

The Whole Dog Journal™



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Must Love Dogs

I do love dogs! But that's not the only reason I do what I do.

BY NANCY KERNS

This happens all the time: People ask me what I do, and I answer, "I edit a dog magazine." About 70 percent of the time, their next comment is, "Wow! You must really love dogs!" And the remaining 30 percent of the time, they ask, "So how many dogs do you have?" As if the only person who would be the editor of a dog magazine would also be obsessed to distraction about dogs and/or have 10 of them!

I actually got this job because I have a degree in journalism and experience in editing other animal-related magazines. Before WDJ, I edited three different horse magazines in an eight-year period. Each time I went job hunting, I was looking for an editing job on a human-oriented magazine – and each time, up popped an offer of a job on the staff of a horse magazine. It so happens that I grew up riding horses, and competed in hunter/jumper events well into college, and later, I was exposed to endurance riding and bought my first Arabian, so I knew the equine vernacular. But I was in the same spot when people used to comment, "You must really love horses!" and ask, "How many do you have?" I often felt I had to explain, "I'm *not* a horse nut! I'm a journalist! I just happen to work for a horse magazine!"

But the undeniable fact is, I *do* love dogs, and I'm absolutely fascinated by all kinds of animal behavior and all things related to education and learning theory – which, when it comes to animals, we call "training." I'm also interested in health, fitness, medicine (conventional, complementary, and alternative), and nutrition. So, even though I don't identify as a dog *fanatic* and I don't have eight dogs, I find so many connections between my work and my home life that it makes editing WDJ a dream job.

What do I mean by "connections"? Well, for instance, this morning I had an appointment with a new dentist; my old dentist retired and turned his practice over to a younger doctor. One of the new technologies employed by the new doctor appeared as some sort of weird light that he shined around

my mouth. When I asked for an explanation, he said the device is a Velscope, and it possesses filters that make oral cancer cells visible – even cancer cells that are developing several layers of tissue beneath the surface. Honest to goodness, my first response was *not*, "Good to know that I don't have oral cancer!" My immediate thought was, "Wow! I wonder if this could be used for dogs!" You see, oral cancer is hard to detect in dogs until it is fairly advanced – so, naturally, I'm looking into whether veterinary applications for the Velscope have been explored.

And those who know me are familiar with my propensity for explaining human behavior in animal-behavior terms. I can't help but explain to my daughter-in-law why she needs to make sure my two-year-old grandson doesn't get "reinforced" for whining (with either the toy or treat he wants, or her continued attention in the form of repeated explanations as to why he can't have what he wants right then) – and warning her to be on the lookout for an "extinction burst" of louder and more persistent whining as she endeavors to stop responding to the "demand behavior." I hope she doesn't take offense at her darling son being compared to a dog who is begging at the dinner table; the solution for both obnoxious behaviors is essentially the same – although no crates are involved in toddler training.

So, anyway, when the receptionist at my new dentist's office asked, "What do you do?" and I responded that I edit a dog magazine, and she said, "Oh, you must love dogs! How many do you have?" I just smiled and said, "Two!"

No Go?

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

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

It's frustrating at best, dangerous at worst, when you can't get your dog to come to you. Indoors, he may be suspicious that you're going to do something aversive, such as treat his ear infection, or put him in his crate. Outdoors, he may also have an aversive association with coming to you, or he may just be having entirely too much fun. Whatever the cause, here are five tips for handling the crisis:

1 STOP CALLING HIM. Seriously. If he's already not coming, calling him again isn't going to miraculously make it happen. In fact, you're likely to make your tone more commanding or angry, which is even less likely to make him come. So stop calling him and do something else.

2 CUE A DIFFERENT BEHAVIOR. Does he love to target? Give him your touch cue and offer your hand as the target. It just so happens he has to come to you to touch your hand! Is his favorite cue "Find it"? Toss treats at your feet and give him the cue. There he is, gobbling them up right at your feet. Do his eyes light up when you ask him to weave? Ask him to start weaving – lo and behold, he's right under you! Does he drop like

a rock on his "Down" cue? Cue him to down and stay – and then walk up to him with a happy smile and lots of treats. Is a car ride his idea of heaven? Open the car door and ask him if he wants to go for a ride. Got him! And, yes, now you have to take him for a ride or he might not come the next time you use this ploy.

3 INVITE HIM TO PLAY. Grab your tennis ball collection and ask him to start fetching. Pull out his favorite toy and offer to tug with him. Start swinging his flirt pole. Squeak a squeaky toy. Roll around on the ground. Blow bubbles. Show him his favorite puzzle toy and invite him to play with it. If you have more than one dog, play with your other dog to spark his interest. Whatever games he

normally loves to engage in with you, start playing!

4 RUN THE OTHER WAY. Dogs love to chase things that move. Try running in the opposite direction instead of chasing after him. Yell "Hey, hey, hey!" or blow a loud whistle to get his attention and when he glances in your direction, run as fast as you can away from him. This works especially well if you incorporated "run away" in your training to get an enthusiastic recall.

5 USE AN EMERGENCY RECALL CUE. You may already have one of these and not know it. Your emergency cue is a word that has a 100 percent positive association for your dog. Perhaps it's "Cookies!" or "Dinner!" Stop and think; is there a word you have used with your dog that always means something wonderful? If so, you can use that word carefully as an emergency recall cue.

A caveat: If you use your emergency word and then do something aversive to your dog, you'll "poison" it and lose the power of that word, too. If you haven't created one accidentally already, you can train an emergency recall cue by associating your new chosen word (or a very loud whistle) with spectacular treats and play. Just remember to always follow it with fantastically positive stuff.

And, finally, I don't think I have to say this to WDJ readers, but here I go anyway: Don't ever punish your dog when he finally comes to you, no matter how aggravated you are. Put on your best happy face, tell him how wonderful he is, and give him all kinds of positive reinforcement. If you are angry with him when you finally get your hands on him, it will only be that much harder to get him to come to you the next time. 🐾

Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, is WDJ's Training Editor. Pat is also the author of many books on positive training. See page 24 for more information about her dog-training classes, books, and courses for trainers.

Trainer Sarah Richardson, of The Canine Connection in Chico, CA, uses a toy and unpredictable running action to engage Charlie and keep his recall practice fun.



“Drowning” on Land

Excessive water intake can lead to an uncommon but deadly condition.

BY DENISE FLAIM

Listen to Susan Paulsen’s story, and you’ll never look the same way again at your dog diving into your swimming pool or a glistening lake, or biting playfully at jets of water from your lawn sprinklers or garden hose.

Earlier this year, Susan was poolside at her home in Morgan Hill, California, tossing a ball for her water-loving Papillon, Kinetic. The 3½-year-old dog was a top-ranked agility competitor, with whom Susan planned to compete at elite agility events around the globe this year. Susan routinely cross-trained the little dog in the pool to build her muscle strength. Kinetic had just learned how to leap straight into the pool, and absolutely loved diving into the big blue expanse for her toy.

Susan was always careful to prevent Kinetic from overexertion; the dog’s name reflected her exuberant attitude about everything she did. So after the usual 20 minutes, Susan called a timeout for Kinetic to rest.

A half-hour later, Susan found her dog motionless on the couch. Kinetic was so lethargic and weak that her head bobbed and she urinated uncontrollably when Susan picked her up. In the car on the way to the emergency vet, things got worse: Kinetic started to foam at the mouth, her lips turned blue, and she passed out, lapsing into a coma from which she would never awaken. As the veterinarian did bloodwork, noting that her sodium-potassium levels were off, Kinetic slipped even further away. Her brain started to swell, and her organs began to fail. At 2 am, the veterinarians took Kinetic off the respirator.

In the space of six hours, Kinetic had gone from being an active, vibrant, butterfly-eared blur to a memory.

“She was fine,” Susan says, still in dis-



Water intoxication can affect any dog who drinks too much too fast, but small dogs, dogs with little body fat, and high-drive athletes are at a higher risk. Agility star Kinetic was all three, and she succumbed to the condition.

belief. “We didn’t do anything excessive, and she wasn’t exhausted. I had no clue that this could happen.”

The culprit was water intoxication, a relatively rare but frequently lethal condition that results from the body taking in more water than it can handle. When this happens, sodium levels outside the cells are depleted, a condition called hyponatremia. In an effort to rebalance itself, the body responds to the low blood sodium by increasing fluid intake inside the cells. Some organs, such as the liver, have room to accommodate the size of their swelling cells, but others – in

particular the brain, which is encased in unyielding bone – cannot.

Signs of water intoxication include lethargy, bloating, vomiting, loss of coordination (stumbling, falling, staggering), restlessness, increased salivation, pale gums, dilated pupils, and glazed eyes. As the pressure in the brain increases and its cells begin to die off, the dog may have difficulty breathing, develop seizures, and lose consciousness.

FREQUENTLY MISDIAGNOSED

“I think water intoxication is much more common than we think, and it’s often misdiagnosed,” says veterinarian Janet Dunn of Hollister, California, who owns some of Kinetic’s siblings and has made it her mission to find out just how much – or how little – veterinarians know about the syndrome that took Kinetic’s life.

Kinetic presented symptoms that were absolutely “classic” for cases of water intoxication, Dr. Dunn says, and yet, some of the first guesses at the veterinary emergency clinic about what was wrong with Kinetic included head trauma, hypothermia, and overexertion.

“I think the number-one problem is that many vets don’t know that water intoxication exists,” Dr. Dunn continues, adding that a dearth of published literature on the condition is partly to blame: One of the only scholarly works she found about it was published in 1925.

When a curious veterinarian asked about water intoxication on the Veterinary Information Network (VIN, an online community for veterinary professionals), Dr. Dunn noted that even internal-medicine specialists seemed perplexed at how a water-logged canine body can turn on itself. “One wrote and said, ‘I’d have guessed that as long as the kidneys are working, excess water should not be a problem.’”

Lower-than-normal sodium levels are a telltale sign of water intoxication, but they can also be misinterpreted, Dr. Dunn notes. “It’s not only how low the sodium falls, but it’s how quickly it falls.” By the time a dog gets into a vet’s office, the intake of water has stopped and blood-sodium levels may be starting to normalize. But the cellular damage has already been done.

In medicine, the saying goes that 75

percent of diagnosis is history, Dr. Dunn says. But with water intoxication, “I think it’s 95 percent. If a dog has neurological signs, anywhere from wobbling to seizures, and if the owner knows enough to say, ‘My dog was playing with the hose or was jumping in the pool,’” then water intoxication should be considered.

In theory, water intoxication can happen to any dog who ingests too much water, too fast. The condition advances more quickly in small dogs, simply because their bodies may be more easily overwhelmed by the excess fluid. But Border Collies and other high-drive dogs – including Jack Russell Terriers and Papillons like Kinetic – seem more likely to develop it than other breeds.

In July 2012, Megan Miller of Folsom, California, lost Kai, her 2½-year-old Border Collie, to water intoxication: It happened after a 45-minute fetching session in a lake they visited almost every day during summer. Because a friend had a Papillon who survived water intoxication several years before, Megan suspected what was wrong, but even prompt veterinary intervention and an accurate diagnosis couldn’t save Kai: She was simply too far gone.

“I think in the agility community we’ve got more dogs who are more prone to water intoxication because our dogs don’t have much fat on them – there’s not much extra tissue to take on that extra fluid,” Megan says. “And even if they’ve swallowed a bunch of water and feel sick, they’ll still work.”

YOU MAY HAVE HEARD OF WATER TOXICITY (IN HUMANS)

Dogs aren’t the only ones who can get ill or die from imbibing too much water: Human endurance athletes can also develop “exercise associated hyponatremia” (EAH), when their bodies expel sodium through perspiration and, super thirsty, they guzzle down too much water or sports drinks too quickly.

In perhaps the most high-profile case of water intoxication in people, suburban Sacramento mother of three Jennifer Strange died in 2007 after competing in a radio contest called “Hold Your Wee for a Wii.” In a bid to win the gaming console, the 28-year-old drank almost two gallons of water in little more than three hours. She died in her bathroom just hours after winning second place and a pair of concert tickets. A wrongful-death lawsuit was filed against the station, and a jury awarded Strange’s widower and three children \$16.5 million.

HIGH DRIVE, HIGH RISK

Dr. Dunn agrees that super-focused, high-energy dogs may be at greater risk, simply because of their personalities. “We breed high-drive dogs for agility, and these dogs are obsessive about doing what they do,” she says. “It can be any breed of dog, but it’s usually the driven dog who wants to jump in a lake for a toy, or the obsessive-compulsive dog who just bites water over and over again.”

Water-centric sports such as dock diving might seem to pose a higher risk of water intoxication, but dog trainer Sally Saxton, KPA CTP, CTDI, of Performance Pups in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, says she hasn’t seen any cases at the freshwater lake where her dock-diving students have

their lessons. Even so, she says, “I share the message of what to look for and how to combat it” – including taking breaks from swimming and using a flat toy for water retrievals so the dog’s mouth doesn’t gape open.

Perhaps another reason for the low incidence that Saxton sees is that in dock diving, dogs catch their toys in mid-air, and have their mouths closed around them by the time they hit the water. Also, their time in the water is limited, and they have plenty of opportunity between runs to rid their bodies of any extra fluid.

Dogs bred for water work or retrieving, such as Labrador Retrievers, Newfoundlands, and Chesapeake Bay Retrievers (to name a few), don’t usually come up in anecdotal discussions of water intoxication on the Internet. This may be because for generations these dogs have been bred to move through the water with their mouths tightly closed, creating as little surface disturbance on the water as possible in order to best do their work.

TREATMENT AND PREVENTION

Dr. Dunn notes that mild cases of water intoxication may simply resolve themselves without the owner noticing. “The dog might come out of the water staggering, and then become undiluted by producing urine,” which helps



Kai, another lean, high-drive agility dog and victim of water intoxication after a routine play session at a local lake.

remove extra fluid before the body is overwhelmed.

Because water intoxication involves a lack of sodium, carefully replenishing that important mineral is crucial. Treatment includes administration of *moderate* levels of electrolytes (super-concentrated sodium can cause severe neurological problems in its own right), drugs such as Mannitol (to decrease intracranial pressure), and diuretics such as Lasix (to help speed the removal of fluid).

“Really severe cases probably won’t survive because their brain stem dies, which controls respiration,” Dr. Dunn says. “When they get that bad, there’s too much permanent damage.”

Owners of dogs who have survived water intoxication sometimes report varying degrees of brain damage as well.

Megan’s new Border Collie, Reckon, swims just like Kai did. “She holds her head very low in the water, and she’s definitely a candidate” for water intoxication, Megan says.

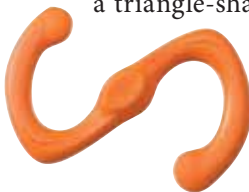
“We still go to the lake, and we still play, and my dogs now are still addicted to swimming,” she continues. “But I won’t throw a toy more than five times, and then I give them a 5- or 10-minute break.”

SALTY DOGS

The opposite of water intoxication is salt-water toxicity, in which a dog ingests large amounts of water with a high saline content. The initial symptoms of hypernatremia, or salt poisoning, include vomiting and diarrhea, which can then progress into neurological symptoms such as lack of coordination and seizures as fluid is drawn out of the brain and severe dehydration begins. As with water intoxication, careful administration of IV fluids to help restore electrolyte balance is required. As a precaution at the beach or seaside, offer your dog fresh water, and give her frequent and shady rest breaks.



Megan no longer throws tennis balls (“The dogs’ mouths are so wide open, I can see water go in”), instead preferring flat toys like West Paw Design’s Būmi, an S-shaped floatie that also works for games of tug; and Chuckit’s Heliflight, a triangle-shaped flexible flyer.



The latter gets in the dogs’ line of vision when they are retrieving it in the water, she

adds, “so they feel like they have to hold their head up to see.”

Dr. Dunn stresses that the best way to deal with water intoxication is to not let it happen in the first place.

“Just pay attention,” she warns. “I promise you, it is out there.” 🐾

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.

PREVENTING WATER INTOXICATION

With its rapid onset and dismal prognosis, water intoxication is certainly something to be concerned about anytime your dog gets near the wet stuff. But it shouldn’t mean that you swear your dog off any contact with water. Just take adequate precautions, including:

✓ **CHOOSE FLAT RATHER THAN ROUND OBJECTS TO RETRIEVE.** It makes sense: A dog who is retrieving a round object like a tennis ball has to keep his mouth open wider than a dog who has closed his mouth around a flatter object.

✓ **KNOW YOUR DOG.** Being aware of how your individual dog interacts with water is key. Some dogs are very careful

swimmers, keeping their noses pointed toward the sky and their mouths clamped shut. But others are more enthusiastic. Does yours like to splash in the pool, or bite at the stream of water from the hose or sprinkler? Then she’s likely at greater risk than another dog who is more reserved.

✓ **DISCOURAGE DIVING FOR TOYS.** The key to avoiding water intoxication is curtailing any activity that can lead to water intake. Biting the water from a hose is also a no-no: Because that water exits under such high pressure, and it’s so fun (read, rewarding) your dog could ingest far more than is good for him.

✓ **TAKE FREQUENT BREAKS.** Regular time-outs on terra firma not only interrupt any ingestion of water, but also give a dog the opportunity to rid her body of extra fluids by urinating. Also, tired dogs tend to swim lower in the water, and may inadvertently take on more water than their better-rested counterparts.



Find Focus

How to help your dog learn to control his impulses, even in the face of excitement.

BY MARDI RICHMOND, MA, CPDT-KA

We've all seen dogs who *exude* impulse control – the ones who are calm in the face of excitement, and patient when it comes to getting what they want. Of course, we've all seen those dogs who are lacking impulse control, too – dogs who can't seem to handle excitement and become overexcited, pushy, or reactive. Sometimes that lack of impulse control results in problem behaviors such as chasing cars, barking for balls, and jumping to say hi. Can dogs who are lacking impulse control learn this important life skill? Absolutely!

I recently had the pleasure of watching an Aussie-mix pup learn about impulse control from another pup. The 14-week-old Aussie started out pouncing and biting a little too hard for his Spaniel-mix playmate. The Spaniel started calmly stopping the play each time the Aussie went over the top, and inviting play when the Aussie calmed down. With each repeated stop and start, the Aussie began to pay attention to his body, his enthusiasm, and his teeth! He began approaching more slowly, pouncing more softly, and keeping his mouth open rather than clamping down. This lovely young Aussie learned about impulse control through a totally fun play session. (And the Spaniel obviously enjoyed the interaction, too!)

These pups clearly demonstrated that the key to learning impulse control is through experiences and actions . . . and the consequences those actions bring. They also showed that impulse control can be learned quickly when the consequences involve *fun*.

All types of consequences (both positive experiences, such as invitations to play, and negative experiences, such as the

play ending) influence the development of impulse control. Fortunately, most dogs can learn this important skill from us as well as through their interactions with other dogs. A very effective way to help your dog learn impulse control is through a variety of enjoyable games and interactions.

RELAXING IS REWARDING

Many dogs who have trouble with impulse control really don't understand

that being calm is an option. For these puppies and dogs, learning that they can settle and that calm behavior is rewarding is the first step. Here are two activities you can incorporate into your daily life to help your dog learn that a calm, relaxed state is always a good option.

First, simply catch your dog in the act of being relaxed, for example, when she has settled on her bed or is sunning on the patio. When you see your dog settled, approach calmly with quiet praise or a gentle touch, and then drop a treat right near her paws or nose.

The first few times you do this, your dog may get up and follow you around to see if more treats might be forthcoming. If she does, simply go back to what you were doing without giving her more attention. After a few repetitions, your dog will learn to settle right back in after being rewarded.

A second activity is to reward your dog for relaxing at your feet. Start with your dog on a short leash so he can't wander off or engage in another activity. Go to a nice quiet place. Stand or sit and wait for your dog to lie down. Please don't cue your dog or otherwise encourage him to lie down. You may have to wait a long time – longer than you'd like to! – but just keep waiting. (This game is also a good way for *people* to practice impulse control; it really is best to wait for the dog to *offer* the behavior!)



“Hell-o! Sitting nicely here!” People often fail to notice it when their usually active pups finally calm down, so the behavior never gets rewarded or reinforced.



Does your dog jump, bounce, or bark to demand that his toy is thrown NOW? Just wait; hold the toy behind you if need be.



If he offers a sit or down, mark the desired behavior with the click of a clicker or a verbal marker, such as “Yes!” ...



... and then immediately reward him with throwing the toy, or initiating a game of tug, whichever he likes best.

When your dog offers the down, *calmly* say, “Good dog” and drop a treat between his front legs. You can offer additional treats to help your dog stay relaxed and settled.

TIPS: Don’t use a clicker or other reward marker for this exercise, as this may encourage excitement instead of calm. If your dog is staring at you, do not treat. Wait until he is no longer thinking about the food before you drop another treat at his feet.

WAITING IS WORTH IT

Sit and wait is one of the most common impulse-control exercises because it works! Impulse control is in action as the dog learns to hold the sit or stay seated while you move away. Impulse control can be reinforced by generously rewarding when your dog stays sitting, even in the face of increasing distractions.

To make sit and wait fun, try adding “sit for everything” into your daily life. More specifically, ask your dog to sit before he gets *anything* he finds fun and valuable: Sit before walks. Sit to start tug, fetch, and chase games. Sit for treats and dinner. Sit before snapping off the leash for a romp in the woods. Whatever your dog gets excited about, have him sit and wait before doing it. Your dog will soon associate sitting and being patient with the opportunity to have fun and engage in enjoyable activities.

TIPS: At first, simply request a brief sit from your dog before releasing him for fun or food. What if your dog doesn’t sit when you ask? Put more distance between your dog and the source of the excitement and try again. *Gradually* work closer to the excitement and extend the time your dog sits. Be sure to reward your dog when he starts to anticipate the

sit and offers it without your asking. This is impulse control at work!

GET HIGH AND SETTLE

An important skill for impulse control is the ability to settle in the face of excitement. My favorite game for helping dogs learn to quickly calm down when they are super “high” is a tug/down/tug game. To play this game, your dog will need to understand a “Drop it” cue, a “Down” cue, and a release such as “Okay” or “Free.”

When you first play this game, do so at an intensity level that is low enough to keep your dog calm. Initiate a game of tug with whatever cue you use, such as “Tug!” or “Get it!” After just a few seconds, use your cue for asking your dog to drop the toy. When he drops it, immediately say “Okay” or use your release cue, and then start the game again. Repeat this first step a couple of times until your dog gets the idea that dropping the toy is what keeps the game going.

Next, begin the game of tug, ask for him to “Drop it,” and then cue your dog to “Down.” As *soon* as your dog hits the ground, give your release cue and start the tug game again with “Tug” or “Get it!” After a few repetitions of this, ask your dog to drop the toy and then wait for your dog to *offer* a down. Your dog may experiment or try something else – keep waiting. When your dog finally tries the down, immediately release him and initiate another great game of tug!

When your dog quickly offers the down, you can start to extend the time he stays down before you release him. At first you might just wait two or three seconds, but gradually wait to release him until he shows some sign of calming. For example, I look for my dog’s excitement

to drop a notch as evidenced by a change in her breathing or eyes softening, and then I resume the tug game.

Over time, you can increase the intensity of the game so that your dog learns to listen, play, stop, and settle even in the face of increasing excitement.

TIPS: If your dog gets overexcited in this game, play a very calm version of it with just a moment or two of tug. If your dog does not like to tug, try another similar “get excited and settle” game such as running around together with a stop and settle. Or, play with a flirt pole (a toy on the end of a rope, which is fastened to a pole) to get your dog running, and then incorporate the stop and settle.

LEAVE IT ALONE

Leave it (sometimes called “Off”) is a very powerful impulse-control exercise. It involves having the dog turn away from something that he is interested in and make eye contact with you instead. My favorite way to jump-start this behavior is through a “Doggy Zen” exercise. (Doggy Zen: In order to have the treat, you must leave the treat.)

Have a handful of super-exciting treats and one rather boring treat available. Put the boring treat in one hand and the good treats in a pouch or container behind your back. Present the boring treat to your dog in a closed fist (so she can smell it, but can’t get to it). Allow your dog lick and sniff your hand, and try to get to the treat.

The *moment* your dog backs away from your treat/hand a *tiny* bit, mark the moment with the “click!” of a clicker or with a verbal marker such as the word “Yes!” and give your dog one of the super-good treats *from your other hand*. Be very patient; the first try or two can take

several minutes before a dog gives up and backs away.

Once your dog understands the game and quickly backs away from the treat in your fist, change it up a little by switching which hand is holding the boring treat. Again, reward with the yummy treat from your other hand.

Once your dog easily backs away from a boring treat in either hand, pause a moment after your dog backs away from the treat (without immediately marking or rewarding the behavior). Watch your dog carefully; almost always, after a few moments of not getting the expected reward, dogs will look at your face for information, trying to figure out why they haven't been rewarded yet. The moment he offers that eye contact, click (or "Yes!") and reward him.

When your dog easily backs off a treat and subsequently makes eye contact with you each time, add a verbal cue such as "Leave it." Present the treat first, and when your dog takes notice, say "Leave it," and click/"Yes!" and reward when your dog makes eye contact.

TIPS: Be patient when waiting for your dog to back off from your fist; let your dog figure out what finally earns him the reward. To take this game to the next level, you can advance from holding the treat in a closed fist to an open hand, to putting the treat on the floor, or using a toy instead of a treat. By *gradually* increasing the difficulty of the "Leave it" task and rewarding your dog generously, he will learn that leaving something

alone is more exciting and interesting than going for it!

TRICKS FOR TOSSES

Most dogs love to chase, run, and play. As with the "sit for everything" exercise described earlier, you can ask your dog to do another behavior before you start any active play-and-chase games.

With this game, instead of having your dog sit and wait, ask your dog to do an *active* behavior – something that makes your dog move – before you toss a toy or release him to run with his pals. Some behaviors to ask your dog for include hand-targeting, spins, leg weaves, fall in to heel or go behind to heel, or coming to you from a short distance. By asking your dog to do something active, he will learn to pay better attention to you when his arousal level is still high. This helps your dog learn to "listen" to you even when he wants to chase, run, or play – a real challenge for some dogs.

TIPS: Make it easy for your dog at first and ask for a behavior he knows very well. Some dogs will love this game from the start and consider the tricks all part of the fun; others may become frustrated by having to do something to make the ball fly. To keep your dog's spirits and interest in the game high, try asking for just one trick and reward with several tosses.

BE REWARDING!

Building impulse control can take time and energy, but it can also be a totally fun way to spend time with your dog. Rather

than making it all about self-containment, make sure your dog understands that calm and focused behavior is the way to keep fun happening, and a great way to keep rewards of all types flowing.

Because impulse control is challenging for some dogs, it's important to make sure all of your impulse-control games and activities are offset with plenty of activities where your dog can let loose and have some uninhibited fun. In fact, to keep a dog enthusiastic about offering impulse control, balance every minute or two of impulse-control activities with several more minutes of fun.

For example, if you are playing the tug/down/tug game, every minute or so, take a quick break and simply toss the toy and let your dog have it, run around, and be goofy. The formula I use with my dog is that for every minute of impulse-control games, I incorporate five minutes or more of active, expressive activity.

Building impulse control can take time. Some dogs pick up the skills quickly, but some need a little more assistance. Just as the Aussie and Spaniel pups showed, experimentation, consequences, and having fun are the keys to successful impulse-control training. 🐾

Author/trainer Mardi Richmond, MA, CPDT-KA, lives and works in Santa Cruz, California. She shares her home with a wonderful partner and a joyful Cattle Dog-mix. Mardi is the owner of Good Dog Santa Cruz, where through classes and private training she helps dogs learn impulse control and other things.



This is also a great time to ask your dog to perform any "active" tricks he knows, such as targeting to your hand with his nose or paw ("Touch!"), spins, leg-weaves, and so on.



Keep the sessions short; *gradually* increase the duration of the period of calm that you require before releasing him for fun. Asking for too much too soon may bore and discourage him.



The use of vaccine titer tests can help you decide whether or not your puppy is completely protected from disease after her “puppy shots,” or if your adult dog really needs any more core vaccines.

titer test. Positive test results can also give a dog owner some solid ammunition for countering those who blindly promote (or require, in the case of some boarding or training facilities) so-called “current” vaccinations, which can mean many different things to different people.

CORE VACCINES

The closest thing that there is to a universal list of recommendations for canine vaccinations in North America is produced by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA). The veterinary medical experts who have contributed to the AAHA’s recommendations agree that there are a handful of infectious diseases that pose a threat to *all* dogs and that *all* dogs should receive vaccinations for those diseases; these are commonly referred to as the “core” vaccines.

Core vaccines include:

- Canine distemper virus (CDV, commonly referred to as **distemper**)
- Canine parvovirus (CPV, **parvo**)
- Canine adenovirus (CAV, better known as **canine hepatitis**)
- **Rabies**

Among healthy dogs, the first three “core” vaccines are expected to induce a protective immune response lasting at *least* five years. However, much longer protection from these vaccines has been demonstrated in dogs in many studies – sometimes, even as long as the dogs’ lifetime.

Rabies is a slightly different case. Because the disease poses a significant risk to human beings, it’s the *only* vaccine that is *required by law* to be administered to dogs. Each state has its own legal requirements for rabies vaccination. Some require annual rabies vaccinations; the rest require the vaccination be given every two or three years (depending on the state). There is ample evidence that rabies vaccines confer protection from

Vaccine Titer Tests

These blood tests are the best way to determine whether your puppy or dog is protected against common infectious diseases.

BY NANCY KERNS

It’s always been interesting to me that few people know why young puppies have to be vaccinated several times, a few weeks apart – and yet, few question the practice. There’s a term for it: *puppy shots!* The concept is widely accepted – and rarely explained. In my experience, when people ask why a puppy needs repeated vaccinations, they are told something vague and inaccurate, such as, “It takes a few shots to build the puppy’s immunity.”

It’s a similar situation with annual or semi-annual so-called vaccine “boosters” – not many people know much about their dogs’ vaccination status, so they take their veterinarians’ word that their dogs are “due” for more vaccinations.

The truth is, there is no single vaccination protocol that will protect all dogs for all things, without over-vaccinating most of them. Vaccination

really ought to be determined on a case-by-case basis, because each dog’s risk factors are unique, based on his age, genetic inheritance, current health, geographic location, and lifestyle.

That said, there is a very useful tool that can help an owner gain solid information about whether her dog is likely to be protected against the most common infectious diseases: the vaccine

rabies for longer than three years, but given the public health risk to humans, there is considerable pushback from public health officials to the idea of extending the legal requirement for rabies vaccines.

NONCORE VACCINES

There are also a number of vaccines for infectious diseases that can pose a risk to *some* dogs, depending on individual risk factors and geographic location. These are called the “**noncore**” vaccines, and they include:

- Bordetella bronchiseptica (Bb, **kennel cough**)
- Borrelia burgdorferi (**Lyme disease**)
- Canine **coronavirus**
- Canine parainfluenza virus (CPiV, **parainfluenza**)
- Leptospira spp. (**leptospirosis**)
- **Measles virus**

Most of these vaccines are useful in certain circumstances, but the evidence falls short of proving that they are helpful to all dogs everywhere. Further, there is proof that some of the noncore vaccines can be harmful to certain dogs. For these reasons, the AAHA recommends that the administration of these vaccines should be decided on an individual basis by a veterinarian familiar with the puppy or dog and the local risks.

As just one example, Lyme disease is prevalent in some parts of the country, and quite rare in others, and it is transmitted by tick bites. Also, some dogs can suffer serious side effects from the vaccine. So if a dog lives in a part of the country where Lyme is not common, and/or if you have a dog who has very little exposure to environments where ticks are likely, the risks of vaccinating that dog for Lyme outweigh the potential benefit.

A TEST OF PROTECTION

Let's go back to the diseases that every dog should be protected from; these are the ones that are most likely to appear on the reminder postcards sent out by your veterinarian – and the ones that you will experience the most pressure (from your veterinarian's staff) to repeat in order to keep “current.” Depending

on your vet, “current” may be defined as annually, every three years, every five years, or longer. As little as 20 years ago, it was widely thought that annual vaccinations “couldn't hurt, and might help,” and most veterinary practitioners recommended that their clients vaccinate every dog annually. But today, we understand that canine vaccines don't “wear off” or “become due” in any standard amount of time. Also, it's better understood today that randomly stimulating the immune system can have negative consequences that we don't fully understand, so we should be more discriminating about vaccinations.

Let's put a fine point on it: The *core vaccines* are an important and life-saving component of responsible dog care when administered properly – neither too frequently nor inadequately. Which brings us back to the original question: How do you know when your dog is protected – or unprotected – against the core diseases?

The best tool at our disposal today is something called a vaccine titer test, and in our opinion, every dog should be tested at least once, and again every three years or so.

When we vaccinate a dog, we administer disease antigens (in a weakened, modified, or killed form that can't cause disease) in order to stimulate the dog's immune system to produce antibodies, molecules that are produced to recognize and neutralize that specific antigen, should they ever cross paths. A vaccine titer test checks for and quantifies the amount of antibodies to specific diseases that a dog has circulating in his blood.

The technology exists to detect any specific antibody for which we may have vaccinated a dog; we can test whether a dog possesses circulating antibodies for any disease. But as it turns out, that's not necessary.

There are two types of antibodies that are highly predictive of the competence of a dog's overall immune response to vaccines: distemper and parvo. If a dog has been vaccinated against distemper and parvo, and develops antibodies to these diseases, the odds are *very good* that he has developed antibodies for any other core disease for which he has been vaccinated.

In other words, a positive vaccine titer test for parvo and distemper can put your mind at ease – and should put your veterinarian's mind at ease – that your

dog is adequately immunized against the core disease vaccinations he has received.

The AAHA – and vaccine-savvy veterinarians – recommend that puppies receive a vaccine titer test about two weeks after they have been given their final puppy core vaccinations (which should occur when the puppy is about 14 to 16 weeks old). Again, a positive result for both distemper and parvo antibodies indicates that the puppy is properly immunized. The AAHA's recommendation is that adult dogs are tested about every three years, to ensure that they still possess circulating antibodies for the core diseases.

NEGATIVE RESULTS

What about when vaccine titer tests come back negative for distemper and/or parvo antibodies? The significance of this result depends on a few factors, including the dog's age and vaccination status, and the vaccine used.

If the test was for a puppy who recently completed a series of core vaccines, he should be revaccinated promptly, and then a titer test run again about three weeks later. The most likely explanation is that something called “maternally derived antibodies” (MDA, antibodies he received via colostrum from his mother) were still active in his bloodstream when the vaccines were given, and they neutralized the antigens present in the vaccines.

Maternal antibodies don't last forever, however; they “fade” at an unpredictable rate. The maternal antibodies can fade quickly (or may be absent) if a pup's mother was unvaccinated, or he received very little or no colostrum from his mother. If his mother had an unusually high antibody titer herself (the highest levels result from surviving an infection with the disease itself), her pups' MDAs might take longer than usual to fade. This would render all of the puppy's early vaccinations useless; only vaccinations given after the MDA faded would stimulate the puppy's own antibody production.

However, if the puppy was undoubtedly more than 20 weeks old when he was vaccinated the final time, and his vaccine antibody titer test results (from a sample taken three weeks after the last vaccination) were still negative, it could indicate that he was a “non-responder” – a dog who could not be properly immunized.

It's been estimated that 1 in 1,000 dogs are not able to respond to the ca-

nine parvovirus vaccine; those dogs will be at a lifetime risk of contracting the disease (though the risk is greater when they are puppies; adults are more likely to pull through with prompt and dedicated care). Far more rare are dogs who cannot respond properly to the distemper vaccine antigen; this is estimated to occur in about 1 in 10,000 dogs.

The third possibility for the dog's failure to produce antibodies in response to vaccination: bad or improperly stored vaccine. In this case, a different vaccine

should be used, and the dog re-tested a few weeks later. According to the AAHA guidelines, "If, after one or more attempts at revaccination with a product different than the one originally used, the dog fails to develop an antibody response" to distemper or parvo vaccines, the dog should be considered a nonresponder.

Canine vaccine experts agree that if a dog previously had a positive antibody titer for both distemper and parvo, and upon later titer testing is negative for one or both antibodies, he should be revacci-

nated with the core vaccines, and another titer test should be ordered about three weeks later.

There are people who disagree, however. The antibodies may no longer be in circulation, but if they had been present earlier in the dog's life, the dog should have immune memory cells – that we can't detect with lab tests – which should, if a dog is exposed to the disease antigen, recognize the antigen and restart production of the appropriate antibodies.

A TALE OF TWO SHELTER DOGS AND VACCINATION

I adopted my mixed-breed dog Otto from a local shelter in June 2008. He was estimated to be about 7 months old and had been turned into the shelter in early May, about six weeks before I adopted him. At the time I adopted him, he had been vaccinated five times already, with four combination vaccines and once for rabies.

Given his estimated age when I adopted him – at least 6 or 7 months old – I felt confident that no maternally derived antibody would interfere with any of those vaccines, and that Otto was more than adequately immunized. (In fact, it's likely that he was overvaccinated, a practice that is typical in shelters.) Had he been younger, so that maternally derived antibodies could have nullified his vaccinations, I probably would have ordered a vaccine titer test at the time of adoption, to confirm his immunization status.

In May 2009, Otto was due for and received a (legally required) rabies vaccination. Standard practice calls for the use of a one-year vaccine when the dog is first vaccinated for rabies, and then vaccines that are approved for longer periods after that. In California, the longest period that a dog can legally go between rabies vaccinations is three years, so I asked for a three-year rabies vaccination at that time.

The veterinarian who saw Otto for that visit gently recommended another combination vaccine, but I demurred and this sufficed. However, the invoice I received for the visit indicated that Otto was "due" for a "DHLPP-C annual vaccine" and a "Bordetella annual vaccine" the following month – a year after his last combination vaccine. No one seemed very concerned about the vaccinations at this time, least of all me.

In April 2010, I made an appointment with the veterinarian who had seen Otto the previous spring; I needed to get a new prescription for heartworm preventatives for Otto. At this appointment, the vet (a gentleman who is probably in his late 60s or early 70s) pressed hard for Otto to receive another combination vaccine. We bantered a bit about vaccination schedules and overvaccination. I finally asked if he'd feel better if we had a titer test result that showed Otto still had circulating antibodies to parvovirus and distemper. He said

he would, so I had him take a blood sample and send it off to IDEXX Laboratories. (Despite his age, this was probably a first for his clinic. The office manager first quoted me \$500 for the titer test. When I insisted that was too much, she admitted that she was looking at a price book for the lab and wasn't certain which of the tests she was supposed to order. I helped her locate the code for the correct test, which IDEXX called the "Vaccination Profile Canine (ELISA)," and paid \$100 for the test.

I have ordered annual vaccine titer tests for Otto ever since, and every one has come back with strong positive results. He was vaccinated with another three-year rabies vaccine in 2012, and is next required by law in early 2015. I have no plans to vaccinate him for anything else unless one of his titers comes back negative.

In January of this year, my son adopted a puppy from the same shelter. Cole's estimated age was 12 weeks. He had been vaccinated with a combination vaccine four times since he arrived at the shelter.

I brought him to see my veterinarian at the estimated age of 18 weeks for a titer test. The result came back positive for parvo, but negative for distemper! Oh no! Did we inadvertently adopt a non-responder, who would be at risk for distemper throughout his lifetime?

I had ordered the test from Dr. Shultz's lab, and the results take a little longer than from the big commercial outfits, so it was two weeks before I took Cole back to the vet to discuss the results. We agreed we should revaccinate with a different product, and then run another titer test. During this consultation, the vet examined Cole thoroughly, and suddenly was struck by Cole's teeth. "I don't think he's 20 weeks old," she said. "I bet he's more like 16 weeks today." We surmised that "maternal interference" was to blame for his negative titer for distemper antibodies.

We revaccinated Cole and ran another titer two weeks later. This time, the results were a nice high positive. Whew! I can rest now, knowing he's protected.

It's a valid *theory* . . . but the most-respected small-animal vaccine expert in the country, Ronald D. Schultz, PhD, of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, disavows the wisdom of the practice. Dr. Schultz has studied animal vaccines for decades, and as a consultant and researcher, has helped develop many of the ones on the market. "You have to consider a dog who has no detectable antibodies against disease to be unprotected for that disease," he says firmly. "I would revaccinate the dog. The risks of contracting the disease are far greater than the risk posed by vaccines – particularly in a very infrequently vaccinated animal."

CAVEATS

I can tell you from personal experience that it can be difficult to be the first in your veterinarian's practice to ask for a vaccine titer test in lieu of automatic revaccinating. The staff may not understand which test to order; a practice manager once told me it would cost \$500



A few of Otto's nice positive vaccine titer test results from different labs.

– \$100 for a test of each vaccine in the combination shot the vet wanted to give my dog Otto. I actually helped them find and order the appropriate test from their laboratory catalog, but switched veterinarians shortly afterward.

During my second visit to the next veterinary clinic I tried, one of the practice owners spent 20 minutes arguing with me about the value of titer tests. "There is no way to know what titer numbers are protective," she stated, and added that "even dogs with positive titers can contract disease."

Those statements are both technically true – but it's very, very rare for a dog

who has *any* circulating antibodies to a disease to become infected with that disease upon exposure. Practitioners who make statements like this are unlikely to add the corollary to this – that dogs who do *not* have detectable antibodies to a specific disease *may* be able to fend off a challenge (exposure) to that disease, again, thanks to as-yet immeasurable "cell-mediated immunity."

I want a collaborative professional relationship with my dogs' veterinarian. If we have very different opinions about something as basic as vaccination, the chances are we will butt heads over other treatments, too. I advise looking for a new doctor to work with if your vet is resistant to running a titer test in lieu of needless and potentially harmful overvaccination. In my experience, veterinarians who are either under 40 or interested in holistic medicine (or both) will readily and with professional curiosity order a titer test for your dog. 🐾

Nancy Kerns is the editor of WDJ.

ORDERING VACCINE TITER TESTS

The veterinary medical laboratories that provide vaccine titer tests all offer a combined canine distemper/parvo vaccine titer test that is less than the cost of running two separate tests. The price you pay will vary, depending on which lab your vet uses and how much your vet charges for taking a blood sample for your dog and sending it to a lab; your veterinarian may also mark up the cost of the test.

The labs operated by veterinary vaccine experts Jean Dodds, DVM (Hemopet) and Ronald Schultz, PhD (Dr. R.D. Schultz Laboratory at the University of Wisconsin-Madison) charge a flat fee for the tests, but you still have to pay your veterinarian for taking and shipping the blood sample. Dr. Schultz's lab has the lowest-cost test of \$25; this price is partially underwritten by Maddie's Fund, as the samples submitted become part of ongoing studies in vaccine research.

The large national labs charge different prices depending on the size of the local market and the volume of tests (all the lab tests, not just titers) ordered by your individual veterinarian.

Some vets now offer in-office vaccine titer tests, such as the Synbiotics TiterCHEK® CDV/CPV test. This can be run while

you and your dog are in the clinic for an examination, making it possible for you to follow up on the spot with a vaccination if your dog has a negative result. Again, the price charged by your own veterinarian will vary for these tests.

❖ ANTECH DIAGNOSTICS: \$75 - \$150

Irvine, CA
(888) 397-8378

❖ HEMOPET: \$52

Garden Grove, CA
(714) 891-2022; hemopet.org

❖ IDEXX LABORATORIES: \$75 - \$150

Westbrook, ME
(888) 433-9987; idexx.com

❖ DR. R. D. SCHULTZ LABORATORY: \$25

School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Wisconsin-Madison. (608) 263-4648. To download an order form to submit a blood sample to the Dr. R.D. Schultz Lab, go to the link at: http://www.maddiesfund.org/Maddies_Institute/Videos/Maddies_Laboratory.html

Awesome Adoptions

They may have been rejected at some point, but they aren't rejects . . . There are no limits to what shelter dogs can do!

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

There is an unfortunate perception held by many in our culture that dogs in shelters and rescues must be somehow flawed. As a result, according to a 2012 report from the American Pet Products Association, only 20 percent of canine companions in U.S. households were adopted from shelters. This, despite the fact that millions of wonderful canine companions are euthanized for being homeless in shelters every year in this country.

While it's true that your shelter adoptee may come to you with some behavior and medical challenges, acquiring a dog from a private source doesn't preclude those challenges. I have had countless clients who purchased their dogs from "private" sources and still ended up with major behavioral and/or medical issues. I know many behavior and training professionals who have found themselves in the same boat. There are no guarantees.

It is also true that "behavior problem" is the number one reason people

surrender their dogs to animal shelters. But what may be a behavioral problem for one owner (barks outside in the yard all night and neighbors are complaining) may be easily resolved in another home – such as the dog who used to bark all night in someone's backyard and who now sleeps blissfully at the foot of your bed every night. If your adoptee comes with more significant issues than that, imagine your sense of pride when you help her overcome those obstacles to become the canine companion of your dreams.

Shelter dogs across the country are overcoming the odds, getting themselves adopted, and achieving some heady accomplishments. If you are among those who elect to not adopt from a shelter or rescue because you want your dog to "do stuff," take a look at what these shelter and rescue dogs have done!

PAW MOOSE PAW

Labrador Retriever adopted from the Maryland SPCA in Baltimore

Moose's story was submitted by Corporal Jonathan Novack of the Maryland State Police K-9 Unit. Cpl. Novack prefaced his dog's story with this quote: "Saving one dog will not change the world, but surely for that one dog, the world will change forever." It certainly was true for Moose.

“On March 12, 2011, I decided I was going to stop by the Maryland SPCA to 'take a look' at the dogs that were up for adoption. What I didn't know was that on that day I would find and bring home a future Maryland State Trooper K-9, my partner, but most of all, my best friend.

“As I walked the kennels looking at the dogs available for adoption, I came across Moose and he looked almost too good to be true. Moose was in his kennel bouncing a tennis ball off the wall to himself and would not stop playing. Knowing this type of focus and attention is what it takes to be a good working police K-9, I adopted Moose that day. Two days later he started his first day of drug detection school with the Maryland State Police.

“Moose and I, as a team, went through 14 weeks of school where Moose was taught basic obedience, his agility and confidence were tested with several tough obstacle courses, and his natural abilities and desires to play, hunt, possess, and retrieve were enhanced. Every day, new challenges were presented that



Cpl. Jonathan Novack of the Maryland State Police and his dog, Moose, who also happens to be his working service partner. Novack found Moose at the Maryland SPCA in Baltimore.

Moose had to learn and overcome and he did so with ease. Every ability he possessed fit perfectly for the type of work he now performs.

“Both Moose and I graduated from drug detection school in June 2011 and have since been working as a team at J.F.K. Highway Barrack. Moose made an impact immediately during his first month on the road and was awarded the J.F.K. Barrack “Trooper of the Month” by Barrack Commander Lt. Dan Fairburn.

“Moose also enjoys his role during community events and school demonstrations where the children love spoiling him with attention. Moose has proven to be one of the top dogs in the State Police and continues to impress with his skills. With his help, I was awarded the 2013 State Police Non-Commissioned Officer of the Year Award, which would not have been possible without him. We are a team who never leaves each other’s side, on or off duty, and I am truly blessed to have him be part of my career, but more importantly, part of my life.”



“Then, in early 2012, Diane noticed that Dylan’s left pupil was a little bigger and darker than his right one. She took him to the vet, and the vet sent her to an ophthalmologist. After some testing, the ophthalmologist delivered the bad news: it was a tumor and it was best to remove his eye. Diane was devastated. She wanted to see her boy continue to do the things he loved, but could a one-eyed dog do weave poles? How would he see the poles on his left side?

“As Dylan recovered, though, Diane could see that he wasn’t skipping a beat. She decided to try agility with him again. Dylan acted as if he hadn’t missed a day – he hit the weave poles without hesitation, had no problems with the dog walk, and even took a few off-course jumps for ‘extra credit’!

“Since then Dylan has proven himself to be an excellent ambassador for the American Staffordshire Terrier breed, and even has his own fan club, which cheers him on at the agility competitions. Dylan was awarded the AKC 2012 Top American Staffordshire Terrier in the Preferred Agility Classes. ‘In my wildest dreams, I never thought Dylan and I would be getting an award like this!’ said Diane. ‘I wasn’t really trying to get any awards, but just to have fun with Dylan.’”

🐾 DYLAN 🐾

American Staffordshire Terrier adopted from Dane County Humane Society, Wisconsin

Dylan’s story was submitted by Rebekah Klemm, CPDT-KA, Woofs Dog Training Center, LLC

“Dylan was a stray American Staffordshire Terrier, found near Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, in 2008. At the time, Diane Wagner was a volunteer at the Dane County Humane Society (DCHS), and she quickly fell in love with this easy-going, friendly, calm, and laidback couch potato.

“After adopting Dylan, Diane discovered that he had been trained in basic obedience and already knew several cues like down, stay, and come. He fit in well with the three pit bull-mixes in Diane’s household (all adopted from DCHS), and was always very attentive to Diane.

“At the time, Diane was doing agility with one of her other dogs, a ‘free spirit’ who was proving to be a challenge to direct in the agility ring – so Diane decided to try agility with Dylan. To her surprise, he loved it! And, because Dylan was so focused on Diane, they made a great team. Everything was going so well.

Dylan’s agility career hasn’t been even slightly compromised by the loss of his left eye to cancer.

emaciated, and covered in ticks, a staff member at a local shelter spent 15 days trying to catch him, finally succeeding with a humane trap. The shelter adopted him out, but the home was not a good fit; he soon showed signs of protective aggression around the family’s mother. They stuck with him for more than a year, hoping that training would fix his issues. Unfortunately, they were directed to a harsh style of training and Handel’s behavior began to escalate toward the children in the home. They elected to return him to the shelter.

“That was when he came into our lives,” Jessica says. “As the head trainer at Briggs Animal Adoption Center at that time, I was responsible for Handel’s rehabilitation plan. I could see that his ‘training’ had left him confused and wary of strangers. Anytime a person passed his kennel he would lunge relentlessly at the door. On our first meeting I was greeted with this behavior. I walked forward and opened the kennel door. Handel shrank back into a corner of the kennel, growled, and peed. I sat down and he came forward slowly, finally lying down and putting his head in my lap with a great sigh. I put my hand on his head to give a comforting touch and was met with a deep growl. Clearly he was a very confused and conflicted fellow. I obviously had to take him home.”

Recognizing that the stress of the shelter would undermine a behavior modification program, Jessica took Handel home as a foster dog. She and I began systematic work to help Handel

🐾 HANDEL 🐾

German Shepherd Dog-mix adopted from Briggs Animal Adoption Center, Charles Town, West Virginia

Handel’s story was submitted by Jessica Miller, PMCT, ANWI, Go Pawsitive, LLC

“Nothing about Handel’s life has been easy,” says his adopter, Jessica Miller. After seeing him running stray in Ranson, West Virginia, matted,

Jessica Miller and her “failed foster,” now a successful K9 Nose Work dog, Handel.





Handel recently got his first (and we suspect, not his last) title in K9 Nose Work.

dog, and a very successful one at that. “When I started K9 Nose Work with Handel it was not with an eye for competition,” Jessica explains. “We’ve been working together solidly for two years now, and as his nose work has steadily improved so has his behavior around people (including Chris).”

“I recently decided he was ready to enjoy a trial day, so a few weeks ago Handel and I competed together in an NACSW K9 Nose Work trial in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. He had to work in front of two cameras and two large male judges, but work he did, and at the end of the day he went home with an NW1 title. He wasn’t the fastest dog – we were 10th out of the 34 dogs that day – but he was correct and confident and happy the whole day. His happy, waving tail was the biggest win in my book!”

accept people, new things, strange sounds, and most importantly Jessica’s husband Chris. This was critical, because as Jessica describes it, “Handel had decided that Chris must remain at least 10 feet away from my person. Having a 55-pound German Shepherd-mix regularly lunging between you and your spouse isn’t very romantic!”

At the same time, Jessica began taking Handel to classes for K9 Nose Work®, a style of scent work created for the enrichment of companion dogs. “I’d been taking nose work with my other dog and had seen the benefits that sensitive/reactive dogs in our class had enjoyed by participating.” Jessica says that Handel was not a natural – “In fact his first class session was a bit of a disaster!” – but as time went by, Handel became more and more willing to explore the boxes.

“Over time, Handel’s searching became more immediate and direct,” says Jessica. “Then one day we noticed that his tail was up and waving while he worked, and we knew that we had cleared a huge hurdle. As Handel became more comfortable and confident with his nose work, he also became more relaxed about coming into class, and even began soliciting attention from other members of class. Now, as soon as he puts on his harness, he eagerly hops into his crate and sits waiting for his turn to work. He is now a dog with something to look forward to each week.”

If you hadn’t already guessed, Handel is no longer Jessica’s foster dog; he’s *her*

ENZO

Mastiff/pit bull-mix adopted from the Norfolk Animal Care and Adoption Center, Virginia

Enzo’s story was submitted by Dawn Kalinowski, Poised Pups, LLC.

“Enzo is a 5-year-old male mastiff/pit bull-mix who found his way to the Norfolk Animal Care and Adoption Center (the municipal shelter in Norfolk, Virginia), as a stray. He was about six months old at the time. When he arrived at the shelter, he was dangerously malnourished and underweight – his bones protruded through the skin on his 50-pound frame, he was suffering from a respiratory infection, and he had a serious infestation of intestinal parasites. While at the shelter, he was given excellent care: proper nutrition, medication for his maladies, and lots of love from the shelter staff.

Enzo’s luck really turned for the better the day his future adopter, Miki Keilholtz, stopped by the shelter. Miki was recovering from the loss of her previous companion dog, Milo, and she had no intention of adopting another dog. However, something about Enzo’s eyes told Miki to take him home.

“Enzo acclimated quickly to his new home. He gained weight and became

healthy. He immediately took to the positive manners training that Miki used as a way to communicate with him. Enzo mastered many basic obedience cues as well as a plethora of tricks suitable for showing off.

“Enzo’s life was great until he suffered a knee injury while playing with another dog at a local park. Luckily, with proper treatment and rest, Enzo avoided surgery and recovered completely.

“Miki and Enzo went on to pass their American Kennel Club Canine Good Citizen (AKC CGC) test. I had the pleasure of working with Miki and Enzo as they prepared for and passed the therapy-dog certification. As a certified therapy dog, Enzo is now a regular visitor at Lake Taylor Transitional Care Hospital in Norfolk, and he is a Tales-to-Tails reading partner with the Norfolk Public Library.

“In 2013, Enzo was voted one of Norfolk’s Canine Crusaders for the Elizabeth River Project, an ongoing environmental campaign. He also lends his time as a ‘spokesdog’ to raise funds for the shelter. He is featured in the shelter’s latest fundraiser, a cookbook titled *Sit, Stay, Eat*. The cookbook’s launch recently featured a book ‘signing’ session with ‘pawtographs’ by none other than Enzo himself!”



Canine Good Citizen Enzo.

HELEN OF TROY

Pit bull adopted from Out of the Pits, Inc., Albany, New York

Helen of Troy’s story was submitted by Helene G. Goldberger, Heartdog.

“I grew up with dogs – always rescue dogs; that ethic was instilled in me at an early age,” says Helene. “After moving to upstate New York in the late 1980s and adopting my first pit bull, I became somewhat obsessed with their plight. This led me to become a longtime volunteer

Helen of Troy, a rescued pit bull, is deaf, but that hasn't hindered her training for good manners, agility, or as a therapy dog – nor has it lessened her enjoyment of being read to, in service as a reading dog for elementary school children at a library in Rensselaerville, New York.

with Out of the Pits, Inc. (OOTP), a small non-profit organization that has done yeoman's service for pit bulls in our community through education, rescue, training, and wise placements, led by the amazing Cydney Cross.

"After we lost our first pit bull and our hearts had begun to heal, we went to Animal Farm Foundation (AFF) to meet Helen. She had been found on the streets of Troy, New York, and brought into a shelter, where it was discovered she was deaf. She was on the euthanasia list for that reason, when a compassionate vet tech saved her by taking her home. Since OOTP did not have space at the time for an adult dog, Animal Farm Foundation literally came to the rescue.

"When we adopted Helen from AFF, she had already begun basic training with positive reinforcement methods. Instead of a clicker (since she couldn't hear it), she was taught that thumbs-up meant goodies were coming.

"When we first adopted her, we worked with local positive reinforcement trainer Jody Diehl of Dog's Best Friend, who gave us additional tools to use with Helen such as using vibration, on/off light switch, and practicing collar grabs with her. We also bought and read *Living*



With a Deaf Dog, by Susan Becker.

"Helen had little experience with the world at large; she screamed, loudly and shrilly, upon seeing other dogs, people, vehicles, and any other novel stimulus. Another wonderful trainer, Corrina Bright, MS Ed., CPDT-KA of Canine Connection Training, helped me see that Helen's screaming was not aggression but rather frustration.

"We used the Premack Principle (using a more desirable behavior – from the dog's perspective – as the reinforcer for a less desirable behavior), giving Helen access to things she wanted once she gave us her focus. Over time, she not only became a calm and happy girl in public as well as at home, she passed her therapy dog test with Therapy Dog, Inc., and is a volunteer with the Veteran's Administration Hospital in

Albany. Helen has also been a reading dog at the library in Rensselaerville, and has been doing competitive agility for more than two years."

WHO RESCUES WHOM?

I still get tears in my eyes as I re-read these stories. My own shelter dogs have

won competition titles, found missing turtles, and proved to be invaluable helpers in my training and behavior work, so I know very well how awesome and accomplished shelter and rescue dogs can be. Corporal Novack says it best, and most eloquently. We are all blessed to have them as part of our lives. 🐾

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.

RESOURCES

❖ SHELTERS/RESCUES

Baltimore SPCA, Baltimore, MD
(410) 235-8826; mdspca.org

Briggs Animal Adoption Center, Charles Town, WV
(304) 724-6558; baacs.org

Dane County Humane Society, Madison, WI
(608) 838-0413; giveshelter.org

Out of the Pits, Albany, NY
outofthepits.org

Norfolk Animal Care & Adoption Center, Norfolk, VA
(757) 441-5505; norfolk.gov/Index.aspx?NID=260

❖ TRAINERS

Helene Goldberger
(518) 428-4101; heartdog1956@gmail.com

Diane Kalinowski
(757) 705-7286; dawnkalinowski.thedogtrainer.org

Rebekah Klemm, Woofs Dog Training Center LLC,
Arlington, VA
(703) 536-7877; woofsdogtraining.com

Jessica Miller, Go Pawsitive LLC, Clear Spring, MD
(240) 625-2247; gopawsitive.com

❖ OTHER

Cpl. Jonathan Novack, Maryland State Police, K9 Unit
(410) 537-1150; mdsp.org/Organization/
specialOperationsBureau/K9Unit.aspx

Oops! I Did it Again

Training your dog is most productive if you stay “in the moment” and endure any humiliation with grace and humor.

BY DEBI DAVIS

Life with any dog has its moments of agony and ecstasy. The ecstasy happens when our dogs’ behaviors are top notch, and all systems seem to run smoothly. The agony happens when our dogs have an “oops” moment, and we know we’re responsible.

I’ve yet to meet a dog owner who does not have at least one embarrassing story to share, of an unguarded moment in time, when in a public place, his or her dog acted in a socially inappropriate way.

Part of learning is making mistakes, and as trainers or companion dog owners, we learn to survive those “oops” moments. But that doesn’t mean there aren’t times when we wish we could don a cloak of invisibility.

As a now-retired service dog trainer, I’ve spent countless field trips teaching my dogs to work comfortably and reliably in public environments. We teach service dogs to respond appropriately in places where pets are not allowed; obviously, we also teach them to display appropriate behaviors in public places as well. Our wonderful canine companions help us with many tasks as we accomplish our errands and work, but they must also behave appropriately during our leisure activities in public, such as when we meet a friend for a cup of coffee at an outdoor café, attend an art festival, or enjoy a festive picnic in a park.

It happens when we least expect it: Our dog is standing quietly by our side on a loose leash, ignoring distractions, when he suddenly unloads his bladder while waiting at a crosswalk for a light to change, splattering shoes of other people also waiting to cross the street.

We might be browsing items in a booth at an outdoor art festival with our dog standing or sitting quietly at our side, and our attention is drawn away from our dog for a moment. In the single second we take our eyes off our dog, he swivels his head and sticks his nose

into another shopper’s crotch, inhaling dreamily. Though we instantly cue the dog to focus on us again, it’s too late. The crotch sniffer has already goosed his gander.

We may have thought we’d adequately prepared for these kinds of responses by allowing our dog ample time to “empty out” before going into stimulus-rich environments, and we may have practiced “leave it” in as many diverse environments as possible. But sometimes, especially with young, more easily distracted dogs, the occasional “oops” will inevitably happen when we least expect it.

IT’S NOT A CRITICISM, JUST INFORMATION

I chalk these moments up to “learning experiences” for the trainer/handler, and see it as simply helpful “information” – a hint that we need to be more vigilant and proactive during future training outings. It’s also a chance to suck up our embarrassment, and learn to laugh through the red-faced moments. We learn along with our dogs – our greatest teachers.

When I was a novice service-dog trainer/handler, my first service dog was a 10-pound Papillon named Peek. He was nearing the end of his first year of training, well on the way to becoming a very reliable service dog, and was generally extremely well mannered in public. I knew the first rule of public access-training was to never take your eye off your dog for very long, and to always be aware of your dog’s body at any given time.

Peek was becoming so reliable in stores, never sniffing nor soliciting attention from other shoppers, that I began to relax my guard a bit; honestly, I became somewhat complacent. Inside a craft store, I focused more on the craft items I wanted to buy that day, and too little on the fact that my dog was still learning lessons in appropriate public behaviors.

Stopping at one aisle for a few minutes, I lost my focus on my dog, gathering items to put in my lap basket as I rolled through the store in my wheelchair. I’d occasionally glance down at my dog, but he remained nicely in a heel



A broken bag and spilled groceries are not a tragedy when you have a well-trained service dog like Peek, shown helping author Debi Davis.

He may have been tiny, but Peek was trained to perform tons of service behaviors, including many that required him to locate a specific item that Davis needed and bring it to her.



position, so I kept shopping. Finding my last item, I headed to the cashier's counter and put my items on the conveyer belt. When the cashier had scanned all the items in my lap basket, she paused, smiled, and said, "I'm just waiting for your last item, ma'am."

I looked down at my lap, thinking perhaps something had come out of my basket and was between my legs or stuck between my leg and the seat of the chair, but I saw nothing. I looked back up at the cashier in bafflement. She whispered, "Your service dog is carrying your last item, ma'am."

Knowing I hadn't asked him to hold anything, I looked down, this time looking at his head, not just seeing that his body was parallel to the wheels of my power chair. I didn't notice that though he had stayed in perfect heel position, he had a death grip on a white rabbit pelt, which he'd somehow pilfered off a bottom shelf when I wasn't paying attention. It was now clamped securely between his chops, dripping with ropy drool.

Horribly embarrassed, I tried to cover by saying, "Oh, I'm so very sorry - I completely forgot about that item." I cued Peek to release the item into my hand. Peek released the item to me, and never moved, but he drilled a hole through that rabbit pelt with his eyes, willing it back into his mouth.

Holding the pelt by two fingers, I try to wipe it off with a couple of wadded-up tissues, but it was hopeless. That ropy,

sticky drool was embedded in the thick white rabbit pelt. The cashier looked at the dripping pelt, grimaced, and said, "That's okay, ma'am. You just read the numbers to me and I'll key it in manually instead of scanning it." No way was she touching that slimy object.

It was a sobering moment to realize my inattention had allowed my dog to shoplift an item from a store. Yes, it was back to "Dog Zen" and refining the dog's ability to bypass the urge to sniff and pilfer items he had not been asked to carry.

BEWARE THE REWARDING ENVIRONMENT

Another time, when I lived in the Sonoran desert, I had a 6-month-old puppy named "Dandy," a young service-dog hopeful. For desert dogs, water is an excellent primary reinforcer. After a nice down-stay or a sit, a cupful of water is a most coveted reward. Dandy, however, was a duck-in-training. Papillon by birth, he seemed to be more waterfowl or fish by nature.

On our river walk that day, the green Palo Verde trees on the newly landscaped path were being watered by effluent - recycled water used for irrigation. It's common in the desert for landscapers to dig moats around the trees for the water to pool up and gradually soak into the hard, desert sand and clay soil.

Young Dandy trotted along next to my wheelchair on a loose long leash, as

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The ever-sharp and compliant Finn, demonstrating an amusing behavior for which only *he* remembered the cue.

it was a relaxing “sniff and jog” trip, and he’d stop every few bushes to hike a leg and post a pee-mail message.

Suddenly, Dandy darted to the left, pulling the long leash loose from my hands as he spotted the irrigation sprinklers pop up and spurt fountains of water up into the air around a tree.

Before I could get “Dandy, COME!” out of my mouth, he’d jumped into the water, and started swimming around the tree, wrapping the leash twice around the thin tree trunk. Dandy looked up, shook off (standing in water that was over his belly), and tried to move toward me, but he could only walk a few steps before the securely wrapped leash stopped him.

He began swimming back and forth, paddling water, ducking his head, lifting it out of the water, shaking his head and diving his head back under the water again. He looked like a mallard duck in training.

I realized I had no choice but to slide out of my wheelchair and crawl across the dirt and cacti, into the moat of muddy water, to untangle his leash. I crawled from my chair to the water’s edge, and slid into the waist-deep effluent and attempted to untangle the leash.

Happy for a playmate, Dandy snapped at the fountains of water coming out of the irrigation tubes, then rolled over, submerging his body, and leapt up like a dolphin to grab another sip, vaulting over the top of the rubber tube. Clearly, this was the best water park he’d ever seen.

Dandy was happily barking at the spurting water as I laughed heartily while unclipping the leash from the top of his harness. I giggled out the recall cue and Dandy swam toward me, glad to be unfettered. Reaching me, he climbed up onto my lap, leapt over my shoulder and dove back into the water.

We splashed each other with water until we were both covered with mud, and I have to admit that on that 100 degree day, it felt mighty refreshing.

A lone, perspiring jogger dashed by, tipped his baseball cap at us, and quipped, “Nice day for a swim, isn’t it?”

NEW BEHAVIORS

I had a lovely Border Collie named Finn, a change-of-career dog. He was a gift from Virginia (Broitman) Dare, after I lost my service dog Peek prematurely from congestive heart failure. Virginia thought that all Finn’s past media work for print and video could easily transfer over to service work with just a bit of tweaking to turn a trick into a task.

Finn was used to crowds, noisy equipment, bright lights, and lots of people scurrying around. Nothing much fazed him.

When Virginia delivered him to me, we went for a training outing at a local casino here in Las Vegas. Finn flawlessly pressed handicapped door openers, picked up trash and put it in the trash bins, did nice sits and downs for extended periods, and ignored all the

distracting food treats we’d thrown on the floor to test him.

I’d spent a decade using a different set of cue words and phrases for my own service dog. Virginia wrote down as many words and phrases she could think of that were already in his repertoire, admitting she could not remember them all. I cued Finn to pick up his leash, accidentally using my own default cue phrase of “Get your leash.” Finn’s cue for that behavior was “Take it.” Finn had never heard my particular cue words coupled together, but he knew “Get your. . . .” And he filled in the blank with a behavior he thought I might have meant.

He reached back, picked up his left rear leg, and held it in his mouth. Virginia and I broke out in laughter at my miscued directive, and we couldn’t stop laughing while Finn stood there holding his left leg in his mouth. He remembered a behavior he’d once been taught years prior, of “get your leg.”

In moments, a crowd had gathered, watching in amazement as this dog stood there holding his back leg and beckoning us with his eyes for the release cue. New handler error! And of course, there was a nice reward for the problem-solving dog who had no fear of trying new behaviors, as he’d been shaped regularly to think up compound cues and adduction.

As trainers, handlers or companion-dog owners, we all have experienced those moments of enjoying the ecstasy and enduring the agony. But it’s also a journey filled with unexpected mirth and great lessons, which makes every outing fresh and original. 🐾

Debi Davis is a retired professional calligrapher and service dog trainer. She is a former faculty member of Clicker Expo, and has presented at service dog training seminars and workshops. Peek, her first service dog, was a 1999 National Service Dog of the Year and participated in animal assisted therapy in a hospital rehabilitation department. Davis and Peek carried the Olympic torch during the Salt Lake City Games. Debi is an advocate for reward-based training, and enjoys being an informal ambassador of goodwill in the service dog and disability communities. She currently lives in Las Vegas, NV, with her husband and service dog in training, Cooper.

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Keep iCalm

The iCalmDog: An awesome mobile music player that can help calm anxious dogs.

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

I have been a huge fan of the Through a Dog's Ear (TADE) products ever since the company released its first CD of calming music for dogs. The beneficial effect on my own dogs has been remarkable, and I also see clients' dogs respond well to the music. (It will also make me fall asleep if I play it in my office when I'm supposed to be working!) The company's follow-up products have been no less wonderful, with a set of sound-phobia CDs (city sounds, thunder, fireworks) with modification protocol narration by Victoria Stillwell, and CDs with music specifically selected for puppies and senior dogs, car rides, dog meets baby, aggression issues, and many more.

Being a bit of a technophobe, I wasn't excited when I saw the company's newest offering: the iCalmDog. This is a small, portable player (fits easily in a jacket pocket or purse) pre-loaded with four hours of TADE music. Great, I thought, another gadget.



Then I turned it on. The quality of music that emerges from this tiny unit is incredible. It's sharp, full, and clear. When I played it during a client session the client was so impressed with the sound he was looking all over the room for the speakers!

Now my iCalmDog and I are nearly inseparable. I use it for almost every canine behavior consultation. I take it on the road when clients and I practice counter-conditioning and desensitization on their dogs in public places. The device helps dogs who already have a strong association with TADE's calming music in a safe environment transfer that feeling to new locations and helps anxious dogs settle more quickly. This, of course, helps the owner be more successful with the behavior-modification protocol – a true win-win!

I used two iCalmDog units during my most recent behavior-modification academy. One was for a dog who was stressed when his trainer/owner left the



Cyrus, a rescued Italian Greyhound, is ordinarily quite hyper, but he naps very nicely with his iCalmDog.

room. He whined when the owner left, stopped whining when we turned the music on, and started whining again if we turned it off. The other unit was used by one of the academy students who was working to relieve a dog's anxiety in cars.

For those of you who may be technophobes like me, here's the really good news: All the TADE programs are available now on Micro SD cards; you just insert the card of your choice in the iCalmDog. No downloads. No syncing. Just switch cards and you are ready to go. If you are already a TADE fan, you definitely want to add this device to your toolkit. If you have an anxious dog and aren't yet a fan of Through a Dog's Ear, perhaps you should be! 🐾

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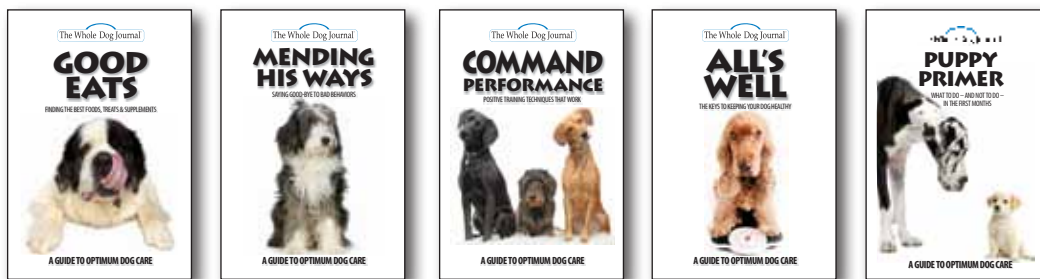
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