

The Whole Dog Journal™



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A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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FEATURES

3 New Hope for Parvo Puppies

Finally, owners have a third option to spending a small fortune to save their parvovirus-infected pups or euthanizing them.

5 Needle Your Dog

Once considered an "alternative" medicine, veterinary acupuncture reveals its strengths as a "complementary" healing modality.

10 Proper Puppy Prep

All the things that good breeders do to optimize their puppies' brains and future behavior.

14 Even More Favorites

A super-effective remedy for infected (or just itchy) ears; an aromatherapeutic spray for skin and coat problems; and coconut oil, for treating just about everything.

20 Have Household Help?

Yes! You can train your dog to help you with chores around the house.



Pinpoint Problems
Canine acupuncture
page 5

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PHOTO BY JILL SIMMONS

Puppy Head Start
page 10

Best Remedies
page 14



Get to Work!
Teaching dog chores
page 20

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Editor's Note
- 24 Product and Expert Resources



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Moderation

Don't lose sight of the forest for the trees.

BY NANCY KERNS

I recently read about an owner whose middle-aged dog had never been vaccinated, given antibiotics or heartworm preventatives, received a flea or tick treatment, neutered, or microchipped. He eats a species-appropriate diet (based on raw meat and bones, prey-model). He's pure! So pure, in fact, that he allegedly has never received chlorinated or fluoridated water. His owner is apparently under the impression these things will help the dog live forever.

Oh, where to start?

By all accounts, he's a very nice dog, and that's important, because if he bites anyone in an incident that gets reported, he's dead. There isn't a city or county animal control official anywhere who would fool around with quarantining a completely unvaccinated dog with a bite record. More likely, the dog would be seized by law enforcement, euthanized, and his brain sent for rabies testing. (Dogs with records of past rabies vaccinations, even outdated ones, would most likely be revaccinated and quarantined.)

If he's been taken out in the world much, he has probably been exposed to kennel cough, and built up some immunity. Not a big deal if he gets kennel cough at his age. But it could be a very big deal if he happens to visit a park or neighborhood where some puppy with parvovirus or distemper had diarrhea on the sidewalk . . .

And what about injuries? I've had dogs cut their feet on glass, get punctured by sticks running in the woods, torn by discarded barbed wire – and of course, attacked by other dogs and punctured, necessitating drains and antibiotics. While herbal rinses and natural antibacterial dressings (like coconut oil, of which I'm a very big fan) are terrific, if an infection sets in, antibiotics are life-savers. Of course, they are over-prescribed sometimes. But I can't imagine lumping them in with poisons.

And speaking of poisons, have I used, and will I use again, toxic topical flea- and tick-control products? Yes. Ticks are a *big deal* where I live, and I've already treated Otto

once (with some of those horrid antibiotics) for a tick-borne disease (anaplasmosis). I comb Otto carefully after every walk in the woods, but even so, some of those damn ticks evade my efforts at detection and attach themselves. Generally, I find and remove them before they have been there long enough to transmit the pathogenic organisms that can cause Lyme, Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever, anaplasmosis, erlichiosis, and more – but obviously, not every time, given that Otto's already been infected at least once.

And apparently the dog's never been anywhere heartworm is an issue? In my county, not giving heartworm preventatives in mosquito season dooms a dog to a short life and a very unpleasant end, coughing, gagging, and out-of-breath. I know that some people feel they can build their dogs' immune systems to the point that the dogs can destroy any developing heartworm larvae . . . but I've yet to see an arthritic, grey-muzzled fox or coyote on a similar raw diet and heartworm preventative-free protocol.

On the other hand, maybe this dog lives indoors! And never, ever gets exposed to anything that might *possibly* be injurious. But if that's the case, I feel sorry for him.

Folks, this is going *too far*. I strongly advocate for home-prepared, biologically appropriate raw diets; I even think filtered water is a great idea for particularly vulnerable dogs. I think using vaccines, flea and tick pesticides, heartworm preventatives, antibiotics, etc. in a very limited way is smart. But going without? Extremist and irresponsible.

NK

HOPE FOR PARVO PUPPIES

New home treatment protocol should drastically reduce the incidence of “economic euthanasia” for infected pups.

When experienced breeder Barbara Sorg noticed that Winks, one of her five 8-week-old puppies, was listless, not eating, and by nightfall was suffering from diarrhea, she hustled him off to her long-time veterinarian the next morning, a Tuesday. The vet suspected that Winks had not tolerated the dewormer he’d been given Sunday. Although he had never left her property and had no suspected exposure, Sorg asked that he be tested for deadly parvovirus; her veterinarian discounted the possibility.

Wednesday he was doing much worse.

By Thursday, Winks had lost a third of his body weight along with his will to live. The SNAP test her vet finally administered confirmed that he was a victim of parvovirus. Sorg made the heartbreaking decision to euthanize him. “He was just *done*,” she says.

By Friday morning, all his surviving siblings had begun to vomit; fecal testing confirmed that they were also infected. What was a dog owner of ordinary means to do?

THE SCOURGE OF ECONOMIC EUTHANASIA

When parvovirus first appeared in dogs the late 1970s, the new disease killed nearly every puppy and dog it infected. While researchers quickly got to work developing effective vaccines, veterinarians began evolving the supportive treatment protocols that would enable the majority of patients that were diagnosed and treated promptly to fight the viral infection, survive, and recover.

The standard of supportive care for “parvo puppies” is hospitalization with 24-hour veterinary care that includes intravenously administered fluids, antibiotics, anti-nausea medication, and electrolytes. The dogs who respond to treatment generally recover well enough to go home for continued nursing in five to seven days. Animals diagnosed, hospitalized, and treated before they are critically dehydrated and shocky stand an 80 to 90 percent chance of survival. That’s the good news from 30-plus years of veterinary experience.

The bad news: the cost of treating a single puppy or dog for parvovirus generally starts at around \$1,200 in less expensive veterinary markets, and can rise to more than \$5,000.

Owners of limited means with brand-new and very sick puppies, shoestring rescue groups, or breeders with four (or eight or twelve) vomiting pups and two kids in college are

often offered two choices by veterinarians: A bill they cannot possibly pay, or “economic euthanasia.” Many find their hands forced to the latter option. The death rate from parvovirus among infected puppies and dogs therefore remains very high, even though “gold standard” supportive treatment is very effective at helping patients whose owners can afford it to survive.

AN EFFECTIVE ALTERNATIVE?

A new treatment protocol that has been tested at Colorado State University is meant to correct that tragedy. Researchers at the CSU College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences Veterinary Teaching Hospital conducted a clinical study of an outpatient parvovirus treatment protocol that is aimed at permitting owners – including shelters and rescues – to treat their sick dogs at home, under veterinary monitoring and supervision. The study was funded by Pfizer Animal Health, which produced the antibiotic and anti-nausea drugs that were tested. (Pfizer recently spun off its animal health division and renamed it Zoetis.)

The protocol was tested on dogs and puppies whose owners were unable to afford “gold standard” hospital care at private practices in Colorado, and were facing the prospect of economic euthanasia. The 40 dogs were randomized into a control group that received the standard in-patient treatment, and a study group that were cared for by veterinary students in a simulation of outpatient supportive care.

After initial stabilization on admission, the 20 dogs in the outpatient study group received a single subcutaneous injection of the long-acting antibiotic Convenia (cefovecin), a daily subcutaneous injection of the anti-nausea drug Cerenia (maripitant), and subcutaneous hydration of a balanced electrolyte fluid solution three times a day. Dogs were syringe-fed as soon as they could keep food down, and given glucose syrup by mouth. Subcutaneous injections and subcutaneous fluid replacement are not difficult procedures,



The total cost of saving the lives of these four puppies, who were infected with parvovirus, with intensive care in a veterinary hospital was more than \$16,000. Owners who can't pay for this “gold standard” treatment now have an option other than euthanasia.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BARBARA SORG

and most owners who are willing can learn to administer them effectively.

The results were dramatic. Ninety percent of the dogs in the control group survived with “gold standard” care administered at a veterinary teaching hospital, which is in line with usual expectations. The exciting news: 80 percent of the dogs in the study group survived, thanks to the new protocol, which can be administered by a non-veterinarian who is available for around-the-clock nursing care and willing to give injections. (One puppy worsened under the study protocol and was moved to the control group, where he received the conventional intensive care treatment and recovered.) Eighty percent is not as good as the hospital protocol’s 90 percent, but significantly better than the 10 percent survival rate of untreated animals, and the 0 percent survival rate of dogs who are euthanized due to lack of funds for treatment.

The cost of the drugs and fluids used in the outpatient study group is about \$200 per animal, according to Lauren Sullivan, DVM, DACVECC, the principle investigator for the parvo study. However, these are not the only treatment costs that a pet owner will incur; Dr. Sullivan stresses that all the dogs in the study were stabilized with intravenous fluids and had their electrolytes evaluated before being placed in the study or control group. Owners will have to pay for a SNAP test to diagnose the disease, daily monitoring, and further testing to determine when the dog has ceased to be infectious after recovery. These costs will vary depending on the location and type of veterinary practice, but at the CSU hospital, Dr. Sullivan estimates that the total cost of treatment would be about \$400. Contrast that with \$2,000 to as much as \$5,000 for the gold standard hospital treatment that she says would be her choice if her own puppy contracted parvo tomorrow.

Dr. Sullivan also stresses that the outpatient protocol may not be effective for the most vulnerable patients – especially young puppies of small breeds, who are less able to maintain cardiac stability and blood sugar levels, and require aggressive monitoring of both variables.

THE COST OF NO OPTIONS

Barbara Sorg’s four surviving puppies are fortunate little tykes. Yes, all four got treatment, and all four recovered.

While Sorg confronted the reality that she could not front the cash to treat Winks’ siblings, and prepared for a gut-kick of a decision, help came from unexpected quarters.

The expectant owners of one pup told her to start treating him – they would pay what it took to save the pup that they had never met. A family member offered her a loan, to be repaid when she could. Her friends in the agility community began an online fundraiser that was publicized on social media, and taken up by both agility competitors and members of her breed community. Not only friends and colleagues, but also strangers contributed toward the puppies’ care.

Barbara Sorg may not have had the cash up-front to save her puppies, but as a member of caring dog-sports and breed communities, she had unexpected resources – resources not available to a less-connected pet owner, or even many non-profits. Sorg calculates that the cost to diagnose and treat all the pups in-hospital (a different clinic than the one that missed the diagnosis) has topped \$16,000 – including the charges for Winks, the one who didn’t make it.

That new veterinarian told her that 90 percent of the clients whose dogs receive a parvovirus diagnosis at that clinic end up euthanizing their pets.

WHAT’S NEXT?

The CSU study has been presented to the veterinary community and its protocol is online for any interested veterinarian to use with clients who cannot afford hospitalization, but the study has not yet undergone peer-review and journal publication.

It’s important to note that this initial study does not address one of the most important factors in any medical treatment – compliance. The “outpatient” protocol was administered by veterinary students in a supervised, clinical setting. Dr. Sullivan would like to see larger studies that examine the effectiveness of the protocol when owners administer it in their homes.

Pet owners, breeders, and shelter and rescue personnel will vary in their discipline and compliance, and the variation in their diligence will affect the outcome of treatment. Dogs treated with the outpatient protocol still require 24/7 nursing care. Owners who must work or attend to other commitments will be unable to provide this level of attention. Shelters will need to train staff or volunteers and set up shifts in order to ensure continuous care and maintain infection control.

Dr. Sullivan says that she has seen a lot of interest in the outpatient protocol from veterinarians serving impoverished communities, where a combination of chronic low vaccination rates and cash-poor owners means that parvo death rates are persistently high. Veterinarians on reservations and who do international work, who serve poor urban and rural communities, or who just have a middle-class client who cannot front the cost of a new Lexus to save a litter of 10 puppies, are “in the trenches” and want to be able to offer an effective alternative to nothing to their clients who love their dogs. – Heather Houlahan

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- ❖ **The Colorado State protocol** can be found here: csu-cvmb.colostate.edu/documents/parvo-outpatient-protocol-faq-companion-animal-studies.pdf

Heather Houlahan lives on a small farm near Pittsburgh, where she has recently learned that one of the things one should not do while raising her SAR partner’s litter of beloved puppies is research and write about parvovirus.



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🐾 MEDICINE 🐾

Needle Your Dog

Once considered “alternative” medicine, veterinary acupuncture reveals its strengths as a “complementary” healing modality.

BY DIANA R. LAVERDURE

Cornelia Guest doesn't have a veterinary degree, but she does have decades of experience caring for animals. The renowned New York socialite, author, philanthropist, and businesswoman, the creative force behind a very successful line of designer vegan handbags, grew up riding horses and has always had a number of canine companions (she currently has nine!).

Guest has always had a passion for both animals and natural healthcare. She chooses natural healing modalities over Western pharmaceutical intervention whenever possible – for herself *and* her dogs. Guest entrusts the care of her nine dogs to Babette Gladstein, VMD, owner of Animalacupuncture.net in

New York, New York. Dr. Gladstein says she has treated Guest's dogs for a variety of health conditions, including growing pains in her young Newfoundland, Cash; bladder stones in her German Shepherd Dog, Belinda; and arthritis in her 18-year-old West Highland Terrier, Arthur.

Madeline Yamate, DVM, uses traditional “dry needle” acupuncture, electroacupuncture, aquapuncture, and other Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) modalities in her practice, the Center for Integrative Animal Medicine, in Davis, California.

“I've tried many different veterinary modalities for my dogs, and acupuncture has been by far the most effective,” Guest says. “I've never seen the magic that happens with Chinese medicine – especially acupuncture – occur with conventional veterinary care.”

Guest is not alone in her endorsement of this ancient healing practice. The American Veterinary Medical Association's (AVMA) House of Delegates approved veterinary acupuncture as an alternative and complementary modality in 1996, stating that it is an “integral part of veterinary medicine.” Its popularity among both pet owners and veterinarians has steadily increased.

“The increased demand for veterinary acupuncture mirrors its rise in popularity among humans,” says Deborah Prevratil, executive director of the International Veterinary Acupuncture Society (IVAS), which offers advanced acupuncture certification for veterinarians. IVAS has trained more than 6,000 veterinarians worldwide in animal acupuncture since



PHOTO BY AND COURTESY OF JILL QUAN, CIAMVET.COM

Acupuncture needles come in varying thicknesses, though most are much slimmer than needles used for “shots.” They are usually made of stainless steel, and are sterile (made for a single use). Here, Dr. Yamate uses a plastic guide tube to keep the needle from bending while it is inserted with the tap of a finger.

its inception in 1974, and Prevratil says its membership has grown steadily in the past decade, with about 1,800 veterinary members today.

Simon Flynn, executive director of the American Academy of Veterinary Acupuncture (AAVA), IVAS’s United States affiliate, also reports a growth in membership within the past decade. Flynn says that in 2012, the AAVA’s membership consisted of approximately 940 veterinary acupuncturists, compared with about 680 members in 2002. “Many people view their pets as part of the family and want them to derive the same benefits from acupuncture that they’re experiencing with their own health, which is helping to drive this growth,” Flynn says.

Brian Husbands, DVM, a board certified veterinary oncologist (DACVIM) and certified veterinary acupuncturist (CVA) with BluePearl Veterinary Partners in Minneapolis, Minnesota, has seen similar rates of growth in his practice. “As a scientist, I did a lot of research before deciding to become certified in veterinary acupuncture,” Dr. Husbands says. “I’m glad I did, because my patients are benefitting tremendously.”

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture is one of the oldest recorded forms of healing. “Acupuncture” literally means to “puncture with a needle.” Acupuncturists insert very fine, solid needles made of stainless steel (some may be gold plated, or have handles that are wrapped with copper wire) into the skin at specific points on the body, to stimulate and create a physiological change.

In traditional acupuncture, only needles are used to stimulate the acupuncture points. Today, many practitioners also use electroacupuncture, wherein needles are inserted in the patient’s body in the usual way, and then attached by light wires to a machine that generates tiny electrical pulses. The frequency and intensity of the impulse delivered is adjusted depending on the condition being treated. Among the advantages of electroacupuncture are increased effectiveness of treatment and potentially fewer treatments required. Obviously, this is a modern innovation!

Acupuncture was developed thousands of years ago in China as a component of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), which also involves natural healing practices such as herbal therapies and nutritional (food) therapy. The *Nei Jing*, the seminal Chinese textbook on TCM, which contains 81 chapters on acupuncture, was compiled between about 305 and 204 BC, but it wasn’t until more than 2,000 years later that acupuncture made its way West.

Acupuncture gained a serious boost of credibility in the U.S. when it became the topic of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) Consensus Development Program. Initiated in 1977, the goal of the Consensus Development Program is “to consolidate, solidify, and broadly disseminate strong evidence-based recommendations for provider practice.” Consensus Development Conferences are developed when there is a strong body of evidence about the topic, but the information has not been translated into widespread clinical practice.

In November 1997, the 12-member

review panel and 25 additional experts from a number of medical fields, presented scientific data on acupuncture’s efficacy to a conference audience of 1,200. According to the panel:

“Findings from basic research have begun to elucidate the mechanisms of action of acupuncture, including the release of opioids and other peptides in the central nervous system and the periphery and changes in neuroendocrine function. Although much needs to be accomplished, the emergence of plausible mechanisms for the therapeutic effects of acupuncture is encouraging.”

Based on its findings, the panel concluded that:

“There is sufficient evidence of acupuncture’s value to expand its use into conventional medicine and to encourage further studies of its physiology and clinical value.”

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Acupuncture’s mode of action differs depending on whether you’re speaking with a practitioner trained in traditional Chinese medicine or a Western allopathic physician. The results, however, are the same.

According to the principles of TCM, all living beings are imbued with a vital universal energy, called “chi” (sometimes spelled “qi” but in any event pronounced “chee”). *Chi* flows in a precise manner along a network of channels, or meridians, that run deep within the body and connect to the major organs and systems. Meridians are mapped, however they do not exist in the physical sense, like the circulatory or nervous systems. Meridians are an invisible, energetic network that transports *chi* to every part of the body.

Dogs have 12 regular meridians, which run parallel in pairs along op-

posite sides of the body and connect to specific organs:

- Lung
- Large Intestine
- Stomach
- Spleen
- Heart
- Small Intestine
- Bladder
- Kidney
- Pericardium
- Triple Heater/San Jiao
- Gall Bladder
- Liver

They also have two special meridians, the Conception Vessel and the Governing Vessel, which are unpaired single meridians that do not connect to specific organs.

The Conception Vessel receives and regulates all the *chi* of the *yin* (soft, relaxed, feminine) energy meridians. It begins internally, with its first exterior point beneath the dog's anus, and runs along the ventral midline of the dog's body (closest to the abdomen), ending at a point on the lower lip. This vessel is important to all reproductive functions.

The Governing Vessel also begins near the base of the tail and runs the length of the dog's body along the dorsal midline (closest to the back), ending at a point between the upper lip and gums. The Governing Vessel receives and regulates the *chi* of the *yang* (fiery, solid, masculine) meridians.

Each point on each meridian corresponds to a specific function. Points are labeled according to a numerical system in order to identify their exact location. GV 14, for example, represents the fourteenth point along the Governing Vessel, while LI 7 represents

the seventh point on the Large Intestine. "This numerical shorthand enables practitioners to quickly and easily identify the points they have treated," says Sandi Leonard, DVM, owner of Veterinary Alternatives in Kansas City, Missouri.

Although the regular meridians share names associated with Western-based organs, their function does not necessarily coincide with, and is not limited to, that organ. The spleen, for example, serves as an immune organ in Western medicine, but in acupuncture it is associated with transporting matter (such as food and drink) through the body, transforming it into *chi*, and moving that *chi* around the body as needed. "The connection between meridians and anatomical systems is complex, and acupuncture specialists trained in TCM spend many hours learning about these relationships," Dr. Husbands says.

As *chi* flows along the meridians, its energy nourishes every cell in the body. "To maintain optimum health, *chi* must be able to flow freely. When *chi* becomes unbalanced or blocked, illness results," Dr. Leonard says.

Acupuncture points are specific spots where the meridians surface just under the skin. By inserting needles into these points, practitioners can manipulate *chi* and unblock or rebalance it, stimulating the body to heal itself.

WESTERN INTERPRETATION

While Western medicine does not acknowledge the presence of *chi* or meridians, numerous scientific studies verify acupuncture's benefits, including:

- Reducing inflammation. "Acupunc-

ture increases blood flow, which stimulates blood cells that fight inflammation," says Dr. Leonard.

- Creating a sense of well being by increasing circulating levels of serotonin and endorphins, neurotransmitters responsible for altering mood and brain chemistry. "These 'feel-good' chemicals are responsible for a wide range of positive emotions, including relaxation, happiness and even euphoria, while low levels are associated with sadness and depression," Dr. Gladstein says.
- Reducing pain. The endorphins and serotonin produced during acupuncture also inhibit pain responses in the brain, while increased blood flow releases nitric oxide (NO), a chemical compound recognized for its analgesic (pain-relieving) and anti-inflammatory properties.
- Stimulating and enhancing the immune system, with measurable effects, such as improvements in leukocyte counts, and enhancement of leukocyte phagocytosis.
- Alleviating nausea. "Acupuncture supplies energy to nerves that affect the gastrointestinal tract, which in turn promotes good GI function," says Dr. Husbands.

Veins, arteries, and nerves are bundled together throughout the body, explains Dr. Gladstein. When you excite specific acupuncture points with needling, you accelerate their electrical conductivity, which increases blood flow and releases chemicals that promote healing.

BEST APPLICATIONS FOR ACUPUNCTURE

There are acupuncture points to treat just about any condition, from reviving a dog in shock to stimulating cranial nerves that enhance appetite.

Like most patients, Wyatt finds his acupuncture session extremely relaxing. Many dogs fall fast asleep during their treatments, even if they come into the clinic excited or anxious. Owners who are nervous about the needles also quickly learn that their dogs scarcely seem to notice their insertion.

PHOTO BY AND COURTESY OF JILL QUAN, CIAMVET.COM



Acupuncture is most commonly used to treat:

- Muscle strains, sprains, ligament/tendon inflammation/tears
- Behavioral disorders
- Allergies
- Dry eye
- Gastrointestinal issues such as IBD, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Muskuloskeletal diseases such as arthritis, back problems, and hip dysplasia
- Nausea related to chemotherapy
- Neurologic conditions
- Reproductive issues
- Respiratory conditions
- Skin issues
- Stress
- Urinary conditions

In his oncology practice, Dr. Husbands uses acupuncture to improve the quality of life of patients undergoing chemotherapy. “Acupuncture is extremely effective at reducing nausea and vomiting related to chemotherapy, and to stimulate the appetite. So, while it may not cure the cancer, it can certainly make the dog’s life a lot more comfortable.”

Acupuncture can sometimes work in cases where Western medicine has thrown in the towel.

In 2006, Dr. Leonard used acupuncture to dramatically alter the fate of a German Shepherd Dog named Piper. At

just 2½ years old, Piper was an agility and herding dog with a bright competitive future ahead of her. But then she began having grand mal seizures. “It was very frightening and traumatic in the beginning. There was no history of seizures in her blood line or rhyme or reason for it,” says Steve Grace, Piper’s owner. He and his wife took Piper to conventional veterinarians, who diagnosed her with epilepsy.

The veterinarians prescribed phenobarbital and potassium bromide, but even on the medications, Piper continued to suffer from violent cluster seizures about every 10 days. “A veterinary neurologist told us that if we got the seizures down to three weeks apart, it would be a miracle,” Grace says. “Dr. Leonard was treating our dog Keiko for arthritis at the time, so we decided to have her try acupuncture on Piper. It was so bad that we were considering putting Piper down, so we figured we had nothing to lose.”

Dr. Leonard’s initial protocol began with twice-weekly treatments. Within a few weeks, Grace says the severity of Piper’s seizures decreased from a 9.5 to a 4 or 5 on a scale of 10, and the frequency reduced to once per month.

After a year and a half, Piper’s seizures decreased to a severity of about 3 and occurred approximately once every 45 days. The treatments were scaled back to every two weeks, and Piper remained on her medication. “The longer Piper was treated, the less intense the seizures became and the more time that passed in between,” Grace says. After a couple of years of acupuncture, Piper’s seizures decreased to once every 6 months, then once per year.

Piper recently passed away from cancer at age 11. She had not suffered from a seizure in more than two years.

IS ACUPUNCTURE RIGHT FOR YOUR DOG?

Consult with a veterinary acupuncturist to determine if treatment is right for your dog, advises Dr. Gladstein. “Acupuncture is not a ‘one-size-fits-all’ modality. It is completely unique to the

individual. Only after a thorough examination by a trained veterinarian can you determine if the treatment plan, cost and expected results are right for you and your dog.”

An immediate call might be warranted if your dog:

- Battles emotional issues such as fear or anxiety
- Experiences nausea related to chemotherapy
- Has a sudden-onset problem such as a muscle injury or acute nausea
- Needs a general boost to his immune system
- Suffers from side effects of a chronic illness, such as vomiting or diarrhea
- Takes long-term medications to treat inflammatory conditions such as chronic arthritis or gastrointestinal issues. “Acupuncture can help minimize or in some cases eliminate the need for prescription drugs and greatly improve the quality of life for these dogs,” says Dr. Leonard.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

When *shouldn't* a dog receive acupuncture? While acupuncture is considered one of the safest healing modalities for people and animals, there are a few instances in which it should be avoided or used with extreme caution:

- Bleeding disorders. “Acupuncture needles are inserted only superficially, however there still is a chance of bleeding or bruising, which is accentuated in dogs with bleeding disorders,” advises Dr. Leonard.
- Cancerous tumors. Since acupuncture improves blood flow, needling through or around a tumor could provide it with energy it needs to grow. “You can still do acupuncture on the patient as long as you stay far from the tumor,” says Dr. Husbands.
- Pregnant animals. Caution should be used to avoid stimulating premature labor.
- Skin infections. Needling an infected area could spread the infection.



Dr. Sandi Leonard performs acupuncture on Piper, a German Shepherd Dog who developed idiopathic epilepsy. Medication reduced the frequency of her seizures, but once regular acupuncture sessions were added to her treatment protocol, the seizures reduced dramatically in severity and even more in frequency.

SELECTING A PRACTITIONER

Deborah Prevratil of IVAS advises selecting a practitioner who has been certified by, or at least completed training through, one of the three main certifying organizations: the Chi Institute, IVAS, or the Medical Acupuncture for Veterinarians (MAV) program offered by the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association (see “Resources,” right).

Veterinarians trained by IVAS undergo 160 or more hours of acupuncture study and must pass written and practical exams, Prevratil says. “This training ensures the practitioner possesses a sound understanding of acupuncture principles, acupuncture points, and diagnostic techniques.”

Dr. Husbands points out that when practiced by a trained veterinary acupuncturist, the complication rate is very low, about 0.5 percent.

“Several papers in human medicine indicate that the only complications associated with acupuncture arise from unskilled practitioners,” he says. “This is the same with veterinary medicine, which is why it’s so important to choose someone who has taken the time to obtain specialized training.” He warns against allowing any non-veterinarian to practice acupuncture on an animal, regardless of state laws. “Even when practicing complementary medicine, you need to have a deep understanding of animal physiology so you can diagnose and treat the pet holistically.”

WHAT CAN YOU EXPECT?

Most dogs tolerate acupuncture well. “These are very tiny needles, so most of the time the dog doesn’t even notice when they’re inserted,” Dr. Leonard says. Dogs often relax and might even fall asleep during the treatment; however, some dogs will fidget, especially during the initial visit when they are unsure of what’s happening.

Veterinarians typically insert multiple needles into various acupuncture points. The number of needles, specific points treated, and duration of the treatment depend upon the individual dog and the condition being treated. Husbands says his average patient receives between 8 and 20 needles per visit, which remain in between 5 and 20 minutes.

Since relaxation is essential, the veterinary clinic may provide a special acupuncture room designed to promote

RESOURCES

- ❖ **CHI INSTITUTE** Reddick, FL (800) 891-1986; tcvm.com
- ❖ **INTERNATIONAL VETERINARY ACUPUNCTURE SOCIETY** Fort Collins, CO. (970) 266-0666; ivas.org
- ❖ **MEDICAL ACUPUNCTURE FOR VETERINARIANS** Fort Collins, CO. Program administered by the Colorado Veterinary Medical Association. (303) 318-0447; colovma.com
- ❖ **BABETTE GLADSTEIN, VMD** New York, NY. (877) 279-2591, animalacupuncture.net
- ❖ **BRIAN HUSBANDS, DVM, DACVIM (ONCOLOGY), CVA** BluePearl Veterinary Partners, Eden Prairie and Blaine, MN (952) 942-8272 and (763) 754-5000 minnesota.bluepearlvet.com/
- ❖ **SANDI LEONARD, DVM** Veterinary Alternatives, Kansas City, MO. (913) 706-0411; vetalternatives.com
- ❖ **MADLINE YAMATE, DVM, CVA, CVCH, CVFT, CVTP, MBA** Center for Integrative Animal Medicine, Davis, CA. (530) 405-4000; ciamvet.com (Please see page 24 for more information)

a sense of calm – for both the animal and owner. BluePearl’s acupuncture treatment room includes carpeting, a couch, and cocktail lights that dim to create a soothing glow. Owners remain with their dog during treatment and are instructed to keep their dog sitting or lying. “We give them a bell to ring in case they need assistance,” Husbands says. “So far, no one has rung the bell.”

Other veterinary acupuncturists, such as Drs. Gladstein and Leonard, create the ultimate relaxation experience with in-home visits.

The most common side effect of acupuncture is relaxation. Some dogs experience temporary minor soreness from the needles, which Dr. Gladstein says subsides quickly. Risk of infection is extremely low, since sterile disposable needles are used.

Animals with acute issues, such as an injury or sudden nausea, typically require fewer treatments than those with chronic conditions. “Dogs who have rather sudden onset of a problem tend to respond really quickly and readily to acupuncture,” says Dr. Husbands. “Patients with problems that have been going on weeks to months will still benefit, but it might take longer.”

Treatment plans vary depending upon the individual dog and the condition being treated. Expect to begin with

weekly or bi-weekly treatments that will taper down to a less frequent maintenance level as the dog improves. Older animals typically require more frequent treatments because their bodies break down endorphins – essential in fighting pain – more quickly than younger dogs.

Conventional medicine often condemns acupuncture as providing little more than a placebo effect, but Leonard points out that such criticism does not apply with animals, since animals don’t “know” they are supposed to feel better. “My first acupuncture patient was a 200-pound Mastiff who couldn’t walk due to a lame leg,” she says. “After about three months of treatment she was effortlessly walking up stairs, and you couldn’t tell which was the bad leg. This dog certainly didn’t ‘think’ herself better.”

Dr. Gladstein agrees. “If you understand neurology and how the various aspects of the body interrelate and ‘communicate,’ acupuncture makes perfect sense. Even thousands of years ago, the Chinese had it together.” 🐾

Diana R. Laverdure is author of The Canine Thyroid Epidemic (2011, co-authored with W. Jean Dodds, DVM). She and Dr. Dodds are currently finishing their second book, on canine nutrigenomics. Diana lives in south Florida with her 12-year-old rescued Belgian Shepherd-mix, Chase.

Proper Puppy Prep

The science and art of optimizing baby canine brains.

BY DENISE FLAIM

Cute is not the first word you reach for when describing newborn puppies. Born unable to hear or see, with smushed-in faces and twitchy little bodies, they look for all the world like diminutive aliens. Detached and distant visitors from another planet, they are in their own orbit, seeking only warmth, milk, and the rough caress of their mother's tongue. Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth.

From the time they are born, puppies are gathering, processing, and synthesizing huge amounts of information from the world around them. And although it is pretty well accepted that puppies need intense socialization when they leave their human caretakers for their forever homes, relatively little is said about the importance of thoughtful, consistent exposure to new stimuli in their first eight weeks of life.

Some forward-thinking breeders, however, have concluded that while temperament is certainly hereditary, early experience can dramatically modify brain development, stress tolerance, stability, and reactivity. Even the fundamentals of potty training, attentiveness to a handler, and a recall can be imprinted at what some might consider an absurdly young age.

Longtime judge, breeder, and lecturer Pat Hastings of Aloha, Oregon, author of *Another Piece of the Puzzle: Puppy Development* (Dogfolk Enterprises, 2004), has seen firsthand the power that environment can exert over genetics.

"I believe very strongly that you are born with your temperament, but you can modify behavior," she says. "I really

believe that with puppies, nurture is much more important than nature. I just see so much of it."

Hastings is sought after for her puppy evaluations, in which she assesses whole litters of eight-week-olds, not just for conformation (physical structure) but also temperament. A case in point is a litter of Parson Russell Terriers she recently evaluated for a breeder who spends a great deal of effort interacting with and socializing her puppies.

In addition to her eight puppies, the breeder also brought one along that was three days older and had all the genetic background to be identical to her other puppies: The breeder had bred the puppy's mother, and the sire was all her pedigree, too. But the puppy had been

whelped and reared by someone else, and hadn't been exposed to the same handling or socialization that her well-adjusted puppies had. "You would think it was a different breed," Hastings says.

While reputable breeders breed with a specific goal in mind – their next great show dog or brood bitch, that future master hunter or agility star – an overarching priority should be producing stable, tractable temperaments, regardless of a puppy's final destination.

"It's very important to end up with really good pets," Hastings says.

To that end, here are some of the techniques progressive breeders use to help maximize the neurological and behavioral development of their little explorers in fur suits. They share this common philosophy: Providing safe and fun experiences for puppies – to expand their horizons, stretch their bodies and minds, and learn that novelty brings good things – is the best investment breeders can make in their pups' first eight weeks.

NEVER TOO EARLY

Many breeders enthusiastically recommend a program of early neurological stimulation based on the "Bio Sensor" or "Super Dog" program developed by the United States military in the 1970s. (There are differing opinions about the success of the military program, and even who came up with the guidelines, but nonetheless, many breeders swear by them.) Daily from the ages of 3 to 16 days, puppies are exposed to these five exercises for three to five seconds each. All the exercises are

This litter of Weimaraner puppies was moved into this large pen full of stimulating toys and other objects at 26 days old. Photo by Linda Hartheimer, Greyhart Weimaraners, Saddle River, New Jersey.



Pups are first introduced to a challenge like a “bottle pool” in pairs, with just a few bottles and lots of treats. As they grow in confidence, more pups and more bottle “obstacles” are added.

intended to safely and briefly expose the puppy to a period of physical stress from which he can easily recover.

- Holding the puppy in one hand, the handler gently tickles between the pup’s toes with a cotton-tipped swab.
- Grasping the puppy with both hands, the handler holds the puppy perpendicular to the ground (that is, with his head held upward, directly above his tail).
- Again holding the puppy with both hands, the handler holds the puppy upside down, with his head pointing toward the ground.
- The handler holds the puppy on his back in the palm of both hands, so he is permitted to sleep.
- Finally, the handler puts the puppy, feet down, on a damp towel that has been refrigerated for at least five minutes, but does not restrain the puppy from moving.

Breeders who do this early neurological stimulation say their puppies are better adjusted, with greater stress tolerance and reduced frustration levels when confronted with obstacles.

“I have seen unbelievable results with it,” Hastings adds. “I probably know 40 breeders who have done it to half their litter to see what the difference was – and the difference was mind-boggling.”

Hastings points to her own breed, the Doberman Pinscher, as an example. “Dobes are working dogs, but they don’t work in bad weather – they don’t do cold or rain,” she laughs. “But I have never seen a Dobe puppy whose breeder did early stimulation that had any issue with weather.”

Hastings stresses, however, that breeders should not go overboard. “Too much stress can have a negative effect,” she warns. If breeders embark on early neurological stimulation, it should be done only once a day, and no longer than the three to five seconds recommended.



PHOTO BY LINDA HARTHEIMER, GREYHART WEIMARANERS

THAT’S YOUR PROBLEM

Lise Pratt of Huntington Station, New York – a longtime agility instructor, Golden Retriever breeder, and co-founder of Avidog, a new company that offers puppy coaching, among other services – advocates allowing puppies to solve their own problems, even as early as a few days old. But that can feel counterintuitive to many breeders, whose first instinct is to help newborns get to the warmth and food they need as quickly as possible.

While intervention is certainly critical for puppies who are not thriving, Pratt suggests that healthy, vigorous puppies should be given the opportunity to find a solution for themselves.

“If you think about puppies in a whelping box, and you see a puppy who isn’t where he wants to be, most breeders will pick the puppy up,” and place him near a nipple or the warmth of his mother, she says. “At that point, the puppy is already learning. So unless that puppy isn’t well and doesn’t need to burn the calories, let him learn at five days old.”

Similarly, when a puppy is older and finds himself stuck in a doorway or stumped by a set of steps, resist the urge to “rescue” him, unless he is in obvious danger. Instead, Pratt recommends, give him the opportunity to solve the problem on his own – and build his confidence along the way.

COMMON SENSES

In a smell-saturated variation of early neurological stimulation, at three days Pratt starts exposing her puppies to a new scent every day – tree bark, grass,

herbs, fruits, spices, and training items like tennis balls and pheasant wings.

Linda Hartheimer of Grayhart Weimaraners in Saddle River, New Jersey, says exposing her puppies to scent this early primes them for the hunt tests in which they will eventually participate. Digging into her refrigerator for frozen duck and pheasant wings, she is amazed at how her puppies respond.

“At three days old, their chests are heaving with the scent of duck,” she says.

When puppies begin to hear, Pratt starts capitalizing on that sense, too, working to create a recall literally from the moment the ears open at 10 or so days old.

“When mom gets in the whelping box, we say, ‘Puppy, puppy,’ in a high, happy voice, or blow a whistle,” she says. “When they leave us, they have a rock solid recall to both,

because we start at an age when they never forget it.”

Exposure to new noises is important as well: the banging of pots and pans, the whoosh of a car on a nearby street, the whine of a landscaper’s leaf blower, and, of course, the roar of the vacuum. Puppies that are raised in cathedral quiet are almost fated to startle when they encounter these sounds in their everyday lives. As background noise, Pratt plays sound-desensitization CDs from a variety of situations that the puppies will encounter later in life, such as the din of agility and obedience trials, or the sound of gunshots in the field. Commercial recordings of thunderstorms, fireworks, and city street sounds are also available.



PHOTO BY SARA RENEE PHOTOGRAPHY

Linda Hartheimer and a 2010 litter she bred and raised.

KID POWER

Chris Walkowicz, judge, author of *Successful Dog Breeding* (Howell, 1994), and a former breeder of German Shepherd Dogs and Bearded Collies, notes that puppies and kids can be a perfect combination, especially from a breeder's point of view.

"I think everyone who breeds dogs should have kids, or rent them," she says, half-jokingly. Most children are not only interested in spending large quantities of time in the whelping box – always supervised, of course – but also inspired in their imaginative play with the puppies. Dog-savvy kids can accustom puppies to being jostled, moved, restrained, and held in all kinds of interesting positions. Children also condition their playmates to quick motions and shrill voices, provided that the interaction is always monitored and positive.

The biggest problem with children is that they inevitably grow up. In Walkowicz's case, there was a decade span between her first two children and her last two, so by the time her younger children left for college, her older ones began having grandchildren to start the cycle again. Breeders who don't have children or are empty-nesters can recruit neighborhood kids or nieces and nephews to come for frequent visits.

Another advantage to having children in the household is that their cast-off toys can be great hand-me-downs for puppies. "My kids had a plastic toddler slide that was two feet long," Walkowicz remembers. "I put that in the puppy pen, and they all loved it."

NO FLAT EARTH SOCIETY

As Walkowicz's puppies demonstrated, puppies love to climb and clamber over all kinds of obstacles. (And that includes, frustratingly for breeders, the sides of the whelping box and exercise pens used to contain them.) These verticality-craving puppies aren't mischievous – they are literally building new neural connections and wiring their brains to solve problems and be unafraid of novel things.

"I think it's really important that puppies are never raised on a flat surface," Hastings says. "We know that challenges in a puppy's environment activate a part of the brain that deals with coordination."

When puppies are very small, rolled-up towels can create obstacles that puppies learn to crawl over. Once the puppies are older and more mobile, breeders can add objects that move or shift, such as a toddler-sized seesaw or a balance board. (You can make your own board by screwing a piece of wood to a section of PVC pipe, or stapling a tennis ball inside a sock to the board.)

The more stuff the better, Hastings says, so the pen becomes a "jungle" of stimuli.

In a similar effort to "literally grow puppy brains," Avidog's Lise Pratt and her sister Marcy Burke developed the Adventure Box (see photo on next page), a 30-inch-square frame that has a variety of interesting and interactive objects dangling from it.

"I wanted to get puppies to be bold and go through something, so I made a wall of noodles," says Pratt, referring

to the popular foam pool toys. Walks through the aisles of Home Depot inspired some interesting additions: empty metal paint cans, sections of garden hose, plastic funnels, and – popular among agility folks who aspire to future weave-pole stars – lengths of PVC pipe. Pratt exposes her puppies to the Adventure Box almost as soon as they can walk, depending on the individual litter.

Search the words "bottle pool" on YouTube.com, and you'll find mesmerizing videos of puppies gleefully launching themselves into kiddie pools filled with empty soda and water bottles, making gloriously loud crunching noises as they bob around amid the plastic cylinders.

For her litters of Weimaraner pups, Hartheimer bought a kiddie sand box to use specifically for this purpose, then slowly introduced the puppies.

"When we first introduce the pool, we put them inside in pairs, with lots of food, and just a few bottles," she says. "As they get older and more confident, we add more empty water bottles, and they remember the food and will start searching. Then, when there are a lot of bottles, they start diving in."

While the bottle pool is very entertaining for puppies and humans alike, the experience can have lifelong benefits, especially for puppies that are headed to performance homes. "It desensitizes them to pressure on their bodies, and different noises," explains Hartheimer, who in warmer months sometimes adds a bit of water to the pool to add a different dimension to the experience. "It's not just about the bottles. It's the whole environment in there."

THE RULE OF SEVENS

Pat Schaap, a Shetland Sheepdog breeder in Clarksville, Maryland, is credited for this list of experiences, people, and things that each puppy should have been exposed to by the time she reaches seven weeks old:

- **Seven different types of surfaces:** Carpet, concrete, wood, vinyl, grass, dirt, gravel, wood chips.

Kids who have good self-control and an interest in dogs make terrific puppy socializers. They tend to move and speak in novel and unpredictable ways, which can be both interesting and rewarding for puppies to experience.

PHOTO BY MARY BLOOM





PHOTO BY JILL SIMMONS

A litter of Golden Retriever puppies explores an Adventure Box, a safe but stimulating puppy playground developed by Lise Pratt and Marcy Burke of Avidog. See avidog.com for construction details and instructions.

- **Seven different types of play objects:** Big balls, small balls, soft fabric toys, fuzzy toys, squeaky toys, paper or cardboard items, metal items, sticks or hose pieces.
- **Seven different locations:** Front yard, backyard, basement, kitchen, car, garage, laundry room, bathroom.
- **Seven new people:** Children and older adults, a person with a cane, someone in a wheelchair or walker.
- **Seven challenges:** Climb on a box, climb off a box, go through a tunnel, climb steps, go down steps, climb over obstacles, play hide and seek, go in and out of a doorway with a step up or down, run around a fence.
- **Seven different food containers:** Metal, plastic, cardboard, paper, china, pie plate, frying pan.
- **Seven different eating locations:** Crate, yard, kitchen, basement, laundry room, living room, bathroom.

Of course, seven shouldn't be a limiting number. Pratt says she exposes her Golden Retriever puppies to 100 different people before they leave at 8 ½ weeks. But the number is probably not as important as the concept: Positively exposing puppies to novelty as early and often as possible will expand their horizons and make them more willing – eager, even – to accept change.

A key part of Pratt's socialization process for her puppies is what she calls

“woods walks.” At about six weeks, “when the instinct to follow starts to kick in,” she and her co-breeder, Gayle Watkins, take their puppies on long walks in a nearby land trust. These jaunts not only increase proprioception – the puppies' sense of their own bodies in the larger world – but also set the groundwork for problem-solving: If a log is in the way, the humans step over it, the dam either jumps it or goes around, and the puppies are left to figure out how to follow.

“Most people have never let their dog take the responsibility of figuring out where you are,” Pratt explains. “The dog never learns to make the choice.” She sees this frequently in the agility ring, where dogs will take off from their handlers, with no sense of connection. By the time her puppies leave, by contrast, they are walking in the woods for an hour and a half, learning how to follow every step of the way.

POTTY TALK

Breeders can make great inroads into priming their puppies for successful housebreaking long before they leave for their new homes.



Puppies who have experienced more than just a wire cage or concrete floor will be better prepared for life in the real world than their sheltered counterparts.

Step one is to ditch the newspaper and piddle pads. They're not only messy and inefficient (there is nothing grosser than a lasagna of soiled *New York Times* from a day's puppy pooping), but they do not teach puppies to use a designated area to relieve themselves.

“Puppies would like to be clean, and if you give them the opportunity to be, they are clean,” Hastings says. “Among the easiest puppies to housebreak are those that are litter-box trained, because from day one they have always been taught to go somewhere else to pee and poop.”

A popular substrate for puppy litter boxes are wood pellets, either the kind sold for use in wood-burning stoves, or as horse bedding. The compressed-wood pellets are the size of a pill capsule, chemical free, and when wet disintegrate into sawdust. If placed on the pellets every time they pee or poop, most puppies will soon associate the feel of the pellets beneath their feet with those bodily functions, and begin to seek the pellets out every time they need to eliminate. Saturated pellets and feces can be easily removed with a small plastic sand shovel, keeping odor and mess to a minimum.

THE FINAL ANALYSIS

Like breeding, raising puppies is as much art as science. It's important to amass as much knowledge as possible, and then improvise.

“After every litter, I re-evaluate and see what worked, and what needs tweaking,” says Hartheimer, a special-education teacher who is fascinated by how the environment she creates literally grows and wires her impressionable puppies' brains.

Then, after the puppies leave her home and venture out into the world, it's up to their new caretakers to continue the next phase of their education. 🐾

In next month's issue, we'll share “Puppy Prep Part 2: Homeward Bound.”

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.

Even More Favorites

Updates on the use of and sources for some less-recognized but often effective alternative treatments and supplements.

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Whole Dog Journal readers often try techniques and products described in the magazine, but sometimes years go by before we need something we read about, or it disappears from the market, or we have trouble finding it, or we simply forget all about it. Last month we revisited systemic oral enzymes and EMT gel, and our September issue revisited green tripe, Seacure, and Willard Water. Here are three more go-to products featured in previous issues that might now be perfect for you and your dog.

PAW PELLITOL OINTMENT PAW

Nine years ago, we described a smoky-smelling pink ointment that worked wonders for seriously infected ears: Pellitol (see “Chronic Ear Infections in Canines,” WDJ June 2004). Pellitol contained zinc oxide, calamine, bismuth subgalate, bismuth subnitrate, resorcinol, echinacea fluid extract, and juniper tar. These ingredients are both disinfecting and adhesive, so that as the ointment gradually dried and shrank (a process lasting several days), it healed ulcers, dried pus and debris, and reduced bacterial growth. In addition to being effective, this apply-it-and-leave-it approach spared patients the discomfort of repeated ear-cleaning treatments.

We learned about Pellitol from holistic veterinarian Stacy Hershman of Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, who became interested in ear infections while working as a veterinary technician in her teens. “This is a subject that isn’t covered much in vet school,” she told us.

“I learned about treating ear infections from the veterinarians I worked with over the years. Because they all had different techniques, I saw dozens of different treatments, and I kept track of what worked and what didn’t.”

Chronic ear infections are the bane of long-eared dogs, swimming dogs, recently vaccinated puppies, old dogs, dogs with an abundance of ear wax, and dogs

with allergies, thyroid imbalances, or immune system disorders. In other words, they are among the most common recurring canine problems.

Dr. Hershman’s maintenance program for healthy ears involves gentle cleaning with cotton balls, cotton swabs, and room-temperature green tea or an alcohol-free acidic ear cleaner. Mild ear inflammation can be treated with careful flushing.

But if the infection is serious, she takes a different approach. When she began her veterinary practice, Dr. Hershman met dogs who wouldn’t let anyone touch their ears. “I knew that nothing I’d learned in vet school was going to help them,” she says, “so I thought back to all the treatments I’d seen over the years. The one that seemed most effective was a combination of boric acid and a thick, old-fashioned ointment that looks like pink toothpaste. I couldn’t remember its name, but I never forgot how it smelled – really peculiar, like burnt embers.”

The ointment was Pellitol, and as soon as she tracked it down, Dr. Hershman combined it with boric acid. “Like the ear powders I learned about from groomers,” she explains, “boric acid dries and acidifies the ear. Yeast and bacteria are opportunistic organisms that die in a dry, acidic environment. They thrive where it’s moist, dark, and alkaline.”

Because boric acid is toxic (note warnings on the label), it should not be inhaled or swallowed. Shielding the face is important and usually requires a

PHOTO BY STEPHEN NAGY, MD



The original Pellitol ointment is no longer made, but two companies now manufacture very similar (and effective) products for treating problematic ears.

helper, someone who can hold the dog's head steady while protecting the eyes, nose, and mouth.

Experimenting with her own dogs and dogs at the animal shelter where she volunteered, Dr. Hershman placed two or three pinches of boric acid powder in each infected ear unless it was ulcerated, bleeding, or painful. "Being acidic," she explained, "boric acid might irritate open wounds. In that case, I would use the Pellitol alone. Otherwise, a pinch or two of boric acid was an effective preliminary treatment."

After applying boric acid, she would fill the ear with Pellitol and let it work. Within a week, the dried ointment would fall out of the dog's ear, leaving it cleaner and far less inflamed.

THE REPLACEMENTS

When its developer retired and closed his business, Pellitol disappeared. Fortunately for its fans, new versions of Pellitol are manufactured by compounding pharmacies.

Dr. Hershman orders Pell Otic ointment from Wedgewood Pharmacy in Swedesboro, New Jersey, which packages the ointment in 15-milliliter syringes that retail for \$24. This ointment contains zinc oxide, calamine, bismuth subnitrate, resorcinol, juniper tar, and bismuth subgallate, which are (except for echinacea) the same ingredients as Pellitol in a slightly different formula. Wedgewood Pharmacy ships to all states except North Carolina. Pet owners can order Pell Otic ointment by phone or online, but orders must be accompanied by a veterinarian's prescription.

Dr. Hershman likes the new product. "Instead of a tube, it comes in a syringe that you dial, which makes it more economical, and it has a convenient long nozzle for applying it deep in the vertical ear canal," she says. "It works the same as Pellitol. It's just more brown than pink in color, possibly due to less calamine and more bismuth. It still smells good, like burnt embers."

She recommends turning the dial once for 1 milliliter per ear unless you're working with larger ear canals, as with Coonhounds, Spaniels, or Basset Hounds, in which case she uses 2 ml per ear. "There is a cap for the end of the syringe so it will not dry out," she says, "and it is actually a lot less messy with the syringe than a tube. The metal Pellitol tubes would break and dry up and

the ointment would be wasted. This is a better arrangement."

Like Pellitol, Pell Otic ointment is sticky. "I tell people to protect their furniture for a day or two. The ointment will stick to anything it touches, and when you fill the ear, it can stick to the outside of the ear or the dog's face. That excess will dry and fall off. You can remove it with vegetable oil, but leave the inside of the ear flap alone."

Another version of Pellitol is available from Specialty Veterinary Compounding Pharmacy in Stafford, Texas. Re-ca-litol Otic Ointment contains resorcinol, bismuth subgallate, bismuth subnitrate, zinc oxide, calamine powder, juniper tar, glycerin, and petrolatum.

Re-ca-litol Otic Ointment is available in 20-gram toothpaste-like tubes costing \$24.63. Orders accompanied by a veterinarian's prescription can be placed by phone or online. Specialty Veterinary Pharmacy does not ship to Arizona, Arkansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Nebraska, North Carolina, or Virginia.

🐾 JAKE'S CANINE REMEDY 🐾

Aromatherapy products for dogs have become a big business, with almost as many essential oil blends, hydrosols, and carrier oils marketed for canines as for their human companions. For an introduction to canine aromatherapy, see "Smell This" (December 2004), "Essential Aromatherapy" (January 2005), "Canines in a Mist" (April 2005), and "Healing Oils for Your Dog" (August 2005).

One of the most versatile and effective aromatherapy blends for dogs is Jake's Canine Remedy, a topical spray that helps heal and prevent skin and coat problems.

Years ago, Colorado aromatherapist Frances Fitzgerald Cleveland of Frog-Works, which manufactures products for pets and people, was out of town when her dog, Jake, developed a hot spot. The steroid shot he received caused kidney failure and Jake died. In his memory, Cleveland combined purified water, apricot kernel oil, and a proprietary blend of essential oils. Jake's Canine Remedy can be sprayed onto wet or dry dogs, brushed into the coat, used as an ear flush, or dabbed onto skin irritations, including hot spots and lick granulomas (see

"Pellitol-type ointments can completely cure mild ear infections," says Dr. Hershman, "but for severe purulent (pus-producing), ulcerative, long-standing *Pseudomonas* and *Proteus* bacterial infections, the ointment by itself may not be enough. Sometimes conventional antibiotics with anti-inflammatory or anti-fungal ingredients have to be alternated with the ointment treatment since these bacteria are difficult to eradicate. In severely resistant cases, I go back and forth between the ointment and ear powders containing boric acid and zinc oxide along with conventional medications. But even in severe cases, Pell Otic ointment makes a big difference."

Note: If your dog develops an ear infection for the first time, or if his condition seems especially severe or painful, consult your veterinarian to rule out a tumor, polyp, or something else that requires medical attention.

For detailed ear-cleaning and ear-flushing instructions, see "Chronic Ear Infections in Canines," June 2004.

"Canine Wounds Deemed 'Hot Spots,'" September 2006).

"I chose essential oils that smell good to dogs and have anti-inflammatory, analgesic, itch-relieving, anti-dermatitic, antibacterial, bacteriostatic, anti-viral, anti-fungal, soothing, healing, and calming effects," she explains.

One of Cleveland's test dogs was her black Labrador-Golden Retriever mix, Oscar. "Oscar swam every day, and I always sprayed him with Jake's Remedy. He never had a hot spot or any type of skin irritation," she says. Oscar passed away last July at age 14, and her three-year-old Lab-mix, Indie, continues the tradition.

In our 2006 hot spot article, Shelley Voorhees of Little-





Jake's Remedy helped Louise, a 6-year-old Lab, recover from a painful ear condition, and relieves her itching paws.

ton, Colorado, reported that when her champion Rottweiler was a blood donor, he had a severe reaction to the disinfecting scrub that was used. "He developed a hot spot that covered his neck and chest," she said. "After a course of antibiotics, the hot spot was still very inflamed and still oozing. I tried Jake's Remedy, and within 48 hours the oozing stopped. The hot spot healed within a week and his hair quickly grew back."

More recently, in Dallas, Texas, Sue Murphy's 6-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever, Louise, developed a serious ear infection. "I was not aware of how bad it was because there wasn't any smell," she says. "Her ear continued to itch and she continued to scratch until the ear and ear flap became as red as a tomato. She tested positive for yeast and bacteria."

Louise's vet sent her home with ointment to be used with an ear flush. As Louise hates having her ears cleaned, Murphy called Cleveland for advice.

"Frances suggested that I flush the ear with Jake's Canine Remedy," she says. "It was a miracle on many counts. Louise was willing to let me put it in her ear, and when I was done, she put her paws on my shoulders and kissed my face! But the most amazing thing was that within two hours, Louise's ear was almost her natural pink."

Murphy continued to use Jake's Remedy for a few more days, and Louise's ears returned to their healthy state. She never had to use the prescribed ointment again. "Every morning Louise lets me check her ears and thanks me with a big kiss," she says. "Now I spray it on her front paws to alleviate itching and to keep her from

chewing on her paws. This stuff is awesome!"

California resident Jim Rounsavell's eight-year-old German Shepherd Dog, Gretchen, has epilepsy, incontinence, a completely replaced left hip, and skin disorders. "She developed a rash from her prolonged use of steroids under a veterinarian's direction," he says. "We were never told that this steroid should not be used for long periods."

When the rash around Gretchen's genitals and lower abdomen continued to worsen, Rounsavell took Gretchen to the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital (VMTH) at the University of California, Davis, School of Veterinary Medicine. "The specialist said he sees only one dog every two years with a condition as severe as hers. He recommended that we work to reduce Gretchen's weight from 122 pounds to around 100 pounds and then schedule surgery to remove the area that refused to heal."

A FrogWorks distributor recommended Jake's Canine Remedy and told Rounsavell that he could expect to see results in seven days. "We started using the product," he says, "and Gretchen's sore area became quite moist. We didn't know what to expect so we called Frances, who informed us that this was part of the healing process. As promised, by the end of a week we saw results, and over the next two to three weeks her condition improved even more." Rounsavell did not have to bring Gretchen back to the VMTH for the much more drastic procedure. Instead, he says, "Jake's Remedy came to our rescue. I want everyone to know about this product."

Kari Filburn, who lives near Portland, Oregon, purchased Jake's Canine Remedy for her dog Koda, who had hot spots on his tail and legs. "It has really helped them heal," she reports. In addition, Koda enjoyed Merlin's Magic Calming Potion, another FrogWorks product. "I sprayed it on a washcloth for him and he carried it around the house. He rubbed his head all over it, then rested against the washcloth – very calm!"

Merlin was a black Lab-Great Dane adopted by Cleveland in 1999 when he was a year old. He had been severely abused and, when rescued, had a fractured hip and other injuries. "I used many essential oils to help him adjust to his new home and get over his past experiences," says Cleveland. "A dog day care asked me to make a calming spray. . . . Then it hit me. I would use all the oils I used for Merlin when we first brought him home. The blend contained vetiver, grapefruit, frankincense, ylang ylang extra, and Roman chamomile essential oils in a base of water, apricot kernel oil, and dispersa, which is an all-natural emulsifier containing vitamins C and E. It worked, and the doggy day care was happy. In 2010, when Merlin passed away, I made it an official product to honor his memory."

Another FrogWorks blend is Garth's Canine Sneezing Remedy, which is designed to help dogs with sneezing and reverse sneezing conditions. "It's a synergistic blend of basil, Roman chamomile, frankincense, and peppermint oils in a base of expeller-pressed safflower oil," explains Cleveland.

"Garth's Canine Sneezing Remedy is fabulous," says Sue Murphy. "When Louise is having bad allergy days, she will wake with a thick coating in her eye, which I remove with a tissue. I apply Garth's Remedy to her head and her eyes remain clear all day. I also apply it before bed so that she wakes up with a lot less stuff in her eye, just a little in the corner. I am 100 percent sold on this product for eye relief when allergies are in the air. I'm so glad I don't have to put steroids in her eyes."

See "Resources," page 18, for a special offer on FrogWorks products for WDJ readers.

Eight years ago, when we first described coconut oil (see “How Coconut Oil Benefits Your Dog’s Health,” October 2005), it was hard to find. Now health food stores, supermarkets, and even some pet supply stores carry a variety of coconut oils from around the world.

Coconut oil fell out of favor during the second half of the 20th century because it’s a source of saturated fat. But the polyunsaturated vegetable oils that replaced it caused more harm than coconut oil ever did, and coconut oil’s medium-chain fatty acids (MCFAs), also known as medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) have been shown to have significant health benefits, so this traditional food has made a comeback.

Coconut oil can be added to meals, used as a cooking oil, or taken as a nutritional supplement. According to its advocates, coconut oil:

- Reduces the risk of cancer and other degenerative conditions.
- Improves cholesterol levels and helps fight heart disease.
- Improves digestion and nutrient absorption.
- Heals digestive disorders like Crohn’s disease, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers, and colitis.
- Contains powerful antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal agents that prevent infection and disease.
- Relieves arthritis.
- Prevents and treats yeast and fungal infections.
- Prevents and treats viral infections.
- Helps balance the body’s metabolism and hormones.
- Promotes normal thyroid function.
- Helps prevent osteoporosis.

Here are just a few of the many coconut oils now available. They are great for pets and humans alike.

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- Rejuvenates the skin and protects against skin cancer, age spots, acne, and other blemishes.
- Reduces allergic reactions.

In addition, coconut oil can be applied topically to speed the healing of cuts, burns, abrasions, and other wounds; to improve the condition of skin and hair; to deodorize whatever it touches (some people brush their teeth with it or use it as an underarm deodorant); and to clear up warts, moles, psoriasis, dandruff, precancerous lesions, athlete’s foot, jock itch, diaper rash, ringworm, vaginal yeast infections, and toenail fungus.

All of this is excellent news for people and their dogs, for most of coconut oil’s human benefits are shared by canines. And most dogs love the taste, which makes feeding coconut oil and other coconut products easy and pleasant.

There are two main types of coconut oil. The first, refined coconut oil (often labeled RBD – “refined, bleached, and deodorized”), is made from copra, or dried coconut meat, then treated to remove impurities. Most RBD coconut oil is inexpensive, bland, and odorless. It doesn’t contain all of the nutrients found in unrefined oil, its fragrance and flavor are different, and in most cases the coconuts used to produce it are of low quality and chemicals like chorine and hexane are used in the refining process. Some brands of refined coconut oil are labeled for use as a skin and hair care product.

Unrefined or “virgin” coconut oil, which is made from fresh coconuts, has culinary and health experts excited. Pressed by hand using traditional methods or manufactured in state-of-the-art factories, virgin coconut oil retains most of the nutrients found in fresh coconut.

In traditional methods, coconut meat is heated or baked until dry and then pressed, or fresh coconut milk is pressed from the meat and then heated to remove its water content, or freshly pressed coconut milk is allowed to ferment for 24 to 36 hours, during which the oil separates from the water. In modern factories, expeller-pressed coconut milk is centrifuged and vacuum-evaporated to remove water. Other methods of removing water from coconut oil include refrigeration and the use of enzymes.

The result of these traditional and modern manufacturing methods is an assortment of coconut oils in a range of flavors, prices, and quality.

Depending on temperature, coconut oil will be solid or liquid. Below 75° Fahrenheit, coconut oil is solid and white, like lard or vegetable shortening, and it is sometimes called coconut butter. At 76° F and above, coconut oil is a transparent liquid.

Good-quality oil is colorless when liquid and pure white when solid, never yellow or pink, and it should not contain any residue or have an “off” or rancid odor. “Many people complain that coconut oil makes their throat feel scratchy or causes a burning sensation,” says Bruce Fife, ND, who has written several books about coconut oil. “The





Some dogs enjoy chewing fresh coconut “meat” right out of the hard shell. Supervise your dog closely to make certain he’s eating just the coconut flesh, and not chunks of shell.

dogs become lean and energetic soon after coconut oil is added to their diets, or their shabby-looking coats become sleek and glossy, and dogs with arthritis or ligament problems grow stronger and more lively.

Even dogs with serious diseases have improved. In one case, a Doberman Pinscher with severe Wobblers made a dramatic recovery in less than a week after

coconut oil was added to his diet. In another case, coconut oil helped a dog recover from valley fever (*Coccidioides*), a fungal infection transmitted by soil spores in the Southwest.

Other reports involve itchy skin, cuts, wounds, rashes, lesions, skin tags, warts, and hot spots. Dogs with flea allergies, contact dermatitis, or other allergic reactions typically stop scratching soon after coconut oil is added to their food,

and dogs treated topically for bites, stings (including bee stings), ear mites, or ear infections recover more quickly.

An easy way to improve a dog’s gums and breath is to rub the teeth with coconut oil once or twice a day or simply give the dog a small amount on a spoon.

Dr. Fife has collected coconut oil stories for years, and one of his favorites, mentioned in his book *Coconut Cures*, is from a man whose dog developed a lump next to her eye.

“The veterinarian said it looked like a tumor,” the owner reported, “and he recommended immediate surgery. I figured that if coconut oil is good for humans, it should be good for animals as well, so I began applying it to the lump on my dog’s forehead. As time passed, the lump grew smaller and smaller and eventually disappeared. It never returned. We avoided the surgery.

“Some time later my other dog developed sores just above his upper lip. The vet gave him an antibiotic, but it didn’t seem to do any good. After a week I stopped the medication and began applying coconut oil to the sores. They got worse for a few days and then began to heal. He recovered without a problem.”

catch in the throat is a sign of poor quality. Some of these oils have a roasted or smoky flavor and aroma, which is another indication of poor quality, as it comes from smoke that contaminates the oil during heat processing.”

The newest coconut oil products are liquid coconut oil and MCT oil. Plain coconut oil contains 62.5 percent medium chain fatty acids (MCFAs), while liquid coconut oil contains 93 percent, and MCT oil contains 100 percent.

“While 100 percent MCFAs may sound impressive,” says Dr. Fife, “there is a drawback. MCT oil contains only two medium chain fatty acids (caprylic and capric acids). It has no lauric acid, which is the most important of the fatty acids. Lauric acid is the most potent antimicrobial fatty acid and provides the greatest degree of protection against infection and disease. Similarly, liquid coconut oil consists of over 81 percent of the same two MCFAs as MCT oil, with only 11.5 percent lauric acid and very little caprylic and myristic acids, which also have antimicrobial properties.”

In addition, liquid coconut oil and MCT oil are far more expensive than plain coconut oil.

IT'S GOOD FOR DOGS

We’re not aware of any clinical trials of coconut oil for canine maladies of any kind, but the anecdotal evidence is impressive. Reports published on Internet forums describe how overweight

RESOURCES

❖ JAKE’S CANINE REMEDY, GARTH’S CANINE SNEEZING REMEDY, AND MERLIN’S MAGIC CALMING POTION

FrogWorks (Frances Fitzgerald Cleveland), Littleton, CO.
For a 15-percent discount on your next order, use coupon code WDJN2013 (one-time use only).
(877) 973-8848; frogworks.us

❖ PELL OTIC OINTMENT

Wedgewood Pharmacy, Swedesboro, NJ. (800) 331-8272;
wedgewoodpetRx.com

❖ RE-CA-LITOL OTIC OINTMENT

Specialty Veterinary Pharmacy, Stafford, TX. (877) 673-3705; svpmeds.com

❖ STACEY JOY HERSHMAN, DVM

Hastings-on-Hudson NY. (914) 478-4100; naturalvetforpets.com

❖ BRUCE FIFE, ND

Coconut Research Center, coconutresearchcenter.org



HOW TO USE COCONUT OIL

For convenient application, store coconut oil in both a glass eyedropper bottle and a small jar. During cold weather, these containers are easy to warm in hot water so that the oil quickly melts.

Use the eyedropper to apply coconut oil to ears, cuts, wounds, mouth sores, and other targeted areas, including your dog's toothbrush.

Use the small jar to apply coconut oil to larger areas, such as cracked paw pads. Coconut oil is not fast-drying, so use a towel or tissue to remove excess oil as needed. The main challenge with coconut oil's topical application is that most dogs love the taste and immediately lick it off. To give coconut oil a chance to disinfect wounds and speed healing, cover the wound with a towel for a few minutes, or distract the dog long enough for at least some of the oil to be absorbed.

In addition to lubricating the skin and joints, coconut oil acts as a natural preservative, is exceptionally stable, has a long shelf life, and does not require refrigeration.

Solid or liquid coconut oil can be

added to food at any meal or given between meals. The optimum dose for dogs is about 1 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight daily, or 1 tablespoon per 30 pounds. These are general guidelines, as some dogs need less and others more.

But don't *start* with these amounts. Instead, introduce coconut oil a little at a time in divided doses. Because coconut oil kills harmful bacteria, viruses, parasites, yeasts, and fungi, the burden of removing dead organisms can trigger symptoms of detoxification. Headaches, fatigue, diarrhea, and flu-like symptoms are common in humans who consume too much too fast, and similar symptoms can occur in dogs.

Even in healthy dogs, large amounts of coconut oil can cause diarrhea or greasy stools while the body adjusts. Start with small amounts, such as ¼ teaspoon per day for small dogs or puppies and 1 teaspoon for large dogs. Gradually increase the amount every few days. If your dog seems tired or uncomfortable or has diarrhea, reduce the amount temporarily.

Coconut oil isn't the only coconut product that's good for dogs. Fresh and dried coconut are excellent sources of

dietary fiber, and dogs enjoy and benefit from the same coconut flakes, coconut chips, coconut cream, coconut milk, shredded coconut, and coconut spreads used by their human companions. Just be sure the products are unsweetened and free from chemical preservatives.

Some dog lovers report that fresh coconuts, which are widely sold in supermarkets and health food stores, can keep a dog busy for hours. Choose coconuts with a hard brown shell and shake them to be sure they're full of coconut water. If you're not used to opening coconuts, look online for instructions. Remove the coconut water, which your dog will enjoy; then split the coconut in half or into multiple pieces with a hammer or other tool, and let your dog go to work. Chewing on the shell to get every morsel will help clean her teeth, and coconut's nutritional benefits make this a doubly rewarding treat. 🐾

CJ Puotinen, author of The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care and other books, is a frequent contributor to WDJ. She and her husband live in Montana with Chloe (black Lab), Seamus (Cairn Terrier), and a red tabby cat.



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Household Help?

Yes! You can teach your dog to help you with chores around the house.

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

Okay, I'll confess: I'm a lousy housekeeper. So when I first saw the YouTube videos starring Jessie the Jack Russell Terrier, who has been trained to do countless household chores, I found the idea of training *my* dogs to help me with the housework quite appealing.

Jessie can, among other things, wake up family members; dust with a feather duster; close a left-open toilet lid; mop up spills with a towel; get the mail; use a Dustbuster; mop the floor; polish shoes and boots; take out the trash; pick up dropped items; turn on lights; carry a shopping basket; and push a grocery cart. (Links to Jessie's videos can be found in the "Resources" box, page 22). Some of these behaviors are just for fun; you couldn't genuinely expect a dog to understand the point of putting polish on your shoes, much less doing a good job of it! But some of them are legitimately helpful!

FETCH THE NEWSPAPER

Of course there's the old standby of bringing in the newspaper. Trainer Clarissa Bergeman, CPDT, owner of In Canine Company, in Round Hill, Virginia, enjoyed sharing a walk down the driveway with Anny, her Pembroke Welsh Corgi, to get the newspaper or the mail. Anny was always happy to carry the paper or a magazine on the walk back. Anny is gone now, but Bergeman's new Corgi, Simon, is learning the task in her stead.

Clarissa Bergeman's Corgi, Anny, enjoyed the daily task of carrying the newspaper or pieces of mail back to the house.

SORT LAUNDRY

I thought this one might be particularly up my 8-year-old Scorgidoodle's (Bonnie) alley, since she loves to hold soft things in her mouth. In fact, I often have to search Bonnie's crate for socks; if she finds any lying on the floor, she stashes them in her bed.

Since dogs are partially color-blind, it's probably too much to expect she could sort clothes by color herself, so I started by placing an article of laundry in each of several spots that I named accordingly: Whites, Jeans, Brights (pronounced "Buh-rights," to help distinguish it from "Whites"), and Towels. The

piles were generously far apart at first (six to eight feet between) so I could point to the proper pile without confusing her. I started by handing her a piece of clothing from the basket, gave the cue, pointed to the appropriate pile, and moved with her to the spot. Then I gave her the "Trade" cue, and when she dropped the item on the pile to "trade" for a treat, I clicked my clicker (one could also use a verbal reward marker, such as the word "Yes!"; to indicate that she performed the desired behavior) and gave her a treat.

I quickly faded my movement toward the appropriate pile, finding that the pointing gesture alone sufficed to send her to the proper spot. The "Trade" cue prompted her to drop the item, and a click-treat brought her back to me for the next piece of laundry. We just started this recently, so it's still a work in progress. Our next step will be to fade the pointing gesture and see if she can identify the proper pile with just a verbal cue.

CLOSE DOORS

Susan Giordano, CPDT, owner of K9U in Atlanta, Georgia, taught her dog Potter to close the refrigerator, pantry door, and any cabinets that are open. Potter will also fetch a towel so Susan can wipe off the counters. Susan says when they are finished with the chores, they dance!

It's relatively simple to teach your dog to close doors. Begin by teaching her to target with her nose or paw (hint: using your dog's nose to close doors rather than a paw reduces the likelihood of scratches to the finish). Offer the palm of your



hand to your dog at her nose level. When she sniffs it, click (or say “Yes!”) and treat. Repeat until she eagerly bumps her nose into your hand, and then add the cue “Touch!” as you offer your palm. (If she thinks your offered palm is the cue for “Shake” try the back of your hand, or offer her the knuckles of your closed fist.)

When you are confident she understands the “Touch” cue, hold a plastic lid (such as the top to a tub of cottage cheese or yogurt) in your hand and ask her to touch that. First hold it so it covers your palm, then eventually hold it by the edge.

When she will touch the lid reliably, attach it to a door or drawer with double-stick tape or rubber cement and cue her to touch it there. You may need to start with your hand near the lid and gradually fade the presence of your hand. When she reliably targets her nose to the lid, shape for more powerful touches until she touches hard enough to close the door or drawer. (For tips on using a target stick to teach this behavior, see “New Tricks for a Stick,” January 2007.)

PICK UP TRASH

Lots of dogs have been taught to pick up their own toys and put them away in a basket designated for that purpose. Dana Ebbecke, one of the trainers at My Pet’s Teacher in Horsham, Pennsylvania, suggests a variation on that behavior: teaching your dog to pick up trash and put it in a garbage can. This is a perfect behavior to “backchain” – where you teach the last piece of the behavior first, and build the chain backward from there.

Offer your dog a piece of trash (that she won’t want to eat) directly over the center of a garbage can and say “Take it!” When she takes it, praise her, then cue her to “Drop.” If she already knows a “Drop” cue, she will drop the trash and it will fall in the can. Click (or use another reward marker) and treat. If she doesn’t know the “Drop” cue yet, say “Drop” and offer her a treat. When she opens her mouth for the treat the trash will fall in the can. Click and treat.

When the “Drop” is working over the center of the garbage can, move the trash slightly to one side, but still over the can, and cue the “Drop.” If it falls into the can, click and treat. If it misses, say “Oops!” and try it again. Gradually move the “training trash” farther from the center of the can, until it’s no longer even over the can. You are helping the dog understand that she needs to move it

UNEXPECTED HELP

A dog trainer friend, Deborah Lee Miller-Riley, from Monroe, Connecticut, posted this on her Facebook wall, just as I was writing this article. It’s a great testimonial for the value of teaching your dog a few general purpose helping behaviors. Miller-Riley wrote:

“This morning I attempted to change a small latch on a screen door. I was standing on a 4-foot high front porch, which is bordered by 6-foot high bushes. In my clumsy attempt to screw in the small metal bracket, it flipped out of my hands and landed under the bushes next to the house – a place I would have great difficulty reaching.

“So I called for Rivets, my service-dog-in-training. I showed her a short pathway to the spot where the item fell and told her to ‘Bring,’ her cue to seek and bring something back to my hand. The object would have my fresh scent on it and would most likely stand out to her like a bright color to us. She went right into the bushes, nosed around and pawed at the object. I said, ‘Yes, bring!’ She picked it up, crawled out and delivered it to my hand. She is such a cool dog, her mind and willingness astonishes me. I completed my door repair after a treat fest with my little paw-hero.”



Rivets gets it.

back over the middle of the can to make sure it falls inside, not outside the can.

When she can bring the trash that you hand her to the can from some distance, start offering it to her closer to the ground, so she understands she has to lift it up and move it to the can. Finally, place the trash on the ground, and add your “Pick up the trash!” cue before you say “Take it!” In fairly short order you should be able to fade the “Take it!” cue and your “Pick up the trash!” should prompt her to pick up that item and drop it in the can.

Now you’ll need to generalize the cue to a variety of different trash items. Make sure you don’t leave valuable objects on the floor when you ask her to pick up the trash! You can’t expect her to make good judgment calls about what is trash and what is treasure; your smart phone could end up in the garbage.

Ebbecke suggests adding to the “Wow! factor” of this behavior by using a garbage can with a push-pedal lid, and teaching your dog to step on the lid to open the can before she drops the trash in. (Just don’t teach this one to a dog who is likely to help herself to items in the can rather than putting more trash there.)

PICK UP/FIND/BRING

The “seek back” used to be a behavior performed in advanced obedience competition. You walked around the ring

and, when cued by the judge, dropped an item, such as a glove. Your dog was supposed to continue heeling with you until you stopped and gave him the cue to, go back, get it, and bring it back to you. Very useful!

It’s relatively simple to get your dog to pick up something you just dropped. Your “Pick it up!” cue (from “pick up the trash”) can generalize to anything you indicate you want your dog to pick up – and it sure beats stooping over to get it yourself.

Just think how even more useful it would be if your dog could search for and find, by name, items you’ve misplaced such as your car keys, the TV remote, your cell phone, or your glasses. I realized many years ago how capable dogs are at finding lost stuff when our wonderful Terrier-mix, Josie, found our missing tortoise without even being trained to do so.

I didn’t realize I had taught Josie to associate the word “Turtle” with Fred and Wilma, the two yellow-footed tortoises we had adopted from the shelter where I worked at the time. But apparently I had. One day I couldn’t find Fred. I frantically searched the yard, repeating aloud to myself, “Where’s the turtle?” I eventually realized that Josie was coming to me, and then running to the spot where Fred had fallen behind a retaining wall. Because of



Use common sense regarding which items you teach your dog to find. Don't train him to hunt for something fragile (like eyeglasses) or for the remote if you don't want him to dig through the couch cushions looking for it, for example.

You can even take this one step further by teaching her the names of family members and having her find them. Just as you did with objects, have your human hide first in easy places, then harder and harder. If, heaven forbid, a family member is ever truly lost, your dog can join in the search!

REVEILLE

Now that you've taught your dog the names of family members, you might as well make every day use of it. Send her to wake up family members who are sleeping in too long. Teach her to pull the covers off the sleepyheads! Have her deliver messages to the kids – carried in her mouth or attached to her collar. Ask her to bring everyone to the table at dinnertime. The sky's the limit! 🐾

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 dog trainers. Pat is also author of many books on positive training. See page 24 for more information.

that amazing little dog, Fred was found, safe and sound.

Chaser, the brilliant Border Collie and subject of multiple cognition studies, now knows the names of more than 1,000 objects, and can retrieve them by name. Surely *your* dog can learn the names of a handful of objects, then learn to find them for you when they go missing.

You've probably already taught her some, simply by using object names in your conversations with her. "Fetch the ball!" "Go to your bed." "Get in the car." So it's not a stretch to think you can teach her more.

Use your targeting cue, followed by the name of the object. Hold the TV remote in your hand and say "Touch, Remote." Click (or say "Yes!") and treat when she does it. Hold your car keys and say "Touch, Keys." Click and treat. Then place them on a table or floor (one at a time) and do the same. When you've done it several times with each item individually, place both on the floor six to eight feet apart, stand six to eight feet away, and ask her to touch one. If she gets the right one, click, treat and party! If she goes to the wrong one, cheerfully say "Oops!" and try again.

If she gets more misses than hits, go back to working with just one object at a time for a while, then try again. Eventually teach her the names of other objects you'd like her to be able to find for you.

When she's identifying the correct object at least 80 percent of the time, start adding the "Find it!" element. If you've already done nose games with your dog, this will be easy as pie. Just as you have been doing already, place one of the objects on the floor in plain view and say "Find Remote!" When she goes over and sniffs it, click and treat. She found it!

Repeat several times.

Now start hiding it. First have her sit and wait, and let her watch you hide it in a very easy place. Return to her side and cue, "Find Remote!" When she goes to where it is, click and treat. If you want to teach her a "tell" – a behavior she performs to tell you she found it – start asking her for that behavior when she locates the object. You could have her sit or lie down at the spot where the item was, or she could come back to you and touch you with her paw to let you know she found it, then lead you to it.

Gradually hide objects in harder and harder places, and eventually hide them when she isn't watching and then ask her to find them. The final step is to have her find things when you've really lost them.

RESOURCES

❖ **JESSIE THE JACK RUSSELL TERRIER HELPING WITH CHORES (VIDEOS)**

- youtube.com/watch?v=P9Fyey4D5hg
- youtube.com/watch?v=LgBKhj48VDY
- youtube.com/watch?v=PztO-OvzRyg

❖ **ARTICLE ABOUT CHASER, THE BORDER COLLIE**

tinyurl.com/usatoday-chaser

❖ **CLARISSA BERGEMAN, CPDT-KA**

In Canine Company, LLC, Round Hill, VA (540) 554-8738; ready-to-rally.com

❖ **DANA EBBECKE**

My Pet's Teacher, Horsham, Pennsylvania (215) 900-0125; mypetsteacher.com

❖ **SUSAN GIORDANO, CPDT-KA**

K9U Training and Behavior Modification, Atlanta, GA (770) 355-3523; K9Utraining.com



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- A natural shampoo formula that can help keep your dog flea-free (p. 201)
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BOOKS AND DVDS

❖ WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of **Positive Perspectives** and **Positive Perspectives 2; 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 and wholedogjournal.com

❖ **The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care** and **Natural Remedies for Dogs and Cats**, by WDJ contributor CJ Puotinen, are available from dogwise.com and from wholedogjournal.com

❖ **The Canine Thyroid Epidemic**, by WDJ contributor Diana R. Laverdure and W. Jean Dodds, DVM, is the winner of the 2011 DWAA Maxwell Award. 2001, Dogwise Publishing, 192 pages. Available from dogwise.com

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