

The Whole Dog Journal™



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A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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What WDJ Offers

Maximum benefit, least harm.

BY NANCY KERNS

Every so often, I remember to make space at the bottom of this page to print WDJ's mission statement – mostly to help new readers understand where we're coming from. Long-time readers don't need to see it in every issue; it hasn't changed since it was written, some 17 years ago. Our overall goal is to offer owners well-researched information about training methods, diets, and healthcare practices that give maximally benefit dogs with a minimum of harm. To that end, we embrace and recommend both home-prepared (the ideal) and the best of commercial diets, conventional veterinary medicine and complementary and alternative treatments. (We don't advocate training that hurts or scares dogs; so much for our "balance" on that point.)

Because we so frequently explain and advocate for "alt/comp" remedies such as acupuncture, massage, herbs, and so on, some people mistakenly assume we are opposed to conventional medical treatments including vaccines, heartworm preventative medications, and pesticides.

In truth, we are opposed only to *over-vaccination*, the use of heartworm preventatives *in parts of the country and at times in the year when heartworm is not a threat*, and the use of pesticides *when pests are not present*. We are totally *for* minimal, least-harm use of the most effective tools that are available for your dogs' long-term benefit.

It's a middle way – a fine line – but we think that smart dog owners are capable of walking it with us. It does require some thought and effort, however, and owners who are willing and able to take responsibility for protecting and defending their dogs' health – which can be challenging at times. It's far easier to comply with every recommendation that your veterinarian might make (such as low-quality prescription diets instead of home-prepared, or year-round spot-on treatments for fleas, heartworm, and intestinal worms, even for elderly apartment-dwelling city dogs) and let him deal with any potential problems

that arise. It's also easy to state that you are "against" vaccines and pesticides – until your dog is dying of distemper, or is wearing a cone because flea bites have tormented him the point of chewing huge, weeping wounds all over his body.

There are other publications for ideologues and purists – both the conventional veterinary crowd, who wouldn't consider a chiropractor for their dog no matter how crippled with back pain he might be, as well as the "completely natural" dog nuts who think that *truly* healthy dogs can fight off *any* disease or parasite. (If he gets infected with disease or parasites, well, he must not have been *truly* healthy – it was probably those vaccines he got at the shelter six years ago, ya know.) If this is how you think, WDJ is probably not for you.

But if you are willing to read (and heed) the warnings on a pesticide label; question, discuss, and sometimes, challenge your veterinarian's recommendations; seek out effective complementary or alternative treatments when they are gentler or less harmful than the conventional remedies – well, you're our kind of dog owner. Welcome!

NK

MISSION STATEMENT: WDJ's mission is to provide dog guardians with in-depth information on effective holistic healthcare methods and successful nonviolent training. The methods we discuss will endeavor to do no harm to dogs; we do not advocate perpetrating even minor transgressions in the name of "greater good." We intend our articles to enable readers to immediately apply training and healthcare techniques to their own dogs with visible and enjoyable success. All topics should contribute to improving the dog's health and vitality, and deepening the canine/human bond. Above all, we wish to contribute information that will enable consumers to make kind, healthy, and informed decisions about caring for their own dogs.

Spot the Problem

Every solution to the perennial flea problem poses health risks. Here is what you need to know to protect your whole family.

BY NANCY KERNS

In some parts of the world, I hear, fleas are not much of a problem. I've never been to those parts of the world. If you and your dogs live there, I suggest that you never relocate. Fleas cause dozens of canine health problems, from severe allergies (more dogs are allergic to flea bites than to anything else), damaged skin, infections and "hot spots," worn teeth (from chewing the itchy flea bites), anemia (from a heavy infestation), and tapeworms (tapeworm larvae are often present inside fleas; when dogs consume infected fleas in the process of chewing their flea bites, they unwittingly become tapeworm hosts, as the worms develop in their digestive tract). And of course, fleas can also torment other household members, especially felines and humans.

Depending on where you live, fleas might be a minor seasonal irritation or a serious year-round problem. Some dog owners are able to control occasional infestations with nothing more than a flea comb and intensive house-cleaning. (For the uninitiated, flea combs have very fine teeth that are so close together that fleas get lodged between the teeth when you comb the dog, enabling you to trap and kill the offending insects. And one can stop a flea population from expanding if you vacuum, mop, and wash the dog's bedding frequently – like, daily for a few weeks. Water kills flea larvae and eggs.)

But if your infestation is more serious, or your dog is super-allergic to flea bites, you may consider buying and using one of the many chemical treatments that kill or control fleas.

Of course, every product on the market has the potential for harm. Some can

make certain dogs sick; some are toxic to cats; some may even pose risks to children or chemically sensitive humans in your home. But *all* of the products listed here are safe for *most* dogs (and other household members) *most* of the time – when used *strictly as directed*, and *never* when contraindicated.

It's incumbent on you, however, as your dog's guardian, to do everything in your power to educate yourself thoroughly about the products available for treating a flea infestation. Because it's completely possible to poison your dog with a product that your best friend – or even your veterinarian! – recommended and used on their own dogs.

SELECT SAMPLE

We're going to discuss just two kinds of flea-control products here: oral medications and spot-on products made by the most reputable and responsible manufacturers. There are two reasons we are excluding *all* the flea-killing shampoos, sprays, powders, dips, and collars – as well as the low-budget spot-ons – that are available to dog owners:

- 1) Almost all of these products are less effective than the products we will discuss.
- 2) Almost all of these products are more dangerous (more toxic) than the products we will discuss.

In fact, many products on the market are excluded by virtue of *both* of the two reasons listed above. We don't recommend using any flea-control products other than the ones that appear on the next few pages – and we implore you to use them exactly as directed.

As their patents run out on best-selling products, manufacturers reformulate and launch "new and improved" products. We suggest that pet owners stick with older products until the safety of new ones has been established.



OUR RECOMMENDATIONS AND WARNINGS

The following are our suggestions for using the most effective flea-control products on the market in the safest ways possible.

■ **DON'T USE A SHOTGUN WHEN A RIFLE WILL DO THE TRICK.** That is, use the least toxic, simplest product that is needed. If fleas are the only insect threat to your dog, use a product that addresses fleas only. If ticks are also a problem for your dog, using a product that is made to protect him from both pests is more prudent than risking a toxic drug interaction from using two incompatible pesticides.

The same goes for a product that also offers protection from heartworm and/or intestinal worms; use one of these multi-target products if it's needed, but don't subject a dog who has little risk of exposure to these additional parasites to a combination product if you don't have to.

Also, be aware that some products are highly problematic when used in combination with other pesticides. Combining spinosad (the flea control ingredient in Comfortis and Trifexis) with the high doses of ivermectin and milbemycin oxime used to treat demodectic and sarcoptic mange increases the potential for neurological side effects. Use with caution in dogs with the MDR1 mutation (see "Dogs With a Drug Problem," WDJ Dec 2012) for the same reason.

ALTERNATE NAMES

Some of the oral and topical flea-control products listed on the tables on page 5 and 7 are marketed under different names.

ORAL MEDICATIONS	
COMFORTIS	AcuGuard (Vethical)
TRIFEXIS	ComboGuard (Vethical)
TOPICAL PRODUCTS	
ADVANTAGE II	Advantage Plus
K9 ADVANTIX II	K9 Advantix Plus
ADVANTAGE MULTI	Advocate (other countries, including Canada)
VECTRA	SimpleGuard, FirstShield
VECTRA 3D	SimpleGuard 3, FirstShield Trio, Vectra Trio, Vectra Gold

■ **USE THESE PRODUCTS INFREQUENTLY, ONLY AS NEEDED.** The product manufacturers would love to have you administer their wares once a month, every month; their bias is profit-motivated. We recommend using them as infrequently as you can get away with. However, if you use a multi-target product for say, fleas and heartworm prevention, and you don't need it for fleas anymore, don't leave your dog unprotected against heartworm; use another preventative aimed at just heartworm.

■ **READ THE ENTIRE LABEL, NOTE ALL CAUTIONS, AND FOLLOW ALL DIRECTIONS.** "Why should I bother? I bought this from my veterinarian!" you say. Vets and their staff members are busy, and

they may not have ever read the entire label – or be familiar with your dog's medical history – to know that a certain product is contraindicated for your dog. Pay special attention to the sections of the label and package insert that discuss "Warnings" and "Safety." If, based on your reading, you think the product could pose a problem for your dog, don't administer it. Instead, call your vet and discuss it with her before proceeding (or returning the product).

■ **BE ESPECIALLY CAUTIOUS IF YOUR DOG IS AMONG THE MOST VULNERABLE TO INJURY.** Certain types of dogs are far more prone to experiencing adverse reactions, including death, to flea-killing products than others. Frequently mentioned on label cautions are dogs who are **old, sick, debilitated, underweight, medicated, very young, or very small.** Additionally, the safety of many products has not been established for dogs who are used for breeding (actually, it's their offspring that are likely to suffer).

■ **USE THE SMALLEST EFFECTIVE DOSE INDICATED.** If your dog weighs 47 lbs, and the product you want to use is available only in doses for dogs who weigh 20-50 lbs and 50-80 pounds, choose the product for the smaller dog. If your dog is extremely small, less than 8 lbs, say, and the smallest dose of the product you are considering can treat dogs up to 25 lbs. look for a different product, one with a smaller range of doses. Extremely small dogs have more adverse reactions than larger dogs, and these inadvertent doses of 2-3 times what they really need definitely contribute to the problems. (Products containing permethrin, in



PHOTO BY ROSE CASSANO

If your dog and cat share beds, sleep in close proximity to each other, or groom each other, don't use any of the products that are toxic to cats on your dog! Cats have been accidentally poisoned (and even killed) through "incidental" contact with dogs who have been treated with spot-on products that contain ingredients that are toxic to cats.

particular, seem to be especially problematic for small dogs, even when dosed according to label instructions. Err on the side of caution.)

■ **DON'T MIX PRODUCTS.** If a product is meant to be administered once a month, don't use it more frequently than that, and don't use any *other* product in that time span, either. A product can be *both* ineffective for its intended use and potentially harmful to your dog.

■ **WHEN A PRODUCT WARNS THAT IT SHOULD BE USED WITH CAUTION IN "MEDICATED" DOGS, DON'T USE ON YOUR MEDICATED DOG!** The makers of these products have been criticized for not being as explicit or thorough as they could be in their lists of contraindications. Consider *every* medication your dog takes, and choose a product accordingly. For example, products containing amitraz (such as Certifect) should not be

used on "medicated" dogs, such as those with diabetes or heart problems; amitraz, a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI), can be dangerous when combined with antidepressants (such as those used to treat separation anxiety), Anipryl (used for canine cognitive dysfunction and Cushing's disease), and DL-Phenylalanine (DLPA), used to treat chronic pain.

■ **USE EXTRA CAUTION IF YOU HAVE CATS.** Some of these products are especially toxic to cats. If your cat shares bedding, sleeps in close proximity to, or licks and grooms your dog, don't even consider any of the products that are potentially fatal to cats.

■ **DON'T RUSH TO VOLUNTEER YOUR DOG AS A GUINEA PIG.** Your veterinary staff may be promoting the latest, greatest product, and may have even, in their enthusiasm, stopped carrying a product that really worked well for your

dog. Don't feel pressured to switch! You can ask them to order the product that worked well for your dog in the past, or look for it at another clinic.

Newly introduced products may not have been tested on more than a couple hundred dogs – or fewer! – before they go to market. The test dogs are likely laboratory animals, often of a single breed, and not necessarily exposed to the complex melange of environmental chemicals, foods, vaccines, illnesses, and medicines that dogs in a "real world" environment routinely experience.

If problems having to do with unanticipated drug interactions or anything else are going to arise, well, let them happen to someone else's dogs. Allow plenty of time for enough doses to be administered that the product's safety is better established before you give it to your dog, *especially* if he's a sensitive individual – very tiny or old, a cancer survivor or a breed that is prone

ORAL FLEA-CONTROL PRODUCTS

ORAL MEDICATION	TARGET SPECIES	ACTIVE INGREDIENTS	MANUFACTURERS' WARNINGS *	Further cautions may be warranted, see article
COMFORTIS Introduced Nov 2007 Elanco Animal Health (division of Eli Lilly and Co.) Greenfield, IN (877) 352-6261	• Fleas	• SPINOSAD (kills fleas)	Do not administer to dogs who weigh less than 3.3 lbs or who are less than 14 weeks of age. Use with caution in breeding females and dogs with epilepsy. The safety in breeding males has not been evaluated. Give with a meal.	
TRIFEXIS Introduced Jan 2011 Elanco Animal Health (division of Eli Lilly and Co.) Greenfield, IN (877) 352-6261	• Fleas • L3 & L4 stages of heartworm • Hookworm • Roundworm • Whipworm	• SPINOSAD (kills fleas) • MILBEMYCIN OXIME (kills L3 & L4 stage of heartworm, and adult hookworm, adult roundworm, and adult whipworm)	Do not administer to dogs who weigh less than 5 lbs or who are less than 8 weeks of age. Prior to administration of Trifexis, dogs should be tested for existing heartworm infection. Use with caution in breeding females. The safe use of Trifexis in breeding males has not been evaluated. Use with caution in dogs with pre-existing epilepsy. Puppies less than 14 weeks of age may experience a higher rate of vomiting. Give with a meal.	
NEXGARD Introduced Sept 2013 Merial Limited Duluth, GA (800) 660-1842	• Fleas • American Dog Ticks	• AFOXOLANER (kills fleas; helps "control" ticks)	Do not administer to dogs who weigh less than 4 lbs or who are less than 8 weeks of age. The safe use of NexGard in pregnant, breeding or lactating dogs has not been evaluated. Use with caution in dogs with a history of seizures.	
CAPSTAR Introduced Oct 2000 Novartis Animal Health Greensboro, NC (800) 332-2761	• Fleas	• NITENPYRAM (kills existing/current fleas on dog, but has no ongoing effect)	Do not administer to dogs who weigh less than 2 lbs or who are less than 4 weeks of age. Often, it's recommended that Capstar be used concurrently with Sentinel (which contains an insect development inhibitor) to provide full control of a flea infestation. The safety of the concurrent use of Capstar and Sentinel in pregnant or nursing dogs or in puppies less than 11 weeks of age has not been demonstrated.	
SENTINEL FLAVOR TABS Introduced Jan 1997 Novartis Animal Health Greensboro, NC (800) 332-2761	• Fleas* (does not kill fleas; prevents flea eggs from maturing) • L3 & L4 stages of heartworm • Hookworm • Roundworm • Whipworm	• MILBEMYCIN OXIME (kills L3 & L4 stage of heartworm, and adult hookworm, roundworm, and whipworm) • LUFENURON (insect development inhibitor that prevents flea eggs from maturing)	Do not administer to dogs who weigh less than 2 lbs and who are less than 4 weeks of age. Dogs should be tested for heartworm before use. Often, it's recommended that Sentinel be used concurrently with Capstar (which kills adult fleas) to provide full control of a flea infestation. Note that the safety of the concurrent use of Sentinel and Capstar in pregnant or nursing dogs or in puppies less than 11 weeks of age has not been demonstrated. Give with a meal.	

to cancer, an epileptic or a breed that is prone to epilepsy, and so on.

■ **DO NOT “APPLY AND FORGET” – WATCH YOUR DOG CAREFULLY!**

Monitor your dog closely for side effects or signs of sensitivity after administering the product, *particularly* when using the product for the first time. This means you shouldn't administer a product right before you leave your dog with a sitter or boarding kennel and go on vacation; no one knows your dog as well as you do, and no one will notice subtle signs of an adverse reaction as quickly as you will. You might even consider using any new product early on the first day of a weekend when you will have ample opportunity to watch your dog for any signs of a bad reaction.

■ **TAKE ACTION IF YOUR DOG HAS AN ADVERSE REACTION TO ANY OF THESE PRODUCTS.**

If it's a topical product, wash your dog as thoroughly as possible, paying special attention to the area where the spot-on was applied. Then take your dog to the veterinarian for treatment, and make sure the vet enters thorough notes about the reaction in



A photo is worth 1,000 words. Take video of any abnormal behavior, or photos of any visible injury, if your dog suffers an adverse reaction to a flea-control product, like this 8-year-old Westie's response to a single application of Activyl.

your dog's file. Take photos and/or video of your dog that illustrate the problem he's having. Document the purchase (save your receipts!) and application of the product; how and when did you administer it, and how and when did the adverse events begin?

Then, report the adverse event to the manufacturer and to the government agency responsible for regulating the type of product you used (see “How to Report an Adverse Reaction, below”).

■ **DON'T REPEAT A FAILURE.** If your dog had an adverse reaction to a product,

don't use that product again! And don't use any other product that contains the same active ingredients!

You are stuck when it comes to the unspecified “other” ingredients in these products. Manufacturers are not required to disclose what these other ingredients are, even though it's clear that they are sometimes responsible for dogs' adverse reactions. If your dog has a bad reaction to a product, all you can do is to avoid using that product and others that contain the same “active” ingredients. (And, in case of adverse reactions to the “other,” undisclosed ingredients, you can only hope that the next product you try does not contain the same undisclosed ingredient.)

Note in your dog's health diary about the product that you used, the amount, the date, and details about the dog's reaction, and then refer to this before buying or using another product. 🐾

Many thanks to Mary Straus for her research assistance for this article.

Nancy Kerns is Editor of WDJ. Tick control is critical in her part of the Northern California woods.

HOW TO REPORT AN ADVERSE REACTION

Any adverse reaction following the administration of a topical or oral medication should be reported to the product manufacturer. You can do this by calling the toll-free number on the product label. A technical services veterinarian from the company will ask a series of questions about the event, file the report internally and (must, by law) forward the report to the proper regulatory agency.

For the most part, pesticides are regulated in the U.S. by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). However, *systemically active insecticides* are regulated as “drugs” by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA). All of the orally administered products listed on page 5 are regulated by the FDA. And most of the spot-on products listed on page 7 are regulated by the EPA. The notable exceptions are Advantage Multi and Revolution; their ability to kill the L3 and L4 (larval) stages of heartworm and intestinal worms is due to a systemic action, so they are regulated by the FDA.

Your veterinarian can also file the report, and you should ask the clinic staff to do so – veterinarians' reports are given more credence than reports from owners by the regulatory agencies – but it's important that you follow up to make sure it gets done. After your dog has been seen and/or treated by your vet, call and ask whether an adverse event report was filed. If

you have an inkling that it hasn't been done and isn't going to get done, it's important that you file one yourself.

You can also submit a report directly to the regulatory agency. Be prepared to provide solid information about when and what product was administered (it's ideal if you have the package), as well as details about your dog's medical history, including his age, weight, breed, all concomitant drugs he has been given, and any other recent illnesses he may have had.

To report an adverse event concerning an oral medication or a systemically active insecticide, contact the FDA Center for Veterinary Medicine at (888) FDA-VETS. A form that can be printed, filled out, and mailed to the FDA CVM is available here: fda.gov/animalveterinary/safetyhealth/reportaproblem/ucm055305.htm

An online form for reporting an adverse event concerning a topical pesticide is here: npic.orst.edu/reportprob.html. If you are not a computer user, it's a tad more difficult, because each state has a designated state pesticide regulatory agency that has the primary responsibility to investigate pesticide incidents. For a list of these state regulators, call the National Pesticide Information Center (NPIC, 800-858-7378), to find the correct contact for reporting your dog's adverse reaction.

TOPICAL (SPOT-ON) FLEA-CONTROL PRODUCTS

PRODUCTS LISTED IN RED ARE REGULATED BY THE FDA, RATHER THAN THE EPA

SPOT-ON	TARGET SPECIES	ACTIVE INGREDIENTS	MANUFACTURERS' WARNINGS * Further cautions may be warranted, see article
ACTIVYL Introduced June 2012 Merck Animal Health Whitehouse Station, NJ (800) 224-5318	• Fleas	• INDOXACARB (19.53%; a pro-insecticidal compound that requires enzymatic activation in the flea and flea larvae)	Do not administer to dogs who weigh less than 4 lbs or who are less than 8 weeks of age. Do not use on dogs who are intended for breeding, pregnant, or nursing. Consult a veterinarian before using this product on debilitated, aged, or medicated dogs.
ACTIVYL TICK PLUS Introduced June 2012 Merck Animal Health Whitehouse Station, NJ (800) 224-5318	• Fleas • American Dog Ticks, Brown Dog Ticks, Deer Ticks, Lone Star Ticks	• PERMETHRIN (42.50%; kills fleas and ticks) • INDOXACARB (13.0%; a pro-insecticidal compound that requires enzymatic activation in the flea and flea larvae)	Do not administer to dogs who weigh less than 4 lbs or who are less than 8 weeks of age. Do not use on dogs who are intended for breeding, pregnant or nursing. Consult a veterinarian before using this product on debilitated, aged, or medicated dogs. Toxic to cats.
ADVANTAGE II Introduced Jan 2011 Bayer Healthcare Shawnee Mission, KS (800) 422-9874	• Fleas • Lice	• IMIDACLOPRID (9.1%; kills fleas) • PYRIPROXYFEN (0.46%; a.k.a. Nylar, an insect growth regulator)	Do not administer to dog who are less than 7 weeks of age. Consult your veterinarian before using this product on debilitated, aged, pregnant, or nursing animals.
ADVANTAGE MULTI Introduced April 2007 Bayer Healthcare Shawnee Mission, KS (800) 422-9874	• Fleas • L3 & L4 stage of heartworm • Hookworm • Roundworm • Whipworm • Sarcoptic mange	• IMIDACLOPRID (10.0%; kills fleas) • MOXIDECTIN (2.5%; kills L3 & L4 stage of heartworm and gastrointestinal worms, including several larval stages)	Do not administer to dogs who weigh less than 3 lbs or who are less than 7 weeks of age. Use with caution in sick, debilitated, or underweight animals. Safety has not been established with breeding, pregnant, or lactating dogs. Dogs should be tested for heartworm before use. Do not apply to irritated skin. Toxic to cats.
K9 ADVANTIX II Introduced Jan 2011 Bayer Healthcare Shawnee Mission, KS (800) 422-9874	• Fleas • Lice • Deer Ticks, American Dog Ticks, Brown Dog Ticks, Lone Star Ticks • Mosquitoes • Biting Flies	• PERMETHRIN (44.0%; kills fleas and ticks) • IMIDACLOPRID (8.8%; kills fleas) • PYRIPROXYFEN (0.44%; a.k.a. Nylar, an insect growth regulator)	Do not administer to dogs less than 7 weeks of age. Consult your veterinarian before using this product on debilitated, aged, pregnant or nursing animals, or those on medication. Toxic to cats.
CERTIFECT Introduced Aug 2011 Merial Limited Duluth, GA (800) 660-1842	• Fleas • Deer Ticks, Gulf Coast Ticks, Black Legged Ticks, Brown Dog Ticks, Lone Star Ticks, Yellow Dog Ticks, European Dog Ticks, American Dog Ticks, Wood Ticks, Paralysis Ticks	• AMITRAZ (7.6%; kills ticks) • FIPRONIL (6.4%; kills fleas and ticks) • (S)-METHOPRENE (5.8%; a.k.a. Precor, an insect growth regulator)	Do not administer to dogs who weigh less than 5 lbs or who are less than 8 weeks of age. Do not use on dogs who have been diagnosed with diabetes or heart problems. Consult a veterinarian before using on dogs that are medicated, debilitated, aged, or obese. Amitraz is a monoamine oxidase inhibitor (MAOI); therefore, humans taking MAOI-containing medication or who are diabetic must take particular care when handling this product. Toxic to cats.
FRONTLINE PLUS Introduced Sept 2000 Merial Limited Duluth, GA (800) 660-1842	• Fleas • Deer Ticks, Brown Dog Ticks, American Dog Ticks, Lone Star Ticks • Lice • Sarcoptic mange	• FIPRONIL (9.8%; kills fleas and ticks) • (S)-METHOPRENE (8.8%; a.k.a. Precor, an insect growth regulator)	Do not administer to dogs less than 8 weeks of age. Consult a veterinarian before using on medicated, debilitated or aged animals.
PARASTAR PLUS Introduced May 2012 Novartis Animal Health Greensboro, NC (800) 332-2761	• Fleas • Deer Ticks, Brown Dog Ticks, American Dog Ticks, Lone Star Ticks • Lice • Sarcoptic mange	• FIPRONIL (9.8%; kills fleas and ticks) • CYPHENOTHHRIN (5.2%; kills fleas and ticks)	Do not administer to dogs less than 12 weeks of age. Consult a veterinarian before using on medicated, debilitated or aged animals. Toxic to cats.
REVOLUTION Introduced Sept 1999 Zoetis (formerly Pfizer) Florham Park, NJ (888) 963-8471	• Fleas • L3 & L4 stage of heartworm • Sarcoptic mange • Ear mites • American Dog Ticks	• SELAMECTIN (two strengths available: 7.3% and 14.2%. Kills fleas; kills L3 & L4 stage of heartworm; prevents flea eggs from hatching for one month; helps "control" ear mites, scabies, and ticks)	Do not administer to dogs less than six weeks of age. Do not use on sick, debilitated, or underweight dogs. Dogs should be tested for heartworm before use. Do not apply to broken skin.
VECTRA Introduced April 2009 Ceva Animal Health Lenexa, KS (800) 999-0297	• Fleas	• DINOTEFURAN (22.0%; kills fleas) • PYRIPROXYFEN (3%; insect growth regulator)	Do not administer to dog less than 8 weeks of age. Do not use this product on debilitated, aged, medicated, pregnant or nursing animals or animals known to be sensitive to pesticide products without first consulting a veterinarian.
VECTRA 3D Introduced Sept 2007 Ceva Animal Health Lenexa, KS (800) 999-0297	• Fleas • American Dog Ticks, Deer Ticks, Brown Dog Ticks, Gulf Coast Ticks, Lone Star Ticks • Mosquitoes • Lice • Biting flies & Sand Flies	• PERMETHRIN (36.08%; kills fleas and ticks) • DINOTEFURAN (4.95%; kills fleas) • PYRIPROXYFEN (0.44%; insect growth regulator)	Do not administer to dogs less than 7 weeks of age. Do not use this product on debilitated, aged, medicated, pregnant or nursing dogs, or dogs known to be sensitive to pesticide products without first consulting a veterinarian. Toxic to cats.

Toss Those Cookies?

The ins and outs of making your dog vomit.

BY LISA RODIER

I can still vividly recall the panic I felt five years ago when I looked up to see my beloved Bouvier, Axel, then 12 years old, stretch out his neck, give a gulp, and swallow the IQube Puzzle Plush squeaky plush ball that he'd been sucking on. I looked at him in disbelief; had he really just quaffed that thing? And should I try to get him to vomit it back up?

For most of us, seeing our dogs orally inhale a verboten item, whether it be a toy, medication, food product or what-have-you, is one of the most frightening pet parent moments. If your dog swallowed something harmful, would you know if and how to induce vomiting?

In Axel's case, I didn't even try, and quickly took him to an emergency veterinary clinic where *they* induced vomiting. Despite their efforts, the ball remained in his belly. We were given the okay to take him home and observe him for any signs of discomfort.

Today, my husband and I share our home with an adolescent Bouvier, Atle. While Atle is no more prone to eating inappropriate items than the next adolescent dog (that is, fairly likely!), I've decided it's high time that I learn how to induce vomiting in an emergency.

IN A HURRY TO HURL?

Dr. Jennifer Pittman is a critical care specialist at BluePearl-Georgia Veterinary Specialists in Atlanta, where she spends most of her time in the ICU and ER, and sees anywhere from 4 to 10 toxicity cases a week. As a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care, toxicity is right up her alley – and she would like the opportunity to consult with a pet owner *before* said owner induces vomiting. “There are things that we don't want to come back up,” Dr. Pittman warns.

Also, inducing vomiting is not without risk of potential complications, such as aspiration of vomitus, which could

lead to the development of pneumonia. Talking with a veterinarian beforehand lets you weigh what your dog has ingested against the risk of inducing vomiting. If your Chihuahua eats one Hershey Kiss, for example, it's likely he'll be okay, so inducing vomiting can probably be avoided.

Although Dr. Pittman says that she hesitates to provide hard and fast rules of when we should absolutely induce vomiting, she does have some general guidelines:

■ **ABSOLUTELY YES** – If you see your dog ingest antifreeze, induce vomiting immediately. Anti-freeze is very rapidly absorbed across the gastric wall; within 30 minutes or less of ingestion, enough antifreeze has already been absorbed by your dog's body to cause kidney toxicity. And then get your dog to a veterinary clinic ASAP.

■ **A GOOD IDEA** – If your dog ingests human medication or a goodly dose of another dog's medications, it's a good idea to make the dog vomit. “That would be a time I'd say to induce vomiting regardless,” Dr. Pittman advises.

■ **IT DEPENDS** – Say your dog swallows a golf ball or

your daughter's teddy bear. Depending on the size of your dog versus the object, inducing vomiting might be a good idea, but many times, the object needs to be removed with an endoscope. In these cases, confer with your veterinarian regarding the probability that the object could make it back up your dog's throat if vomiting was induced.

■ **UH, MAYBE NOT** – Your dog drinks an acidic substance such as bleach or a household cleaner, or eats a sharp-edged item. Inducing vomiting in these cases is more safely accomplished under the direct supervision of a veterinarian who can weigh the risks and benefits and act quickly if the plan goes south.

■ **ABSOLUTELY NOT** – If your dog is sedate, comatose, or displaying signs of neurologic impairment or seizures, do *not* induce vomiting. Dr. Pittman says, “The dog must appear clinically normal when you try to induce vomiting.” If he's not normal, do not induce vomiting; you run a high risk of complications from aspiration.

Although it's best to act within an hour of ingestion, inducing vomiting can be effective up to four hours post-ingestion in some cases. The caveat is that you should always consult a veterinarian or one of the veterinary phone consult toxicology services before inducing vomiting!

THE ART OF INDUCTION

Hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) is the therapy to use should you need to induce your dog to vomit. The solution works as a direct irritant to the dog's gastric lining; in a perfect world, the dog vomits fairly quickly after administration.

The dose is not a lot: one tablespoon per five pounds of your dog's body weight, with a maximum of three tablespoons! In other words, give all dogs who weigh



Every dog owner should have this on hand for emergency use: A fresh (unopened) bottle of hydrogen peroxide and a syringe (which makes it easy to squirt into the back of your dog's mouth).

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

Your initial call for advice can be to your local veterinarian or a poison control hotline. If your dog has ingested something fairly pedestrian (yet still potentially dangerous) such as a box of dark chocolate, a pound of raisins, a bulk package of gum containing xylitol, or other potentially toxic food products, odds are that your vet can adequately advise you. If your dog's choice of poison is something more exotic, such as a cocktail of grandma's beta blockers, statins, and anti-anxiety meds, you'd be better off making your first call to an animal poison control hotline.

There are two phone consult toxicology services, both offering consultations 24/7 and run by veterinarians:

- ✓ ASPCA Animal Poison Control: (888) 426-4435. Fee: \$65 payable at time of call by credit card. (aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control)
- ✓ Pet Poison Help Line: (800) 213-6680. Fee: \$39 payable at time of call by credit card. (petpoisonhelpline.com)

When you call, you'll provide the consulting veterinarian with the details of what your dog consumed, his age, weight, and

other pertinent facts, and in return you'll get a case number. The benefit to doing this before traveling to your vet clinic, or even en route (if someone else is with you and they are driving) is that by the time you reach the clinic, your veterinarian can call the service back with your case number and hit the ground running.

Dr. Pittman notes that many veterinary clinics themselves will err on the side of caution and consult poison control for two reasons:

1. To check for updated information about recent toxicities and newer formulations of drugs and combinations; many drug interactions are not commonly known.
2. To document the case and build a bank of information for treatment of future cases.

"In a perfect world," Dr. Pittman says, "you'd initiate contact with your local vet and contact the service at essentially the same time."



more than 15 pounds no more than three tablespoons per dose!

If the H₂O₂ works its magic, your dog should vomit within two to five minutes of receiving the first dose. If he doesn't vomit within five minutes, it's okay to re-dose. Then stop. Dr. Pittman warns that if your dog does not vomit within 10 minutes, you should be on your way to the vet. Do not administer more than the suggested dose. If given an exceedingly large dose of H₂O₂, the dog's stomach could rupture!

HOW TO ADMINISTER

A syringe is the first choice; it enables you to measure the dose precisely, and squirt it right into the back of the dog's mouth. If your dog is prone to eating odd things, keep an unopened bottle of peroxide (so that it's unoxidized and fizzy-fresh if needed) and fasten a syringe to the bottle with a rubber band, so you have everything you need in an emergency.

Another tactic that Dr. Pittman finds useful is to soak a piece of bread with the measured dose of hydrogen peroxide and immediately feed it to the dog.

Don't be disappointed if your pooch doesn't produce. "In the majority of cases, trying to induce vomiting at home, unfortunately, is not as successful as we

wish it would be. Don't be disappointed when it doesn't work, and know that you're not alone," says Dr. Pittman.

Whether the induction "works" or not, your next move is to head immediately to your dog's veterinarian or veterinary emergency clinic.

If you succeed in getting your dog to vomit, it's helpful to clean up and bring the vomitus with you to the vet's office. "That's probably the least glorious part of this whole process," says Dr. Pittman. "If you're worried that your dog ate four pills, we've got to search through that mess and try to identify those four pills."

REALLY? The vet wants the mess?

Yes and no. "Absolutely, we're happy to evaluate what came up," says Dr. Pittman. That said, even having the vomit won't solve all the mysteries. "But some medications, like gel caps or rapid release formulas, dissolve the minute they hit the stomach, so we'll never find those." But if fragments of the pills are found, it can make a huge difference in the next course of action, says Dr. Pittman: "The difference in the pills still being there versus them not, may mean three days of hospitalization."

THE MISSING TOY

Axel's ball remained happily ensconced

in his belly for about six months. Then, as these things are bound to happen, it re-emerged as a threat when we left Axel with a pet sitter and vacationed in Italy. When the sitter called to report that Axel was lethargic and not eating, all we could think about was the "smoking gun" of that darn ball. Blood tests and x-rays revealed nothing else askew.

I'm not sure that we would have elected for exploratory surgery had it not been for the missing toy, but fortunately, we did. The surgeon opened him up, removed the ball from his stomach – and happened to notice that his liver looked inflamed and infected. The focus of treatment became the liver infection; the stray ball wasn't the cause of Axel's malaise at all, but fortunately, it led his vet right to the real problem.

So as it turns out, if I had induced vomiting and gotten the ball back months before, we probably would have declined exploratory surgery and failed to find and treat the liver condition in time. Nevertheless, I'm glad to know *now* what to do if Axel's successor, Atle, swallows something he shouldn't. 🐾

Lisa Rodier lives in Georgia with her husband and Atle the Bouvier, and volunteers with the American Bouvier Rescue League.

Home Schooled

Professional dog training in your home can be a great alternative to group classes.

BY SUSAN SARUBIN, CPDT-KA, PMCT2

As an apprentice to a professional trainer in 2007, I learned to teach group good manners classes for puppies and adult dogs. Eventually I graduated to teaching group classes as a head trainer at my mentor’s facility, and started my own training business in Baltimore (Pawsitive Fit Puppy & Dog Training), offering private instruction in clients’ homes. As much as I liked the energy and excitement in group classes, and while group training classes work well for many dogs and owners, I found teaching “privates” was a better fit for me and many of my clients. Some of my private clients who previously attended group classes with other trainers realized that they (or their dogs) were not well suited for learning in a group environment. Several found classes so stressful that they dropped out before completing the course!

In-home training can be expensive, often costing several hundred dollars more than an average group training class. Some people can easily afford it, but the “sticker shock” of an initial quote for a package of private lessons may scare others away, limiting the options of many owners and dogs who could benefit from using this service. Fortunately, private trainers are often flexible in how they structure payment to make their services more financially accessible. They may discount the price of a course or package of several classes, and some offer pay-as-you-go options. While paying by the class may cost you a few dollars more than an up-front purchase of a course, it allows you to schedule sessions as your budget allows.

Also, with instruction tailored to your needs, you may need fewer sessions than the six to eight weeks required of most group classes, reducing your costs. Even

if it requires some creative budgeting, in-home instruction can be a wise investment in your relationship with your dog if it is the best option for training.

Let’s look at the benefits of in-home training, for humans *and* dogs.

ADVANTAGES FOR OWNERS

I’ve learned that there are times when in-home training is simply the best alternative for dog owners. The following are just a few of those times:

■ WHEN TIME IS AT A PREMIUM –

It is difficult, if not impossible, for some people to commit to a seven- or eight-week training class on the same day each week. Evening work hours or weekend commitments to other family activities may coincide with the only times that group classes are offered. Many private trainers offer flexibility in appointment times from week to week, to accommodate you if you are available Tuesday morning this week, but only Wednesday evening next week.

Some families are so tightly scheduled, that simply finding time to travel to and from a training center for classes is problematic. A trainer who can come to their home, or even schedule sessions from the park where the kids’ soccer practice is being held concurrently, can make sure that the dog’s lessons don’t get lost in the shuffle.

Are you short on time for training, or looking for quicker results? “Day training,” a service offered by some in-home trainers, may be your answer. With day training, the trainer comes to your home while you are at work or otherwise occupied. The trainer works with your dog to build the foundations of the behaviors you select, usually for two to three sessions each week for several weeks. While they “install” the new behaviors, most private trainers require an additional weekly session with the owner present to teach the required skills to maintain the training.

Day training services are significantly more expensive than standard in-home classes where the owner takes an active

One advantage of private dog training sessions in your home is that the trainer can work with your dog on the behaviors that most bother you, in the environment where they most commonly occur, such as calm greetings at your front door!



A custom training curriculum can also include a trick or two of your choice for added fun! Author/trainer Susan Sarubin gives Archie a reward for his first “Take a bowl!” behavior on verbal cue.

role in all training sessions. If you hire someone else to do most of the “heavy lifting” when it comes to training your dog, prepare to pay!

■ **HEALTH ISSUES** – An owner may have health problems or restricted mobility, making it difficult, or even impossible, to work with her dog in a group class. Mental health issues can also make in-home training the best, or only, choice. Private trainers can work with owners who are disabled, ill, or elderly and lack the mobility or stamina needed for a group class. They are also in a better position to suggest modifications to the home environment to make it easier for an owner to navigate with their dog and manage their dog’s behavior.

■ **DIFFERENT LEARNING STYLES** – If you learn more easily through observation, you may respond best to watching a trainer demonstrate the skills used to teach your dog new behaviors. Perhaps you need more emphasis on detailed oral or written instructions, or prefer diving right in with some coaching from the trainer. In the client’s home, a trainer is able to adapt their teaching method, lesson plans, and expectations of progress according to your preferred style to maximize your learning potential.

■ **THE PERSONAL TOUCH** – In a private training session, the trainer focuses on only you and your dog. You have that trainer’s undivided attention to help you hone your training skills, answer any questions, and address any challenges you may have experienced while working with your dog.

■ **TRAINING TAILORED TO YOUR NEEDS** – Your dog may already know how to wait politely for the food bowl and drop items on cue, but is a disaster walking on leash and greets guests to the home with a chest bump. With personalized instruction, a trainer can create a custom curriculum that focuses on the behaviors that you consider most important.

It’s possible that your home environment poses challenges to your dog’s



success that are best addressed on-site. For example, a dog might be able to learn and demonstrate perfect recalls and sit-stays in a training center or neutral setting, but be far too distracted by the barking dogs or children jumping on a trampoline next door to perform these behaviors at home. When a trainer can observe the unique training challenges present in your home, she can offer techniques for conquering them in a much more efficient way, reducing your frustration with your dog’s lack of compliance.

■ **FORCE-FREE TRAINING CLASSES NOT OFFERED IN YOUR AREA** – You may live in an area where the only group classes offered are old-fashioned obedience classes that use collar “corrections” or other techniques based on force and punishment. If so, look for a force-free trainer in the vicinity offering private instruction. (See “Resources,” page 13, for sources for lists of force-free trainers).

If you can’t afford the cost of a class package with a private trainer, pay for one or two sessions to start. After some initial instruction, you can train on your own, using a good basic, force-free training book for guidance (see page 13 for my recommendations). When your budget allows, you can always have the trainer back for a single session to fine-tune skills if you need to. When you have a simple training challenge, most trainers are happy to help former clients by phone or by e-mail for free or a reduced charge.

ADVANTAGES FOR YOUR DOG

Sometimes it’s the dog who would benefit the most from private lessons! For example:

■ **DOGS WHO ARE UNSUITED FOR A GROUP CLASS** – Is your dog anxious or fearful? Easily aroused? Reactive to other dogs or strangers? Attending a group manners training class may do more harm than good. While you want to

help your dog overcome his fears, exposing him to what he fears in close proximity or at a high intensity can make him even more fearful.

A dog-reactive dog in a class of dog-friendly dogs is disruptive, and possibly dangerous, to the other dogs, their owners, and the trainer.

There are some wonderful group classes specifically designed for dog-reactive dogs – individuals with aggressive on-leash reactions toward other dogs. These classes are a great option if offered in your area. If not, a private trainer experienced in working with leash-aggressive dogs can help you work with your dog in real life environments. Aggressive behavior toward humans needs to be addressed in private sessions with a qualified behavior professional before considering a group class.

Dogs who are anxious or high-energy and easily aroused may feel overwhelmed in an environment as stimulating as a group class. This leads to difficulty in maintaining focus and attention; when there is no attention, there can be no training. “Cautious canines” and “hyper hounds” may be more relaxed starting training in a familiar home environment.

If you have a dog who is not suited for group classes, but still needs manners training, look for a private trainer experienced in working with difficult dogs. With your trainer’s help, you can teach your dog manners as well as addressing any behavior issue that requires special behavior modification training. Working on basic behaviors that teach your dog attention and focus (name recognition, putting attention on cue) and impulse control (stay, wait at the door, wait for food), better prepares your dog to cooperate with behavior modification training.

Dogs who are deaf, blind, or have other special needs will also do best with private, in-home training. Look for a trainer experienced in working with dogs that have your dog’s particular special need; specific skills are required that the average trainer may not possess.

■ **DISTRACTIBLE DOGS** – When teaching new behaviors, the fewer distractions, the easier it is for your dog to learn. You can never eliminate *all* distractions, even at your home – an

TRAINING BAILEY: BEST AT HOME

Bailey, a 3-year-old Lab-mix, needed manners training, but due to some more serious behavior problems, she was not a good candidate for a group class.

As a puppy, Bailey was transferred from a shelter in Georgia to one on the eastern shore of Maryland. It was a year before she was adopted by a loving family; a married couple with two boys, ages 9 and 12. In the next 14 months Bailey had surgeries on both knees for luxating patellas. Her recovery and rehabilitation required months of kennel confinement and restricted leash walking only. Bailey was trained at home, but training was limited and not very effective.



In time, Bailey made a full recovery from her surgeries and is now a healthy, active dog with normal mobility. When her owners called me, Bailey not only needed basic manners training, but had developed several serious behavior issues that needed to be addressed as well. The common behavior problems were jumping on family, attention-seeking barking, and “not listening” or coming when called. Of more concern was her reactive behavior toward other dogs, some strangers, and bicycles passing. Her leash aggression toward other dogs made it impossible to bring her to a group training class for basic manners training. And walks with Bailey had become a nightmare, trying to avoid other dogs and bicyclists.

After our initial behavior consultation, Bailey’s family now manages her environment more carefully, has increased her physical and mental exercise, and is committed to using only positive methods of training. Our two follow-up appointments have focused on a combination of manners training, working on attention and impulse control, reinforcing calm behavior, managing behavior, and behavior modification training (counter-conditioning and desensitization), beginning with her intense reactive response toward bicyclists.

Her owners are happy to report that since they started working with Bailey, she is calmer, barking for attention has decreased, and she “seems happier.” At our appointment just yesterday, she still greeted me at the door by jumping initially, but there was no physical contact or barking, and after two or three leaps she sat down. Our training with moving bicycles has also paid off; Bailey’s mom reports that she can now walk Bailey and feed yummy treats as bicyclists pass, and Bailey barely notices them go by.

Bailey still has a way to go. We will continue good manners and behavior modification training in her home and neighborhood. With a family committed to her training and well being, and based on the progress we’ve already seen, Bailey and her family are well on their way to a better life together.

Bailey, a 3-year-old Labrador-mix, is fortunate to have found a family who is so committed to her! Her training took a back seat to months of recovery from medical issues, during which time she developed some problematic behaviors. Happily, some private training sessions have solved most of these!



unexpected UPS delivery, the neighbor mowing the lawn, kids playing loudly next door, and construction noise are beyond your control.

But in the privacy of your home, you are able to control the number and intensity of many distractions while training. Turn your cell phone off, unplug the landline, send the kids upstairs to do homework, pick the toys up off the floor, and close the blinds.

If possible, schedule your appointments at more quiet times of the day, when there are no other dogs, strange humans, or unfamiliar sights and smells to compete for your dog’s attention. If you are the most interesting thing in the room when you train, it’s easier for your dog to stay focused. When ready for more advanced training, you can easily control your dog’s exposure to distractions in and around your home.

■ TRAINING IN THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE MOST BEHAVIOR HAPPENS

– While some owners take their dogs everywhere with them, many dogs spend their days in and around their homes – in the house, yard, on a neighborhood walk, at a nearby park, with only occasional visits to a vet or pet supply store.

It makes sense to train in the environment where most dogs spend most of their time – and where it is most important for a dog to be well behaved. You can teach your dog in the areas of your home where problem behaviors may occur (at the doors, around counters or furniture, interacting with your kids, etc.). And your trainer can help you with modifications to your particular home environment to better manage your dog’s behavior and make training easier.

■ ACCESS TO THE REAL WORLD –

Private training does not *have* to take place in your home. When you and your dog are ready to increase distractions, you can work with your trainer practicing behaviors outdoors. You can even meet at a park or outdoor shopping mall to work on loose leash walking, polite greetings, or attention skills.

SOMETIMES A GROUP CLASS IS BETTER . . .

Professional in-home training is not all things to all dogs or all owners. In addition to being less expensive than private training, group classes offer some benefits to both dogs and their humans

that personal instruction does not. For example, puppies who are well socialized at an early age are less likely to develop fear-based behavior issues as adult dogs. A well-run group puppy class typically offers lots of exposure to other puppies as well as interactions with unfamiliar humans in a novel environment. Many classes also provide after-class puppy playtime, pairing pups of similar size, personalities, and play styles for some games and friendly tussling.

While group class alone is not sufficient socialization for your pup, it is a good weekly opportunity for safe, supervised socialization. If you choose to work with a trainer in your home, make it a priority to find appropriate socialization opportunities with people and other friendly dogs.

There is a camaraderie among dog owners that often develops in a group training class. You meet other people, swap stories about your dogs, share your successes, and commiserate over behavior challenges. Realizing that other people make training mistakes, get frustrated, and have dogs that are as imperfect as yours, may make you feel less alone in your efforts. Sometimes friendships develop that go beyond the walls of the training center. You may find the perfect playmate for your dog and arrange play dates!

All that said, as a trainer, I really enjoy having the opportunity to get to know my clients and their dogs more intimately in private lessons. I have achieved a good deal more success teaching owners and dogs one-on-one than in my short career as a group trainer.

Since moving to the eastern shore of Maryland a few years ago, my business mainly consists of consultations with owners whose dogs have more serious behavior issues, though some need only basic manners training. But when, every once in a while, someone calls and says, "I have a 8-week-old puppy and we need training!" I'm thrilled. It means a close encounter with a little life that I can help mold, and spend time teaching someone how to create an extraordinary life with their new family member. 🐾

Susan Sarubin, CPDT-KA, PMCT2, is owner of Pawsitive Fit, LLC, Puppy and Dog Training, serving the mid-shore region of Maryland. Susan lives in Easton, MD, with her husband and three Rhodesian Ridgebacks. See page 24 for contact information.

RESOURCES – FIND A “FORCE-FREE” TRAINER

The following are my recommended sources for finding a trainer who uses force-free, dog-friendly training techniques:

Pet Professional Guild – The Association for Force-Free Pet Professionals (PPG) is a membership organization that promotes the common interest of spreading ‘force-free’ dog training and pet care methods to the pet industry. petprofessionalguild.com

Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT) – The CCPDT offers testing and certifications for animal training and behavior professionals. Please note that while establishing and maintaining humane standards of competence based on experience, standardized testing, skills, and continuing education, trainers certified by the CCPDT are *not* required to use force-free methods exclusively. When considering a Certified Professional Dog Trainer (CPDT), be sure to ask about training philosophy and methods used. cpdt.org

Association of Professional Dog Trainers (APDT) – The membership of this organization is comprised of individual trainers who are committed to becoming better trainers through education. Note that while many force-free trainers are members of the APDT, you will need to inquire whether or not your local APDT member trainer uses only force-free methods in training. apdt.com

Pat Miller Certified Trainers (PMCT) can be found at peaceablepaws.com

Karen Pryor Academy Certified Training Partners (KPA CTP) can be found at karenpryoracademy.com

Victoria Stillwell Positively Dog Training licensed trainers (VSPDT) can be found at positively.com

SUPER SELF-HELP TRAINING BOOKS

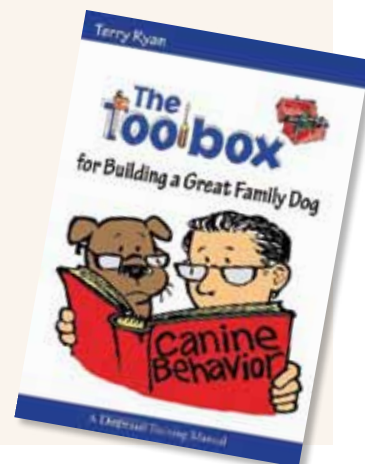
The following are my recommendations for books that make it easy to understand how to train your dog at home by yourself. All of the books are available from your local bookseller and from WholeDogJournal.com.

The Power of Positive Dog Training, by Pat Miller

The Dog Trainer's Complete Guide to a Happy, Well-Behaved Pet,
by Jolanta Benal

Family Friendly Dog Training: A Six Week Program for You and Your Dog,
by Patricia McConnell, PhD, and Aimee M. Moore

The Toolbox for Building a Great Family Dog,
by Terry Ryan





🐾 FITNESS 🐾

Lean This Way

Keeping your dog thin is literally a lifesaver.

BY DENISE FLAIM

In 2003, Holly Marie Johnson of Rainier, Oregon, got some very bad news. Her 2-year-old Shepherd-mix, Kaija, had a severely dysplastic left hip, and surgery was not an option. All the veterinarian could offer was a bottle of glucosamine and MSM supplements, and the advice to “love her for as long as she has.” But almost a decade later, at 11½ years old, Kaija is going strong – “active, cheerful and playful” – a stark contrast to that grim prognosis. “Only in the last year has she shown any signs of pain,” Johnson says, “and then only occasionally, usually when she’s gotten chilled or has been overly active.”

The secret to Kaija’s success wasn’t some new drug, or experimental surgery. It was the simple fact that Johnson made sure she kept Kaija slim, to lessen the pressure on her joints and skeletal structure. If she was going to err, Johnson decided, it would be on the side of slightly underweight as opposed to a few pounds over. And Johnson put Kaija on a regimen of moderate exercise to main-

tain her muscle tone and help hold her hip in its shallow socket. Johnson concludes, “Had Kaija been overweight, she wouldn’t have made it this far!”

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Kaija’s story isn’t a fluke: Just as with people, studies show that keeping dogs lean contributes significantly to their health and well-being.

Highly active dogs, and breeds and individuals who are prone to degenerative arthritis or hip dysplasia may benefit the most from being kept thin. Reducing the dog’s body weight will reduce the stress on his muscles, tendons, and joints.

“When we look across all species, from fruit flies to gorillas, we see that caloric restriction improves longevity,” says veterinarian Ernie Ward of Calabash, North Carolina, founder of the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention and a personal trainer who sees the parallels between canine and human obesity. “The body of evidence is pretty strong that the leaner live longer.”

The bellwether research that cemented the benefits of less is more was the Purina Life Span Study, which followed 24 pairs of Labrador Retrievers from 1987 to 2001. Half the dogs were fed their recommended caloric allowance; the other half were fed 25 percent less than what their individual counterparts in the other group had eaten.

The 14-year study found that the dogs with restricted diets lived 15 percent longer – almost two years. Their blood pressure was lower, age-related changes in their immune systems happened later, and they had fewer outward signs of aging, such as graying muzzles.

Like Kaija, a significant percentage of the lean Purina dogs managed to short-

circuit the hip dysplasia for which their breed is genetically predisposed: Of the well-fed Labs, 16 of 24 had hip dysplasia by the age of two. Among the 24 dogs with the restricted diet, only eight were diagnosed with the orthopedic disorder.

The benefits of a slim silhouette aren't just orthopedic: A 2006 study in *The Journal of Nutrition* found that dogs that developed canine diabetes mellitus were significantly more often considered overweight by their owners at the time they first showed symptoms: Fifty-five percent of owners reported their dogs to be overweight when they became symptomatic, compared with 20 percent of owners of non-overweight dogs.

Overall, the simple truth is that increased calorie intake affects dogs on a cellular level – and not in a good way. While of course there's no better motivation for keeping your dog thin than knowing you are extending his time with you, there are pragmatic reasons, too. To be blunt: It saves a lot of money.

"The disorders that we're talking about are costly, and we can't cure them," Ward says. "If your dog develops arthritis, there's no cure for that, unless you give him a total hip replacement. Not only is it debilitating and painful and will cause your animal a lot suffering, it's going to be a real hit on your pocketbook."

FEEDING FRENZY

Despite the compelling evidence for the up side of slimming down, the reality is that thin isn't in – at least, not when you're talking about dogs.

The statistics range from worrisome to downright scary. Banfield Pet Hospital's 2012 "State of Pet Health Report," which drew on medical data from 2 million dogs and 430,000 cats that were treated at its 800 hospitals the year before, found that one out of every five dogs and cats is obese. (The accepted definition of obese is weighing 30 percent or more than ideal body weight.) According to Ward's Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, more than half of all the dogs in America – 52.5 percent – were declared overweight or obese by their veterinarians in 2012.

This photo, taken in 2010, shows Kaija in the sort of condition that has prevented her severely dysplastic hips from worsening to the point that painkillers and/or surgery would be required – and undoubtedly lengthened her life!

And the numbers are not getting better: The Banfield report says the prevalence of overweight dogs increased a whopping 37 percent between 2007 and 2011.

The poster dog for canine obesity was arguably Obie the Dachshund. Overfed by indulgent elderly owners, the 7-year-old standard-sized smooth Doxie weighed a whopping 77 pounds when he became a national news item in 2012. Looking like a helium-pumped walrus, Obie was so fat he needed a sling to prevent his huge stomach from dragging on the ground. Over the course of a year, Obie's new owner, certified veterinary technician Nora Vanatta of Portland, Oregon, kept up with a diet and exercise regimen that helped Obie lose so much weight – 50 pounds – that he needed a tummy tuck to tighten up his over-stretched skin.

All kinds of solutions have cropped up to stem the problem of canine obesity and overweight, from iPhone apps like The Fat Dog Diet to a patent for an actual vaccine for obesity. But the first step to solving a problem is recognizing that it exists in the first place.

THE 'FAT PET GAP'

Despite the fact that Kaija's outcome was a happy one, the same adjective doesn't apply to the passersby on the street who sometimes stop Johnson to inform her that Kaija looks malnourished. Sometimes, ironically, they are accompanied by their own butterball-shaped canine.

"People often comment that she looks thin," Johnson says, adding that the unsolicited criticism has let up a bit over the

years, perhaps because more people are educated about the risks of canine obesity. "Some ask if she has been ill. Others assume that she's a rescue. She actually is, but that's another story and has nothing to do with her current weight! A few glare at me and say, 'You really should feed that poor dog.'"

Certainly, there's no dearth of material in veterinarian offices explaining – and picturing – what a fit dog looks like: Can your dog's back ribs be felt if you place both your hands across her rib cage? When you view her from the side, does your dog have a "tuck-up" – does her abdomen rise upward from her ribcage to where it meets her leg? If you are looking down at her from above, does she have an identifiable waist?

There's a name for the mislabeling of a fit dog for a malnourished one, and it has nothing to do with the very real measurements outlined in those "body condition system" posters. Ward calls it the "fat pet gap": Basically, if a person is constantly surrounded by overweight animals, his or her concept of what is normal begins to unconsciously tilt toward that heavier version.

"We've reset the normal perspective of what an animal should look like," Ward explains. "It's rare to see a trim Labrador Retriever, so when we do see one, we think he's too thin. And when we see a 100-pound Lab, we say he's big boned, or his mom was big, when in reality he's overweight. There's substantial evidence to show that we do this for the human condition as well."

(At this point, we should reassure



This is what “too much love” looks like! This darling dog is only 6 years old, but he looks and acts much older. He’s at high risk of a short, uncomfortable life.



Labrador Retriever lovers that their breed is not being singled out as preternaturally porky. Labs tend to come up as examples much of the time because they are the nation’s most popular purebred, and owners can tend to overemphasize their naturally stocky build.)

There may be evolutionary reasons for this little dose of self-delusion, Ward adds. As an innate survival instinct, “we may be preconditioned to see thinness as potentially alarming.”

Veterinarians are the first line of defense in making owners aware that their dogs are getting a little thick around the middle. But research shows that some pudgy pooches aren’t getting properly diagnosed in the exam room. A 2006 study found that veterinarians diagnosed overweight or obesity in only 35 percent of dogs whose documented body-condition scores put them in those categories. That’s similar to a 2004 study of pediatricians in which only slightly more than half of practitioners documented obesity in children who met the clinical definition of obese.

Perhaps because our companion dogs are such close reflections of ourselves, there’s an almost linear parallel between human obesity, particularly in children, and the canine version. And, as we know in people, the reasons why people overeat can be complicated. A 2010 study in the *Journal of Small Animal Practice* in Britain noted that a number of environmental factors were associated with canine obesity. Some you might expect, such as the frequency of snacks and treats, or hours of weekly exercise. But the study also found that an owner’s age and personal income had an impact on the likelihood that his or her dog would be fat. As in human medicine, the researchers noted that awareness of the health risks of obesity is not as high among people in lower socioeconomic brackets.

LOVE ME, LOVE MY LASAGNA

Over the years, Johnson didn’t have much difficulty at all keeping Kaija thin. A naturally high-energy dog, Kaija has an equally high-octane “brother dog”

who would never allow her to get porky. “She loves to swim, which is a great low-impact, fat-burning, muscle-building exercise for dogs with joint issues,” Johnson adds.

Portion control is easy because Johnson keeps meticulous track of it. “Kaija eats two meals a day, and I measure her food carefully and adjust the amount if she seems to be gaining or losing too much weight,” she explains. Kaija does get high quality, natural treats in moderation – bits of chicken breast, cheese, and homemade dog cookies are her favorites – but Johnson calculates them into her “food budget” for the day.

But even Johnson isn’t immune to those big, pleading eyes. “Kaija is very good at looking hungry, especially when I’m eating,” she says. “Sometimes it’s hard for me to resist, but I know how crucial it is to not start bad habits and give in to those hungry looks.”

Well, most of the time. When she sits down to her own meals, Johnson admits that she usually picks out a dog-safe nibble from her plate – unsalted green beans or carrots, for instance – and sets aside a tiny, treat-size piece for Kaija and her other dog, Gunner, a 4-year-old English Shepherd.

That’s nothing compared to Johnson’s grandmother, who used to slip Kaija table scraps whenever she had the chance. “Grandma loved to feed people and animals, and felt that anyone who wasn’t slightly plump was starving,” Johnson says. “Grandma also equated food with love – as many people do – and she had a special soft spot for Kaija.”

Johnson’s grandmother is not alone. If canine obesity was as simple as lowering a dog’s calorie intake and upping his exercise schedule, bloated Bassets and chunky Chihuahuas would be dropping the pounds like so many retrieved tennis

balls. Some experts argue that it is the emotional connection to food – both on the part of humans and dogs – that is to blame for much of that extra poundage.

Veterinarian Myrna Milani of Charlestown, New Hampshire, points out that the food-equals-love equation reached its apex with our oldest generation of Americans, who grew up during the Depression and correlated the presence of food with safety and love. They, in turn, passed these values on to their Baby Boomer offspring.

“My dad was part of that generation where to prove your love to your family you were a good provider,” Dr. Milani says. “Saying ‘I love you’ – you’d have to tie him down to get that out of him. But he’d bring home a box of chocolate for Valentine’s Day, and go all out for the dinner on Christmas Day. The problem with this relative to our animals is: What does it say to us personally when we think that a gift of ourselves isn’t enough?”

Sifting through memories of her decades in practice, Dr. Milani recalls vignettes of clients whose struggles with their dogs’ obesity were far more than just a matter of biology. There was the woman who fed her overweight Dachshund ice cream and potato chips, even though they resulted in painful bouts of pancreatitis. The man who refused to stop sharing rich desserts with his obese black Lab because, he explained tearfully, “it would kill us both.” And the “week-end food-bingers who shared this activity with their pets,” calling on Sunday nights or Monday mornings because their dogs were vomiting.

In all these cases, food was exalted beyond its nutritional value, and invested with symbolic, ritualistic and deeply emotional meaning – and not in a healthy way.

It’s clear that some humans overeat

in response to stress and negative emotions, and for the first time, scientists are asking whether animals do, too. In a 2013 paper published in the *Journal of Veterinary Behavior: Clinical Applications and Research*, veterinarian Franklin D. McMillan puts forward the idea that dogs themselves may overeat as a coping mechanism when they are under psychological stress. And if that is the case, he argues, simply feeding less food will not solve the problem; in fact, without getting to the root cause of the stress, it might very well exacerbate it.

Of course, cutting calories isn't the only requirement for weight loss:

Exercise is needed, too – and not just for metabolic reasons. Dr. Milani points to a 1963 study cited in Dr. McMillan's paper that showed that rats significantly reduced their food consumption when they had access to an exercise wheel, but increased it when the wheel was removed. That seems counterintuitive – if the rats' behavior was based on energy expenditure alone, they should have been eating more when they were using the wheel. "But the animals wanted the exercise for the intrigue of it, the joy of it," Dr. Milani explains. And, quite possibly, for the stress relief it provided them.

As for Kaija, if she has any worries or overwhelming impulses to stage refrigerator raids, she's not letting on. "At this very moment, Kaija and Gunner are wrestling and racing around the house," Johnson notes, adding that Kaija initiated the play session with the younger Shepherd, who is almost three times her junior. "I'm pretty sure," she concludes, "there's nothing more heartwarming than an elderly, exuberant dog!" 🐾

Denise Flaim of Revodana Ridgebacks in Long Island, New York, shares her home with three Ridgebacks, 10-year-old triplets, and a very patient husband.

FAT CHANCE

Owners of fit dogs report that they sometimes are met with the slings and arrows of outrageous accusations: Total strangers accost them on sidewalks or in the aisles at Petco to inform them that their dogs are disturbingly thin.

Kim Atchley of Seattle, Washington, says she gets told "all the time" that her Rhodesian Ridgeback, Nigel, is too skinny. Nigel, who is Atchley's medical-alert service dog, is a medium-sized neutered male who weighs in at around 65 pounds. "I usually respond by saying that he is the correct weight for his build," she explains. "Most people first point out his tuck-up, as they don't seem to understand that a dog should have one. Also, they notice that when he stands that you can see the outline of his last three ribs."

The critics usually experience their "aha" moment when they watch Nigel run full tilt on a beach or field. "He is a bit of a speed demon, having been radar-clocked at 35 miles an hour on a straight run," Atchley says. "When those folks see him move alongside their dogs, then they seem to get it, as he has much more stamina and endurance than their dogs."

Sometimes these confrontations over weight have more to do with what's going on inside the accuser's head than what's in your dog's food bowl.

Several years ago, when she was a foster home for a Basenji rescue group, Andrea Williams of Charlotte, North Carolina, was accused of not properly feeding her dogs. The critic was an angry adopter who was returning her newly adopted Basenji along with another dog who lived in the household.

Williams says that during email exchanges with the group's rescue coordinator, the owners that were surrendering the dogs "felt compelled to try and diffuse their guilt by accusing me of neglect because they said my dogs were underweight.

"Thankfully I had a coordinator who was wise to their ploy," Williams continues. "They had the dogs picked up by some-

one else, then transferred to me for fostering."

Not surprisingly, both dogs were fat, Williams says. Within a couple of weeks, she had them at proper weight and ready for adoption. Their new homes were "fantastic," Williams adds, and the dogs are living there happily to this day.

Of all the kinds of dog lovers out there, sighthound owners arguably get the most flak for their super-thin charges, even though they have been bred for millennia to have spare, aerodynamic frames. Caroline Coile of Live Oak, Florida, says she has had people stop her on the street to chastise her for not feeding her Saluki. "Even people at dog shows who should know better have told me they could 'never own a dog they had to starve,'" Coile says. Never mind that with sighthounds like Salukis, Greyhounds, and Whippets, packing extra pounds can mean the difference between a smooth, efficient gallop and severe injury.

"To my eyes, Salukis are the runway models of the dog world – svelte and slender. But to people used to more voluptuous breeds – what I would call 'plus-size' – they're more like heroin-chic models: emaciated and hungry looking," Coile continues. "The truth is they're more like athletes. When was the last time you saw a fat marathon runner? Salukis were bred for thousands of years to run down gazelles in the desert. When was the last time you saw a fat gazelle?"

But apparently, Coile's Kate Moss aesthetic doesn't translate to other breeds – especially those that aren't as famously finicky as Salukis. "I'm a sucker for begging eyes," she admits. "My terrier looks more like a beach ball because I can't say no!"



A fit (not starving!) Saluki.
PHOTO COURTESY OF CAROLINE COILE



Entitled

Ever wonder about all the initials that precede or follow some dogs' names?

BY BARBARA DOBBINS

My friend has super fast dogs, and they compete in agility. I always imagined that the magnets on the back of her vehicle indicated just how fast they could run: MACH speeds! And C-ATCH: Catch me if you can! Obviously my Border Collie, Duncan, and I didn't get far enough in our brief agility career to earn any titles (he preferred to make up his own courses). But when my curiosity got the better of me and I looked into what, exactly, those letters on my friend's car actually meant, I quickly learned that there are *countless* titles and certifications that can be bestowed upon our canine companions.

Just like the acronyms associated with veterinary professionals (see "Alphabet Soup," WDJ October 2013), the titles bestowed upon dogs indicate that they have reached certain goals and standards and have thus earned acknowledgement and certification as set forth by the requirements of the granting organization. As these organizations all have different titles and requirements, there's no way to cover them all here. Below are some of the more common ones you may come across.

THE KENNEL CLUBS

There are two very large organizations with the words "kennel club" in their names. Most dog owners have at least

heard of the **American Kennel Club** (AKC), the largest registry of purebred dogs in the United States. The AKC also promotes and sanctions events for purebred dogs, and more recently, the AKC has added a number of events and titling opportunities for mixed-breed dogs, too.

The AKC offers titles in activity-based competitions: agility, obedience, rally, tracking, and field events (such as hunting, earthdog, herding, lure coursing, and retrieving). Dogs who earn titles (by earning enough points, which are awarded for wins) in competition in these events get letters added to the *end* of their names – at least, until they've earned a championship or grand championship. Then they get letters at the front of their names!

Then there is the *other* kennel club: the **United Kennel Club** (UKC), which calls itself the largest all-breed *performance*-dog registry in the world, registering dogs from all 50 states and 25 foreign countries. More than 60 percent of its nearly 16,000 annually licensed events are tests of hunting ability, training, and instinct.

CONFORMATION

Conformation is the formal name for what most people think of as "dog shows." Judges assess the dogs for how closely they conform to their breed's "standard" – the word picture of what the breed should look and act like – including the size, coat, outline, and body proportions. Dogs are examined while standing and moving, with their gait and even temperament judged against the ideal for their breed.

Dogs who win the required 15 points under the minimum number of judges and point configurations (points earned at a show depend on geography and the number of dogs in competition) earn the title of Champion and the designation "CH" now precedes the dog's registered name. After more wins in the show ring, a dog may earn the title of Grand Champion (in the AKC, "GCH"; in the UKC, "GRCH").

Compared to AKC shows, UKC conformation shows are much more casual affairs, with a relaxed dress code in the ring and no professional handlers permitted.

OBEDIENCE TITLES

The first obedience trial grew out of the efforts of trainers to popularize the profession and to demonstrate the usefulness of dogs in areas other than the conformation ring and the field. Today's obedience competitions begin with exercises that attest to the dog's good manners. At a trial, the dog and handler will perform various predefined obedience exercises, which will be evaluated and scored by a judge.

The AKC version of the sport is one of its oldest events and is now promoted and practiced by hundreds of obedience clubs, kennel clubs, and specialty clubs throughout the U.S.

All dogs who receive a passing or qualifying score earn a "leg" toward

an obedience title. When a dog has accumulated the requisite number of legs for a given title, the governing organization issues a certificate recognizing the achievement. Testing exercises include variations of heeling, stays, retrieves, and jumps; utility titles (highest level of competition) add more advanced exercises including cueing via hand signals only and scent discrimination.

■ AKC OBEDIENCE TITLES

- BN: Beginner Novice
- CD: Companion Dog
- CDX: Companion Dog Excellent
- GN: Graduate Novice
- GO: Graduate Open
- OM: Obedience Master
- OGM: Obedience Grand Master
- OTCH: Obedience Trial Champion
- NOC: National Obedience Champion
- PCDX: Pre-Open
- PUTD: Pre-Utility
- UD: Utility Dog
- UDX: Utility Dog

■ UKC OBEDIENCE TITLES

- UCD: United Companion Dog
- UCDX: United Companion Dog Excellent
- UUD: United Utility Dog
- UOCH: United Obedience Champion
- GOCH: United Grand Obedience Champion

RALLY

Rally obedience (also known as rally or rally-O) is a dog sport based on obedience. Competitors proceed through a course of 10-20 stations that instruct the dog and handler team to perform a behavior. The major difference between rally and conventional obedience competitions is that in rally, handlers are allowed to encourage their dogs during the course.

There are several organizations in the U.S. that offer rally competitions includ-

ing the AKC, UKC, the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT), C-Wags, and Canines and Humans United (CHU). The exercises vary slightly from organization to organization, but generally follow similar guidelines.

AKC rally is open to AKC breeds and mixed breed dogs registered in the AKC Canine Partners program. After qualifying three times under at least two different judges, the dog earns a title, which appears after the dog's registered name.

There are three levels in AKC rally: Novice (beginner's class), successful completion results in the title RN (Rally Novice); Advanced (when completed, dogs receive the title RA); and the highest class, Excellent (RE). Additional titles are available: Rally Advanced Excellent (RAE), in which the team has to qualify in *both* Advanced and Excellent in 10 trials; and Rally National Champion (RNC).

UKC rally follows an approach similar to the AKC program; it is open to any dog and handler team. There are three levels of competition, three legs are required for a title, and there is an extended championship title.

■ UKC RALLY TITLES

- URO1: United Rally Obedience 1
- URO2: United Rally Obedience 2
- URO3: United Rally Obedience 3
- UROC: United Rally Obedience Champion
- UROG: United Rally Obedience Grand Champion
- URX: United Rally Obedience Champion Excellent

CANINE GOOD CITIZEN (CGC™) PROGRAM

The AKC CGC test consists of real-world skills considered needed by well-mannered dogs. Any dog, purebred or mixed-breed, can participate in the CGC program; more than 500,000 dogs have received the CGC certificate to date. CGC is often viewed as the standard of behavior for dogs in the community. Some insurance companies will provide coverage for dogs with a CGC certificate – dogs who may not otherwise have been covered. Some multi-dwelling housing

units require the CGC certificate for dogs living on the premises.

The CGC test consists of 10 exercises: accepting a friendly stranger; sitting politely for petting; welcoming a physical inspection and grooming (with cleanliness being a requirement); walking on a loose lead; walking through a crowd; sit and down on command and staying in place; coming when called; polite reaction to another dog; showing interest and curiosity (rather than fear or aggression) to a distracting stimuli; and supervised separation. All exercises are performed on leash.

The AKC's CGC became an official title only in January 2013, and as such it can now be listed after the dog's name and appear on the title records of dogs registered or listed with AKC. (All dogs, including mixed breeds, can get a "Pure-bred Alternative Listing" (PAL) number from the AKC that is used to attach titles to the dog's record.) Prior to this, CGC was considered an "award," with a certificate presented to the owner.

Even more recently (October 2013) the AKC announced the creation of its Community Canine title, an advanced level of CGC that expands on CGC skills in a natural setting and lays the beginning foundation for obedience, rally, and therapy dog work. As with CGC, Community Canine requires a 10-step test that dogs must pass to earn the official title. The dog must also have a CGC certificate or CGC title on record at AKC, as well as an AKC number (AKC registration number, PAL number, or AKC Canine Partners number). Dogs passing the AKC Community Canine test will earn the "CGCA" (advanced CGC) title and "CGCA" may be listed after the dog's name.

COURSING ABILITY TEST

Lure-coursing trials are simulated rabbit hunts where the "bunny" is actually a white plastic bag run on a pulley system powered by a motor, and are open only to Sighthound breeds such as Salukis and Whippets. But in 2011, AKC debuted the "Coursing Ability Test," or CAT, which is open to all breeds and mixes that are at least a year old and registered or listed with AKC. In the CAT test, an individual dog chases the lure along a modified course; in order to pass, dogs must show enthusiasm and finish the course without interruption within a given time frame. Once a dog completes three legs success-

In obedience, accuracy and precision are essential, but the natural movement of the handler and the willingness and enjoyment of the dog are very important to the scoring, too.



fully, she earns the Coursing Ability, or CA, title. Ten passes are required for the Coursing Ability Advanced (CAA) title, and 25 for Coursing Ability Excellent (CAX).

The UKC has a similar lure coursing program and set of titles.

AGILITY

I confess. I get teary from an overwhelming sense of wonder when I watch agility. There is something magical about dog and handler teams racing exuberantly together through a timed obstacle course of jumps, teeter-totters, weave poles, dogwalks, A-frames, tunnels, and pause tables.

There are more than 50 agility titles in the AKC alone, so this is a shorthand version to glean a general understanding of what they represent.

There are several classes in AKC agility, consisting of Standard, Jumpers with Weaves, and Fifteen And Send Time (FAST). Each class is delineated by four levels: Novice (beginning basic level), Open (middle level), Excellent (advanced level), and Masters (achieved after advancing through the lower three classes with lifetime achievement levels of bronze, silver, gold, and century within this division). These are all performed in one of two classes of jump heights: “Regular” class (standard jump heights) or “Preferred” (modified standards of a lower jump height with more generous course times).

The “A” in the suffixes you see after dogs’ names with agility titles stands for Agility, F is for FAST, C is for Century, G is for Gold, J is for Jumpers with Weaves, M for is Master, N is for Novice, O is for Open, P is for Preferred, S is for Silver, TQ is for Triple Qualifying, and X is Excellent. So, as one example, the letters MJPB listed after a dog’s name would indicate that the dog has achieved the award Master Bronze Jumpers with Weaves Preferred. The highest title overrides lower titles, so not *all* the titles a dog has earned will be listed after her name.

If you’re still confused, you’re not alone. But just to add to that confusion, let’s look at the championship agility titles that get added as *prefixes*:

■ AKC AGILITY CHAMPIONSHIPS

- MACH: Masters Agility Champion
- NAC: National Agility Champion



- PACH: Preferred Agility Champion
- PNAC: Preferred National Agility Champion

■ UKC AGILITY CHAMPIONSHIPS

- UGRACH: United Grand Agility Champion (UGRACH titles are issued with a numeral designation indicating the number of times the title has been earned, e.g., UGRACH1, UGRACH2, etc.)
- UACHX: United Agility Champion Excellent
- UACH: United Agility Champion
- UAGII: United Agility II
- UAGI: United Agility I

Still not confused? Then let’s just add in some additional agility titles offered by *other* organizations!

The **United States Dog Agility Association, Inc.** (USDAA) is the world’s largest independent organization for the sport of canine agility, with more than 25,000 registered competitors and more than 200 different breeds of dogs, including mixed breeds. Dogs running in USDAA competitions compete in three levels – Starters, Advanced, and Masters – in the classes of Standard Agility, Jumpers, Gamblers, Relay, and Snooker.

USDAA titles range from AD (Agility Dog) to VS (Veterans Snooker) with champion title of ADCh.

The **North American Dog Agility Council** (NADAC) was formed in 1993 to provide a fast, safe, and fun form of agility for dogs and their handlers in North America. The organization sanctions agility trials sponsored by affiliated clubs and awards titles in seven different agility classes: Regular Agility, Jumpers, Chances, Weavers, Touch N Go, Tunnelers, and Hoopers.

A dog can earn a title in each of these classes at three different levels: Novice, Open, and Elite. Beyond “Regular,” there are two advanced titles – Outstanding and Superior – available in every class and at every level. So if Rover were to have “O-EJS” listed after his name, he would have received the title Outstanding-Elite Jumpers Skilled.

NADAC also further delineates its competitions by three divisions: Standard, Veterans, or Junior Handler. The titles, however, do not indicate these divisions. Each dog’s points are pooled from all divisions for the purposes of determining eligibility for a title. Competitions are also divided into two categories: Proficient and Skilled. The acronym NATCh indicates the accomplishment of National Agility Trial Champion.

Canine Performance Events (CPE) is another organization that offers a multitude of titles in the agility classes. CPE’s philosophy is for the dog and handler to have fun while competing. Both mixed-breed and purebred dogs are allowed to compete for titles. CPE also offers “fun runs,” which provide an easy introduction to trials. Its classes are divided into Standard, Colors, Wildcard, Snooker, Jackpot, Full House, and Jumpers, including divisions for junior handlers and older dogs too (with lower jump heights).

There are five levels of titles within CPE, from Beginners to Championship, with the acronyms ranging from CLI-R (Completed Level 1 Standard) to C-ATE (CPE Agility Team Extraordinaire) and C-ATCH (CPE Agility Trial Champion).

A FEW OTHER NOTABLE TITLING ORGANIZATIONS

There really is no end to the canine activity organizations that offer titles for dogs who are accomplished in certain tasks. There are titles for Freestyle, Nose Work/Scenting, Disc Dogs, Field Dogs, Flyball, Barn Hunt, Drafting/Carting, Tracking, Water Racing, Sled Dogs, Herding, Straight and Oval Track Racing, Hunting, Earthdogs, Police Dog, Protection Dog and Dog Scouts (DSA), to name just a few. Chances are that any organized canine activity for work or for fun will have titles associated with it.

Here are just a few we admire.

■ **CANINE – WORK AND GAMES** (C-WAGS) is open to all dogs and awards titles in obedience, rally, scent, and

games. In obedience, teams that have earned qualifying scores are awarded ACE titles at various levels. C-WAGS titles are easily identified as they begin with CW, for example:

- CW-OAL1: C-WAGS Obedience Ace Level 1
- CW-OAL2: C-WAGS Obedience Ace Level 2 (there are four levels of these titles, and then . . .)
- CW-OCA: C-WAGS Obedience Champion Ace (Level 5)

Teams may collect additional Ace titles at each level and will be designated as CW-OAL1x2, CW-OAL1x3, etc.

■ **SEARCH AND RESCUE TITLES:** In September 2012, the AKC began awarding titles to Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) dogs who are certified by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). There are two levels of certification for these search and rescue canine/handler teams:

- Basic Certification (Type 2): The search dog is required to perform to specific standards *under the handler's direct supervision and guidance*.
- Advanced Certification: (Type 1): The search dog is required to perform to specific standards *outside the direct supervision and guidance of the handler* and to successfully search more difficult rescue simulation courses.

Canine/handler team must pass rigorous national certification in urban search and rescue every two years in order to participate in operations. Handlers are certified by passing written and verbal tests regarding search and

rescue strategies, briefing and debriefing skills and canine handling skills. Search and Rescue canines must show control, agility, and alert skills as well as a willingness to overcome innate fears of unusual environments.

The AKC grants the following search titles to purebred dogs registered with the AKC or mixed breeds enrolled in the Canine Partners program; the title appears on the dog's record and title certificate as well as on AKC pedigrees.

- SAR-U: Urban Search and Rescue. Dogs that are certified as FEMA or State Urban Search and Rescue (SUSAR) deployable are eligible; they are further designated by Type 1 (SAR-U1) and Type 2 (SAR-U2).
- SAR-W: Wilderness Search And Rescue. Effective June 2013, dogs who have participated in a minimum of five actual wilderness SAR efforts and have been certified by an AKC-recognized SAR certification organization are eligible for the SAR-W title.

SAR dogs can be trained for specific types of searches such as rubble, water, and avalanche and these searches can be applied to disaster and wilderness environments. Additional acronyms that might be associated with SAR dogs include HRD (Human Remains Detection) and MAS (Missing Animal Search).

■ **THERAPY DOG TITLES:** By their very nature, dogs are natural born therapists. And while most every dog could be considered a therapy dog on some level, there are requirements for dogs who work in this very specialized field. The oldest registry of therapy dogs in the U.S. is **Therapy Dogs International (TDI)**, established in 1976 to test, certify, insure, and register volunteer therapy dogs. TDI dogs must be at least one year of age and have a sound temperament, and all dogs and handlers are tested and evaluated by a Certified TDI Evaluator. TDI has extensive testing requirements including

those required for the AKC's CGC test (see above).

Passing the therapy dog test does not earn a title; the titles are awarded to actively working therapy dogs, based on how many documented therapy visits they have. The titles range from TDIA (TDI Active, completion of 50 documented therapy visits) through TDIG (TDI Gold, completion of 500 documented therapy visits). There are also two more notable titles:

- TWT: Tail Waggin' Tutors, earned after completion of 100 documented visits for TDI's reading program for children.
- DSRD: Disaster Stress Relief Dogs are therapy dogs who comfort victims and rescue workers after an emergency or disaster. The requirements are stringent and only the most capable teams are certified.

In 2011, the AKC began awarding the title ThD (Therapy Dog) to dogs who are certified or registered with an AKC-recognized therapy dog organization and have performed a minimum of 50 documented visits. The dogs must also be an AKC Dog recognized through AKC registration, PAL listing, or AKC Canine Partners enrollment.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Obviously, titles don't mean anything to our dogs; they exist to offer recognition and affirmation to the dogs' owners and handlers for the time and effort they've put into developing a dog with extra-special accomplishments. Goodness knows, these things don't happen without serious commitments of time and money. What *does* mean something to our dogs, however, is the treasured relationship that develops from working as a team with their human companions throughout the hundreds and thousands of hours of fun and training and dedication. 🐾

In the next installment, we'll look at the titles earned and used by dog trainers and behaviorists.

Barbara Dobbins, a former dog trainer, writes about dogs and studies canine ethology. She lives in the Bay Area with her Border Collie, BDE (Best Dog Ever) Duncan.



Cougar Mountain Rescue Ranger, SAR-U1, owned by Darren Bobrosky of Berkeley, CA, works through a pile of wood debris. Novice dogs are directed by their handler as they work; advanced dogs work without direction from their handlers.

Cue the Cues

Five ways to help your dog learn your cues.

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

It's very frustrating when you're sure your dog knows the cue for a behavior but he doesn't do it when you ask him to. Imagine how frustrating it is for *him* when you cue a behavior and he just doesn't understand the cue that you were so sure he knew! Here are five things to do to avoid this impasse.

1 USE THE SAME CUE, THE SAME WAY, EVERY TIME.

You may *think* you already do that, but chances are you don't. The cue "Sit!" for example, needs to always be "Sit!" – not "Sit! Sit down! I said SIT DOWN!!!" or other variations such as "Could you please sit for mommy?"

Dogs can learn multiple cues for the same behavior, and well-trained dogs can learn to pick out and respond to cues in a sentence (a fun thing to teach, down the road!) but in early training, and if you're having communication issues with your dog, it's best to keep it simple.

Be consistent with the tone of your voice, too. Cue your "Sit!" in the same tone you would invite a friend to have a seat in your living room. If you chirp a quick "Sit!" one time, use a long, drawn out "Siiiiiiiiiiiiit" the next, and give an angry "SIT" on still another, your dog's confusion will be entirely predictable.

2 PAIR A BODY LANGUAGE CUE WITH THE VERBAL CUE.

Dogs are natural body language communicators, so you can enhance your dog's verbal learning if you use a body language cue (also known as a prompt). Say "Sit!" and pause for a second or two. Then raise your hand, with a treat in it, to your chest. Eventually the gesture will become a cue on its own, without a treat, and not necessarily paired with the verbal "Sit!" Practice them together and separately, so you have the flexibility of a reliable verbal or body language cue.

3 FADE LURES QUICKLY. As *soon* as you can lure the behavior easily, it's time to fade the lure so you and your dog don't both become dependent on its presence to accomplish the behavior.

With your treat-hand behind your back, cue the behavior "Sit!" If your dog sits, click and treat. If he doesn't, bring the treat out and give your hand-to-chest prompt or lure the sit by moving the treat over his head. Click and treat. Gradually (and variably) increase the length of time you wait after giving the verbal cue before you give the prompt. If you see his "wheels turning" – signs that he's trying to figure out what to do – just wait a bit longer, without repeating the cue. If he sits without you having to use the lure, give him an encouraging jackpot and lots of happy praise.

4 PRACTICE!

Dogs learn through repetition, just like we do, so the more you practice, the more reliably your dog will respond to your verbal cues. Also like us, dogs can learn concepts. So a training-

Lose the lure as soon as possible! You don't want your dog to be dependent on the presence of a lure in order to comply with your cues.



savvy dog will be able to put each new behavior on cue more quickly than the preceding ones when he has come to understand the concept of verbal cues.

5 GENERALIZE YOUR CUES. If you always practice "Sit!" in the living room, on carpeting, two feet in front of the TV, your dog might conclude that "Sit!" means "Sit in the living room, on carpeting, two feet in front of the TV."

Practice "Sit!" in as many different locations as possible, until your dog is proficient with your verbal *and* body language cues (together and separately) wherever you go. Be prepared to start at Training Square One at each new location until your dog generalizes the cue.

Next, change the picture as you give the "Sit!" cue. Instead of standing in front of him making eye contact, give the cue while you are looking off to the side. Cue him to sit while you are sitting on the sofa, sitting on the floor, standing with your back to him, and hopping from one foot to the other. Give him the hand signal cue for sit while you are talking on your cell phone, and the verbal cue to sit while your hands are busy changing the baby's diaper. When he will reliably sit on cue at least 80 percent of the time in all of these scenarios – and more – your dog really *does* know the cues for "Sit!" 🐾

Author Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, is WDJ's Training Editor. See page 24 for more information.

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- ❖ **Susan Sarubin**, CPDT-KA, PMCT2, Pawsitive Fit, LLC, Puppy and Dog Training, Easton, MD. Private, in-home instruction. Force-free, dog friendly training and behavior modification. (410) 200-0091; pawsitivefit.com

- ❖ **Sandi Thompson**, CPDT-KA, Bravo!Pup Puppy and Dog Training, Berkeley, CA. Classes for puppies, adolescents, and adult dogs, "puppy socials," private lessons, and group classes. (510) 704-8656; bravopup.com

HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

- ❖ **American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association** (AHVMA). Abingdon, MD. ahvma.org

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

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