grace. Many dogs will settle down more quickly when crated, particularly if the crate lends a feeling of being safely enclosed. For that reason among others, I prefer the plastic snap-together type crates to the wire ones.

7 IF YOUR DOG HAS SEPARATION ANXIETY, IT'S BEST TO IGNORE HIM WHILE YOU'RE AT HOME. This one was probably an extrapolation of the traditional advice to ignore your dog for 10 minutes before leaving the house, and for 10 minutes after returning. The logic goes that the less difference in emotional peaks and valleys between when you're at home and when you're gone, the easier it will be for the dog. But I didn't get a dog to ignore him, and I bet you didn't either. Besides, imagine that your significant other suddenly began to ignore you. Wouldn't you wonder what you'd done wrong? Would you not become anxious and stressed even if you weren't to begin with? Dogs are masters of observation and believe me, if you suddenly start to ignore your dog, chances are you'll cause more anxiety, not less. It is true that you shouldn't make a huge fuss over your comings and goings, but keeping things on an even keel emotionally is the key.

TREAT THE INDIVIDUAL

If your dog has separation anxiety, keep these myths in mind. While some might hold true, others just might not. Closely observing your dog's behavior and evaluating it on an individual basis will allow your treatment plan to be that much more successful.

Nicole Wilde, CPDT-KA, is the author of nine books, lectures worldwide on canine behavior, is an "Ask the Expert" columnist for Modern Dog *magazine, and co-stars in the DVD "Train Your Dog: The Positive Gentle Method." Nicole runs Gentle Guidance Dog Training in southern California, and donates her time photographing rescue dogs to improve their chances of adoption. To find Nicole's books, seminar DVDs, "Wilde About Dogs" blog, and contact info, see page 24.*

RESOURCES

Flannigan G. and Dodman N.:
Risk factors and behaviors associated with separation anxiety in dogs,
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RESOURCES

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

- **Pat Miller,** CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, 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**

- **Nicole Wilde,** CPDT-KA, Gentle Guidance Dog Training, Santa Clarita, CA. In-home training for everything from puppy issues to aggression and everything in between. Positive, gentle methods only. **gentleguidance4dogs.com** You can also connect with Nicole on Facebook at NicoleWilde, Author and on Twitter @NicoleWilde

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**

- Nicole Wilde, CPDT-KA, is author of nine books including ***Help for Your Fearful Dog; Don't Leave Me!: Step by Step Help for Your Dog's Separation Anxiety;*** and ***So You Want to Be a Dog Trainer.*** You can find all her books, seminar DVDs, "Train Your Dog: The Positive, Gentle Method" DVD, "The Dog Trainer's Business Kit CD-ROM, seminar schedule, and Wilde About Dogs blog at **nicolewilde.com**

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- **NEEDLE ME**
  The many uses for veterinary acupuncture.

- **FROZEN IN PLACE**
  A review of frozen raw diets.

- **OUR FAVORITE REMEDIES, UPDATED**
  The latest on the use of coconut oil, Seacure, Pellitol, green food supplements and more.