

# The Whole Dog Journal™



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*A monthly guide to natural dog care and training*

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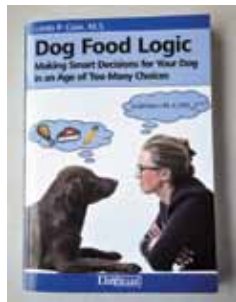
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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF – Nancy Kerns  
TRAINING EDITOR – Pat Miller  
PUBLISHER – Timothy H. Cole  
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR – Greg King

#### EDITORIAL OFFICE

E-MAIL: [WDJEditor@gmail.com](mailto:WDJEditor@gmail.com)  
ADDRESS: 1655 Robinson Street  
Orville, CA 95965

#### SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

PHONE: (800) 829-9165  
INTERNET: [whole-dog-journal.com/cs](http://whole-dog-journal.com/cs)  
U.S. MAIL: PO Box 8535  
Big Sandy, TX 75755-8535  
CANADA: Box 7820 STN Main  
London, Ontario N5Y 5W1

#### REPRINTS

For price quote, contact  
Jennifer Jimolka at (203) 857-3144.  
Minimum order 1,000

#### NEWSSTAND

Jocelyn Donnellon, (203) 857-3100

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# Tick Tock

*Skin-crawling adventure.*

BY NANCY KERNS

**I**s it my imagination, or is a plague of ticks currently in effect? Everywhere I go with my dogs these days, they come back crawling with ticks. I use Frontline on them, though I've used Advantix in the past – as well as apple cider vinegar rinses and essential oil sprays and Skin-So-Soft wipedowns. For whatever reason, Frontline seems to work better than anything else on my dogs, in my area, though I hear contrary reports from other dog owners in other places. I'm seriously considering making a line of Tyvek canine coveralls, instead.

Due to the tick plague, I have to allot extra time for walking the dogs, or rather, for combing them after walks. I pour a glass of water, put a little dish soap in it to reduce the surface tension, and drop all the ticks I find into it as I work. The little insects immediately sink, waving their tiny legs, but not for long.

Every time I have ever mentioned dropping ticks into water, I get letters from people who *insist* that you can't drown a tick. I invite you to do some "citizen science" and put your own ticks in a jar of water, and follow this fun activity with observing the results. You can even dry out their little dead bodies afterward to see if they "come back to life." Trust me; ticks drown.

They can also live without food for a week or two (but not forever) in a jar that contains *no* water. Ask me how I know.

You can google these things, but sometimes you just have to see for yourself. Like, when I was reading about ticks the other day (I'm mildly obsessed right now), I kept coming across the stated fact that ticks can't jump. I just can't fathom how they are so damn successful at getting all over my dog, who runs like the wind the whole time we're out on walks, if they can't at least launch themselves quickly toward something. So, after combing and pulling ticks out of Otto's coat on our last walk, I saved a few individual ticks in a dry jar, and ran a few trials. I released one tick at a time onto a white plastic folding table (so

I could be sure to spot and apprehend any escapees from my "test lab"). They sure do ambulate faster than I could bear to watch for long, but I didn't observe any jumping activity – but then, I never let them get close enough to the table's edge for reliable data regarding jumping *off* something onto someone. I guess I'm going to take Google's word for that bit of trivia.

There's just one bit of good news on the tick front: I have discovered the world's best tool for removing ticks, one that surpasses all previous favorites. It's called the Pro Tick Remedy, and it features a V-shaped slot that narrows tightly enough to scoop up and pull out even the tiniest, most freshly latched-on tick. It comes on a keychain paired helpfully with a small magnifying glass, so you can confirm that you really did get the whole thing. See [tickinfo.com](http://tickinfo.com) (or call 800-749-8425) for more information and links for ordering one (or some) of your own. I bought six, so I could have them stashed everywhere I might happen to be petting Otto and feel a tick. I've never been so grateful for something that costs so little (less than \$5).

Try it yourself!



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.

# Accidents Happening?

*Five things to do if your housetrained dog starts soiling in the house.*

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

**I**t's very disconcerting when your well-housetrained dog suddenly starts having accidents in the house. It may be human nature to think he's doing it to spite you, but that's not the case – a well-trained dog doesn't just start soiling indoors on a whim. There's a legitimate reason it's happening, and you owe it to your dog to find out why. Here's what you need to do:

**1 EXPLORE POSSIBLE MEDICAL CAUSES.** Something as simple as a urinary-tract infection or as complex as diabetes (causes increased thirst and water consumption, which causes increased urination) can be the cause of your dog's indoor puddles. There are *many* common medical causes of increased urination. Gastrointestinal distress, which causes anything from slightly loose stools to liquid diarrhea, can prompt your dog to defecate indoors as well. Any dog can have an accident, but if yours has uncharacteristically started house soiling regularly, get thee to thy veterinarian as soon as possible for a complete workup.

**2 CHECK MEDICATIONS, IF ANY.** A number of canine medications used to treat common health conditions can also cause increased water consumption followed by increased urination. Prednisone, used to treat a variety of ailments, is a prime example. Other medicines can cause gastrointestinal distress, which can also result in house soiling. If your dog is on any medications, ask your veterinarian whether that could be the cause of his break in training.

**3 LOOK FOR STRESSORS.** Urination and defecation can be a dog's response to stress. Check your environ-

ment to see if there's something going on that might provoke this stress response in your dog. Construction next door with loud machinery? Neighborhood kids who have discovered it's fun to bang on your door to tease the dog? A watch alarm beeping in a drawer? Set up your laptop camera or nanny cam and see if you can make a correlation between stimuli, stress, and soiling. If you can't find a specific trigger, then evaluate your dog's total stress load and see if removing as many stressors as possible can help him return to his prior fastidious habits.

**4 EVALUATE YOUR ROUTINE.** Are you working overtime a lot? Stopping on the way home at a local pub for some face time with your new honey? Perhaps your dog was just barely holding it with legs tightly crossed before, and the extra time it's taking you to get home now is just more than he can handle.

If so, and if you can't return to your prior schedule, then make arrangements with a neighbor or family member to let your dog out at midday or late afternoon, or hire a good petsitting service to do it.

**5 REVISIT HOUSTRAINING 101.** It's worth putting serious energy into discerning the cause of your dog's house soiling. If you discover and remove the cause of his problem, your dog may immediately return to his former pristine ways.

Or he may not. If that's the case, or if you simply can't find a reason, it's time to go back to basic housetraining. You probably won't have to implement the puppy "every hour on the hour" routine, but you do need to make sure he gets outside more often than he has to go. If you work all day, this might mean putting him back in a crate or exercise pen until he is successfully retrained, and hiring a professional petsitter (or arranging with a friend or neighbor) to let him out for a potty break at least once, preferably two or even three times during the day.

Just keep in mind that there's a reason your housetrained dog might eliminate indoors – and neither spite, anger, jealousy, nor any other human emotion we might blame has anything to do with it. It's up to you to find the reason and help him return to spotless living. 🐾

Illness, pain, side effects of medication, stress, and a lack of capacity are the most common reasons that a housetrained dog reverts to eliminating indoors.





**There are many conditions that require treatment with eye drops or ointments. Don't be daunted! It's not as difficult to do as your dog might want you to think it is.**



# How Eye'd Do It

*Tips and tricks of administering prescribed eye drops or ointments, without a battle.*

BY DENISE FLAIM

**A**s Frodo learned all too well, messing around with someone's eye can be asking for trouble. And while administering ophthalmologic drops or ointment to your dog isn't quite as hairy as tangling with the Red Eye of Sauron, it still can be an unpleasant experience for both of you if you are unprepared.

Eye drops and ointments are prescribed for a variety of ocular conditions in dogs, including glaucoma, corneal ulcers, and recovery from cataract surgery. Even a minor eye infection like conjunctivitis – what the kids in your grade-school days called “pink eye” – can require regular administration of drops.

But when it comes to putting anything in their eyes or those of their dogs, “people are naturally freaky about it,” says Dr. David Maggs, professor of veterinary ophthalmology at the University of California at Davis. “And it's just difficult to aim: You've got a wriggly dog and a very small target.” It doesn't help that eyes in need of medication tend to look very off-putting, to put it mildly: Even a

superficial scratch of the cornea, which in many cases will resolve in a few days, can make your dog look like something out of a low-budget horror flick.

If you're feeling trepidation, your dog probably isn't looking forward to the experience, either. Most would rather be somewhere, anywhere, else rather than getting a generous splash of wetness plopped into their eye, which likely isn't feeling so great to begin with. “Depending on the dog, they can be very sensitive, especially if they have ulcers in the eye, which are extremely painful,” says Dr. Tomas Infernuso, of Veterinary Traveling Surgical Services in Long Island, New York. “And they associate any kind of contact with pain.”

That said, there is something worse than having to deal with a dog's resistance to getting eye medications: Having matters escalate to the point where you can't give them at all. “I've seen dogs who have lost an eye because people couldn't medicate them,” Dr. Infernuso says. And that's really not an option.

## FIND A TECHNIQUE THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Ask 10 veterinarians, and chances are that you'll hear 10 different (and sometimes contradictory) recommendations on how best to give eye medications. The following are some tips to make the process a little smoother; pick the ones that work best for you and your dog.

■ **CORNERED!** Dr. Brad Holmberg, a board-certified ophthalmologist at the Animal Eye Center in Little Falls, New Jersey, likes to position the dog so she can't back away: For small dogs, that's on a table or countertop, with the dog's rear against you – “butt to belly,” as he puts it.

Dr. Holmberg recommends straddling large dogs (who need to stay on the floor) with your thighs and elbows, and maneuvering their backs into a corner so they have no way to escape.

“Place your left hand on their chin and angle their head up,” he explains. Rest your right hand on the dog's forehead, with the applicator ready. Using the thumb of the left hand, which is still steadying the chin, pull up the eyebrow – not the eyelid – to expose the white of the eye, and apply the drops.

■ **LESS RESTRAINT.** Dr. Infernuso, by contrast, prefers not to restrain the dog unduly. “I usually start by rubbing the dog on the head, so he knows I'm not just going for the eye,” he explains. “Then I gently massage the area around the eye,” being careful, of course, not to put any pressure on the eye itself.

Restraining a dog, he notes, usually will mean that she will resist you. “They learn that when they're held, something's going to happen, so it usually turns out

to be more of a struggle than an easy way out, and usually you get the opposite of what you want.”

Instead, with most patients, he offers food with one hand and administers the medicine with the other. (In a variation of this, a dog rescuer recently exulted on Facebook that she had found the perfect distraction: peanut butter smeared inside a yogurt cup, then held high to induce a helpful head tilt.)

■ **I’LL TAKE OINTMENT.** Dr. Infernuso prefers ointment, because it lasts longer, and administers it by using his thumb to pull down the bottom eyelid, then deposits the medication on the pink tissue, or conjunctival sac. “You don’t have to open the eye that much, and you don’t want to touch the cornea,” he says. He administers drops this way, too.

■ **GOING STEADY.** Take a tip from the manicurist: If you’ve ever gone to a nail

salon, you might have noticed that the technician stabilizes the hand she holds the nail-polish brush with by resting her pinky against the table; it gives her more control and accuracy. Use that same technique with the hand that holds the eye medication.

“Resting your hand on your dog’s head is important – you don’t want to be holding the bottle above his head,” says Dr. Jacqueline Pearce, an assistant professor of comparative ophthalmology at the University of Missouri in Columbia. “Hold the medicine bottle or tube with your thumb and forefinger, and rest your pinky on the dog’s forehead.” Use the fingers of your other hand to hold the dog’s eyelid open.

■ **DON’T TELEGRAPH YOUR PLANS.** Dr. Pearce also advocates the element of surprise, bringing the bottle from behind. “Move your hand along the dog’s neck toward the back of the head,” she

advises. “That’s better than if you come straight at them with the bottle.”

■ **HANDS OFF.** Administering eye medication is a tricky little dance: You have to get close enough to ensure that the liquid or ointment actually gets into the eye, but not so close as to let any portion of the applicator make contact with it. With eye drops, hold the applicator about an inch from the eye, and be conscious of where it is at all times. “I’ve seen people rupture the eye by holding it too close,” Dr. Infernuso warns, “or the dog turns his head and basically perforates the cornea.”

Though you might be tempted to squeeze ointment on to your finger before applying it, don’t: No matter how well you clean your hands, you will transmit bacteria into your dog’s eye. Again, with ointment you don’t apply it to the eye itself, but rather to the strip of pink tissue behind the eyelid. Once

## LONG-TERM ADMINISTRATION?

The problem with eye medication is most dogs don’t have a chance to be introduced to it in a gradual, positive manner: Instead, the need for it is often instantaneous and unexpected, and owners simply don’t have the time to build up a positive association, the way they would with other potentially invasive procedures such as nail trimming or bathing.

But if your dog develops a condition that requires long-term daily administration of ophthalmologic drops or ointments, it may be worth it to you to take the time to condition your dog to *love* the eye-drop bottle or tube. Veterinarian, trainer, and author Dr. Sophia Yin recommends systematically pairing the bottle and progressively intense handling with food rewards over the course of a couple of weeks.

To start, use an empty drop bottle smeared with canned cheese or peanut butter, and “let the dog lick the treat off,” Dr. Yin advises. “It’s best to spread it flat and thin so the dog has to lick repeatedly instead of sucking up the entire treat with one quick roll of the tongue.”

Once your dog is consistently happy to see the bottle, Dr. Yin recommends starting to pair food with touching the dog’s face, systematically and gradually approximating how you will touch it in order to give the drops, such as parting the eyelids. Once she accepts that, you reintroduce the treat-smeared bottle, allowing her to lick the food off the bottle as you mimic the steps of administering the medicine, eventually quickly moving the bottle into position above the eye before returning it to a place where she can continue noshing.

“Keep switching back and forth, systematically increasing the length of time that you hold the bottle above her eye,” Dr. Yin explains. “When you’re consistently able to hold the bottle above her head for three to five seconds, you’re ready to administer drops. Switch the fake practice bottle out and replace it with the real bottle of medications. Administer the drops, and then hurry and follow with treats.”



**This shelter puppy has entropion, a condition in which the dog’s eyelashes irritate and scratch the surface of the eye, which, in turn, can lead to infection, corneal ulceration, or perforation. He’ll require surgery (to prevent his lashes from making contact with his eye), and drops to fight infection, relieve pain, and reduce inflammation.**





**Isha Buis, RVT, uses the heel of her hand to both steady her aim and pull the dog's lower eyelid down; the ointment is applied inside the lower eyelid.**

placed there, the ointment will dissolve and distribute itself across the eye.

■ **BE PREPARED.** “Get your drops ready,” Dr. Holmberg says. “Remember to take the top off before you start.” To soften ointment so that is more viscous and easier to spread, put the tube under your armpit or in your pants pocket for five minutes. “It will be more like a gel than toothpaste,” he explains.

If you're short on time, you can also run the ointment under warm tap water for a minute or so, Dr. Pearce adds. She notes that eye drops rarely have to be refrigerated, but if yours do – or if they have been in a cold car or storage area for any length of time – leave them out for ten minutes so they warm to room temperature. Overly cold liquid is uncomfortable for your dog.

■ **HELP WANTED.** If at all possible, have a capable helper on hand. One person can help support the head and body to keep the dog still, while the other person focuses on holding and administering the medication.

■ **ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE.** “One thing that's really helpful is to reward the dog after he gets eye drops, so he associates it with something positive,” says Dr. Pearce of the University of

Michigan. “I've had clients who say their dogs remind them it's time for their drops.”

### **TOUGH CUSTOMER?**

Oh, to have a pliant and pleasant Lassie who lifts her comely head to you in trust and deference as you administer those all-important drops. But the reality is that some dogs are simply not willing to follow a script when it comes to medical procedures, and if you want to get the job done, some vets offer more compulsory methods to consider. This may go against your personal philosophy in handling your dog, but, as always, measure it against the potential repercussions of not being able to medicate at all.

Several veterinarians suggest giving the antihistamine Benadryl, which can have a subtle settling effect, about a half-hour before applying the eye medication. (The recommended dose is 1 milligram per pound of body weight.) Dr. Infernuso notes that because many eye conditions are painful, it can be appropriate to have the dog on some pain medication to manage that discomfort to begin with.

“Sometimes, a soft muzzle will preoccupy a dog” long enough for an owner to administer the medication, Dr. Pearce notes. And sometimes that kind of mouth restraint is required with dogs who may be unhappy or panicked enough to at-

tempt to bite when the bottle draws near.

Dr. Holmberg notes that wrapping a small dog in a towel is sometimes very calming, though this may have more to do with the dog being immobilized rather than any more relaxed emotional state. Following this train of thought, consider using a pressure wrap such as an Anxiety Wrap or ThunderShirt. Tight-fitting garments made of elastic fabric that distributes pressure across the body, these wraps can decrease anxiety for some dogs, though of course they will do nothing to physically restrain them.

Dr. Maggs of UC Davis suggests putting the dog “in an area where he is not emotionally sure of himself – where he tends to freeze and be still.” For large dogs, he suggests an elevated area such as a table – provided you have enough help and control to keep the dog there during the process – or a bathtub; for smaller dogs, a sink often does the trick.

In the interest of “getting the job done,” using compulsion can seem like the most logical and expedient choice. But remember that once a dog is “wise” to your tricks, things can escalate, and you are put in the position of using even harsher measures to get the same effect. In the interest of preserving and building the bond you have between you, keep your interactions as positive and rewarding as possible. The results might not be as immediate, but they will very likely be longer-lasting.

### **STRIKE THAT BALANCE**

It should go without saying, but let's say it anyway: Be gentle. In particular, don't put too much pressure around eye and be mindful of hurting your dog if he is so unruly that he's bucking like a bronco. At the same time, don't be so tepid or unsure that you communicate this to your dog. Remind yourself that this is a simple medical procedure that even the greenest layperson can do with the proper technique. And you've just learned it. 🐾

*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.*

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PAW TRAINING AND BEHAVIOR PAW

# New Old Friends

*Thinking about adopting a senior dog? GREAT!  
Here are some tips to smooth his homecoming.*

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA



Author Pat Miller and her senior adoptees Missy and Scooter.

**W**hen my husband asked me to come to the shelter where he worked to meet the 8-year-old Australian Shepherd he had fallen in love with and wanted to adopt, of course I said yes. When Paul first met Missy, she threw herself on her back at his feet, and he was hooked. When I saw her striking red merle coat, her stunning “odd eyes” (one brown, one blue) and her delightful personality, I was smitten, too, and didn’t need any arm-twisting from my husband to agree to add this beautiful girl to our family. She slipped into her place in our home with barely a ripple, just as did Mandy, an 8-year-old tri-color Rough Collie and my first senior adoption, some 30 years prior.

People who have adopted a senior dog usually say it’s one of the most rewarding things they have ever done.

If you are embarking on a senior adoption adventure, you’re likely to have many questions about your new old dog. What should you expect? How active will he be? How much management will he require? Should you plan to do any training with him? Will he need any training? If so, how much, what kind, and when? We asked several different trainers to share their wisdom on senior-dog adoptions.

## REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

While adult-dog adoptions often go as smoothly as Mandy’s and Missy’s, they don’t always. There can be immense benefits inherent in adopting a dog who may already be housetrained and well beyond the puppy chewing and adolescent stages. However, because senior-dog adoptions aren’t always trouble-free, it’s safest to make no assumptions about your new adult canine family member.

Cindy Mauro, CPDT-KA, of Cindy Mauro Dog Training in West Milford, New Jersey, is very familiar with the rewards and challenges of older-dog adoptions.

“I have adopted many senior dogs. The last two were 13-plus years, and I’m expecting a senior girl to come to me in a



couple weeks from a puppy-mill rescue,” she says.

“I keep in mind that training may require changing old habits, which requires patience. I never assume that the older dog is already trained, so instead of setting myself up for disappointment, I start off as I would any new dog – with a plan in place for training and management as soon as she comes in the door. I am pleasantly surprised and pleased any time things go easier than I thought they would.”

Absent solid information to the contrary, behave as though your new dog is not housetrained. He may have belonged to someone who forced him to soil indoors so he thinks carpeting is the appropriate substrate on which to eliminate, or maybe he spent the first eight years of his life with only shoes and sofa cushions for chew toys. Or, although he may be physically capable of “holding it” because he’s a mature adult, he’s lived outdoors all his life and never learned rules for indoor living.

Plan on implementing a senior-dog training and management plan that will set him up for success, by using an “every hour on the hour” puppy housetraining protocol. Also, practice diligent puppy-proofing – putting everything away that your new dog might view as a potential chew object. With a little luck he will quickly show you that your precautions are unnecessary and you can relax your standards. If, however, your precautions are justified, you will have set him up to succeed by not allowing him to be reinforced even one time for unwanted behaviors in his new environment. This will help him to learn new rules and appropriate new behaviors much more quickly.

My standard practice of keeping small Tupperware containers of treats in every room will serve you well with your senior adoptee, as will a never-ending supply of cookies in your pockets. You don’t want to miss a single opportunity to reinforce him for doing the right thing as the two of you create your relationship.

## THERE’S NO HURRY

This sort of proactive management will help you and your new dog get off on the right foot, but when it comes to actual training, it’s wise to take it slow with your senior adoptee, unless he makes it clear he’s ready for a fast track. Christine Danker, CPDT-KA, KPA-CTP, PMCT3,



of Hemlock Hollow Dog Training in Albany, New York, offers these useful tips:

- Give the older dog a quiet place to settle in for a few days. This should be located somewhere that enables her to see and/or hear everything going on in the house, or to retreat without disturbances if she prefers.

- Plan on being home, or at least reduce your regular schedule considerably, so you can observe the new senior. Will she be afraid to be left in a room behind a baby gate? Will she be comfortable in a crate? Is she housetrained? Does she have hearing loss or mobility issues?

- Slowly integrate the new senior into a house with other dogs. Was the new dog living alone? With other dogs? An active younger dog could be too rambunctious for a senior, but if their sizes are similar, the senior may really enjoy interacting with another dog.

Remember, a mature dog who lived for many years in one home can take longer to adjust to the sudden changes in his life than a younger dog might.

“Be mindful that a senior dog may have formed a strong bond with his former family,” says Dawn Kalinowski, CPDT-KA, of Poised Pups, LLC, in Norfolk, Virginia. “Realize that he may even be mourning the loss of his beloved humans and the familiarity of his previous home. Don’t overwhelm him. It’s important to go slow and allow him time to bond with his new family and settle into this new environment.”

Susan Sarubin, PMCT-2, CPDT-KA, of Pawsitive Fit LLC, in Easton, Maryland, is in total agreement.

“Dogs who are re-homed later in life may need a more extended period of adjustment to a new home, given their

**New York trainer Christine Danker adopted her Saluki, Catera, when the apricot-colored dog was 10 years old.**

longer history of behavior in their old home. Many older dogs come with additional fears and anxieties that extend beyond just normal adjusting to a new environment or new humans. For those dogs, the best way of dealing with this may be to just give the dog space, allowing him to choose where he wants to be, and when he wants to be with you and your family.

“Sometimes I think we’re in too much of a rush to teach older adopted dogs the behaviors we ultimately want them to learn to successfully assimilate into the family. Unless behavior is truly problematic and needs immediate attention, allow time for the dog to view you as predictable, safe, and the source of wonderful things (petting, treats, toys, walks, etc.). Teaching new behaviors will be easier to train once your new dog is less stressed and trusts you. Be patient, capture the behaviors you like, and forgo dedicated training sessions until your dog is happily interacting with you and appears calm and relaxed in his new home.”

## GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

If you already have other four-legged family members, helping your new old dog adjust to his new home includes careful introductions and a management plan that protects your senior adoptee from the unwanted attentions of younger, more active dogs.

Here are some recommendations from Sharon Messersmith, owner of Canine Valley Training in Reading, Pennsylvania, who says, “If you are adding a senior dog into your household with younger dogs, specific training with all dogs will help with the transition.”

- Teach all dogs to wait at steps to allow your older dog to go first, or vice versa.

- Give each dog her own space and teach all your dogs to respect each others’ spaces.

- An older dog might not be able to tolerate constant play all day. Give her a crate or room that is just for her when she needs some alone time.

## BE CONSIDERATE OF PHYSICAL NEEDS

Finally, keep in mind that your senior adoptee may have mobility issues that impact his daily routine in your home. Past injuries or simply age-related arthritis may dictate that you assist him with getting into vehicles, going upstairs, or even navigating the small raised threshold of a doorway. While Missy was able to climb our stairs to the second-floor bedroom for most of her time with us, for the last year of her life I routinely assisted her. In her final few weeks she slept downstairs, as it became too much

of an ordeal to ask her to climb. Make sure water bowls and beds are easily accessible for your mobility-challenged new old dog, and consider installing ramps where possible to make life easier for the oldster.

## TRAINING

You may or may not need or want to (or have to) invest much energy into training your new old dog. Your own preference as well as your individual dog's personality and abilities can guide you here. If you win the adoption lottery and your new family member is already housetrained

and has decent manners (like Missy and Mandy), you can slide on the training.

You may also discover that your adoptee has some mobility issues that limit his physical capabilities. When I first met her, I noticed that Missy had a slight limp. When we had radiographs taken we found that her right hind leg was an inch shorter than her left due to a prior broken leg injury that hadn't been properly treated. If we had ambitious goals for her, this might have been disappointing. As it was, since we only wanted her to be a happy farm dog, it wasn't devastating – it only meant that we needed to watch for arthritis as she aged and alleviate her pain as needed.

Most trainers recommend taking a slow training approach with senior adoptees – slower than you might with a younger dog. Peaceable Paws trainer Laura Nalven, PMCT, shares an experience she had with a recent client:

"I'm reminded of someone in my classes who adopted a senior dog (probably 10 years old or so) just a week or so before class," she relates. "She wanted to start training immediately because she remembered how much fun her previous (and much younger) dog had and how much it helped them bond.

"The old boy couldn't see anything more than about eight inches from his face if it wasn't moving, and his owner hadn't realized this limitation in the short time they'd been together. Hearing or vision problems, coupled with general achiness, can make group classes full of bouncy adolescents an overwhelming experience. The class environment just stressed this dog out, and his owner felt like she wasn't doing enough to bond with him.

"I'd suggest that you allow older dogs a longer period to adjust to their new home than you might a younger dog. If they're peppy and eager to do training games, go for it. But if they're laid back and just want to sit in the sun all day, let them."

## CLEAN SLATE? OR HIGHLY EXPERIENCED?

Nan Marks of Silver Spring, Maryland, is a Peaceable Paws Academy graduate who trains at Capital Dog Training Club in Silver Spring. She is also a veteran adopter of mature dogs. She shares her thoughts about training:

"This topic is near and dear to my heart. In recent years I have adopted a

## SENIOR SUCCESSES

There is an endless supply of "new old dog" happy-ending stories like Missy's and Mandy's. Twelve-year-old Scooter is a beloved member of our family. We adopted the little Pomeranian five years ago when he was on the euthanasia list at our shelter after he failed his assessment due to his resource guarding (easily managed in our child-free home).

Trainer Susan Sarubin tells of her most recent adoption:

"The transformation in my 7½-year-old adopted Rhodesian Ridgeback, Andy, has been quite remarkable since we adopted him over a year ago. There have been many 'firsts' in his behavior that have brought me tears of joy. Until recently, I spent little time with him that was dedicated to training – he experienced only the training that goes on with normal daily interaction, with rewards for desirable behavior. He has blossomed into the dog that he was never allowed to be in his previous life. We accomplished that in large part by letting him to come to it on his own. We have done 16 months of informal shaping, really. Now he learns behaviors on cue quickly – and most important, he's a happy boy."

Sometimes people worry that they won't be able to bond with an older dog when they've missed out on the puppy and young-dog sharing experiences. Trainer Nan Marks puts those fears to rest with these beautiful words:

"I remember early on fearing I would not love these older guys as much. Boy, was I wrong! For the most part I've found them easier to bond with quickly because they are more fully who they are already and not surfing the waves of puppyhood and adolescence.

"I also remember fearing that having only a short span to share with them would be too painful. I can only say that for the two who have now moved on, they were with me for three and four years, respectively, and those wonderful, loving years felt gloriously long to me in all the things that make having dogs meaningful."



**This seems like an unremarkable picture of trainer Susan Sarubin's two dogs, but she says it took almost a year for senior adoptee Andy (right, age 7½) to gradually trust Sampson (age 9) enough to choose to share a bed with him.**





**Nan Marks adopted Lucy from Collie Rescue, Inc., when Lucy was about 8½ years old. Formerly an outside dog, Lucy is now a lovely house pet and a certified therapy dog.**

Rough Collie, Robbie, at age 8; a large bronze (Golden/Chow/Newfoundland?) mix, Bruce, at age 10; and most recently another 8-year-old Rough Collie, Lucy.

“All three were basically outdoor dogs; two of the three had been tied out their entire lives. These dogs have taught me two primary things: first, never assume that they won’t learn and enjoy learning just because they are older; and second, let their behavior, not their age, tell you what they are willing to try. All three became delightful companions, trained and active therapy dogs, two of the three learned some agility, and one competed and titled in obedience and canine freestyle.”

On one hand, your senior dog may come to you with little or no training, as did Marks’ dogs, described above. On the other, he may have had some training with the less-than-positive methods that are still all too common in the real world.

Peaceable Paws Academy graduate Jackie Moyano trains at WOOF! in Arlington, Virginia, and Coventry School for Dogs in Columbia, Maryland, and also volunteers at the Animal Welfare League of Arlington, where she enjoys matching prospective adopters with appropriate senior dogs. She suggests having fun with your dog while introducing him to a new training relationship with humans based on mutual trust.

“While your mature dog may come to you knowing ‘sit,’ ‘down,’ and ‘stay,’ you may not know the training methods used to teach these cues,” says Moyano. “Why

## RESOURCES

### ❖ **CHRISTINE DANKER, CPDT-KA, KPA-CTP, PMCT3**

Hemlock Hollow LLC, Albany, NY  
(518) 495-7387; [hemlockhollowdogtraining.com](http://hemlockhollowdogtraining.com)

### ❖ **DAWN KALINOWSKI, PEACEABLE PAWS ACADEMY GRADUATE**

Poised Pups LLC Dog Training, Norfolk, VA  
(757) 705-7286; [dawnkalinowski.thedogtrainer.org](http://dawnkalinowski.thedogtrainer.org)

### ❖ **NAN MARKS**

Capitol Dog Training Club, Silver Spring, MD  
(301) 587-5959; [cdtc.org](http://cdtc.org)

### ❖ **CINDY MAURO**

Cindy Mauro Dog Training, West Milford, NJ  
(973) 728-8691; [cindymaurodogtraining.com](http://cindymaurodogtraining.com)

### ❖ **SHARON MESSERSMITH**

Canine Valley Training, Reading, PA  
(610) 223-3981; [caninevalleytraining.com](http://caninevalleytraining.com)

### ❖ **JACKIE MOYANO**

Trains in three locations:  
In Arlington, VA: (703) 536-7877, [woofsdogtraining.com](http://woofsdogtraining.com); and (703) 931-9241, [awla.org](http://awla.org). In Columbia, MD: (410) 381-1800; [thecoventryschool.com](http://thecoventryschool.com)

### ❖ **LAURA NALVEN, PMCT**

Peaceable Paws, LLC, Fairplay, MD  
(301) 582-9420; [peaceablepaws.com](http://peaceablepaws.com)

### ❖ **SUSAN SARUBIN BA, PMCT2, CPDT-KA**

Pawsitive Fit LLC Puppy & Dog Training, Easton, MD  
(410) 200-0091; [pawsitivefit.com](http://pawsitivefit.com)

not take a positive-reinforcement tricks class? Not only could this provide mental stimulation for your mature dog, it could accelerate your bonding!”

## IT DEPENDS

So, the best answer to any question about a “new old dog” is . . . “It depends.” He may come to you already trained, or you may need to do a lot of management while you find out who he is and how you can best meet his needs. You may be able to jump right into a training program, or he may need time to settle in and take training at a slower pace. In any case, be prepared to fall every bit as deeply in love with your senior adoptee as you have with previous puppies and younger dogs who have been part of your family.

Just last year we said sad goodbyes to our beloved

Missy when, at age 14, her injury-related arthritis finally dictated that we let her go. Although we were her humans for only six of her 14 years, it was as painful a loss as any we’ve experienced. When you adopt a new old dog, since you don’t have as much time to look forward to, you learn to treasure the years you do have with them. 🐾

*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 the 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 about her dog-training classes, books, and courses for trainers.*



# Dog Food Logic

*The following is an excerpt adapted from a new book that can help you make smart decisions about what to feed your dog.*

BY LINDA P. CASE, MS

**T**wo years ago, my friend Pam’s six-year-old Akita, Bruino, was diagnosed with bone cancer. Bruino had had his share of health issues during his short life; he was born to a rescued and severely malnourished and neglected mother, he developed several skeletal disorders before he was a year old, and he later required surgery to repair the cruciate ligament in his left knee. Still, throughout all of this, Bruino remained an easygoing and friendly fellow, getting along well with people and dogs and never quite seeming to realize that he greatly outweighed his owner and the majority of his canine friends. When Bruino started to limp during a walk one day, Pam assumed that either the surgical repair to his knee had failed or that he was developing arthritis in that knee. Unfortunately, x-rays revealed the problem to be something much worse: a bone tumor located in his femur.

We are fortunate that we live in a university town with a veterinary college and an excellent cancer-care clinic. Bruino was examined the next day by a team of board-certified veterinary oncologists. Information was presented to Pam about the disease, its prognosis, and several options for Bruino’s care.

Although amputation is frequently the treatment of choice with osteosarcoma, Bruino’s large size coupled with his mobility problems made him a poor candidate for this option. After consulting with the veterinary oncologists, the orthopedist who had performed Bruino’s knee surgery, her own veterinarian, and her training friends, Pam opted to provide Bruino with several palliative rounds of chemotherapy and also to enroll him in a clinical research trial that was testing the effects of a bone-salvaging drug

for dogs with osteosarcoma. Pam and I also discussed Bruino’s diet, and she made some changes that were designed to support his body condition, reduce inflammation, and possibly slow tumor growth.

Bruino responded well to treatment. His pain and swelling were reduced, and his quality of life continued to be very good.

During this time, Pam was in contact via email with a number of dog folks whom she knew from being involved with Akita rescue. One acquaintance – we will call her “Jane” – took it upon herself to inform Pam via email that feeding Bruino a commercial diet during his young life had almost certainly led to his cancer. Further, this woman proclaimed, if Pam would just start to feed Bruino the homemade diet that she recommended, plus a concoction of nutritional supplements that she would provide, this would slow progression and could even cure his cancer.

Like most of us, Pam would do anything possible to help her beloved dog. She considered changing Bruino’s food and purchasing the packets of supplements. Pam trusted that this person was sincere in her claims. This was a known dog enthusiast who clearly believed in her own words and in the results that her prescribed diet and supplements could bring. (I would add that I like to think she never intended to be the source of the emotional pain that her words caused to Pam.)

After more thought, and more discussion with me and with Bruino’s team of veterinarians, Pam decided to stay with her planned course and declined to use the diet that Jane promoted. During our last discussion about this, Pam commented, “Well, if her diet works so well, wouldn’t there be studies showing that it worked, and wouldn’t more people be using it?”

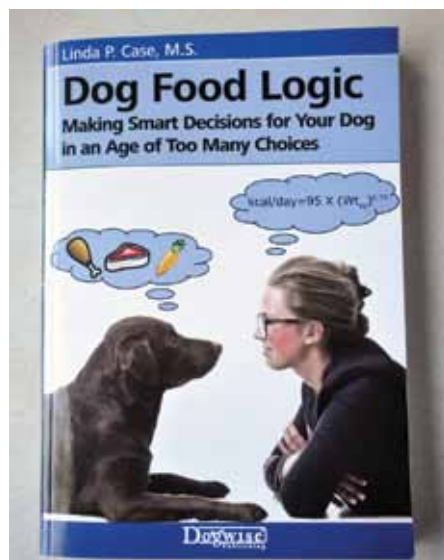
Yes, indeed, that is certainly the right question to ask.

## MISTAKES WERE MADE ... BUT NOT INTENTIONALLY

The woman foisting unsolicited food advice upon Pam was probably sincere (though arguably insensitive). She believed that feeding her homemade dog food and providing a nutrient supplement could prevent cancer from developing in healthy dogs and cure disease in diagnosed dogs. Most readers will agree that this is a pretty extravagant claim. Yet, she insisted with conviction, and Pam, in a state of emotional turmoil, considered giving it a try.

We all hear and read such claims in the popular press, on the Internet, or when talking to Joe next door (who

*The article above is an excerpt adapted from **Dog Food Logic** by Linda P. Case, MS. Used with permission. Dogwise Publishing, 2014. Available from Dogwise.com, (800-776-2665). \$20 softcover; \$10 ebook.*





There isn't any solid evidence that commercial diets cause cancer in dogs; if there was, wouldn't most dogs in this country have cancer? However, there is good evidence that certain dietary changes can help dogs, like Bruino, who are diagnosed with cancer.



happens to know a lot about dogs). Why is it that we, as supposedly the most intelligent species on the planet, are so susceptible to believing such claims and often make decisions in response to assertions that are accompanied by little or no supporting evidence? Why do we sometimes make a choice that seems to be a good idea (i.e., it feels right) but in reality has no actual evidence supporting its benefit or superiority?

In Chapter 1, I discussed how our emotions – important and essential as they are – not only influence our behavior but also frequently do so without our conscious awareness.

Additionally, our brains efficiently process information using a set of mental shortcuts called heuristics that enable us to rapidly observe a scene, extract meaning from it, and react in what is (usually) an appropriate manner. And, as with the emotional input, all of this mental work takes place beneath the surface of our consciousness. It is only the result of processing the incoming information (the action or reaction) that we are consciously aware of. It does not feel this way because we are also masters at “back-reasoning.” If asked why we made a particular decision or choice, we can immediately explain why.

However, at the time that the choice is made, functional MRI (fMRI) studies have shown that the processing is much too rapid to have allowed us to work through the series of logical steps to reach the choice – at least not consciously. Again, the benefits of this subconscious system are its processing speed and efficiency.

But with every benefit there is a cost. The price that we pay for rapid-fire analysis is that our brains miss details – details that may be essential in certain situations for reliable decision-making. And, just as with emotionally influenced choices, we are unaware of these missed details. Before reaching the conscious level of “Act now, do this!” our brains fill in a set of details for us, using our unique set of beliefs, experiences, and expectations.

For most processing and decision-making, this system works well because past patterns often accurately predict current patterns. However, the system is also biased by our opinions and beliefs, and so can make mistakes. As a set, these mistakes are referred to as *cognitive biases*, predictable patterns of thought and behavior that lead us to draw incorrect conclusions. Similar errors called *logical fallacies* refer to faulty arguments that lead to errors in logic – again, without our awareness – usually because we are highly invested in supporting a particular answer or solution.

Happily for us, psychologists, neuroscientists, and behaviorists have been studying these biases and fallacies for many years. Although we cannot completely prevent them (that subconscious mind thing again), we can be aware of the existence of these traps and their potential to lead us astray when making choices. Just as many of us are talented dog trainers, we can also become effective “mind trainers,” teaching ourselves to avoid or correct for these traps when making decisions for our dogs’ health (and for other important things in life).

The following are some specific types of cognitive biases and logical fallacies that may unduly influence us as we try to select foods, choose the best feeding approach, and make decisions for our dog’s nutritional well-being (each of these are discussed in more detail in the book):

■ **CONFIRMATION BIAS** is the tendency to seek out and remember information that matches what we already believe, and to ignore or discount information that is not in agreement with our

preformed views. As just one example, confirmation bias is at work when we become convinced that a dog’s itchy skin is caused by the chicken meal in her diet and then attend to only those signs that confirm this belief (itchy skin, commercial food containing chicken meal) and ignore signs that her problem skin may have other causes (seasonal allergies, parasites, flea allergy dermatitis).

■ **POST-HOC FALLACY**, formally called *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*, translates to “after this, therefore because of this.” This common logical fallacy is the cause of many superstitions and false beliefs. We commit a *post-hoc* error whenever we assume that because two events occur together, with one following the other in time, that the first event caused the second event.

We are especially prone to these in nutrition precisely because we can easily change the food that we feed and because we tend to change foods only when our dogs experience a problem. If the dog’s condition improves after changing her food (and the timeframe encompassed by “after” may be days, weeks, or even months), then the improvement is immediately attributed to the change. However, if no positive change is observed, diet is still not eliminated as a cause. Rather the change may not have been the right diet. The owner moves on to another food, another supplement, and another dietary approach. (Because of confirmation bias the misses are also often not noticed, while the hits are celebrated.)

■ **ILLUSION OF CONTROL:** Because as owners we actually are in complete control of what our dogs eat and when they eat it, the jump to assuming (hoping) that we can control our dogs’ health entirely by what we feed to them is pervasive. Proponents of nutritional trends that make extravagant claims exploit our deeply ingrained desire to be able to control health changes in our pets through what we choose to feed them. It is no wonder that we fall for these claims, given our strong desire to help our dogs and the natural tendency of our brains to convince us that we have a universal ability to do so.

■ **THE AVAILABILITY ERROR** is rooted in our natural tendency to attach greater significance to events that are easily brought to mind or remembered

(i.e., are “available”). Like most cognitive biases, the availability error has its roots in a heuristic that our brains use for speed and efficiency when evaluating incoming information. It can lead to errors in judgment when we would be better served to take our time and evaluate information more objectively.

Examples of the availability error include the belief that shark attacks, child abductions, and plane crashes are far more common (and present much greater risk to individuals) than they actually are. An unfortunate but common example occurs when people believe that all Pit Bull Terriers are dangerous because of sensationalized media coverage of dog bites that focuses repeatedly only on this particular breed or breed type.

■ **NEGATIVITY BIAS** refers to the psychological phenomenon in which we naturally pay more attention to and give more weight to negative rather than positive experiences. It is this unconscious bias that causes people to be more hurt or discouraged by insults or poor work performance reviews than they are pleased or encouraged by compliments or shining performance reviews.

The negativity bias can affect the attention that we pay to our dog’s health and wellness. We tend to wait until we see a change in weight, the development of itchy skin, or the onset of a serious health problem before we react. In human medicine (and increasingly in veterinary medicine), efforts to train ourselves to focus on wellness and disease prevention as opposed to disease treatment are a reflection of recognizing and trying to combat negativity bias.

## JANE’S CLAIMS

These are just a few of the ways in which our mind’s tendency to think rapidly and use shortcuts to form opinions and rules of thumb to make decisions can lead us to make errors in judgment. Let’s return for a moment to Jane’s insistence that her diet and supplement would cure Bruino’s cancer.

Upon further investigation, Pam discovered that one of Jane’s dogs had died of cancer several years previously and that Jane had changed the dog’s diet several months prior to the diagnosis. This led Jane to believe that “diet causes cancer,” examples of both *post hoc* and availability errors. Because she spent many hours and a great deal of effort in

the development of her nutritional supplement, Jane understandably was highly invested in believing in the efficacy of her approach. Therefore, these feelings could lead her to pay more attention to dogs who responded positively (or did not suffer from it) and to ignore cases in which the dog’s condition worsened (confirmation bias).

An additional *post hoc* fallacy was committed when she assumed that a dog’s change in status was due specifically to her remedy because the change in condition *followed* feeding the remedy chronologically (regardless of how long that time period was and ignoring the effects of other treatments that a dog may have been receiving).

The fact that Jane’s remedy (and her beliefs about it) had not been shown to be effective through controlled scientific study does not discount the fact that her remedy *might* be helpful or effective. *The point is that we just don’t know.* The claims that Jane made for her nutritional approach had never been tested and the risks of succumbing to a variety of potential biases make her claims at the very least unfounded, and at the most highly suspect.

So, what is a dog person to do? Are our minds, while highly efficient at processing loads of information and helping us to react quickly to changing circumstances, at the same time sabotaging our attempts to weigh evidence and make well-reasoned decisions? Well . . . yes. But when it comes to our dog’s nutritional health and well being (as well as to many other important decisions in our lives), we can use science as a rational and reliable tool to help us to avoid these traps, evaluate information objectively, and choose well.

## WHAT IS SCIENCE (AND WHY DO WE NEED IT?)

At its most basic, science refers to a systematic approach to acquiring knowledge. The system of science uses observation and experimentation to describe and explain the natural world. And – this is important – science is specifically and intentionally designed to prevent the biases and cognitive traps that come along with being human, traps that will almost always trip us up in one way or another if we simply go about willy-nilly making decisions in response only to how we *feel* and without any type of system or plan.

One of the best things about science is that, by definition, it is testable. Science is designed to evaluate the validity of the stuff that you think/ponder/learn to make sure that your beliefs actually reflect reality as opposed to being flawed, misleading, or an outright falsehood.

In most disciplines, including nutrition, science is put into practice through use of the *scientific method*. Most of us learned the steps to this method in high school, and some of us have had the opportunity to put it into practice later in college and in our careers. There are four primary steps to the scientific method:

**1** The investigator notices a natural phenomenon or a problem and takes the time to observe it closely, trying to learn as much as possible about it.

**2** The investigator considers one or more possible explanations or causes for the phenomenon and typically selects a favorite for testing: her hypothesis. Now the fun begins.

**3** This is the essence of the scientific method. A study is designed, data are collected and analyzed, and conclusions are drawn. The results of the first study may suggest a second, and understanding grows.

**4** Following study replication (preferably by unrelated groups of researchers), the hypothesis is either rejected as false (and you start all over again), accepted, or judgment is withheld pending still more study.

A key difference between the scientific method and other ways in which we learn about the world is that it is designed to protect us from inherent biases and mistakes in reasoning. In Chapter 3, we will see how the use of well-designed studies can support or refute claims that are made about a particular pet food, ingredient, nutrient, or feeding method. For now, let’s return one more time to the issue of diet and cancer in dogs.

## THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD IN PRACTICE

The scientific method provides a systematic approach to testing ideas about “how things work” that protects those doing the work (and those who stand to benefit from it) from making errors in judgment. Jane promoted a feeding approach and nutritional supplement that she was con-



## NUTRIENT MATRIX – DIET FOR DOGS WITH CANCER

Foods that are designed (formulated) for dogs with cancer should account for nutritional changes that are associated with cancer. These include weight loss and changed in body condition, reduced appetite, and metabolic effects caused by tumors. Recommended diets include:

- ✓ Increased fat
- ✓ Reduced digestible carbohydrate (starch)
- ✓ Increased omega-3 fatty acids (specifically EPA and DHA)
- ✓ Moderately increased protein
- ✓ Quality ingredients that are highly digestible

vinced would slow the progression of Bruino's cancer. Her convictions, while sincere, were based not upon scientific evidence but upon personal experience. As we have seen, personal experience can lead to flawed conclusions. Yet, as I mentioned, we did change Bruino's diet.

The food that Pam chose for Bruino included an increase in fat and reduced levels of digestible carbohydrate (starch). Protein was moderately increased. The type of fat was also modified to include a high proportion of a class of fatty acids called the omega-3 fatty acids. These are commonly found in certain types of fish. When included in the diet in proper amounts, omega-3 fatty acids have varying degrees of anti-inflammatory benefits to different tissues in the body. The reasons for these changes have to do with changes in the way that animals with cancer are able to use energy-containing nutrients from their diet (fat, carbohydrate, and protein) and also how being affected by cancer influences body weight, body condition, and an animal's interest in eating.

Most animals, including humans, experience certain changes in metabolism (the way in which the body digests and uses nutrients) during cancer. These changes become most pronounced during the later stages of cancer and can also be influenced by cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation.

It is known that most tumor cells preferentially use carbohydrate as an energy (fuel) source and use fat

and protein far less efficiently. Therefore, feeding an animal who has cancer a diet that shifts its energy balance away from carbohydrate and toward fat is designed to *feed the patient while starving the tumor*. Because tumors grow fastest when using carbohydrate for energy, depriving them of this form of energy may slow their growth and slow the progression of the cancer.

An additional benefit to increasing dietary fat is that fat improves a food's energy density and appeal to dogs, which will both encourage a dog to eat and will help to maintain body weight during treatment. Increasing omega-3 fatty acids in the diet has anti-inflammatory benefits in the body and may also help to limit tumor growth. Finally, many dogs with cancer lose weight and specifically show a loss of muscle mass and strength. Increasing protein helps to conserve the



**Author Linda P. Case and her youngest dog, Cooper.**

body's lean tissue and reduce this decline in body condition.

These recommendations arise from our understanding of both canine cancer and nutritional science. Still, an approach to feeding dogs with cancer that uses this nutrient matrix must be *tested* (scientific method, remember) if we are to accept that a diet switch could help Bruino. Is there scientific evidence?

Indeed there is. Although there are not *mountains* of it, there is enough to suggest that these dietary modifications may be beneficial for dogs with cancer. (Editor's note: the published research is referenced and described in the book.) These studies provide the science that was needed to make a decision for Bruino's wellness and quality of life during cancer treatment.

Happily, Bruino's new diet at the very least supported his body condition and muscle mass during his treatments. Bruino experienced a high quality of life for almost a year following diagnosis. While we cannot know if the dietary intervention slowed his cancer progression as an individual case, we do know that a dietary matrix that includes increased fat and protein, reduced carbohydrate, and increased omega-3 fatty acids has the potential to do so. And, because the food that he was fed was formulated to be nutritionally complete and had been tested, we also know that we did not harm him by feeding it. 🐾

*Linda P. Case, MS, is the owner of AutumnGold Consulting and Dog Training Center in Mahomet, Illinois, where she lives with her four dogs and husband Mike. She is the author of Canine and Feline Nutrition, as well as three other books and numerous publications on nutrition for dogs and cats.*

*Her blog can be read at [thesciencedog.wordpress.com](http://thesciencedog.wordpress.com).*

*Editor's Note: Dog Food Logic examines the types of available scientific (and not so scientific) evidence about canine nutrition that you can use to make evidence-based decisions for your dogs' health and wellness. Further chapters include information about dogs' nutritional requirements, how a dog's age and activity level should affect your choice for his diet; how the pet food market and the companies that make up that market are changing; pet food marketing; label claims and how to analyze them; and pet food oversight and regulation.*

# Lumps and Bumps

*No one likes tumors on their dog, but some are problematic and some are not. Here's how to tell the difference.*

BY NANCY KAY, DVM, DACVIM

**G**iven the opportunity to examine an older dog, I'll very likely find at least one or two cutaneous (within the skin) or subcutaneous (just beneath the skin surface) lumps and bumps. Such growths are common by-products of the canine aging process. In this regard, I liken them to the brown spots that appear on our skin as we get older.

The good news is that most cutaneous and subcutaneous canine tumors are benign. It's the small population of malignant masses that keeps us on our toes. They are the reason it's important to have your veterinarian inspect any newly discovered lumps and bumps your dog develops. The smaller a cancerous growth is at the time of treatment, in general, the better the outcome.

## PET YOUR DOG!

In terms of "lump and bump patrol," your first order of business is to pet your dog. No doubt you and your best buddy already enjoy some doggie massage time. What I'm asking you to do is a more methodical petting session. Once a month, slowly and mindfully slide your fingers, palm sides down, along your dog's body. Move systematically from stern to stern while inspecting for any new lumps or bumps.

Also, look and feel for changes in the size or appearance of those previously discovered. Any new findings should be addressed with your veterinarian, who relies upon your help with this surveillance. Imagine your vet trying to find a tiny growth on a shaggy Sheepdog

or Sheltie during the course of a single exam. Some lumps and bumps are bound to be missed without your assistance.

## WHEN TO SEE YOUR VETERINARIAN

Does finding a new growth suggest that you must see your veterinarian right away? Not necessarily. Say that you've just spotted a new bump in your dog's skin that is no larger than the size of a pea. She is due for her annual physical examination in three months. Must you rush to visit your vet with this new finding, or can it wait the three months? The

answer depends on the behavior of this newly discovered growth.

My recommendation is that you continue to observe it once a week. Examining it more frequently can make it difficult to accurately assess change. If the mass is growing, or otherwise changing in appearance, best to have it checked out sooner rather than later. If no changes are observed, waiting to address it at the time of the annual physical exam makes perfectly good sense.

In contrast, say that in the course of examining your best buddy you discover a prune sized, firm, subcutaneous growth that feels attached to the shoulder blade. Based on the larger size and deep attachment of this mass, it's best to have this one checked out right away. If ever in doubt, give your veterinarian a call to figure out the best course of action. As with most things medical, better to be safe than sorry.

In advance of your veterinary visit, mark the location of any lumps or bumps requiring inspection. You can clip some hair over the site or mark the fur with a ribbon, hair band, or marking pen. Growths discovered at home when an animal is lying down in a relaxed, comfortable position have a habit of magically disappearing when the dog is upright and uptight in the exam room.

## FINE NEEDLE ASPIRATE FOR CYTOLOGY

If a newly discovered growth is large enough, the usual first step your



**This senior dog has dozens of lipomas located all over his body, ranging from pea-sized to melon-sized – but he's okay!**



**Make a point of running your hands over your dog's body once a week or so, feeling for new lumps and observing the change in size of any existing ones. Write (and date) a brief note, describing the location and approximate size of your findings. This will help you keep on top of changes and decide when you should schedule a veterinary examination.**

veterinarian will recommend is a fine needle aspirate for cytology. Cytology refers to the microscopic examination of cells. The purpose of this step is to attempt to noninvasively clarify the cell type within the mass, and whether it is benign or malignant.

Collection of a fine needle aspirate is a simple process that is easy on the dog and rarely requires any sort of sedation. Using a needle no larger than the size of a vaccination needle along with some gentle suction, your vet will remove a smattering of cells from the growth. These cells are then spit out onto a glass slide and evaluated under the microscope.

Some cytology interpretations are a slam-dunk, and can readily be interpreted by your family vet. Others require the eyeballs of a specialist – a clinical pathologist who works in a veterinary diagnostic laboratory. Remember, the goal of the cytology testing is to determine the underlying cell type, therefore whether the growth can be left alone or requires more attention. Fine needle aspirate cytology is often (but not always) definitive. If the results do not provide clarity, a surgical biopsy of the mass may be recommended.

If your veterinarian recommends surgical removal of a mass as the very *first* step (chooses to forego the fine needle aspirate), I encourage you to consider getting a second opinion. It is disappointing and frustrating when a veterinarian foregoes cytology, proceeds with surgery, and the biopsy report reveals a malignancy with cancer cells extending beyond the margins of the tissue that was removed. In other words, cancer cells were clearly left behind. Had the veterinarian known in advance from the cytology report that the tumor was malignant, a different approach (much more aggressive surgery and/or radiation therapy) would have been undertaken, almost certainly resulting in a better outcome.

A second “bad news scenario” that can arise from forging ahead with surgery without benefit of fine needle aspirate



cytology is failure to identify a cancerous growth that may have already spread elsewhere in the body. If the cytology reveals a malignancy, screening the rest of the body for metastasis (spread) is a logical next step. If metastasis is discovered, removal of the originally discovered mass is unlikely to provide any benefit. Rather, such surgery will only subject the patient (and the client's pocketbook) to a needless procedure. Leaping into surgery to remove a mass without the benefit of cytology is risky business.

### **LIPOMAS (FATTY TUMORS)**

Lipomas are one of the most common types of canine tumors. Fortunately, the vast majority of them are completely benign. They arise from fat (lipid) cells and grow in subcutaneous locations, primarily in the axillary regions (armpits) and alongside the chest and abdomen. Occasionally one will develop within the chest or abdominal cavity. Rarely does a dog develop only one lipoma. They tend to grow in multiples, and I've examined individual dogs with literally hundreds of lipomas.

Should lipomas be treated in some fashion? In the vast majority of cases, the answer is a definite, “No!” This is based on their benign, slow-growing nature. The only issue most create is purely cosmetic, which dogs could care less about!

There are a few exceptions to the general recommendation to let sleeping lipomas lie. A fatty tumor is deserving

of more attention in the following situations:

- A lipoma that is steadily growing in an area where it could ultimately interfere with mobility. The armpit is the classic spot where this happens. The emphasis here is on the phrase “steadily growing.” Even in one of these critical areas there is no reason to remove a lipoma that remains quiescent with no discernible growth.

- Sudden growth and/or change in appearance of a fatty tumor (or any mass for that matter) should prompt reassessment to determine the best course of action.

- Every once in a great while, a fatty tumor turns out to be an infiltrative liposarcoma rather than a lipoma. These are the malignant black sheep in the family of fatty tumors. Your veterinarian will be suspicious of an infiltrative liposarcoma if the fine needle aspirate cytology reveals fat cells, yet the tumor feels fixed to underlying tissues. (Lipomas are normally freely moveable.) Liposarcomas should be aggressively surgically removed and/or treated with radiation therapy.

- Occasionally a lipoma grows to truly mammoth proportions. If ever you've looked at a dog and thought, “Wow, there's a dog attached to that tumor!” chances are you were looking at a lipoma. Such massive tumors have the potential



**Certain “lumps” may be benign and don’t appear to cause the dog any pain – but are so unsightly that his human wants them removed, anyway. In this case, the benefit of surgery must be weighed against its cost, not to mention the risk of anesthesia in an older dog. Plus, what if they recur?**

to cause the dog discomfort. They can also outgrow their blood supply, resulting in potential infection and drainage from the mass. The key is to catch on to the mass’s rapid growth so as to surgically remove it before it becomes enormous in size and far more difficult to remove.

How can one prevent canine lipomas from occurring? No one knows. Anecdotally speaking it is thought that overweight dogs are more predisposed to developing fatty tumors. While I’m not so sure I buy this, I’m certainly in favor of keeping your dog at a healthy body weight.

## SEBACEOUS ADENOMAS

These are the most common benign skin tumors in dogs. Sebaceous glands are microscopic structures found just beneath the skin surface. They secrete an oily substance called sebum that is transported to the skin surface via microscopic ducts, and can arise from the gland *or* the duct.

Sebaceous adenomas tend to be small, no more than ¼ to ½ of an inch in size. They may appear round, or they can have a wart-like appearance. Sebaceous adenomas occur primarily in middle-aged and older dogs. Any breed can develop sebaceous adenomas, but certain breeds are particularly predisposed: English Cocker Spaniels, Cocker Spaniels, Samoyeds, Siberian Huskies, Alaskan Malamutes, West Highland White Terriers, Cairn Terriers, Dachshunds, Miniature Poodles, Toy Poodles, Shih Tzus, Basset Hounds, Beagles, and Kerry Blue Terriers.

Because of their benign nature, the vast majority of sebaceous adenomas require no treatment whatsoever. There are some exceptions to this general rule, and they are as follows:

■ Surgical removal is warranted for those sebaceous adenomas that recurrently bleed or become infected because of self-trauma (the dog bites or chews at them) or because they get in the way of the groomer’s clippers.



■ Some sebaceous adenomas secrete oodles of sebum, creating the constant appearance of an oil slick on the dog’s hair coat. The grease rubs off on hands, furniture, and anything else the dog contacts. No fun!

■ Some sebaceous adenomas are pretty darned unsightly, looking like warty little aliens poking through the hair coat. Although this is not bothersome for the dog, it can be a significant issue for the person living with that dog.

■ If a mass believed to be a sebaceous adenoma is growing or changing in appearance, it is important to ask your vet to have another look. What was thought to be a benign adenoma may be its less common cancerous cousin, a sebaceous carcinoma.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF HISTOPATHOLOGY

If your veterinarian surgically removes a growth from your dog, do not, I repeat, do *not* let that tissue sample wind up in the vet clinic garbage can! A far better choice is to have the mass submitted for histopathology (biopsy) to a veterinary diagnostic laboratory. There, a veterinary pathologist will evaluate paper-thin slices of the mass under the microscope to confirm the identity of the mass.

Even if fine needle

aspirate cytology indicated that the growth was benign, histopathology is warranted. On occasion, the pathologist discovers something quirky such as a malignant tumor within the center of a benign lipoma.

If histopathology is not affordable, ask your vet to place the growth that was removed in a small container of formalin (preservative) that you can take home for safekeeping. This way, should multiple masses begin growing at the surgery site or should your dog develop a tumor at another site, you will still be able to request histopathology on the original sample. Formalin is toxic stuff, so keep the container lid sealed tightly.

Lumps and bumps are a very normal part of the canine aging process. Teaming up with your veterinarian to assess them on a regular basis is the best way to insure that they never create a health issue for your best buddy. 🐾

Nancy Kay, DVM, DACVIM, is the author of *Speaking for Spot: Be the Advocate Your Dog Needs to Live a Happy, Healthy, Longer Life, and Your Dog’s Best Health: A Dozen Reasonable Things to Expect From Your Vet*. She lives in North Carolina. You can read her blog at [speakingforspot.com/blog](http://speakingforspot.com/blog), and see “Resources” on page 24 for contact and book purchasing information.



# When Dogs Fly

*Bringing your small dog with you on a flight is far safer and more convenient than any of the alternatives, but requires preparation.*

BY NANCY KERNS

The ability to carry a little dog onto an airplane with you is one of the greatest advantages of owning a small dog that can't be shared by owners of medium or large dogs. Most (though not all) of the risks of flying a dog on a commercial flight are posed by the dog's handling by airport employees behind the scenes and by the dog's unattended experience in the cargo hold of the plane; in contrast, the risks to a dog who is with you at every moment of your flight are very slight – and under your control. That said, there are a lot of things you need to know and contingencies for which to prepare if you are going to subject your dog to air travel. Here's how to make the carried-on dog's flight as enjoyable and stress free (for both of you) as possible.

## WHAT DOGS CAN BE CARRIED ON?

Before you count on being able to bring your dog on any flight with you, you should be aware that there is no cut-and-dried rule regarding the size of dogs who can be carried on a plane. Most accurately, the limiting factor for which dogs can be carried onto a flight is the size of

the dog's carrier, and how well the dog appears to fit inside it. But every airline has different maximum dimensions for kennels and soft-sided carriers – and airlines sometimes have different maximum dimensions for the various types of airplane that may be employed on your journey. And there is quite a range! I found airlines with stated maximum car-

rier heights as small as 7.5 inches (in this case, for a hard-sided carrier on Alaska and United), and as much as 11 inches (and in this case, specifically for a soft-sided carrier on United). The maximum dimensions for the width and depth of the carrier vary quite a bit, too. We found a range of maximum carrier width from 11 to 19 inches, and a range of maximum length from 12 to 19 inches.

In addition to their carrier dimension limitations, some airlines also have a weight limit for the pet and her carrier. For example, JetBlue dictates that the combined weight of the dog and carrier cannot exceed 20 pounds.

Dogs are supposed to be able to stand up, turn around, and lie down naturally and comfortably in the carrier. It doesn't pay to try to stuff a borderline too-large dog into a small kennel; airline representatives, who may or may not be knowledgeable about pets, can refuse to allow you to board with your dog if they feel the kennel is too small and causing (or potentially causing) your dog undue distress.

On top of the size and weight considerations, there are federal regulations regarding the minimum age for puppies who can be carried on a plane. These regulations (and common sense) require puppies to be at least eight weeks old and weaned at least five days before flying.

If your dog is small enough to fit comfortably into a carrier that will meet the airline's size specifications for the plane used on the journey you plan to take, read on!

For more discussion of appropriate small dog carriers, see page 23.

■ **BUYING THE TICKET** – It's weird and annoying: I haven't yet seen an airline's website that allows a traveler to indicate that she would like to bring a pet on board for a flight. Generally, you first book the flight for yourself, and then

**These Pugs (and the carriers that are large enough to comfortably contain them) are far too large to be carried onto some airplanes, operated by some airlines – but are easily accommodated on other flights. Before buying your ticket, call the airline you want to travel on, and ask about their carry-on size and weight maximums.**





call the airline directly to reserve a spot for your dog. That's a weird order of operations, given that airlines allow only a limited number of pets on any given flight; if the flight you have booked for yourself already has reached its capacity for pets, you will have to select a different flight. Although the airline won't charge a "change fee" for this, if the new flight costs more than the one you originally booked, you will have to pay the higher price. Take home point: Book your flight as early as possible, and call the airline to reserve a spot for your dog immediately after booking.

**■ ABOUT HEALTH REQUIREMENTS FOR YOUR DESTINATION** – When you make the phone call to reserve your dog's spot on your flight, ask the reservation agent whether any health certificates or vaccinations are required for your dog for that flight. A health certificate, issued by a veterinarian who examined your dog within a short period (usually 10 days) before your flight, is required for all international flights, but generally not for domestic travel in the U.S., with a couple of notable exceptions. Because Hawaii is the only place in the U.S. that

is completely free of rabies, that state has special requirements for inbound pets. And certain destinations in Alaska have vaccination requirements (for canine parvovirus and rabies).

**■ PAY A FEE** – All airlines charge an extra fee for your carried-on dog, and the price (like all airline add-on fees) has gone up in recent years. Unlike the price of your ticket, the fee doesn't seem to be dependent on the length of the flight; a flat fee is applied no matter how long (or short) the flight is, and varies from airline to airline, from about \$125 to \$200 (one way). Payment for the pet fee is made at the counter when you check in for the flight.

**■ GETTING YOUR DOG READY** – Ideally, you've bought your ticket and made your dog's reservation months (or at least weeks) in advance of your flight. That gives you time to prepare your dog for some of the experiences she will be subjected to on the day of travel, so she's not miserable on the airplane – and so you and your fellow passengers aren't made miserable by her distressed behavior, either.

It's *most* important for your dog to practice spending time in a small carrier – and, while there, being jostled about and subjected to strange noises and movement. Small dogs who are regularly carried in soft-sided bags are likely to accept everything about the air travel experience with ease. But if your dog has rarely graced the inside of a crate, or is unhappy being in one, you need to start conditioning and desensitizing her to this ASAP. (See "Crate Expectations," WDJ January 2011, for more information about teaching a dog to be comfortable in a crate.)

Once your dog is comfortable spending time in a crate or carrier at *home*, make sure she is equally comfortable being carried in it, subjected to the sounds and motion of a vehicle in it (people who crate their dogs in the car, with the crate securely belted or strapped in, are way ahead of the game here), and will go into it happily at any time. Ideally, your dog will be familiar with and comfortable in the carrier you plan to use on the trip well before you travel; don't subject her to an entirely new carrier on the day of the flight if you can help it.

You may need to take your dog out of and put her back into the carrier several times during your travel. The airline representative at the front counter might want to see your dog out of the carrier to make sure she's in a correctly sized carrier. You will be asked to remove her from the carrier again when you go through security. If you have to change planes, you will probably want to seek out a "pet relief area" at the midway airport so your dog can go potty. You want to be able to remove your dog from the carrier without her trying to escape in a panic at all of these points, as well as at your final destination. So in the weeks before the flight, practice asking your dog to enter the carrier, and taking her out of it, in all sorts of different environments: dark, bright, loud, indoors, outdoors, etc. Keep the experience highly rewarding (with high-value treats and praise) each time she enters and exits calmly.

It's also a good idea to bathe your dog a day or two before your trip, so that she's odor free and comfortable.

Finally, make sure your dog's nails (including the dewclaws, if any) are clipped short. A dog who tries to paw or dig her way out of a carrier can easily catch and tear a nail, especially in a soft-sided carrier. Bleeding, whining, and

## SHOULD YOU TRANQUILIZE YOUR DOG?

Veterinarians generally advise against administering a tranquilizer to dogs for air travel. The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has a list of "Traveling with Your Pet FAQs" on its website ([avma.org](http://avma.org)), with this statement: "It is recommended that you DO NOT give tranquilizers to your pet when traveling by air because it can increase the risk of heart and respiratory problems. Short-nosed dogs and cats sometimes have even more difficulty with travel. Airlines may require a signed statement that your pet has not been tranquilized prior to flying."

The AVMA goes on to quote Dr. Patricia Olsen of the American Humane Association (AHA): "An animal's natural ability to balance and maintain equilibrium is altered under sedation and when the kennel is moved, a sedated animal may not be able to brace and prevent injury."

If you are concerned about your dog's behavior or anxiety on an upcoming flight, spend time daily getting him accustomed to being in his carrier. See "Crate Expectations," WDJ January 2011, for tips on teaching a dog to be happy in a crate.

**The more your dog practices spending time in her carrier, the better.**





## WHAT ABOUT LARGER DOGS AND SHIPPING AS CARGO?

There are people who routinely airship dogs as cargo across the country. I am not and will never be one of those people.

The federal government requires airlines to report incidents to the U.S. Department of Transportation every time an animal on a commercial flight is injured, lost, or dies. The reports appear online in a remarkably timely fashion. The owners' names are redacted but all the other basic facts about each incident are recounted in the reports.

If you spend a few hours reviewing those "animal incident reports," you may find yourself turning in your dog's wings. The reports describe pets who were sickened, injured, escaped from their crates, or lost during air travel – as well as those who were dead on arrival at their owner's destination.

The reports certainly do serve to educate. Ongoing analysis of the reports (compiled since the law mandating their collection went into effect in 2005) has exposed the most potent dangers of air travel to pets. For example, in 2010, analysis of five years' worth of animal incident reports revealed that dogs with short muzzles (such as Pugs, Boston Terriers, Boxers, some Mastiffs, Pekingese, Lhasa Apsos, Shih Tzus, and Bulldogs) are much more likely to die on airplanes than dogs with normal-length muzzles. One-half of the 122 dog deaths associated with airline flights in that time span involved these short-faced breeds.



An alarming number of incident reports involve dogs who manage to escape from their crates (and are found by the ground crew at their destination loose in

the cargo hold), dogs who were injured in frantic attempts to escape from their crates – descriptions of blood-spattered crates and limping dogs dot the incident reports – and crates that are found to be cracked upon arrival.

Industry observers say that since the airlines (those operating airplanes that seat more than 60 passengers) have been required to collect and publish these reports, the number of incidents have gone down. Industry spokesmen tend to minimize the number of pet losses; you will find all sorts of projections – based on *estimations* of the total number of pets flown on airlines – as to the rate of pet injury or loss that make air travel look very safe for your dog.

However, it's far less safe for your pet to fly than it is for you. It's telling that most of the airlines have increased the number of limitations on which pets they will accept as cargo, on

which routes, and at what times of year. And some airlines no longer accept pets as cargo at all.

### ALTERNATIVES TO CARGO FLIGHTS FOR TRANSPORTING A DOG

Before flying a dog as cargo, I would recommend exhausting every other option for moving a dog from one place to another, such as:

- ✓ Chartered flight (where even large dogs are allowed in the cabin). Example: [magellanjets.com](http://magellanjets.com)
- ✓ Professional pet ground transportation service. Example: [royalpaws.com](http://royalpaws.com)
- ✓ Driving the pet yourself.
- ✓ Transatlantic move? Cunard's Queen Mary 2 (QM2) is the only ship that allows the transatlantic transportation of dogs; see [cunard.com](http://cunard.com).

### NO ALTERNATIVE?

If you *had to* ship a dog as cargo, consider the following:

- ✓ Dogs with any sort of breathing or cardiac impairment, those who are elderly, obese, and/or in poor health, very young puppies (especially those of toy breeds), and brachycephalic (flat-faced dogs) are at extremely high risk when flying.
- ✓ Do not ship during times of year when extremely hot or cold weather can add to the risk.
- ✓ Choose an itinerary with the shortest flight time and direct route to minimize extraneous moving (and potential mishandling) of your dog's crate.
- ✓ Thoroughly condition and desensitize your dog to spending long periods in the crate, and being in the crate when it is transported. Load and unload the crate into your car with your dog in it, and take long drives with him in the crate. If he shows signs of anxiety or discomfort during these trips (panting, whining, barking, pawing or chewing at the gate, trying to escape, etc.), understand that he will be even *more* anxious (if not panic-stricken) in the crate as it is handled by baggage crews – and when unattended in the baggage hold during the flight or flight delays.
- ✓ Buy the strongest, heaviest crate you can buy.
- ✓ Follow (and exceed) all of the airline's rules for fastening and labeling the crate. Experienced shippers drill holes near the crate door and use plastic zip ties to keep the door closed in the event that the spring-loaded latch gets jostled open.

distress can follow. Having all the nails short and sound (not split and snaggy) will help prevent a slightly stressful trip from turning into a *very* stressful one.

■ **DAY OF THE FLIGHT** – It should go without saying that your dog should be wearing an ID tag with your current contact information on it; ideally this includes your current mobile number. It's also best if your dog is microchipped (in case he somehow got his collar or harness off) and that the microchip registration is also up-to-date.

It's usually recommended that you not feed your dog within six hours of a flight; you really don't want him to vomit, urinate, or defecate in the carrier on the plane if you can help it. But whether or

not you heed this recommendation totally depends on how well conditioned your dog is to spending time in the carrier. Dogs who are super comfortable spending even long stretches of time in their carriers aren't likely to vomit or need to eliminate any more than usual. But if your dog is not as well accustomed to the carrier as he should be, is a nervous traveler anyway, can't yet go for very long without needing to eliminate (like most puppies), or suffers from motion sickness in a car, you may want to withhold food and give him just small amounts of water in that time frame before flying.

Note: If you are flying with a very young puppy, or a toy breed puppy of any age, *don't* withhold food before flying; you don't want to add to the risk factors of hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). Hypoglycemic attacks can be brought on by stress, and may result in seizures, listlessness, muscle weakness or staggering, tremors (especially in the face), coma, and even death. The stress of shipping is a common cause of hypoglycemia in puppies, especially those of the toy breeds. Other causes include missing a meal, becoming chilled, and exhaustion (this can happen when people get a new puppy and, thrilled with their new friend, keep instigating play and not letting the puppy rest).

Start your day as early as necessary in order to have enough time to walk your dog far enough (or be outside long enough) so that he eliminates as fully as he ever does! Once you have arrived at the airport, give him a leisurely (not rushed) chance to urinate one more time outside before putting him in his carrier and taking him inside.

■ **ACCEPT NO SUBSTITUTES** – Imagine this for a moment: You have arrived at the airport, dog in carrier and carrier in hand, and were told at the front counter that a mistake had been made and there was no room in the cabin for your dog after all. The airline could, however, put your dog in the cargo area. What would you do?

If this happened to you – *as it has happened to more than one person I know!* – I strongly suggest that you calmly refuse to allow your dog to be put in the cargo area, even if it meant you had to take another flight. If you had a legitimate reservation for your dog to be in the cabin, you should hold the airline to it, or accept their offer of reticketing

(without fee) on another flight *with* an upgrade.

The only possible exception would be if your dog were *completely* comfortable being in a crate, without you, and with travel; you had an appropriately sized “hard” crate already; your dog is a fit, healthy, adult, non-brachycephalic breed; the weather conditions were perfect (neither at *all* hot nor at *all* cold); and the flight wasn't a terribly long one. In my opinion, those are the only conditions under which *any* dog should be shipped via cargo – but honestly, somebody's life would have to be at risk before I would consider letting my dog travel that way.

■ **EN ROUTE** – Check all the zippers and fasteners on your carrier carefully, to make sure they are completely closed, and can't be pawed or nosed open. Some bags have double zippers with tabs that can be clipped together with the snap from your leash to ensure that the bag cannot be unzipped without unsnapping the tabs first.

Consider teaching your dog to lick water from the slightly opened spout of a sports bottle (sort of like a rabbit's water bottle). You can bring an empty bottle through security, and fill it up from a water fountain in the gate area. That way, you can offer your dog an occasional lick of water on the flight if she's panting or seems hot. If you are certain she won't try to escape, you can offer this by unzipping one of the carrier's doors just enough to permit the insertion of the tip of the sports bottle. Or just hold the tip up to the mesh of the bag; if she licks the mesh, she can still get enough water to wet her mouth.

Don't break the rules and allow your dog out of her carrier on the plane; she's far safer, and your fellow travelers will be far more comfortable, with your dog contained. Also, if your dog did vomit or relieve herself in the crate, letting her out will only make matters worse in terms of the mess and odor! Wait until you deplane to try to improve the situation. Ask a flight attendant or the gate attendant (upon deplaning) for the location of the nearest pet relief station and head straight there.

It should be a huge relief to you for both of you to have arrived safely! 🐾

*Nancy Kerns is the editor of WDJ. She is flying with a small dog the week after this article goes to press.*

## ONBOARD CHECKLIST

You should be prepared to meet any of the airline's requirements as well as your dog's needs. Carry the following with you (*with* you, *not* in your checked bags):

- ✓ Anything your dog would ordinarily wear: his harness and leash, and coat and booties (if appropriate).
- ✓ Sports bottle (fill with water once past security)
- ✓ Small collapsible or folding travel bowl
- ✓ Poop bags and a couple of large sealable bags (in case you need to bag wet bedding or smaller bags of poop or vomit)
- ✓ Small bag of tiny, high-value treats
- ✓ A day or two's worth of food (so you can feed your dog in case of a long flight or flight delays)
- ✓ Health certificate (if needed for your flight – and even if it's not required for your flight, it can help smooth the way at times with uninformed or balky airline personnel); vaccination record (regardless, just in case)
- ✓ A color photo of your dog (for identification, if he somehow escapes your custody)

## CARRIERS FOR SMALL DOGS

One of the most interesting discoveries in my research for this article had to do with the ubiquitous phrase, “airline-approved carrier.” Just about every article you read about pet travel encourages you to make sure you buy an “airline-approved” bag for carrying your small dog onboard. And just about every online site that sells small dog carriers claims its products are “airline-approved.” I saw one seller that claims its product “exceeds TSA requirements,” and another that says it sells “FAA-approved carriers.”

The thing is, there is no such thing.

Neither the Transportation Safety Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, Department of Agriculture, nor the Department of Transportation has a certification program – or even a specific set of standards – that a small dog carrier must meet in order to be guaranteed as “approved” for carrying a dog on a flight.

In fact, the International Air Transport Association filed a suit against several manufacturers for labeling products as “airline approved,” causing consumers to buy products that ended up being rejected by airlines as unsuitable.

The only standards agreed upon by all government entities are actually quite general. Most state that carriers need to be big enough for the pet to stand up, turn around, and lie down naturally and comfortably in; small enough to fit under the seat directly in front of you; and leak proof, escape proof, and ventilated. That’s it.

When you drill deep down into each individual airline’s pet policies, you will see that they are fairly upfront in saying that your carrier will be subject to inspection and approval by their personnel. In other words, the only real test that matters is whether the product you buy will be accepted by whichever airline employee you happen to encounter when you arrive at the airport with your carrier and dog. Random!

Just ask anyone you know who has flown with a small dog; odds are that they will tell you that they either missed a flight, or nearly missed a flight, due to a dispute over whether their dog’s carrier was “approved” or not. The education of airline employees regarding pet travel is pretty darn spotty. I called a bunch of airlines to ask about their policies regarding carry-on dogs and the bag dimensions and type that were allowed on their flights. Several representatives told me that as long as the carrier had a tag or label that said it was “approved,” it would be okay. But I’ve spoken to dozens of people who bought what they thought were “approved” carriers, only to be turned away (or forced by a lack of time to buy a different carrier from the airline) because a front-counter airline employee deemed their carrier insufficient.

Plus, as I mentioned on page 19, not only does each airline have its own specifications for the acceptable dimensions for

pet carriers, each airplane flown by the airlines may have different specifications. Flight attendants aggressively enforce rules about stowing bags completely under the seat in front of you; for your safety and that of your fellow passengers, it’s critical that your carry-on bag not stick out into the aisle.

One pet carrier company has tried to eliminate the uncertainty of carrier acceptability by partnering with airlines to design and sell carriers that meet each airline’s specifications. Sherpa, a division of the Quaker Pet Group, has developed a “Guaranteed On Board” program. Participants go to the program website ([flygob.com](http://flygob.com)) and click on the airline on which they hope to travel with their dogs; currently, a number of major carriers are participants. The instructions indicate that if you buy one of the Sherpa carriers listed for the participating program, fill out a form that confirms that carrier’s inclusion in the “Guaranteed On Board” program, present the form and the appropriate bag to the appropriate airline, and you are denied boarding from the aircraft specified with the “Guaranteed On Board” bag, you can receive a reimbursement for the cost of your airline flight and your pet airline travel fee. There are a number of reasonable caveats; for example, the offer is void if the bag is damaged or in poor condition, your pet is viewed as a safety threat, or the information on the form presented to the airline agent is not accurate (you have a different sized bag or pet than what you have indicated on the form).

One could view the Guaranteed On Board program and its forms as either reassurance for a recalcitrant airline employee – or a sign that sometimes, even a bag so designated and adorned with airline logos may be declined by airline personnel. Is your bag half full or half empty?

If you are not a fan of the Sherpa bags, don’t despair; there are many other pet carriers that are equally (if not more) secure and comfortable for your pet, and that could meet the maximum size specifications of your flight. Just be sure to check their measurements against the maximum dimensions provided by the airline for the aircraft you plan to take.

One final warning: Don’t buy a carrier at the last minute. You need enough time to both acclimate your dog to going in and out of it calmly and confidently, and to use it long enough to ensure that it’s of high enough quality to safely and securely contain your dog.



**The Sleepypod Air – A small dog carrier we could drool over. Expensive (\$160!) but extremely well-made and full of thoughtful features. Sleepypod, (626) 421-6818; [sleepypod.com](http://sleepypod.com)**



 RESOURCES 

#### BOOKS AND DVDS

- ❖ Nancy Kay, DVM, DACVIM, is the author of *Speaking for Spot: Be the Advocate Your Dog Needs to Live a Happy, Healthy, Longer Life*, and *Your Dog's Best Health: A Dozen Reasonable Things to Expect From Your Vet*. More of her writing can be enjoyed at [speakingforspot.com/blog](http://speakingforspot.com/blog). Dr. Kay's books are available from [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com) and [wholedogjournal.com](http://wholedogjournal.com)
- ❖ 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*. Available from [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com) and [wholedogjournal.com](http://wholedogjournal.com)
- ❖ Linda P. Case, MS, is author of *The Dog: Its Behavior, Nutrition, and Health; Canine and Feline Nutrition; Canine and Feline Behavior: A Complete Guide to Understanding Our Two Best Friends*, and the very recently published *Dog Food Logic: Making Smart Decisions for Your Dog in an Age of Too Many Choices*. Her blog can be read at [thesciencedog.wordpress.com](http://thesciencedog.wordpress.com). You can find all of her books at Dogwise, (800) 776-2665; [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com)

#### HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

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

#### TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

- ❖ **Linda P. Case, MS**, AutumnGold Consulting and Dog Training Center, Mahomet, IL. Linda is an adjunct assistant professor at the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine, where she teaches companion animal behavior and training. She is certified with the National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors (NADOI) and the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (IAABC). Linda is also a companion animal consultant and uses positive reinforcement and shaping techniques to modify behavior in dogs in basic level through advanced classes. Her blog can be read at [thesciencedog.wordpress.com](http://thesciencedog.wordpress.com). (217) 586-4864; [autumngoldconsulting.com](http://autumngoldconsulting.com)
- ❖ **Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA**, Peaceable Paws Dog and Puppy Training, Fairplay, MD. Group and private training, rally, behavior modification, workshops, intern and apprentice programs. Trainers can become "Pat Miller Certified Trainers" (PMCT) by successfully completing Pat's Level 1 (Basic Dog Training and Behavior) and both Level 2 Academies (Behavior Modification and Instructors Course). (301) 582-9420; [peaceablepaws.com](http://peaceablepaws.com)
- ❖ **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](http://pawsitivefit.com)

## WHAT'S AHEAD ...

### ❖ TITER TESTS

*What you need to know about your dog's vaccines.*

### ❖ WHAT A "RESCUE DOG" CAN DO

*Highlighting the accomplishments of former shelter and rescued dogs.*

### ❖ TRY DRIED

*Dehydrated and freeze-dried diets reviewed.*

### ❖ RELUCTANT?

*Five things to do when your dog won't come to you.*

### ❖ TIME TO RUN SOME TESTS

*Ruling out medical causes for abnormal behavior.*

