

The Whole Dog Journal™



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Food Issues

*When it comes to health,
your dog's diet affects everything.*

BY NANCY KERNS

Recently, an acquaintance posted some pictures of her dog on Facebook. The dog is super cute, but I couldn't help but notice that something was wrong: the little dog's hair was completely absent from his chest, neck, top of his head, and paws. "Hey, what's up with Charlie?" I asked her in a private message. "What happened to his coat?" She responded that it happens to him periodically – and did I think it could have anything to do with the food she had recently switched him to?

Well, yes, I know for a fact that Charlie's hair loss (and, no doubt, a torment of itching and scratching) absolutely could have been caused by his diet. And since its onset was so close to the time that she switched his food, I'm certain that it can be cured by another change in diet (only, it's going to take a bit of detective work to identify the problematic factor in the food).

My previous dog, a Border Collie named Rupert, was horribly allergic to flea bites. Whenever he would start itching and scratching (and chewing and rubbing himself on anything handy), I would go into a fit of cleaning and searching for fleas, which, half the time, I couldn't find any sign of. It turned out (after many years of fighting phantom flea infestations and misguided trips to the vet for steroids), that he was also horribly allergic to chicken, as well.

Diet affects more than the skin and coat, however. Over time, it can affect everything having to do with your dog's health, especially his digestion. (Digestion is a huge category. Is he always hungry? Never hungry? Often

gassy? Frequently constipated? Have loose stools? Go too frequently? The possibilities for problems are endless.)

We talked for a while, and I made some suggestions for keeping track of what Charlie was eating, and for some foods that my friend might want to switch him to as soon as possible (such as something with a novel protein and a carbohydrate that he hasn't encountered in his diet so far – the start of an allergy elimination trial).

All of that said, a trip to a veterinarian is in order for Charlie, too. While a change in diet certainly could have been the trigger for the skin and coat problems he currently suffers from, it could also be that he has another serious health problem brewing; perhaps the dietary change was the final insult, and his already stressed and overburdened body just couldn't cope with it.

As for what specific food my friend should feed her dog? What do I recommend? That's easy: I suggested she check out this issue, which contains our annual dry dog food review.

NK

CORRECTION: In an article entitled, "Toss Those Cookies" in the January 2014 issue, we reported an incorrect dosage of hydrogen peroxide to administer to a dog if and when you were trying to make him vomit (in case of an accidental poisoning). **The correct dose is 1 teaspoon per 5 lbs of the dog's body weight, with a maximum of 3 tablespoons. There are 3 teaspoons in a tablespoon, so the maximum dose for dogs who weigh more than 45 lbs is 3 tablespoons per dose.** Our veterinary emergency care expert assures us that even at the incorrect dosage stated, if the *maximum* amount that we *correctly* reported (3 tablespoons per dose) were abided by, no harm should come to a dog of any size; the dosage we originally reported is just more than needed for very small dogs. We regret the error.

It's in the Bag

Five common mistakes to avoid when buying and feeding dry dog food.

The vast majority of dog owners feed dry dog food to their dogs – and quite a few of them select and store the bags of food in a way that turns a wholesome food into a health hazard for their beloved companions. Are you handling your dog's food in a safe manner? Or do you regularly make the following mistakes?

1 GRABBING AND BUYING THE FIRST/ TOP BAG ON THE SHELF. *Always* check the date/code on the bag, and buy the bag with a “best by” date that is as far in the future as you can find. And don't buy bags that are within a few months or closer to their “best by” date.

Most foods that are made with natural preservatives are intended to be consumed within 12 months of manufacture, although companies extend this to as much as 18 months. But dry food is far less nutritious (oxidation slowly decreases the vitamin activity), and has far more potential to be rancid, the more time passes post-manufacture. (Note that foods that are packed in vacuum-sealed bags and flushed with nitrogen keep fresh longer.)

So, for example, if its February 2014, a bags that was *just* manufactured and placed on the shelf should have a “best by” date of February 2015 – buying *that* bag would be ideal. In contrast, avoid the bag with a “best buy” date that indicates the food should be consumed within the next few months.

2 BUYING GIANT BAGS FOR YOUR SMALL OR MEDIUM DOG. It's fine to buy the biggest bag if you have several large dogs, but the point is, you should be buying bags in sizes that are small enough so that the food is entirely consumed within two to three weeks, no more.

The longer the food is exposed to oxygen once the

bag is open, the faster it oxidizes. While buying very large bags makes the most economic sense (the price per pound is always less if you buy in large bags), it may not make the most sense for your dog's health. Many dogs start turning up their noses at a food by the time you reach the bottom of the bag, because by that time (especially if you have a small dog!), the fats in the food may be quite rancid – and dogs' noses are far more sensitive to the odor of rancid fats than our noses are. Veterinarians have a phrase for what happens when dogs are *not* fussy and eat rancid food, suffering digestive upset after meals: “bottom of the bag syndrome.”

3 STORING THE FOOD IN A WARM OR DAMP PLACE. Read the label; it will almost always suggest storing the food in a cool, dry place. Again, this is to preserve the wholesomeness of the food

and to retard the process of oxidation. Look for a cool, low cupboard or shelf in the pantry.

4 DUMPING THE FOOD INTO ANOTHER CONTAINER. I know, I know, it's far easier to scoop food out of a plastic bin than it is to scoop it out of the bag. But there are several problems with bins. First, many are not made with “food-safe” plastic – material that is resistant to degradation caused by contact with fat (keep in mind that dog food is a relatively high-fat food). Fat can cause the type of plastic used in things like plastic garbage cans and totes to accelerate the rate at which BPA and other plasticizers leach out of the container and into the dog food.

Second, if you don't completely empty and clean out the bin in between each bag of food you dump into it, you are effectively “seeding” each new batch of food with rancid fats that are in the old food in the bottom of the tub and the fat that covers the container. It's far safer to keep the food in the bag, and keep the bag in a container.

The practice of dumping the food into another container leads to the next mistake you should avoid . . .

5 THROWING AWAY THE BAG BEFORE YOUR DOG HAS FINISHED ALL THE FOOD. If your dog becomes ill, the type of food and its date/code number will be *critical* information to have on hand. Your vet will want to know what exact food you fed the dog. If it develops that the food causes a serious illness or death, the manufacturer and the FDA will need the information to conclusively tie the food (and the specific lot of food) to the problem. If you are not absolutely certain and/or can't prove what variety of food you fed to your sick dog, it's will be very difficult to make the company take responsibility for the problem. 🐾

The best way to store dry dog food is in its bag; the best place to store the bag is somewhere cool, dry, and dark (and with a dog-proof latch!).



When Work Is Play

A positive approach turns a serious job into a game for this talented dog.

BY LISA RODIER

What do you want, you crazy dog?” Jennifer Wade said with a smile to her diabetic alert dog, Raven. Wade, 30, had just eaten a meal at an office luncheon, so she knew her blood glucose level (blood sugar) had to be okay. But Raven persisted, tugging her, and getting in her face. She guessed that the food-crazy dog just wanted an apple from the party, and her co-workers encouraged her to allow the persistent black Labrador Retriever to have a bite. Wade relented, but the chow hound declined the offer. In a hurry to get back to work, Wade exclaimed, “Now what?! You’re not going to eat? What is wrong with you?”

Raven tugged at Wade’s wrist strap, jumped up on her, and eventually sat and stared at her with big, sad, brown puppy eyes and began whining. “Okay, if it will make you happy, I’ll check my blood sugar, you silly dog.” Sure enough, her blood sugar level was low. She gave Raven the signal to let him know he was correct, and he lit up, dancing around with excitement . . . and ate the apple.

I know *my* blood sugar is dropping when I start to feel cranky or fatigued. Fortunately, I can ride out my discomfort until I have a moment to grab a snack. But imagine you have no indication that your blood sugar is dropping.

For diabetics who have “hypoglycemia unawareness” – a condition in which a person with Type I diabetes doesn’t experience the usual warning symptoms of hypoglycemia – the consequences of not acting immediately on a fast-dropping blood sugar level can be fatal.

Cue Raven, who entered Jennifer Wade’s life in July 2011, nine years after her diagnosis with diabetes – after struggling for nine long years to maintain appropriate blood sugar levels. A Type I diabetic, Wade found herself falling asleep at night, but not waking in the morning due to precipitously low blood sugar levels. As a single mother of

a five-year-old boy, Wade (who has since married), was distressed that the burden to be sure that Mom was okay – including summoning 911 emergency assistance – might fall to her young son. Diagnosed as having hypoglycemic unawareness, she stopped going out in public unless accompanied by another adult.

THE NOSE KNOWS

Trained by Service Dogs of Virginia (SDV), a 501(c)(3) non-profit service dog organization, Raven signals Wade when her blood sugar is on its way down or low, presumably based on a scent that diabetics emit when blood sugar levels begin to drop. Raven’s alert is to tug on an elastic band that Wade wears on her left wrist.

Peggy Law, founder and director of SDV, says that while diabetic alert dog programs are in their infancy, dogs have always smelled low blood sugar. “We don’t teach them to smell anything – we teach them to tell us when they smell it. The dogs just didn’t know we cared!”

Law trains and places diabetic alert dogs only for clients diagnosed with hypoglycemic unawareness – folks who have a greater than usual challenge in managing this tricky disease. She explains that dogs seem to notice when a human’s blood sugar drops rapidly, “even if the client’s level isn’t yet low.” When the dog alerts repeatedly as the level continues to drop, the client can immediately take action (eat, drink) to prevent a drop to an unsafe range.

When the client’s blood sugar decline is very gradual, dogs tend not to notice until the level is low. Given this, says Law, SDV’s goal is to train the dogs to alert when the client’s blood glucose level is at 70 mg/dl or below, but before the point of no return when the person can’t think clearly enough to eat or drink on her own. “We want the dog to alert while the person is still functioning so she can fix the situation.”

Before Raven was placed with her, Wade had been employing a risky strategy in managing her blood sugar levels. “When I started having episodes, I was afraid to keep my sugar at normal levels;

Raven, a 4 ½-year-old Lab, is a trained diabetic alert dog. He lets his person know when her blood sugar level is dropping rapidly or is dangerously low.



PHOTO BY LEAH VALENTINE



PHOTO BY SERVICE DOGS OF VIRGINIA

Raven has given Jennifer Wade, a Type I diabetic, the confidence to once again go out in public alone.

lived with a volunteer puppy raiser for his first year of life. During that year, SDV's goals are to ensure the dog is comfortable in public, and to work on basic good manners behaviors, in order to establish groundwork for advanced behaviors. Then the dogs come back to live with an SDV trainer to embark upon advanced training for another year.

SDV utilizes positive training methods and clicker trains most behaviors, including alert training. Law and Wade appreciate the engagement, motivation, focus, and "think on your feet" attitude this method of training cultivates in dogs – an attitude that might mean the difference between life and death.

For example, one day Raven found Wade on the floor beside her bed, "sleeping." Raven was in SDV's second class of diabetic alert dogs and had not been formally trained to get help if Wade didn't respond to his alerts. (This behavior has since been included in the program.) Wade vaguely recalls the dog repeatedly tugging on her wrist strap – and pushing him away. Frustrated and determined, the dog left the room and alerted Wade's husband, who called paramedics.

SDV takes a slow approach to alert training that calls upon the dog's strong clicker-based foundation. Alert training starts by "charging" the scent, rewarding the dog whenever the scent is presented to him in order to make it significant to him, and then teaching him to perform a specific behavior when the scent is presented. Eventually, he learns he will be rewarded for performing that behavior (now called an alert behavior) whenever he detects the scent.

The tasks increase in difficulty, with the scent being presented randomly, in all sorts of different situations and environments. Through months and months of repetition, working through false alerts and a gradual increase in the difficulty of the "game," the dogs understand that being right leads to a party: big rewards (SDV uses food rewards) and lots of praise.

RELATIONSHIP IS KEY

SDV spends close to two weeks working with clients to "transfer" the dogs to their people. Law describes it as learning to dance with a partner. "The dog knows

how to do the dance, but they can't lead. The person has to learn to lead the dance, but they have to learn the steps first." The client gets instruction on lots of dog training basics, and, at the same time, the relationship starts to build. "The dog is hanging out with them during training, and therefore has the opportunity to alert. The first few times it happens, the client is shocked," Law explains.

Part of client orientation includes imparting an understanding that the dog is not an alert machine. Law says, "When you have a dog with you at work, the grocery store, and everywhere you go, you develop a deep knowledge of one another if you listen to and observe your dog. That can only help strengthen the dog's persistence and determination when needed. The bond is a two way street: many people want a dog just to work, but forget that the dog has to be provided for physically and emotionally."

And she stresses that, "Any time you're training service dogs, it's not just about the task (the alert); it's about the dogs being very comfortable in public. There's no way they can do this job if they're not comfortable being out there. You also can't expect them to work 24 hours a day. They've got to be able to have some down time."

IT WORKS

We still don't know exactly what chemicals these dogs detect in order to be able to accurately alert to a low blood sugar level. Despite the fact that there is proof in her numbers, validated by her endocrinologist (who is a big supporter of diabetic alert dogs), Wade has been confronted by skeptics who assert that the dog is just guessing and happens, on occasion, to be right. Wade's response? "My sugars have been the best they have ever been, my numbers reflect that, and I'm more confident than ever before. If it's all in my head, so be it, because not only are my levels a lot better, my life is a lot better, too!" 🐾

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

I was so afraid that I'd pass out [if her blood sugar got low], so I kept it high," Wade describes. While the outcome of high blood sugar in the short term is not as deadly as a precipitously low level, consistently abnormally high blood sugar causes long term damage that can lead to outcomes such as amputations and blindness. But now that Wade has an emergency backup indicator in Raven, she feels safer with lower average blood sugar levels than before. "Having Raven and knowing that he does his job well gives me confidence to keep my sugars where they should be. Since getting him, my average blood sugar (A1C) has been the lowest [most normal] that it's ever been."

POSITIVELY POSITIVE

When Wade first brought Raven home, the dog was legitimately alerting Wade four to five times a week. Now, with her blood sugar under better control, she's down to two to three alerts per week.

When Raven alerts, she'll tell him, "OK, let me check my sugar." The Lab knows the routine: he lies down, stares at her, and waits. If she's low or on a downward trend, she praises him with a "Good dog! Let's get a treat!" while she gets him a treat and grabs some juice for herself. His response? "He thinks he's the cat's pajamas! He's all excited and thinks he's the best dog in the whole wide world," Wade laughs.

A diabetic alert dog's road to reach that point is long. Raven came to SDV from a breeder at eight weeks of age and

Dried and True

As much information as we think you can digest about finding the very best dry dog foods.

BY NANCY KERNS

We've reviewed dog foods annually for 17 years now, and we try, every year, to tell you something new about the food you feed (or should be feeding!) your dog, something you may not have known before. We also tell you how we define and identify good-quality foods, and how to tell them apart from the products of lesser quality. And finally, we give you a list of foods that meet all of our selection criteria and meet our approval. We're doing all that again this year, but in a slightly different format.

There are a lot of different factors that should be considered when selecting the right food for your dog. The most important ones, in our opinion, are the ingredients in the food themselves, which is why we spend so much time through the course of the year and space in the magazine talking about dog food ingredients. On the facing page, we have again listed the "things to look for" (desirable traits) on a dog food ingredients list, as well as "things to look out for" (undesirable traits). This really is the most important information to know about choosing good (healthy) dog foods.

If a food doesn't have good ingredients, there is no point in talking about where it's made, where you have to go to buy it, whether it is grain-free or not, how much fat is in it, whether the company that makes it has ever had a recall, or how much it costs. Learning to look at the ingredients panel before you buy is half the battle; the other half is identifying good ingredients (so you can buy that food) and bad ingredients (so you can avoid buying that food).

For some of you, this will be brand-new information. If you've never before looked past the pretty pictures on the label of your dog's food – the juicy steaks, glistening cubes of pink chicken breast, dewy carrots, steaming bowls of rice, and so on – to look at the extremely fine print of the actual ingredients list, you may be shocked to see that what's *actually* in the bag is mostly corn, with steak *flavor*, chicken *by-product meal*, carrot *powder*, and *brewers rice*.

Those of you veteran label readers, we salute you! Your reward is a lot of new information about the foods you should (if you don't already) love, buy, and feed your dog (shouldn't all of those always be the same thing?).

NEW CHARTS

So, trying to mix things up and add to your store of knowledge about the products on our list of "Approved Dry Dog Foods for 2014," we've put together a table of new information about these

foods (which starts on page 9). Let's walk through the information that is included on the table, so we can explain what we've added and why.

COMPANY INFO

The foods that we like and that meet our selection criteria appear on the chart under their **maker's name**. These companies are listed alphabetically. So, for example, please don't freak out when you don't see Orijen under the O's; it's listed under the name of the company that owns it: Champion Pet Foods.

MFG: SELF OR CO-PACK?

Some companies own and operate their own manufacturing plants; some of these make only their own products, and others make their own and other companies' foods, too. Other companies, especially the smaller ones, use "contract manufacturers," a.k.a., "co-packers," to make their foods for them. As we have observed many times, there are benefits and challenges of both arrangements.

When a company owns and operates its own plant, it has full control of the entire food-making process: sourcing ingredients and managing their inflow and storage; hiring, training, and managing workers; equipment maintenance and cleaning; product testing (requiring at least a minimal lab and space and a system for retaining product samples); and so on. When things go wrong, there is no one to blame but yourself; on the other hand, if you are in full control of the whole process, and you know what you are doing, theoretically, you should be able to prevent things from going wrong.

But owning and running a plant is unthinkable costly; few small companies can afford the expense, so they contract the services of a co-packer.

When a pet food company does this, it can build as little or as much control or oversight of the manufacturing process into its contract as it



WDJ'S DRY FOOD SELECTION CRITERIA

THINGS TO LOOK FOR: HALLMARKS OF QUALITY

The following are desired traits – things you **want to see** on the label.

- ✓ **Lots of animal protein at the top of the ingredients list.** Ingredients are listed by weight, so you want to see a lot of top quality animal protein at the top of the list; the first ingredient should be a “named” animal protein source (see next bullet).
- ✓ **A named animal protein – chicken, beef, lamb, and so on.** “Meat” is an example of a low-quality protein source of dubious origin. Animal protein “meals” should also be from named species (look for “chicken meal” but avoid “meat meal” or “poultry meal”).
- ✓ **When a fresh meat is first on the ingredient list, there should be an animal protein meal in a supporting role to augment the total animal protein in the diet.** Meat contains a lot of (heavy) water, so if meat is first on the list, another source of animal protein should appear in the top three or so ingredients.
- ✓ **Whole vegetables, fruits, and grains.** Fresh, unprocessed food ingredients contain nutrients in all their complex glory, with their vitamins, enzymes, and antioxidants intact. Don't be alarmed by one or two “fractions” (a by-product or part of an ingredient, like tomato pomace or rice bran), especially if they are low on the ingredients list. But the more fractions present in the food, and the higher they appear on the list, the lower-quality the result.
- ✓ **A “best by” date that's at least six months away.** A best by date that's 10 or 11 months away is ideal; it means the food was

made very recently. Note: Foods made with synthetic preservatives (BHA, BHT, ethoxyquin) may have a “best by” date that is as much as two years past the date of manufacture.

LOOK OUT FOR: AVOID THESE TRAITS

The following are things you **don't** want to see in the ingredients.

- ✓ **Meat by-products or poultry by-products.** Higher-value ingredients are processed and stored more carefully (kept clean and cold) than lower-cost ingredients (such as by-products) by meat processors.
- ✓ **A “generic” fat source such as “animal fat.”** This can literally be any fat of animal origin, including used restaurant grease. “Poultry” fat is not quite as suspect as “animal fat,” but “chicken fat” or “duck fat” is better (and traceable).
- ✓ **Added sweeteners.** Dogs, like humans, enjoy the taste of sweet foods. Sweeteners effectively persuade many dogs to eat foods comprised mainly of grain fragments (and containing little healthy animal protein).
- ✓ **Artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives (i.e., BHA, BHT, ethoxyquin).** The color of the food doesn't matter to your dog. And it should be flavored well enough to be enticing with healthy meats and fats. Natural preservatives, such as tocopherols (vitamin E), vitamin C, and rosemary extract, can be used instead. Note that natural preservatives do not preserve foods as long as artificial preservatives, so owners should always check the “best by” date on the label and look for relatively fresh products.

likes. Some companies “leave it to the experts,” taking a hands-off approach to the production of its products, while others insist on things like sourcing its own ingredients and having a company representative present for every run of its products, from start to finish.

When a food company hires a competent, ethical contract manufacturer and is educated enough to provide meaningful oversight of the services it hired, the relationship can work out well for all concerned, including you and your dogs.

When we started our annual dry dog food reviews (some 17 years ago), pet food companies would not, did not, disclose where their products were made. “Proprietary information” was the perennial excuse – which made us crazy, because we suspected, and later learned we were correct, that all the companies absolutely knew where their competitors' products were made; it was just us, the consumers, who weren't supposed to know. But why? It never made sense to us. If you were proud of your manufacturer, why not tell the world?

This argument worked with some of the companies whose foods we admired – and we admired them even more for disclosing the information to us and consumers everywhere.

We had several reasons for wanting companies to disclose this. First, we wanted to see if there was a pattern; did all the best foods come from certain co-packers? Did the ones that were recalled originate from certain others?

We also *hated* the helpless feeling we had in 2007, when company after company announced that their products, too, were apparently adulterated with a substance that could sicken and kill dogs – and the companies whose names were on the label of the foods we were feeding our dogs wouldn't tell us whether their products were manufactured in the same place as the location where all those first deadly foods were produced. That's when we decided to draw a line in the sand and insist that if a company wouldn't tell its consumers where its products were made, we wouldn't include them on our “approved lists.”

The companies that already disclosed their manufacturing sites were thrilled; they hoped to see many of their competitors fall off our lists. But after coping with the outrage of the pet-owning public in the wake of the 2007 melamine disaster, few companies wanted to be called out for nondisclosure anymore, and *almost* every company on our previous “approved foods” lists disclosed their manufacturing sites then and has done so ever since.

There have been a couple of curious hold-outs – curious because in every other way, their products met all of our other selection criteria as quality foods: Halo and Newman's Own. Both companies sell great products, interesting foods, and both have an impeccable record so far – no recalls for anything, ever. Why won't they tell?

We don't know. Ask them. We've gotten tired of explaining why these products, which so obviously meet all of our (other) selection criteria, are not on our lists. **And so, this year, we didn't ask each of the 57 companies with products**

on our “approved list” to tell us where all of their products are made (some of the larger companies might use half a dozen co-packers!). You ask them, when you call their toll-free number to ask for a free sample and get more information about their products. See what they tell you and how you feel about it.

(By the way, when you call these and every other company whose products you are interested in, or whose products you feed to your dog now, note whether you got an answering machine and no call back, or a real person. Did the company have accessible and knowledgeable customer service people? As you put this to the test, think about how you would feel about the company’s accessibility if you just heard that a recall of its products had been announced and that’s what you were feeding your dog.)

SALES LOCATIONS

Many of the companies that make the kind of foods we like are small, and may have only a regional sales presence. Even some of the larger companies’ products may be difficult to find, especially for those of you who are unused to shopping at independent pet supply stores, or even national pet specialty chains like Petco, Petsmart, and Pet Supplies Plus.

All credit to developing this “natural/holistic” or “super-premium” market should go to the independent pet supply stores; it’s at this level where educated, passionate salespeople can educate dog owners, one at a time, about the many health benefits of better-quality foods. (That’s why independent store operators get really mad when a company whose food they have been promoting for years succeeds to the point where it inks a distribution deal with a national chain – whose sales volume can empower the chain to undercut the price that the indie was charging by a lot, killing sales at the indie’s store.)

We strongly suggest shopping at independent pet supply stores if you are lucky enough to have one nearby. The salespeople (who are often the owners) will be a wealth of information about the best foods for your dog that are in your price range. Those of you who don’t have a good indie close by, or those who struggle to afford better-quality foods, the pet specialty chains and online sources are your next-best bets. Also, some of the companies have direct-shipping options that might work for you.

VARIETIES, GRAIN-FREE?

We listed the number of varieties of food offered by each company, and, further, broke down these offerings into separate lines when said lines have been formulated with a unifying approach or purpose. We’ve also noted the number of grain-free varieties offered within the total – not because we think every dog should be on grain-free (it’s *not* right for *all* dogs) – but just to help those of you who *do* want a grain-free food to see which makers have them.

MEAT, MEAL, OR BOTH?

When we say “meat,” rest assured that what we are talking about is a named species (beef, chicken, whitefish, etc.) of fresh or frozen animal flesh. If you are confused, read that list of selection criteria again. If a dog food ingredients list on the label says “meat,” it indicates *any* type of meat from *any* species of animal – you don’t and can’t know what they mean. But on our table, “meat” is *the clean flesh derived from (named, specific) slaughtered animals, with or without the accompanying fat and portions of the skin, sinew, nerves, and blood vessels that normally accompany the flesh* (that’s a slightly edited version of the legal definition of meat).

When we say “meal,” we mean rendered meat – meat that meets the above definition, but has been cooked and then dried to a granular powdered form. This is *very* different from dehydrated or freeze-dried meat; don’t let any pet food company try to convince you otherwise. Rendering is a drastic process; it alters the nutrient content of the food. Fat is boiled off; so is bacteria. But most importantly, the ground-up result is made unidentifiable and uniform. You don’t know what tissues, in what relative amounts, went into it. However, because the water has been mostly removed (to about 10% moisture), protein is concentrated in the finished product. Meat meal can bring the protein content of a food to a nice high level that can’t be reached with meat alone.

When used in a dry food formula, meat offers a less-processed ingredient, and a taste and odor that dogs uniformly prefer. But meat meal is key to a high-protein food that most dogs thrive on, so many manufacturers use both.

We’ve noted the few instances when a company uses *genuinely* dehydrated or freeze-dried meats. These unprocessed

ingredients add both concentrated protein and taste to a finished product, but are wickedly expensive, so they aren’t often used in dry food.

PROTEIN RANGE, FAT RANGE

In this column, we listed the lowest and highest percentage of protein found in any of the company’s foods, followed on the next line by the lowest and highest percentage of fat found in the company’s foods. If you are looking for a food for your dog that has protein or fat in a certain range, you can easily see whether that company makes a variety that might meet your dog’s needs.

RECALLS?

The FDA has a site where all the pet food recalls since 2008 are listed. We’ve indicated which products on our list have had a recall since 2008, what it was for, and when it happened. (Here is the FDA’s site: fda.gov/animalVeterinary/safetyhealth/recallswithdrawals/default.htm.)

Keep in mind that we are not terribly concerned about recalls for Salmonella in dry dog food. (See “Do You Recall,” WDJ April 2013, and “Why Are There So Many Recalls?” October 2013.)

PRICE

This is a bit of a sticky wicket, since the price of any particular bag of food varies so much based on geography and sales site. We gathered prices from a variety of retailers – brick-and-mortar and online. We also checked prices on each variety, in large bags and small bags; the price per pound is much less in large bags than small bags, but not everybody buys (or should buy) large bags. We averaged these prices per pound and came up with these categories:

- \$ Food is less than \$2.50/lb.
- \$\$ Food is \$2.50 to \$3.50/lb.
- \$\$\$ Food is more than \$3.50/lb.

Because of the number of variables, it may not be accurate for all foods in all places, but rather a rough guide to help some of you identify which foods may or may not be in your budget. Just remember: to some extent, price does equal quality. While it’s highly possible to pay a lot for a mediocre food, you *cannot* buy a great food for less than the cost of the superior ingredients that are needed to make it. 🐾

WDJ'S APPROVED DRY DOG FOODS FOR 2014

NEW PRODUCTS FOR THIS LIST
APPEAR IN YELLOW BARS

COMPANY INFO	MFR: SELF OR CO-PACK?	SALES LOCATIONS	VARIETIES, GRAIN-FREE?	MEAT, MEAL, OR BOTH?	PROTEIN RANGE FAT RANGE	RECALLS?	PRICE	NOTES
ADDITION FOODS Kent, WA (425) 251-0330 additionfoods.com	Self, in New Zealand	Ind. stores, direct-ship, online	7, 2 grain-free	Meals	22% - 28% 8% - 14%	No	\$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very novel proteins for dogs who need them • Foreign manufacturing
AINSWORTH PET NUTRITION (BACK TO BASICS) Meadville, PA (800) 219-2558; backtobasicspetfood.com	Self	Pet Supplies Plus chain, few other ind. stores, online	7, 3 grain-free	Both	24% - 28% 14% - 18%	No	\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interesting approach: made with organ meat as primary protein source
ANNA MAET Telford, PA (888) 723-0367 annamaet.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, online	9, 4 grain-free	Meals	23% - 32% 7% - 20%	No	\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In formulas containing chicken, company says only low-ash chicken used
ARTEMIS Carson, CA (800) 282-5876 artemiscompany.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, online	FreshMix: 8	Both	20% - 28% 6% - 17%	No	\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch the fat content; varies a lot across the product line
			Osopure: 3 grain-free	Both	23% 14%			
BENCH & FIELD Grand Rapids, MI (800) 525-4802 benchandfield.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, health food stores, Trader Joes, direct shipped	1	Meals	24% 15%	No	\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only one variety is offered
BLUE BUFFALO Wilton, CT (800) 919-2833 bluebuffalo.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, pet specialty chains	Basics: 8, 1 grain-free	Both	22% - 26% 8% - 15%	Yes; vit. D excesses in Oct 2010	\$\$- \$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each line contains food for puppies, adults, and seniors • Basics line contains only one animal protein per variety (most have turkey; one has salmon); Freedom line is entirely grain-free, but with moderate protein and fat; Life Protection line contains moderate protein and fat; Longevity line is lower in protein and fat; Wilderness line is completely grain-free with high protein and moderate fat levels.
			Freedom: 5 grain-free	Both	24% - 27% 14% - 16%			
			Life Protection: 21	Both	18% - 28% 6% - 16%			
			Longevity: 3	Both	22% - 26% 8% - 13%			
			Wilderness: 13 grain-free	Both	30% - 37% 13% - 16%			
BORÉAL Beamsville, ON (800) 253-8128 borealpetfood.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, online	3 grain-free	Both	28% - 29% 15% - 18%	No	\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available only in Canada • Uses Zinpro, a highly bioavailable zinc
BURNS Valparaiso, IN (877) 983-9651 burnspethealth.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, direct-shipped	3	Meals	18.5% - 22% 7.5% - 11%	No	\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very simple, limited ingredient lists
CANIDAE San Luis Obispo, CA (800) 398-1600 canidae.com	Some made in-house, some co-packed	Ind. stores, pet specialty chain (Petco)	10, 4 grain-free	Meals in most; both in grain-free foods	20% - 32% 8.5% - 18%	Yes; Salmonella in May 2012	\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five of Canidae's foods are EU-certified

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CANINE CAVIAR Norco, CA (800) 392-7898 caninecaviar.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, online	8, 4 grain-free	Meals (Some are dehydrated meats, rather than rendered meals)	18% - 31% 8% - 19%	No	\$\$- \$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maker claims no GMO ingredients are used • Formulated to be alkaline
CARNA4 Toronto, Ontario (855) 422-7624 carna4.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, pet specialty (Global Pet Supply), online	2, 1 grain-free	Meat	27% - 29% 16%	No	\$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maker claims no GMO ingredients are used • Food is baked, not extruded
CASTOR & POLLUX Amarillo, TX (800) 875-7518 castorpolluxpet.com	Self	Ind. stores, pet specialty chains (Petco, Petsmart); online	Organix: 7, 2 grain-free	Both	21.4% - 30% 10% - 15%	No	\$\$	• Organix line is made with all organic ingredients
			Ultramix: 8, 2 grain-free	Both	22% - 38% 9.5% - 17%			
CENTRAL GARDEN & PET Walnut Creek, CA (866) 500-6286 goactivedog.com	Self	Ind. stores	Active Care: 2	Meals	22% - 25% 12% - 15%	No	\$	• Active Care line boasts high levels of glucosamine and chondroitin for healthy joints.
apdselectchoice.com	Self	Ind. stores	Advanced Pet Diets: 6	Meals	17% - 28% 8% - 17%	No	\$	• Three of AvoDerm's varieties are baked, not extruded. All contain avocado.
avodermnatural.com	Self	Ind. stores, pet specialty chains	AvoDerm: 18, 2 grain-free	Most with meals (baked lamb food contains both)	20% - 28% 8% - 20%	Yes: Salmonella in 2012	\$	• Pinnacle foods contain only one animal protein per variety
pinnaclepet.com	Self	Ind. stores, online	Pinnacle: 6, 3 grain-free	Meals	22% - 42% 10% - 22%	No	\$\$- \$\$	
CHAMPION PETFOODS Morinville, Alberta (877) 939-0006 championpetfoods.com	Self	Ind. stores, online	Acana: 15, 4 grain-free	11 use meals; grain-free foods use both	25% - 33% 10% - 24%	No	\$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acana has three lines: 9 "Classics" varieties with 55-65% meat; 4 "Regionals" with 60-65% meat; and 2 "Singles" with 45-50% single-source protein. • Company claims Orijen line contains 80% meat
			Orijen: 6, 6 grain-free	Both	38% 15% - 20%			
DIAMOND Meta, MO (800) 658-0624 chickensoupforthepetloverssoul.com	Self	Ind. stores, online	Chicken Soup: 6	Both	20% - 28% 6% - 14%	Yes: Salmonella in 2012	\$	• Chicken Soup, Premium Edge, and Professional are lower-cost foods compared to many on this list, yet fresh meat is included in each formula
(800) 977-8797 premiumedge petfood.com			Premium Edge: 8	Both	20% - 44% 10% - 18%		\$	• Taste of the Wild grain-free foods each contain multiple protein sources
(800) 342-4808 professionalpet food.com			Professional: 7	Both	20% - 29% 8% - 20%		\$	
(800) 977-8797 tasteofthewild petfood.com			Taste of the Wild: 7 grain-free	Both	25% - 32% 15% - 18%		\$\$- \$\$	

COMPANY INFO	MFR: SELF OR CO-PACK?	SALES LOCATIONS	VARIETIES, GRAIN-FREE?	MEAT, MEAL, OR BOTH?	PROTEIN RANGE FAT RANGE	RECALLS?	PRICE	NOTES
DOGSWELL Los Angeles, CA (888) 559-8833 dogswell.com	Co-pack	Ind. stores, pet specialty chains (Petco)	Happy Hips: 1	Both	24% 12%	No	\$- \$\$	• Happy Hips has high levels of glucosamine/chondroitin
			Live Free: 6 grain-free	Both	24% - 32% 125 - 18%			• Live Free is Dogswell's new line of grain-free, potato-free foods
			Nutrisca: 3 grain-free	Both	38% - 40% 145 - 18%			• Nutrisca is also grain- and potato-free
			Vitality: 1	Both	24% 12%			• Vitality is intended to help eyes, skin, coat
DR. GARY'S BEST BREED Findlay, OH (800) 500-5999 bestbreed.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, direct-shipped	14, 2 grain-free	Meals	21% - 32% 7% - 22%	No	\$\$	• Company claims products are GMO-free • Product line includes 6 specific breed foods
DR. TIM'S PET FOOD Marquette, MI (906) 249-8486 drtims.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, online	4, 1 grain-free	Meals	26% - 35% 16% - 25%	No	\$	• Company says all foods are low-ash, with high levels of quality fats a priority
DRS. FOSTER & SMITH Rhinelander, WI (800) 562-7169 drsfostersmith.com	Co-packed	Direct-shipped	5	Both	21% - 26% 8% - 14%	No	\$	• First ingredients, especially fresh meat, are great. Lower-cost ingredients start to appear 5th to 7th on list
EVANGER'S Wheeling, IL (800) 288-6796 evangersdogfood.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, direct-shipped	5, 2 grain-free	Both	24% - 33% 12% - 16%	No	\$	• Three formulas are chicken-free, for those looking for an alternative to this common ingredient
FIRSTMATE North Vancouver, BC (800) 658-1166 firstmate.com	Self	Ind. stores	14, 9 grain-free	Meals	18% - 32% 6% - 18%	No	\$\$\$	• Grain-free varieties all use only one animal protein and one carbohydrate source each
FROMM FAMILY FOODS Mequon, WI (262) 242-2200 frommfamily.com	Self	Ind. stores, online	Classics: 2	Both	21% - 23% 11% - 15%	No	\$ \$ \$	• Classics line is made with chicken and chicken meal
			Four-Star Nutritionals: 10, 5 grain-free	Both	23% - 30% 11% - 19%			• Four-Star line offers a wide variety of animal proteins
			Gold: 7	Both	24% - 27% 10% - 18%			• Gold line is formulated so each product contains several animal proteins
GRANDMA MAE'S New York, NY (888) 653-8021 grandmamaes.com	Co-pack	Ind. stores	6, 1 grain-free	3 varieties contain both; 3 contain meals only	23% - 30% 7% - 15%	No	\$	• Sold only in independent stores in the midwest • Senior variety includes dried chicken liver
GREAT LIFE Simi Valley, CA (805) 577-9663 doctorsfinest.com	Co-pack	Ind. stores, direct-shipped	Great Life: 7, 3 grain-free	Meat and freeze-dried meat	22% - 30% 13%	No	\$-\$ \$\$\$ \$	• Grain-free foods are also potato-free
			Dr. E's Limited Ingredient: 4, 2 grain-free	Meat and freeze-dried meat	19% - 27% 9.5% - 12%			• Maker claims products are GMO-free
			Pioneer Naturals: 9, 4 grain-free	Meals and freeze-dried meats	20% - 30% 10% - 14%			• Lots of freeze-dried ingredients (including a few freeze dried meats) in these products

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HALO Tampa, FL (800) 426-4256 halopets.com	Co-pack (company does not disclose location)	Ind. stores, pet specialty chains (Petco), direct-shipped, online	10, 2 grain-free	Meats only, with the exception of the 1 vegan variety	20% - 30% 10% - 20%	No	\$\$- \$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All varieties (except the vegan one) contain fresh meat and eggs Vegan variety should be used only for dogs with allergies to multiple animal proteins
HILL'S (IDEAL BALANCE) Topeka, KS (800) 445-5777 hillspet.com	Self	Ind. stores, pet specialty chains (Petco, Petsmart), online	7, 2 grain-free	Both	18% - 25% 12% - 16.5%	No	\$\$- \$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hill's shows 6 more foods in this line on its website, but these do not appear to be available yet. Note that the ingredients have changed and, in our opinion, declined a bit since the introduction of this line last year
HI-TEK Dublin, GA (800) 284-4835 hitektrations.com	Self	Ind. stores, online	Hi-Tek Naturals: 8, 3 grain-free	Meals	21% - 35% 12% - 16%	No	\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hi-Tek Naturals is lowest-cost line
leonardpowell.com	Self	Ind. stores, online	Leonard Powell Signature: 6	Both	24% - 28% 12% - 16%		\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leonard Powell Signature has two "classic" formulas, two baked formulas, and two with novel animal proteins
life4K9.com	Self	Ind. stores, online	Life4K9: 2	Both	21% 9%		\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Life4K9 line is baked, not extruded
HORIZON Rosthern, SK (403) 279-5874 horizonpetfood.com	Self	Ind. stores	Amicus: 3 grain-free	Both	30% - 32% 10% - 18%	No	\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amicus foods are formulated for mini and small-breed dogs Legacy line claims an 80% meat inclusion Pulsar line is made with peas and lentils (pulses) Company claims no GMO foods are in its products
			Complete: 4	Meals	24% - 28% 10% - 14%			
			Legacy: 3 grain-free	Both	34% - 36% 14% - 18%			
			Pulsar: 2 grain-free	Meals	28% 15%			
KENT NUTRITION (BYNATURE) Muscatine, IA (877) 367-9225 bynaturepetfoods.com	Self	Ind. stores, online	9, 1 grain-free, 1 organic	Meals (sole exception is organic variety, contains both)	24% - 37% 12% - 20%	No	\$\$- \$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organic variety is the most expensive, and the only one to contain fresh meat
LOTUS Torrance, CA (888) 995-6887 lotuspetfoods.com	Co-pack	Ind. stores, online	9, 4 grain-free	Both, except for the fish and senior foods, which have only meat	18% - 27% 8% - 16%	No	\$\$- \$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All Lotus foods are baked, not extruded Three of the foods are also available in "small bites" with the same GA and ingredients
MERRICK Amarillo, TX (800) 664-7387 merrickpetcare.com	Self	Ind. stores, pet specialty (Petco), and online	Merrick: 12, 5 grain-free	Both	25% - 38% 11% - 17%	No	\$\$- \$\$\$	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Company says Merrick line is 60% animal proteins, 70% in the grain-free varieties Whole Earth line is made with meals and is the company's economy line
			Whole Earth Farms: 3	Meals	24% - 28% 10% - 17%		\$	

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MIDWESTERN PET FOODS, INC. (EARTHBOURN HOLISTIC) Evansville, IN (800) 752-2319 earthbornholisticpetfood.com	Self	Ind. stores, online	10, 6 grain-free	Meals	22% -38% 12% - 20%	No	\$- \$\$	• Company has a "UPC for Trees" program; return the barcode from the label and it will plant a tree
MULLIGAN STEW Jackson, WY (888) 364-7839 mulliganstewpetfood.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, direct-shipped	3	Both	26% 10%	No	\$\$\$	• Company offers a buying club (the "Stew Crew") with up to 25% discounts for frequent buyers (direct-ship)
NATURA Fremont, NE (800) 532-7261 naturapet.com	Self	Ind. stores	California Natural: 15, 6 grain-free	Most utilize only meals; 3 contain both	21% - 34.2% 7% - 16.7%	Yes; Salmonella in March-June 2013	\$- \$\$	• California Natural is the company's "limited ingredient" line, with just 4-6 major ingredients in each • Evo line offers highest protein levels, with moderate fat levels • Healthwise is the company's economy line • Check out Natura's seebeyondthebag.com ; interesting.
		Ind. stores	Evo: 7 grain-free	Both	43% - 52% 18% - 22%		\$\$	
		Ind. stores	Health-Wise: 4	Meals	20% - 28% 7% - 18%		\$	
		Ind. stores, pet specialty (Petco, Petsmart, Pet Supplies Plus)	Innova: 12, 3 grain-free	Both	20% - 38% 7% - 16%			
NATURE'S SELECT Anaheim, CA (888) 814-7387 naturalpetfooddelivery.com	Co-packed	Direct-shipped, local distributors	8, 1 grain-free	Most utilize only meals; 2 contain meat	16% - 33% 10% - 17%	No	\$	• Availability limited to areas with local distributors
NATURAL BALANCE Pacoima, CA (800) 829-4493 naturalbalanceinc.com	Self	Ind. stores, pet specialty chains (Petco), online	Alpha: 3 grain-free	Both	26% 11.5%	Yes; Salmonella in May/June 2012	\$\$	• Del Monte Foods bought the company in early 2013. • Misc. includes a vegetarian variety, an organic chicken variety (containing both meat and meal), and a "fat dogs" (lower fat) variety (made with meal).
			Limited Ingredient Diets (LID): 13, 10 grain-free	Most have both, and a few contain meat only	20% - 22.5% 10% - 12%		\$\$	
			Misc: 3	Misc.	18% - 26% 8% - 13%		\$- \$\$	
			Ultra Premium: 4	Both	18% - 28% 8% - 16%		\$	
NATURE'S VARIETY St. Louis, MO (888) 519-7387 naturesvariety.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, pet specialty chains (Petco), online	Instinct: 9	Meal	27% - 42% 16.5% - 22%	No	\$-\$ \$\$\$	• Instinct line has 9 foods, 5 with multiple animal proteins, and 4 limited ingredient foods, each with a single animal protein • Instinct Raw Boost line is kibble with freeze-dried meats included in formulas • Raw Boost line has two "healthy weight" formulas with lower (still moderate) protein and fat
			Instinct Raw Boost: 7	Meal and freeze-dried meat	27% - 29% 16.5% - 18%		\$\$\$	
			Prairie: 8	Both, except puppy foods have meal only	22.5% - 26% 12% - 13%		\$- \$\$	

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NEWMAN'S OWN Aptos, CA (800) 865-2866 newmansownorganics.com	Co-packed (company does not disclose location)	Ind. stores, fine grocery stores, online	2	Both	21% - 24% 10% - 12%	No	\$- \$\$	• Major ingredients (except chicken and chicken meal, which are the sole animal proteins used) are organic
NUTRO ULTRA Franklin, TN (800) 833-5330 ultraholistic.com	Self	Ind. stores, pet specialty (Petco, Petsmart)	11	Both	23% - 29% 10% - 16%	No	\$\$- \$\$\$	• Ingredients start well, with fresh meat, meat meal, and whole grains . . . but things like pea protein and potato protein are also present
OHIO PET FOODS (BLACKWOOD) Lisbon, OH (888) 843-1738 blackwoodpetfood.com	Self	Ind. stores, online	10, 2 grain-free	Meals	20.5% - 28 % 9% - 18%	No	\$	• Blackwood foods are the manufacturer's "house brand"
OVEN-BAKED TRADITION Saint-Hyacinthe, QE (888) 224-4140 ovenbakedtradition.com	Self	Ind. stores	16, 4 grain-free	Both	20% - 34% 8% - 18%	No	\$\$	• All varieties are baked • Available only in Canada • This is the manufacturer's house brand
PARTY ANIMAL West Hollywood, CA (855) 727-8926 partyanimalpetfood.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, Whole Foods	1	Both	24% 14%	No	\$\$	• Only one variety offered: Organic chicken (with chicken meal), and several whole organic grains
PERFORMANCE PET (SPRING NATURALS) Mitchell, SD (866) 868-0874 springnaturals.com	Self	Ind. stores, online	12, 5 grain-free	Meat only	23.5% - 26% 11% - 17%	No	\$\$	• Each food contains proteins from 1 species • This is the manufacturer's house brand
PETCUREAN Chilliwack, BC (866) 864-6112 petcurean.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, online	Go! : 8, 3 grain-free	Both	22% - 36% 12% - 18%	No	\$\$ \$\$- \$\$\$ \$	• Go! line has 3 types: "Fit + Free" (grain-free); "Sensitivity + Shine" (single protein); "Daily Defense" (single protein, no potato) • Summit line available only in Canada
			Now Fresh: 7 grain-free	Meat only	24% - 29% 10% - 18%			
			Summit: 3	Meal only	21% - 28% 8% - 17 %			
PETGUARD Green Cove Springs, FL (800) 874-3221 petguard.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, online	3	1 contains meat; 1 contains both; 1 is vegetarian	16% - 27% 9% - 15%	No	\$\$- \$\$\$	• "Lifepath" is organic variety; organic vegetarian food is also offered • "LifeSpan" contains chicken and chicken meal
PETS GLOBAL (SIGNATURE) Gardena, CA (888) 897-7207 signature.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, online	Signature: 5 grain-free	Both	27% - 32% 14% - 18%	No	\$\$	• None of the formulas contain grain, potatoes, or any chicken or chicken egg ingredients
PET VALU (PERFORMATRIN ULTRA) Markham, ON (800) 738-8258 performatrinultra.com	Co-packed	PetValue (chain) stores	8, 3 grain-free	Most contain both; 1 contains meal	22% - 37% 8% - 16%	No	\$\$- \$\$\$	• We like Performatrin Ultra, but not the low-cost Performatrin line containing corn gluten and other low-quality ingredients
PRECISE (PRECISE HOLISTIC COMPLETE) Nacogdoches, TX (888) 477-3247 precisepet.com	Self	Ind. stores	9, 2 grain-free	5 contain both; 4 contain meal only	23% - 32% 12% - 20%	No	\$- \$\$	• This is the manufacturer's house brand, but the "Precise Holistic Select" line is its best product (we're not fans of the lower-quality economy lines)

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PYRAMID (TUSCAN NATURAL) Las Vegas, NV (888) 408-0895 pyramidpet.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores	4, 1 grain-free	2 contain meal only; 2 contain both	21% - 35% 11% - 20%	No	\$\$	• "Carne" variety is grain-free and has far higher protein and fat levels (35% & 20%) than the rest of the line.	
SMARTPAK CANINE Plymouth, MA (800) 461-8898 smartpak.com	Co-packed	Direct-shipped	5	Meal	21% - 24% 8% - 14%	No	\$	• 3 life stage formulas containing chicken meal, and 3 containing lamb meal	
THREE DOG BAKERY (BAKE TO NATURE) Kansas City, MO (800) 487-3287 threedog.com	Co-packed	Direct shipped, Three Dog Bakery stores	4	Both	18% - 26% 5% - 15%	No	\$\$	• All foods are baked, not extruded	
SOLID GOLD El Cajon, CA (800) 364-4863 solidgoldhealth.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, pet specialty chains (Petco), direct-shipped	9, 2 grain-free	Most contain both; 2 contain meal only	22% - 41% 9% - 18%	Yes; Salmonella in May 2012	\$\$	• Highest protein foods are the two grain-free varieties: Barking at the Moon (41%) and Sun Dancer (30%); puppy varieties and small breed follow with 28%	
TUFFY'S PET FOODS (NATURAL PLANET, NUTRISOURCE) Perham, MN (800) 525-9155 naturalplanetorganics.com nutrisourcedogfood.com	Self	Ind. stores, direct shipped	Natural Planet: 4, 3 grain-free	Both	23% - 25% 14% - 15%	No	\$	• 2 of the Natural Planet foods are organic • These are the manufacturer's house brand	
			Nutri-source: 16, 5 grain-free	Most use both; 4 contain meal only	21% - 32% 9% - 21%		\$		
			PureVita: 6, 3 grain-free	Both	24% - 26% 13% - 16%		\$\$		
VERUS PET FOODS Abingdon, MD (888) 828-3787 veruspetfoods.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, online	5	Meals	17% - 24% 8% - 16%	No	\$	• Verus offers simple formulas with quality ingredients	
VETS CHOICE Melville, NY (800) 992-9738 vetschoice.com	Co-packed	Ind. stores, online	5, 1 grain-free	Both	24% - 27% 9% - 18%	No	\$	• All contain fish oil, primrose oil, GAGs, colostrum, blue green algae, prebiotics, probiotics	
VIAND Elmsford, NY (800) 743-1502 viandpet.com	Co-packed	Direct-shipped	3	Meals	18% - 26% 8.5% - 16%	No	\$	• Company was formerly known as PHD	
WELLPET (HOLISTIC SELECT, WELLNESS) Tewksbury, MA (800) 225-0904 holisticselect.com wellnesspetfood.com	Co-packed and self	Ind. stores, pet specialty chains	Holistic Select: 12, 1 grain-free	Meals, except 1 grain-free food (both)	21% - 30% 7.5% - 20%	No	\$\$	• Holistic Select line has "digestive health support" features • Company says no GMO ingredients are used in the Wellness line of foods • Each Wellness line has small breed, large breed, puppy, adult, senior, and weight management varieties • Wellness Simple foods contain a single animal protein and easily digestible carbs	
			Wellness Complete Health: 13	Both	21% - 30% 6% - 18%		Yes; Salmonella in May 2012		\$\$
			Wellness Core: 7 grain-free	Both	33% - 36% 10% - 18%		No		\$\$-\$\$\$
			Wellness Simple: 4, 2 grain-free	Both	21% - 26% 11% - 12%		No		\$\$-\$\$\$

Brushing Up

Why (and how) you should brush your dog's teeth.

BY LISA RODIER

The good news: you can give your dog a thorough brush job in just two minutes a day. The bad news: few dogs fancy having their teeth brushed, and there ain't no Holy Grail of Canine Tooth Brushing, despite my attempts to extract one from Angela Mees, DVM, who owns a practice limited to veterinary dentistry in suburban Atlanta.

I'm guilty of not brushing my dog Atle's teeth. But after talking with Dr. Mees, who is working toward becoming a fellow in the Academy of Veterinary Dentistry, I've reconsidered my sloth.

OUNCE OF PREVENTION

Brushing removes plaque, the sticky, colorless film that forms on teeth. Bacteria live in plaque and secrete acids that cause tooth decay and irritate gum tissue, leading to gingivitis (gum disease) and periodontal disease. Plaque begins to calcify after 48 hours so, while daily brushing is best, brushing your dog's teeth every other day is still very useful.

The only way to remove tartar (calculus) is with a cleaning by a veterinarian; brushing buys you extra time between professional cleanings. Dr. Mees explains, "If you go a year with just professional cleaning and no brushing, you're more likely to see periodontal disease. I tell people to think about their own mouths – we brush twice a day, we floss daily, and most people get cleanings twice a year."

Some dogs are more prone to periodontal disease – including Greyhounds, small breeds, and brachycephalic breeds – but, just as with humans, some dogs

naturally have better oral health than others, even within the same breed and family.

Keeping plaque and tartar at bay toward off oral disease is just the tip of the iceberg; your dog's liver, kidney, heart, and overall immune system are affected by the condition of her teeth and gums. Brushing is some of the best preventive, holistic "medicine" we can employ to maintain the health of our dog.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Dr. Mees is a fan of simplicity; her tool of choice is a children's soft tooth brush. If you have a very large dog, she

recommends an adult extra soft brush, explaining, "People mistakenly think the heftier the bristle, the better the job. You want something very soft because the gingiva (gums) are very sensitive."

If your dog is worried about the brush, start with just your finger then move to a brush. While finger brush products aren't bad, they have thick bristles that make it difficult to get under the gum line. Some of Dr. Mees' clients have reported success with an electric toothbrush, but in her experience, that sort of horsepower tends to scare most dogs.

As for toothpaste? Simply wet the toothbrush with water and forego the paste. Many dogs try to eat paste by chewing the toothbrush, making the brushing job a whole lot harder for us. Dr. Mees says toothpaste is a major reason why people often unknowingly struggle and give up on brushing; we think we have to use it – and we don't! Want the benefit of the enzymes in canine toothpaste? Try using it as a treat after you brush your dog's teeth. (Note: Be sure to use a product formulated for dogs, not humans.)

HOW TO START

If your dog has signs of gum disease – puffy, red, or bleeding gums – wait to introduce a brushing routine until after you've taken your dog to a veterinarian for a professional cleaning. If her gums are painful and you brush, the dog may develop a negative association with the whole process and you'll fail.

Otherwise, if your dog's mouth is in good health, Dr. Mees' advice is to start

For the upper back teeth, put the wet brush in the dog's cheek, and, gently holding her muzzle, close her mouth and brush. Closing the mouth controls the dog's tongue, reducing any struggle with brushing.



slowly – very slowly – and make the experience positive. I've found that's the right approach since introducing Atle to the activity. The first time I touched the brush to his front tooth – and that's all I did – he jumped like I'd put a hot prod up his backside (I actually think it tickled). On day one, and even day two, all I did was gently touch the tooth. Will some dogs open wide and say more, more, more? Probably, but from talking with Dr. Mees, that's the exception, not the rule.

Make brushing a daily routine; the more your dog becomes accustomed to the routine, the better it will go. And don't use force. For Dr. Mees, it's important that your approach be gentle, but firm, and not interfere with your bond with your dog.

She's a big advocate of using praise, treats – whatever your dog responds to in terms of positive reinforcement – during and after brushing, especially in the introductory stages, much like doing a dog's nails, or touching a dog who is uncomfortable with touch (see "Touch Me, Touch Me Not, WDJ August 2004, for step-by-step directions on using classical conditioning to get your dog to accept and enjoy something he previously disliked).

THE MECHANICS OF BRUSHING

Start by figuring out what position will be most comfortable for both you and your dog. For Dr. Mees and her Greyhound, that's standing. This lets Dr. Mees reach around from behind the dog, and works well for them. Smaller dogs might be happy to sit in your lap. For Atle, I've found that having him lie on his side works best.

Where to start? Dr. Mees advises that one approach is to divide the dog's mouth into four quadrants, tackling one at a time. She begins with her dog's front teeth because they're easiest to reach. Wherever you choose to begin, start with a wet brush, and gently work each area as follows, with pressure light enough that the bristles *barely* bend:

■ To brush the front teeth, gently pull back the dog's lips.

■ For the upper back teeth, put the brush in the dog's cheek, and, gently holding her muzzle, close her mouth and brush. Closing the mouth controls

the dog's tongue, reducing any struggle with brushing.

■ For the lower back teeth, release your hold on the muzzle a bit, slightly open the dog's mouth, and brush the bottom back teeth.

Dr. Mees admits that getting the insides of the teeth is difficult, so don't get discouraged if you can't (the dog's tongue tends to keep the inner sides of the teeth clean). And don't be concerned about brushing your dog's tongue and roof of her mouth.

In what direction should you brush? Dr. Mees explains, "We're taught circular motions, but I think if you try circular motions in a moving animal, you're going to get frustrated! So I usually recommend side to side."

In a perfect world, you'll gradually work up to brushing each quadrant for about 30 seconds. Nonetheless, Dr. Mees acknowledges that you might not achieve that. She gets about five to ten seconds per quadrant on her own dog, so she brushes once quickly, then tries to repeat one or two more times.

Any amount of brushing is better than none; you will see better results in your dog's oral health, even with a dog who won't tolerate a total of more than 20 to 40 seconds, than if you never brushed. Do as much as he will handle to start, then gradually see if you can do a little more. I'm at day five with Atle, and I've been able to begin brushing his back upper and lower teeth. We're still just talking a matter of seconds, and he's not entirely thrilled, but that's OK. I'm not in a hurry, and he's getting lots of treats and praise for what he gives me.

After brushing, thoroughly rinse the

brush and let it air dry. It's a good idea to replace your dog's toothbrush every three to six months, and use a separate toothbrush for each of your dogs to prevent the spread of germs.

SIGNS OF TROUBLE

If your dog has pain during brushing or you see blood, stop. It could be gingivitis, which is reversible with a professional cleaning and brushing. But if the problem is periodontal disease, advanced professional veterinary dental care is in order.

Overzealous brushing or brushing multiple times a day can cause gum erosion. More is not better!

If your dog gets aggressive or tries to bite you when you introduce brushing, Dr. Mees does not recommend pushing through. Your route, instead, may be more frequent professional cleanings, and the use of other products such as water additives and chew toys.

However, if your dog unhappily tolerates the process, keep it up (and try to reward him more richly for his cooperation). In most cases, Dr. Mees says that people struggle with, then give up on, brushing their dog's teeth too soon. The misconception is that because their dog doesn't like it, they should quit. "We tend to baby our animals; if we perceive that the animal is not enjoying it, we're not going to do it. But, then people get to my office, we have to pull teeth, and they're mad. I explain that you can't have it both ways; we've got to use a little bit of tough love with our dogs sometimes." Their health depends on it! 🐾

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

RESOURCES

❖ ANGELA MEES, DVM

Atlanta Veterinary Dental Services
(770) 552-8777; atlantaveterinarydentistry.com

❖ AMERICAN VETERINARY DENTAL COLLEGE (AVDC)

The AVDC is the clinical specialist organization for veterinary dentists, recognized by the AVMA's American Board of Veterinary Specialties. avdc.org

❖ ACADEMY OF VETERINARY DENTISTRY (AVD)

An international organization of veterinarians with a special interest in the dental care of animals. avdonline.org

Training Titles

The significance of all those letters after some training and behavior professionals' names.

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

Not to be outdone by the veterinary profession (See “Alphabet Soup,” WDJ October 2013) or even dogs themselves (“Entitled,” January 2014), the dog training and behavior profession also boasts a mind-boggling array of letters that may appear at the end of a trainer’s name. In some cases, the initials identify a person with considerable education and experience with canine behavior, but others indicate little more than membership in a dog-training organization, so it pays to know what those letters mean!

You may be surprised to discover that there are *no* educational, experience, training, skill, certification, or licensing requirements for anyone to call themselves a dog trainer or behaviorist in the United States. None. Zip. Zero. Nada. Your plumber could decide to hang out a shingle and start training dogs tomorrow, even if he or she has never touched or even seen a dog in his or her entire life.

Fortunately, there are scores of excellent educational opportunities for animal training and behavior professionals to increase their skills and knowledge, and many do, in fact, attend courses and seek various kinds of certification in the

field. In fact, the number of qualified, well-educated training and behavior professionals has increased dramatically since the 1990s.

TRUE BEHAVIORISTS

While the media tends to refer to anyone who will comment on any animal’s behavior as an “animal behaviorist,” there is growing agreement among ethical behavior and training professionals that the term “behaviorist” should be reserved for those in the field who have advanced degrees in behavior and/or veterinary medicine and behavior. Those who don’t have such degrees and who wish to show

respect to degreed behaviorists use terms like “behavior consultant,” “behavior counselor,” and “behavior professional” to describe what they do. That said, plenty of people who offer services in training and behavior disregard that courtesy.

■ **DACVB:** At the top of the behaviorist food chain is the “veterinary behaviorist” – a veterinarian who meets the rigorous qualifications set by the American College of Veterinary Behavior (ACVB) and passes the two-day veterinary board exam in behavior. These board-certified specialists are known as diplomates; a diplomate of the ACVB = DACVB. One who calls himself a veterinary behaviorist without this credential is practicing veterinary behavioral medicine without a license and is subject to prosecution.

In addition to passing the board exam, the requirements include the equivalent of an internship; a conforming residency at an approved university program, or a non-conforming training program which was mentored and approved by ACVB; a supervised behavioral caseload (the first 25 clinical cases are seen with the mentor present, 25 of the next 50 cases are seen under the supervision of the mentor, close supervision is required for the first 200 cases); authoring a scientific paper published in a peer-reviewed journal based on the candidate’s own research; and writing three peer-reviewed case reports.

Given the requirements, it’s understandable that there are fewer than 100 DACVBs in the world, most in the United States and a handful in Canada.

■ **CAAB:** Next in line is the Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (CAAB). In order to become a CAAB, one must meet the qualifications set by the Animal Behavior Society (ABS).

There are two different possible paths to acquisition of this title. The first re-

Melissa Bain, DVM, DACVB, (at right) is Chief of Service of the Clinical Animal Behavior Service at the William R. Pritchard Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital at the University of California, Davis. As such, she teaches at the university, manages clinical cases at the behavior service, and conducts behavior research. Overachieving? Not for a DACVB.



quires a Phd (doctoral degree) in a biological or behavioral science with an emphasis on animal behavior, and five years of professional experience.

The second path requires a doctorate in veterinary medicine plus two years in a university-approved residency in animal behavior and three additional years of professional experience in applied animal behavior.

Other requirements of this second path include: demonstrating a thorough knowledge of the literature, scientific principles, and principles of animal behavior; submitting original contributions or original interpretations of animal behavior information; showing evidence of significant experience working interactively with a particular species as a researcher, research assistant, or intern with a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist prior to working independently with the species in a clinical animal behavior setting; attending and presenting a contributed talk or poster at an ABS Annual meeting prior to applying for certification; and meeting all the requirements for an Associate Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist (see next).

■ **ACAAB:** The Associate Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist is the next rung down the ladder. Don't let the "Associate" fool you; the requirements for this level of certification are still stringent: First, the applicant must obtain a Master's degree from an accredited college or university in a biological or behavioral science with an emphasis in animal behavior. The degree should include a research-based thesis. Coursework must include 30 semester credits in behavioral science courses, including 9 semester credits in ethology, animal behavior, and/or comparative psychology; and 9 semester credits in animal learning, conditioning, and/or animal psychology.

Next, the candidate must provide evidence of a minimum of two years of professional experience in applied animal behavior; show evidence of significant experience working interactively with a particular species (such as a researcher, research assistant, or intern working with a certified applied animal behaviorist) prior to working independently with the species in a clinical animal behavior setting; attend and present a contributed talk or poster at an ABS annual meeting prior to applying for certification; and must also provide a minimum of three

letters of recommendation, one from a Certified ABS member and one from a regular ABS member affirming the applicant's professional experience in the areas listed above. There are about 50 CAABs and ACAABs combined.

OTHER TRAINING AND BEHAVIOR ASSOCIATIONS

With fewer than 100 certified behaviorists in the entire United States (many of whom do not work with companion animals), the dog population would be seriously underserved if there were not other qualified behavior and training professionals to be found. Fortunately, a number of organizations created to further the education of dog trainers have emerged in the past few decades.

■ **APDT:** Recognizing the need for professionalism in the dog training field, in 1991 British veterinary behaviorist Ian Dunbar founded the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, intended as a forum for trainers to network with each other and provide educational opportunities. APDT, which was recently renamed the Association of Professional Dog Trainers, held its first annual educational conference in Orlando, Florida, in 1993.

The annual conference continues to this day, joined by frequent webinar offerings. While the APDT itself does not certify trainers nor are its members necessarily committed to force-free training, this organization did launch the CCPDT in 2001 (see below), which has certified more than 2,000 training and behavior professionals worldwide. With more than 5,000 members, APDT is the largest dog training membership organization in the world.

■ **AVSAB:** The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB) is a group of veterinarians and research professionals who share an interest in understanding behavior in animals. Founded in 1976, AVSAB is committed to improving the quality of life of all animals and strengthening the bond between animals and their owners. Membership in this organization is open to all veterinarians, veterinary students, and non-veterinarians who have a Phd in animal behavior or a closely related field.

Membership in AVSAB is not a certification, and so is not a statement of member skills or qualifications in behavior work.



■ **CCPDT:** The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers was the first national certification body for dog trainers. Until the creation of the CCPDT in 2001, there was no nationally available certification process for dog trainers in this country. Unlike many other certifications, CCPDT tests are monitored, and the testing processes are standardized. The CCPDT administered its first test September 28, 2001, during the APDT educational conference in New York.

CCPDT is not a membership organization; you do not join in order to become a certificant. CCPDT requires its certificants to abide by a Code of Ethics and adhere to a humane hierarchy in their behavior and training practices. There are currently more than 2,500 certificants in one of the three existing certifications (a fourth certification is in the development stage):

- **CPDT-KA:** The Certified Professional Dog Trainer, Knowledge-Assessed, must pass a comprehensive written exam; submit confirmation of at least 300 hours experience in dog training within the past five years; have a high school diploma or GED equivalent; and submit three references (from a veterinarian, a dog training client, and a colleague in the behavior and training profession). There are currently more than 2,400 CPDT-KAs.
- **CPDT-KSA:** The Certified Professional Dog Trainer, Knowledge and Skills Assessed, must hold a CPDT-KA credential and, additionally, pass a video skills examination of him or herself training four different skills as designated by the CCPDT, one skill each to four different dogs not living with or previously trained by the candidate. There are about 120 CPDT-KSAs.
- **CBCC-KA:** The Certified Behavior Consultant, Canine, Knowledge Assessed, must pass a comprehensive



written exam; submit records of 500 hours in canine behavior consulting on fear, phobias, compulsive behaviors, anxiety, and aggression within the previous five years; or hold a Master's Degree or Doctorate in psychology, social work, a biological sciences field, or a life sciences field with 300 hours in canine behavior consulting on fear, phobias, compulsive behaviors, anxiety, and aggression within the previous three years; and submit five references. There are about 75 CBCC-KAs.

■ **IAABC:** The International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants was founded in 2004 in recognition that the practice of assisting the public with companion animal behavior problems was a growing field that encompassed many different professionals: veterinarians, animal trainers, animal shelter employees, and academics, as well as practicing consultants who didn't always fit neatly into one of the aforementioned categories.

The goal of the IAABC is to standardize and support the practice of companion animal behavior consulting, while providing resources for pet owners needing advice. The organization has nearly 400 members throughout the world (not all members are dog behavior consultants). IAABC members work to minimize the use of aversive stimuli and maximize the effective use of reinforcers to modify animal behavior. The LIMA (least intrusive and minimally aversive)

principle is used as a general rule. You must be a member of IAABC to be certified. There are about 375 Certified and Associate Certified members on the IAABC rosters.

- **CDBC:** The IAACP offers certifications for professionals who do behavior work with a variety of different species. The Certified Dog Behavior Consultant must: document a minimum of three years and 500 hours experience in animal behavior consulting with client present; complete 400 hours minimum of relevant coursework, seminars, and mentorship; submit three written case studies; submit written discussion of four case scenarios; answer questions regarding terminology, techniques, behavior assessment, and history taking; and possess a minimum educational level of high school diploma or GED. Veterinary Behaviorists, ACAABs, and CAABs are granted membership with the submission of three applicable case studies and the application fee.

■ **IACP:** The International Association of Canine Professionals was founded in

Training and behavior professionals who are able to help you with your dog come with a wide range of experience in canine behavior education and experience. Their background should be a starting place for a discussion about their training experience and methodology.

1999 to develop and promote the highest standards of professional and business practice among canine professionals. IACP offers three different certifications; you must be a member of IACP to be certified. The IACP has about 65 certified members (not all IACP members are certified).

- **CDT:** Professional members of the IACP and Associate members who have been members for six months and have at least two years' experience as a professional trainer can take the Certified Dog Trainer exam. The CDT exam is intended to test an applicant's basic level of skills to provide the general public with a standard of expectation for what constitutes a "basic level" of expertise. Candidates must submit three evaluation forms filled out by past clients; three letters of reference; copies of handouts used in training, sample intake/registration forms; and three case studies.
- **CDTA:** The intent of the Certified Dog Trainer - Advanced (CDTA) exam is to verify a high level of competence on the part of the candidate. The CDTA must have held the CDT title for at least one year and have a minimum of five years experience training professionally. The CDTA candidate must either train three dogs in front of an IACP-CDTA Evaluator (and also make provisions to have the training videotaped to a DVD), or present a video of himself training three dogs without an evaluator present and submit the DVD to IACP for evaluation.
- **PDTI:** A candidate for Professional Dog Training Instructor (PDTI) must have held the CDT title for one year,

PLEASE NOTE:

- ❖ Whole Dog Journal supports training and behavior modification methods that follow science-based positive reinforcement protocols. Not all of the programs discussed in this article meet that standard.

and have a minimum of 250 hours of instruction as head or lead dog trainer for group or private classes within the past five years. The exam tests the applicant's knowledge, experience, and instructing skills relevant to teaching people to train their dogs. The candidate must also submit three letters of reference; forms, handouts, workbooks, homework sheets, and reading lists used in training; videos of the candidate instructing clients; and answers to 12 essay questions.

■ **NADOI:** The National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors was founded in 1965 when a small group of highly experienced dog trainers gathered together and resolved to promote modern, humane training methods, and at the same time elevate the standards of the dog obedience instructing profession. To accomplish these goals, it was decided that members of the organization should be designated as having attained certain skills and knowledge of dog training and obedience instructing.

NADOI Certified membership requirements include: at least five years' experience in dog obedience training; at least two years as a full-charge instructor; past experience working with a minimum of 100 different dogs; submission of training hours (group instructors must have taught at least 104 class hours; private instructors 288 hours). Also, each applicant must submit a written essay that enables evaluation of his knowledge of general dog behavior, ability to deal with specific training problems, knowledge and use of training methods, and teaching and training skills.

■ **PPG:** The Pet Professional Guild is a membership business league for individuals and professional pet industry businesses with the common goal of furthering the public's education and awareness of force-free dog training and pet care methods, techniques, and state of research in dog training and pet care, and promoting the common interest of spreading force-free dog training and pet care methods to the pet industry.

The PPG provides professional registry, representation, and education to force-free pet care providers and the public, with an emphasis on building collaboration among force-free pet trainers and professional pet care providers, thereby improving the business

conditions and promoting the common interests of force-free professionals. The PPG does not offer certifications.

■ **TDF:** The Truly Dog Friendly group is an online list of more than 350 training and behavior professionals who are committed to using dog-friendly methods. TDF defines dog-friendly methods as reward-based rather than force-based. Dog-friendly trainers do not use shock collars (e-collars), nor do they use coercion, intimidation, or pain. Instead, they teach with a gentle, fair approach so that dogs truly will enjoy learning and form a trusting bond with their owners. TDF does not certify trainers.

TRAINING SCHOOL WITH CERTIFICATE COURSES

There are many training schools that offer certificate courses. While a student who completes one or more courses from these schools may be granted a "certification" title, this type of certification means only that the student passed the course. While some of the courses are very comprehensive, true professional certification tests a broad body of knowledge, not just the knowledge taught in a specific course.

■ **ADT:** Jean Donaldson's Academy for Dog Trainers aims to further aversive-free, science-based dog training by making an academically rigorous program available to anyone, no matter where they live, at an affordable cost. This is a comprehensive on-line program that can typically be completed in one to two years.



The Academy for Dog Trainers was founded in 1999 by Jean Donaldson. It ran for 10 years as a residential program at the San Francisco SPCA before Donaldson re-invented the curriculum as a self-paced e-learning course that allows students to study and train at their own pace.

■ **CASI:** The Companion Animal Sciences Institute provides advanced, science-based professional development education in the animal behavior, training, behavior change programming, fitness, and nutrition in an online format. It is the position of CASI that animal friendly, positive reinforcement-based methods are the most efficient and effective, and least intrusive and risk-laden methods to use in animal training and behavior, and most conducive to facilitating the human-animal bond. Certificate credentials offered by CASI include:

- **Cert. PDTST:** The Certificate of Professional Dog Training Science and Technology program is a rigorous program that helps students upgrade and develop skills for a career in dog training. Coursework covers the principles of learning and technology of dog training, with hands-on skill practice.

- **Cert. SRW:** The Diploma of Shelter and Rescue Work certificate program addresses many aspects of working in the dog sheltering and rescue environment. Coursework explores the principles of behavior, behavioral assessment strategies within the shelter environment, training and behavior modification techniques for shelter and rescue environments, disease risk management, environmental enrichment and emotional health management of dogs in shelters, the adoption process itself, and shelter and rescue organization operation.

- **Dip. ABST:** The Diploma of Animal Behavior Science and Technology program addresses key topics in behavior modification and management protocols, including the principles of behavior; tactics, strategies, and procedures in non-coercive animal training; functional assessment; behavior modification protocols; professional activities; and professional ethics. Students carry out hands-on training with their own companion animal and engage in a problem behavior resolution project.

■ **KPACTP:** The Karen Pryor Academy (KPA) Dog Trainer Professional program takes an innovative approach to developing and supporting outstanding positive reinforcement trainers who

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teach the general public. Graduates of the academy are Karen Pryor Academy Certified Training Partners (KPACTP). The six-month course combines online learning with hands-on teaching from experienced teachers in the field.

■ **NK9SDT:** In 1981 the National K-9 Learning Center established its School for Dog Trainers (NK9SDT), with the mission of offering interested individuals the skills and knowledge to pursue careers within the field of professional dog training. The school uses what it calls a “balanced” approach to training, meaning that the tools and methods used are not necessarily based in positive reinforcement.

● **CPT:** Certified Professional Trainers are graduates of the NK9SDT’s six-week Master Trainer course.

■ **PPAWS:** Peaceable Paws (PPAWS), launched in 1996, is my own training business and trainer academy, with a mission to foster harmony between the human and non-human animals of our world. PPaws Academies are intensive, hands-on, six-day courses; graduates of multiple academies are PMCTs (Pat Miller Certified Trainers). The Peaceable Paws Academy has graduated more than 300 trainers since its inception. All PMCTs commit to using force-free methods. There are three levels of certification: PMCT1 through PMCT3.



Peaceable Paws student trainers do hands-on work in the field with author/trainer Pat Miller, who offers a wide range of courses and three levels of certification for trainers who are committed to force-free training.

■ **TRS:** The Tom Rose School, in business for 40 years, offers intensive residential programs and course certifications that cover everything from basic obedience to canine competition, guard dog, and service dog training. The school uses a “balanced” approach to training,

meaning the tools and methods used are not restricted to those based in positive reinforcement. TRS offers several courses with certifications for graduates: a 16-week Associate Dog Trainer (ADT) course; Professional Dog Trainer (PDT) program, which has the same length and content as the ADT, but with standards set higher; a 12-week Master Dog Trainer (MDT); and Advanced Master Dog Trainer (AMDT) course, which is available by invitation only.

■ **VSPDT:** Victoria Stilwell Positively Dog Training is a network of professional dog trainers committed to promoting positive reinforcement methodologies. VSPDT doesn’t currently offer a dog trainer school, but has a licensing process for currently practicing professional dog trainers who meet certain criteria and qualifications, including employing only positive reinforcement dog training; avoiding dominance-based alpha-hierarchy methodologies; and undergoing a dog training evaluation by Victoria and her team.

FAR MORE

This is by no means a complete list of the alphabet jungle that comprises the world of dog behavior and training; there are undoubtedly more organizations that offer education and/or credentialing for trainers. Just keep in mind that, as in any line of work, not every graduate of a particular program is equally skilled. The letters they choose to put behind their name can give you a rough idea of how much and what kind of education they’ve had, that’s all.

If you are looking for a training or behavior consultant to help you with your dog, you still have to use due diligence: watch the person work with dogs and teach classes, ask for references, etc., the way you would research anyone who you will allow to work with your dog, whether she bears an impressive set of letters behind her name or not. 🐾

Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, is WDJ’s Training Editor. She lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center, where she offers dog training classes and courses for trainers. Pat is also author of many books on positive training. She has a terrific brand-new book, How to Foster Dogs; From Homeless to Homeward Bound. See page 24 for more information.

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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*; *Positive Perspectives 2*; *Power of Positive Dog Training*; *Play With Your Dog*; *Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First Class Life*; and her newest book, *How to Foster Dogs: From Homeless to Homeward Bound*. All titles are available from dogwise.com and wholedogjournal.com

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