

The Whole Dog Journal™



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Guarded Prognosis

In favor of a case-by-case policy.

BY NANCY KERNS

Pat Miller and I were discussing her article (“On Guard,” page 20) and laughing about the very expressive photos I have of my Chihuahua-mix, Tito, who used to resource-guard *everything* with the ferocity of a starving hyena. That’s him in the photo on page 20, snarling (and though you can’t hear it, crazily growling) to beat the band. The photo was taken a week after he came to live with me, four or so years ago. Today, Tito guards only meaty bones or canned food with that sort of intensity (so he doesn’t get them very often, and only when he’s safely isolated from other dogs and people). He’s a well-managed dog whose behavior had been successfully modified with the techniques Pat describes in her article, so we can laugh *now* at how demented the actually jolly little guy appeared.

I’m well aware that if Tito were a ward in almost many shelters today, he’d be dead in short order. That’s because many shelters use canned food when they assess whether a dog is a resource-guarder; this is a common and integral part of most shelter’s behavior evaluations, which will determine which dogs are “adoptable” and which dogs will be euthanized as “unadoptable.” If you give Tito a bowl full of canned food, and go poking at him with a fake hand, as if you were going to take it away before he’s done with it, Tito is going to come off as the canine equivalent of an axe murderer. Boom! Goodbye, Tito!

But Tito has a lot of other things going for him: Again, he’s a well-managed dog who doesn’t get careless access to canned food. He doesn’t live with children. He’s a small dog with great bite inhibition; even if he were to bite someone (and he’s bitten me before, when I was pulling a tick off of him), it doesn’t hurt.

It’s true that his expressions and behavior are dramatic – but it’s important to understand that his communication is not evil or driven by malice! It’s a normal, natural canine behavior to use dramatic expressions and sounds to guard things that are valuable to them, such as food, chewies, toys, and beds. Humans typically find these

expressions and sounds objectionable and even threatening (even if, as in Tito’s case, there is no real danger), and will go to *any* lengths to dissuade most dogs from making them. It’s a shame, because in many cases (as in Tito’s case, again), many perfectly nice dogs are not given a chance to be placed in homes where the behavior can be managed and modified.

Don’t get me wrong: I’m not for a *second* saying that *all* dogs who exhibit resource-guarding behavior should be given a chance to live in homes. I very recently witnessed the behavior assessment of a friendly, funny, gorgeous Rottweiler-mix at my local shelter, whose aggression over food and toys was chilling and potentially quite dangerous, due to her size and the intensity of the behavior. Because I had liked the dog so much before I got a chance to see her guard toys (with fast-increasing stiffness and volume) and then canned food (with truly chilling ferocity), I was disturbed for weeks by witnessing her guarding behavior and understanding it meant she was going to be euthanized. But neither would I want her placed in *anyone’s* home; she was truly dangerous. Taking this behavior on a case-by-case basis is important. *NK*

CORRECTION: On page 13 of the July issue, we published a chart that discussed which types of service animals are allowed access in which settings. We’d like to clarify the rules for the Air Carrier Access Act as it relates to assistance and service dogs (as opposed to emotional support animals). The type of air carrier access granted for assistance and service dogs should read as follows: Dog/handler teams are generally permitted to fly together in the cabin. No special documentation or requirements apply except in the case of psychiatric service dogs. Handlers with psychiatric service dogs can be required to show written documentation (on the treating medical provider’s letterhead, which must include the provider’s medical license number) supporting the handler’s need for a psychiatric service dog, and the documentation must be less than one year old. Airlines can also require that handlers with psychiatric service dogs notify the airline regarding travel with the dog at least 48 hours in advance.

More Power to You

This new column, produced by raw and home-prepared diet experts, will teach you to analyze commercial diets – and make even better ones.

BY NANCY KERNS

I couldn't be more excited to introduce this new column in Whole Dog Journal. I've been wanting to find someone to write a regular column about home-prepared cooked and raw diets for WDJ, but no one I've discussed it with and proposed it to has been able to commit to the amount of work it's going to take. Allow me to emphasize the part of that previous sentence that finally opened the door to presenting the column: the phrase *no one*. You see, several of the people I spoke with were willing to provide *some* of the work of the column. What I needed to do was to build a *team* of like-minded and experienced home-prepared diet formulators and raw-diet feeders who could collaborate on the creation of diet guidelines and analysis of products and recipes prepared by other formulators.

Happily, a sort of *canine-diet dream team* has come together to work on a series of articles that will help owners formulate healthier home-prepared diets for their dogs – or identify the commercial raw diets (fresh, frozen, or dehydrated) that are genuinely nutritionally “complete and balanced” (in contrast to the vast majority that claim to be complete and balanced, but have potentially serious nutrient overages, deficiencies, or imbalances).

All of the people who will contribute to this column are experienced with raw and home-prepared diets, but each brings different strengths to the project. In this, the inaugural installment of the column, I'd like to introduce each of the contributors, briefly describe their backgrounds, and allow them to explain their motivation and goals for this column to you. Each of them has a fascinating and deep “back story” regarding his or her experience and interest in canine nutrition, and I think you will enjoy getting to know them as much as the topics they will soon be writing about.

Then, next month, we'll dive right in with some analysis of the most common

problems they see in the commercial raw diet marketplace. This will help illustrate why most of us would be better off learning to prepare our dogs' food ourselves, rather than outsourcing the job to commercial manufacturers.

Here is our canine diet analysis team:

■ STEVE BROWN

His first professional career was in the technology industry, but Brown “went to the dogs” in the late 1990s. A search for a small, low-calorie treat for his dog led to his development of a product called Charlee Bear dog treats. This entrée to the pet food industry sparked an interest in canine nutrition – and the more he learned about the field, the less satisfied Brown was with the conventional diets on the market. He developed another very successful product, a line of raw frozen canine diets, “Steve's Real Food for Dogs,” which made its market debut in 1998 (Brown is no longer affiliated

Steve Brown has created numerous diets for pet food companies, as well as custom-formulated diets for individual dogs, including those in his own “pack.”

with either Charlee Bear or Steve's Real Food for Dogs).

Brown has provided consultation services to other raw frozen pet food companies, and wrote two valuable books on canine nutrition, *Unlocking the Canine Ancestral Diet* and *See Spot Live Longer*, as well as the booklet, “See Spot Live Longer the ABC Way.” Brown lives near Eugene, Oregon.

Brown will be contributing his knowledge of commercial pet food producers, perspective as an experienced diet formulator, and his amazing database of nutrient information for every ingredient ever used in dog food.

■ **STEVE BROWN SAYS** – I'm one of the founders of the raw diet industry, and one of the more detailed-oriented formulators in the industry. I'm almost ready to retire from dog food and start my next project, which has nothing to do with dogs or food. But before I retire I have a few things to say and do.

I'm very happy with the growth of fresh, raw, and ancestral-type feeding. Twenty years ago when I started, there were maybe 10 stores in the nation that had freezers for raw pet foods. Now there are tens of thousands of stores selling raw diets and perhaps hundreds of thousands of people who make their own foods. The spectacular growth shows there is tremendous interest in raw and ancestral-type diets for dogs.

I'm quite upset at some companies and some authors of homemade recipes. I've seen some bad “raw” diets out there, commercial and homemade. Many people and producers have jumped on the raw bandwagon with little if any basic





Karen Becker, DVM, wrote her first pet cookbook in 1999, after recognizing that people committed to nourishing their pets in the most healthful way lacked reliable information about how to do it.

knowledge of nutrition. I'm particularly upset with some of the best-selling raw diet companies, and their misstatements, poor analyses, and lack of care to do things right.

It's my goal for the first installment in the column to help educate WDJ's readers and the overall market on how to identify properly formulated commercial raw diets. I'd also be happy for it to shake up the commercial raw diet industry and force some of the companies that have products in this category to formulate correctly or stop calling their products "complete" foods.

In future articles, we're going to show you how to evaluate homemade dog food recipes, and then how to make your own ancestral-type homemade diets that meet American (AAFCO) and European (FEDIAF) standards. Once this is done, I can retire.

■ KAREN BECKER

A veterinarian with a passion for promoting species-appropriate, top quality diets for every animal, Dr. Becker is the author of *Dr. Becker's Real Food for Healthy Dogs & Cats*, currently in its third edition, and (full disclosure) the creator of one of WDJ's favorite dog treats, Dr. Becker's Bites. She incorporates a love of clinical pathology and integrative medicine in her holistic veterinary medical practice, Natural Pet Animal Hospital in Bourbonnais, Illinois (an hour south of Chicago). She attributes much of her clinic's success to

the fact that nutrition is addressed with every patient, at every exam.

Dr. Becker will contribute her long experience with feeding raw and cooked home-prepared diets to dogs, and, in fact, improving the health of her canine patients with properly formulated diets. We will count on her to provide the veterinary perspective on the food/health connection.

■ **DR. BECKER SAYS** – I've been a homemade dog food girl since vet school, when the free dry food from a major prescription pet food company sickened my dog; I believe it was caused by ethoxyquin toxicosis. I turned to an intense detoxification protocol and a species-appropriate raw food diet, which I believe saved her life. This experience not only changed my perspective as young holistic veterinarian, but also shaped the way I viewed the formulation of fresh food diets. At that time, there were no raw food diets on the market and I knew most homemade recipes were unbalanced, including my own.

My desire to create nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate meals for my pack and my patients fed my passion for furthering my understanding of nutrient requirements for optimal health, especially as a steady stream of sick animals visited my practice. As commercially available raw food diets began entering the market I assumed these convenient alternatives to entirely processed pet foods would finally create a generation of healthier pets. But that didn't happen to the extent I was anticipating. In evaluating many of these diets I found there were significant formulation flaws.

I continue to seek out diets and recipes that provide *optimal* nutrition for dogs and cats. I believe in educating and empowering animal guardians to be able to make wise food choices. This is the best approach for owners who want take control of their pets' health and well being, and avoid making nutritional mistakes that could ultimately harm their pets.

I am partnering with WDJ and experts in the field of raw food nutrition to provide educational information that fosters positive changes in the pet food industry, positive discussions among holistic veterinarians and nutritionists, and, most importantly, improves the way you choose to nourish your dog.

■ MARY STRAUS

A retired software engineer who began putting her prodigious research and analysis skills to work on canine diets in the late 1990s, Straus calls her deep interest in home-prepared diets an "avocation." I don't know anyone else whose hobby has resulted in their contribution of so many searching and in-depth articles (to this publication and others) on canine nutrition. Her work has sparked improvement in many canine diets, both home-prepared and commercial. She lives in the San Francisco Bay area, and shares her discoveries about canine health and optimum nutrition on her website, DogAware.com.

Straus can out-calculate engineers twice her size and has the research tenacity of a terrier in a rat-infested hay barn. She would rather wrestle with a spreadsheet or fact-check a scientific paper on the AAFCO nutrient profiles than write an article about all the anomalies and errors she found – but she's happy to explain them to other canine-nutrition obsessives. With Straus helping to "run the numbers" on the diets the team analyzes and creates, we can be assured of infallible data.

■ **MARY STRAUS SAYS** – My interest in raw diets began when I visited Wolf Park in Indiana, and watched them feeding whole deer carcasses to the wolves. I spent the next year researching raw diets before starting my own dogs on a homemade raw diet in 1998.

My interest in nutrition continued to grow as I researched everything I could find over the next 17 years. I don't recall when Steve Brown and I met, but at some point, he became my mentor and friend, and his book, *Unlocking the Canine Ancestral Diet*, is one of those I reach for most often when I have a question about homemade diets. I believe that Steve understands more about basic canine nutrition than anyone else, including most veterinary nutritionists, and I have learned a tremendous amount from him. I'm excited that he will be sharing some of his knowledge with us here.

One of the things I learned from Steve is that the amount of fat shown on the guaranteed analysis label of all dog and cat food products may be *far* less than the actual amount of fat in the food. This is legal, since only the *minimum* amount of fat is required on the label. The *actual* amount of fat can be estimated by a

complicated formula that relies on the company's reported number of calories in the food – but is only as reliable as the company's reported value for calories.

I was shocked to learn that at least one major commercial raw food company deliberately understates the amount of fat in their foods, refusing to respond to multiple requests to provide the actual amount of fat in their food (they're willing to provide any other nutritional information except that). Note that this problem affects not only raw foods; when this formula is applied to other commercial foods, particularly canned foods (which tend to be higher in fat than dry foods), I found that many must have *considerably* more fat than the minimum amount on the label in order to account for the calories reported by the manufacturer for that food.

Higher-than-expected fat levels can be problematic. For example, dogs with pancreatitis may be seriously or even fatally harmed by high-fat foods. In other cases, too much fat may cause digestive upset or unwanted weight gain. When portions are restricted enough to prevent weight gain, the nutrient value of the diet may fall below the dog's requirements. Since it may take years for nutritional deficiencies to cause signs severe enough to recognize, it is impossible to tell whether a diet is complete and balanced just by examining a dog or even by doing blood tests.

As I began analyzing homemade diets myself and comparing them to National Research Council (NRC) and Association of American Feed Care Officials (AAFCO) guidelines, I was surprised by some of the deficiencies I found. Steve helped me to realize that not all the information presented in the USDA National Nutrient Database is always reliable – which is crazy, because virtually everyone (veterinary nutritionists included) who builds complete diets for dogs relies on the information in this database to calculate the nutrient content of their recipes.

For example, in some cases the values for certain nutrients in some foods are missing. This is indicated in the database with a dash – meaning, there is no value for that nutrient in that ingredient available. If you don't provide a value for that nutrient, it will be calculated as if the ingredient contained zero amount of that nutrient, which may or, more likely, may *not* be the case.

For example, more than 40 percent of the poultry products in the current USDA database do not measure choline, so if I happen to choose one of those ingredients when analyzing a diet, the diet may appear to be low in choline when in fact the amount of choline may be adequate. A similar percentage of poultry products do not measure vitamin D.

In other cases, by comparing similar items, it becomes obvious that certain nutrient values are inaccurate, due to either testing or data entry errors (I've also learned from Steve that lab testing can be notoriously inaccurate). While less common than missing data, these inaccuracies can also affect the ability to determine whether a homemade diet meets guidelines or not.

Steve has created a corrected version of the USDA database, for which he has calculated and inserted values for missing nutrient data and corrected values that were so obviously out of the average range that they were likely errors. To the best of my knowledge, he is the only one to have done so. Other nutrition analyzers, including those used by veterinary nutritionists, use uncorrected data that may skew results considerably.

As I learned what foods provided certain nutrients, I'd look at ingredient lists for commercial raw, freeze-dried, and dehydrated diets that the manufacturers claimed met AAFCO guidelines, and realized that there was little likelihood that certain nutrients could possibly be provided in adequate amounts. In one case, I called a company to ask about their iodine content, and was told that they had never tested for iodine in their diets!

In other cases, I would compare a nutritional analysis of the food to AAFCO guidelines and realize that there were deficiencies, despite the AAFCO "complete and balanced" statement on the label. In one case where a company's products definitely did not meet AAFCO guidelines, they chose to do a six-month feeding trial, which is absurdly easy to pass, to justify their claims of nutritional completeness. While this meets AAFCO's requirements regarding label claims for a "complete and balanced diet," it doesn't change the fact that a number of nutrients in this company's products do not in fact meet current AAFCO guidelines for nutrient levels.



Mary Straus has created diets for her own dogs since 1998. Her last two dogs (both Shar-Pei) lived to the ages of 16 and 17. Straus recently began competing in K9 Nose Work with her Norwich Terrier, Ella.

There are also a number of commercial raw food companies that make claims on their websites and in their product literature that their diets are "complete and balanced" *without* providing an AAFCO "complete and balanced" statement on the product label, which is a violation of labeling laws.

A quick perusal of the ingredient lists indicates that in virtually all of these cases, the diets would not in fact meet AAFCO guidelines. Over time, I've noticed certain companies begin to add supplements to their foods, sometimes quietly and without any announcement, and sometimes by introducing new products that now carried an AAFCO statement but which differ substantially from their prior products that they had claimed to be complete. It was clear that they had never done a complete nutritional analysis, and when they did, they likely discovered that their foods did not, in fact, meet the guidelines for a complete and balanced diet.

Remember that commercial diets must meet all of a dog's nutritional requirements because each may be the only food the dog ever receives. 🐾

Next month: How to separate well-formulated, truly "complete and balanced" commercial raw-food diets from the nutritionally incomplete and imbalanced products flooding the market.



You can teach several cues for the same behavior. Here is a hand signal ...



... which means exactly the same thing to Willow as the verbal cue ...



... and this novel cue (holding up car keys), which the author taught Willow for fun.

Clean Up Your Cues!

Be clear about what you want your dog to do.

BY LISA LYLE WAGGONER, CPDT-KA, CSAT, PMCT2

It's important to know what your cues are for your dog. Yes, I bet you think you know, but in reality your dog may think your cues are very different than what you think they are.

As a professional trainer, I'm pretty good at adding cues that are clear to me and clear for the dog. However, I've recently had a bit more time to work with my own dog, Willow, a 3-year-old Australian Shepherd. It's been a blast teaching her a few new tricks, adding humorous cues to those behaviors and even changing some cues to a few tricks

she's already learned. But I've seen that puzzled look on her face a few times, as if she's saying, "Hey, Mom, I just don't *get* it. Can you be more clear?" I guess it's time to clean up my cues.

WHAT IS A CUE?

From the handler's perspective, a cue is the word or action we attach to a specific

behavior the animal has learned so that we can elicit that behavior again. In the dog-friendly and humane training I use (and hope you use, too), the word "cue" is used instead of "command." Command implies "You *do* it or *else!*" In the world of positive training, if the dog doesn't respond to my cue, it's my job as the trainer to assess what just occurred and tweak my own actions to help the dog succeed. If the dog succeeds, the dog earns reinforcement, and reinforcement makes the behavior more likely to happen again.

In reality, a cue is anything your dog can perceive. It's also a chance to earn reinforcement. Our dogs see, hear, smell, touch, and taste, just as we do, so anything a dog is able to perceive by one of her senses can be turned into a cue. In the pet dog world, most people use verbal cues, with hand signals coming in a close second. In canine sports and service dog work, handlers may use a number of other types of cues, including olfactory cues.

KNOW YOUR ABC'S?

Keep in mind the ABC's: **Antecedent. Behavior. Consequence.**

It's important to understand that the cue (an antecedent) isn't what causes the behavior to happen. The consequence of the behavior is what makes the specific behavior more likely to increase or decrease. If you like that specific behavior (the sit, down, etc.) and want your dog to do it again, reinforce the heck out of it! Reinforcement drives behavior.

HOW TO ADD A CUE

If you want to teach your dog a new behavior, you must first "show" the dog what to do and make sure the behavior is reliable before adding a cue.

For example, if I'm attempting to teach a dog to sit, I would help to elicit the behavior by first luring, capturing, or shaping the movement. Our dogs know how to sit, right? They just don't know how to sit when we say "sit."

To *lure* the dog into a sit, hold a piece of food in your hand, place it at the dog's nose and move it up and back over the dog's head. This causes the dog to look up, rock back a bit, and as she does so, her bottom goes down. When the dog's bottom hits the floor, you'd mark the desired behavior with the click of a clicker (or a verbal marker, such as the word "Yes!") and give the dog a yummy piece of food.

To *capture* a sit, merely wait patiently and observe the dog. When the dog happens to move into the sit position, click/treat.

To *shape* a sit, consider all the tiny parts of the entire sit position (looking up, rocking back, rear end begins to move closer to the floor), and reinforce each of those tiny parts toward the final behavior of sitting.

Once the dog is reliably (at least 80 to 90 percent of the time) performing the behavior, you can begin to incorporate whatever cue you wish by using your desired cue as the dog performs the behavior.

After the dog is successful a few times, use the cue *before* the dog performs the behavior. Example: Say "Sit!" (always in a happy tone of voice). Pause one second, and then lure the dog into the sit position. By pausing, you're giving the dog an opportunity to associate the sound of your verbal cue, "Sit!" with the behavior of sitting.

Pay close attention to your dog

SARAH FOSTER'S CUE DICTIONARY

To be more precise, this is the cue dictionary for Sarah's dog, Jane! Sarah may use other cues for some of the same behaviors with other dogs.

It helps to keep track of exactly what it is that you expect the dog to do when you use a certain cue. If your dog is often confused about a particular cue or behavior, you might look over your own dictionary to determine whether your definition or cue has drifted away from what you originally taught your dog, or whether you have cues or behaviors that are easy to mistake for another one.

Words in **bold red** are verbal cues.

BEEP, BEEP, BEEP: Dog backs up.

BEHIND (AKA right finish): Dog walks from front of handler to handler's right side and crosses behind the handler to the left side and sits or heels.

CHEEK: Touch target with cheek.

CHIN: Touch target with chin.

COME: Dog comes to me close enough to grab her collar.

DOWN: Front end down, back end down, immediate, until released; hand signal is palm down, push hand down.

FLIP (AKA left finish): Dog walks from front of handler to handler's left side and turns around to the left to face the same direction as the handler and sits or heels. Physical signal is to swing my arm back and front. (Note: I'm changing her left finish to a swing finish. The behavior is the dog pivots from the front of handler to heel position by rotating her hind end in a half circle. I have taken the finish off the verbal cue until the new finish is exactly what I want.)

FLY: Dog goes out to object, goes around, returns.

FRONT: Dog sits directly in front of handler until release.

GET: Dog picks up object and returns it.

GIVE: Dog drops whatever is in her mouth.

HOLD: Dog holds object in mouth until released.

INSIDE: Jump inside object.

LET'S GO (heel): Dog walks on handler's left side, no lagging or forging, stops when handler stops.

LICK: Dog licks lips.

OKAY: Dog is released from last cue given, dog should be relaxed.

OVER: Jump over object.

PICK UP: Dog picks up object.

PAW: Touch target with paw.

PLEASE: Dog puts chin on leg and looks up at me.

PUSH: Dog pushes ball or unrolls yoga mat.

RING: Dog hits button on bell.

SIT: Hind end on ground, immediate, until released, watches me; hand signal is palm up, lift hand up.

SPIN: Dog turns around counter-clockwise. Hand signal: I circle my index finger, which is pointing down.

STAND: All paws on ground, legs fully extended, until released.

TOUCH: Touch target with nose.

TUNNEL: Dog goes through tunnel.

UP: Jump on object.

WAIT: Dog doesn't move until I release her. Hand signal is palm in front of dog's face. For running wait the verbal cue is the same, but the right arm bends upward as if throwing a ball underhand.

XYZ: Dog dips head down.

Did you know that you can teach your dog to read? Well, if you can teach your dog to recognize something like the sight of your car keys as a cue, she can learn to recognize a few different symbols or shapes written on a sign. Teach her this additional cue the same way you taught her other additional cues as described below.

when you say the cue; if you see even the slightest movement that gives you an indication she's about to sit, praise her (Good girl!) and lure her the rest of the way into the sit position, then click/treat. By encouraging even her slightest movements, you can help increase her response to the verbal cue. With each successive repetition, slowly fade out the lure, and voila!, your dog will respond to your verbal "Sit!" cue.

HOW TO CHANGE OR ADD AN ADDITIONAL CUE

Dogs can learn multiple cues for a single behavior. I have three different cues for Willow's sit: a verbal cue (an auditory cue I can use if my hands are busy); a hand signal (a visual cue I can use if I'm talking); and the sight of car keys (another visual cue I trained just for the fun of it). I must continue to use and reinforce each cue periodically if I want Willow's response to these cues to be reliable.

If you want to change a cue, use the "new" cue, pause, then give the "known" cue, and click/treat the correct response. Repeat several times. Next, give the new cue, pause a little bit longer, give the known cue, then click/treat the desired behavior. This gives the dog time to associate the new cue with the old cue.

As you continue to repeat this exercise, before long, your dog will hear the new cue and move into the desired behavior before you have a chance to give the known cue. You'll be excited so don't forget to click and treat! Good job! You've just changed a cue.

Every dog learns at a different rate, just as we each do. I've seen dogs who can learn a new cue in as few as three or four clicks and others take longer. If you're doing a good job of minimizing your own body language, it will help your dog achieve success in a shorter amount of time.

CONFUSING OUR DOGS

So often in training, when a dog doesn't perform the desired behavior in



response to the given cue, we blame the dog. I often hear, "He's blowing me off!" or "She's being stubborn!" In reality, the handler just didn't make it clear enough for the dog to fully understand what the person was trying to teach. Here are ways we confuse our dogs:

■ EXPECTING OUR DOGS TO AUTOMATICALLY KNOW OUR LANGUAGE.

Dogs don't come with an English software package installed. We must patiently teach them our language, one cue at a time.

■ NOT TAKING THE TIME TO DEFINE THE CUE'S GOAL BEHAVIOR.

Have in mind the specific definition of what you expect. I suggest you create a cue dictionary. Write down every cue you currently use, then define the goal behavior for each cue. Do you want a straight sit with square hips or a sidesaddle sit? A speedy down or a slow down? Defining your cues and the goal behavior for each in writing will help you be clear in your own mind about what you expect, and that will make it more clear for your dog.

Check out the cue dictionary that my colleague, Sarah Foster of Cold Nose College Atlanta, put together for her dog, Jane (see page 7).

■ ADDING CUES TOO EARLY. It's important to teach your dog the behavior and make sure she can perform it reliably before adding the cue.

■ USING TWO CUES SIMULTANEOUSLY.

For example, a verbal cue and a body cue (hand signal): Dogs are keen observers. They pick up on our body language before they pick up on our words. If you use a verbal cue, but also a body movement with it (such as the word "sit" and then the hand signal for "sit"), I'd bet that if you said the word and didn't use the body movement, the dog probably wouldn't understand what you meant and might not give you the behavior you expect.

■ POOR REINFORCEMENT. Don't fail to reinforce the newly learned behavior enough for it to become fluent. Some dogs catch on very quickly; others more slowly, but they all can learn if we're patient and reinforce the desired behavior appropriately.

■ CHOOSING CUES THAT LOOK SIMILAR OR SOUND SIMILAR.

Choosing the verbal cues such as Down and Bow for two different behaviors can be confusing for your dog. Instead of Bow, I suggest Bravo or TaDa!

There are other reasons a dog doesn't respond to a cue: the dog didn't see or hear the cue; the dog didn't recognize the cue because it's too similar to another cue; the dog was distracted by the environment (another dog, person, squirrel); the dog felt unsafe.

So, repeat after me: "Don't blame the dog." Take a look at your training techniques and find a way to tweak the process so you can help your dog be successful. When your dog is successful, she earns reinforcement and that behavior you worked diligently to install and put on cue works perfectly. The result is clear communication with your favorite furry friend. Happy dog. Happy trainer! 🐾

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THE ABCS OF TRAINING

We have Edward Thorndike (1874 - 1949) to thank for teaching us about The Law of Effect. While studying behaviorism, he observed and described The Law of Effect, which states that behaviors change as a result of the consequences to actions. Boundless.com has a nice succinct explanation of The Law of Effect:

- ✓ The Law of Effect states that responses that produce a satisfying effect in a particular situation become more likely to occur again in that situation, and responses that produce a discomforting effect become less likely to occur again in that situation.
- ✓ Thorndike is the psychologist who first studied the Law of Effect by placing hungry cats inside puzzle boxes and observing their actions. He quickly realized that cats could learn the efficacy of certain behaviors and would repeat those behaviors that allowed them to escape faster.
- ✓ The Law of Effect is at work in every human behavior as well. From a young age, we learn which actions are beneficial and which are detrimental through a similar trial and error process.

(Source: Boundless. "Thorndike's Law of Effect." Boundless Psychology. Boundless 14 Nov. 2014.

Remember consequences (not cues) drive behavior.



Image © Thinkstock

A >>> B >>> C
Antecedent >>> Behavior >>>
Consequence

So what is an antecedent? Technically, antecedents are the conditions present prior to the behavior. In a training environment, some examples of antecedents are a food lure, a physical prompt, a verbal cue, or a hand signal that causes the behavior to occur. Then you have the behavior (the sit or spin or twirl), followed by the consequence of that behavior (food reward or life reward or other reinforcer). While the antecedent helped the behavior to happen, it's the *consequence* of the behavior that will affect the dog positively or negatively and cause the behavior to increase or decrease.

Behaviors that are reinforced will be repeated, even if they're unwanted behaviors. Remember to think about training from the dog's perspective. What's in it for the dog? Will the consequence be more likely to increase or decrease the behavior? Keeping the consequence in mind is a great way to think of solutions for solving unwanted behaviors. If your dog is counter-surfing, what's in it for the dog? You left a sandwich on the counter (antecedent), the dog jumped up and placed front paws on the counter (behavior), and the dog ate the sandwich (consequence). Because the dog surely enjoyed the sandwich, the behavior of jumping up on the counter is more likely to increase because it was reinforced.

If you're attempting to teach your dog new behaviors, you definitely want those behaviors to increase, so the consequence should always been something that's reinforcing to the dog.

Beauty for Ashes

A dedicated owner's journey through – and past – her dog's mental illness.

BY SUSAN KLAVON

Competing with our Sheltie Asta at her first agility trial was an answer to our prayers. After her diagnosis, we lived with months of uncertainty about what type of life she might have. Following her lovely debut, a friend aware of Asta's condition commented on how "normal" it all looked. But our path to that first agility competition was anything but "normal" because Asta has a mental illness.

People very rarely discuss mental illness in dogs, even though many families face this situation. The silence on this topic hampers them from finding much needed help and support.

This is the article I wish had been available to us when Asta's symptoms began – the story of one dog's journey through mental illness.

BRIGHT BEGINNINGS

By June 2012, my husband Ken and I had been on puppy wait lists for more than a year. At our first encounter, 9-week-old Asta and I quickly connected, but I wasn't sure if a dog of her petite size was the right fit for our family. When Ken and I visited her two weeks later, Asta chose us as much as we chose her, and we promised her a forever home.

Named after the crime-solving dog in "The Thin Man" movies from the 1930s and '40s, Asta is our fifth Sheltie. We love the breed for their beauty, intelligence, and willingness to work with their people. Our first Sheltie introduced us to dog sports, and each of our dogs has earned performance titles. We hoped Asta would one day, too.

Our first weeks together were happy. Blessed with a sunny disposition, Asta

loved to learn and was a star at puppy kindergarten. Our primary-care vet, Dr. Karen Hoffmann, borrowed a line from Mary Poppins to describe her: "Practically perfect in every way!" Asta enjoyed meeting new people and dogs. Very little bothered her.

Looking back, though, there were signs that something was amiss. Shortly after coming home, Asta periodically chased her tail (with one or two spins) during meal preparation. She also frequently licked our fireplace, even though I kept spraying it with Bitter Apple.

The list of odd behaviors grew along

with Asta. At four months old, she often stared at one of our end tables for as much as 30 seconds at a time, although there was nothing unusual on or behind the table. Her tail-chasing in our kitchen increased, with one episode lasting more than 38 seconds. I made mental notes, but wasn't particularly concerned.

INTO THE ABYSS

In mid-September, 5-month-old Asta suddenly started taking every opportunity to race along our fenceline as if she was chasing something – but nothing was ever there. She would also chase after things that weren't there during walks; she'd run straight up steep hills after figments of her imagination.

I assumed that these odd behaviors were just a training issue. But no training techniques helped, and our puppy class instructor had no suggestions. We didn't want her repeating undesirable behaviors, so we kept trying to stop her.

I contacted acquaintances with experience in dog training and behavior, but didn't find much help. While my first email inquiry mentioned the possibility of obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), I refrained from "diagnosing" the behavior myself, since I knew well there could be other explanations.

The frequency of Asta's odd behaviors rapidly escalated. Her tail-chasing occurred more frequently, in more contexts, and in a specific pattern (four spins to the right, four to the left, then four to the right). Her chasing after invisible things moved indoors, where she paced along the baseboards as if



Asta in July 2012, at about three months of age. She was a typically happy, bright, affectionate Shetland Sheepdog puppy. PHOTO BY KEN JUICKS.



By September 2012, at the age of five months, Asta's OCD symptoms were emerging full force. PHOTO BY JIM POOR, THE DOG SPORT PHOTOGRAPHERS.

hunting for something. Many times, when we stopped her chasing behaviors, Asta would suddenly focus on us as if to say, "Oh, you're there!"

About a month after these odd behaviors started, I took Asta to our veterinarian for her routine six-month well-puppy visit. I showed video to our primary-care vet, but had difficulty explaining the symptoms because they made no sense. With such limited information, Dr. Hoffmann thought Asta's quirks could be just a phase. If I remained concerned, it was her recommendation that I consult with certified dog training and behavior professional Pat Miller.

While my gut told me something was wrong – it was more than a phase – my work schedule couldn't accommodate a consult with Miller. Instead, I arranged for a home visit by an Associate Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist. She thought that we might need help from a veterinary behaviorist – a veterinarian who specializes in behavior – but she gave us a prevention and management plan to try. In addition, she taught me to describe Asta's symptoms in terms of duration, intensity, and frequency.

The behaviorist's plan reduced Asta's symptoms, but at significant cost. Because of the plan's stringent restrictions, Asta was always stressed (like the whole family) and her world shrank. After two weeks, the behaviorist said Asta's repetitive behaviors were "abnormal" and would return; she advised that we contact Dr. Hoffmann to get a veterinary behaviorist consult.

When Dr. Hoffmann called, we discussed Asta's worrisome symptoms. She recommended several specialists, and then asked how I was doing. I said I felt somehow responsible for Asta's problems, and she replied that is a common response when people see their pets suffer. Then she firmly and kindly stated that Asta's issues were not my fault.

Since Asta's symptoms were back and growing worse, I quickly set up a long-distance consult with Dr. Hoffman's top recommendation: veterinary behaviorist Karen Overall, VMD, author of a textbook on small-animal behavior conditions. I rushed to pull together and overnight all of the information Dr. Overall requested. She expected the consultation would take two to three weeks to complete.

Asta's descent into the abyss of uncontrollable, repetitive behaviors had been swift and inexorable. Her symptoms erupted around mid-September. By early December, she was on the verge of self-mutilation during tail-chasing, our house was barricaded to keep her from chasing invisible things along our baseboards, and we couldn't walk her at any time of day or night (even for a short potty break) without her chasing things that weren't there. We were desperate.

DIAGNOSIS: OCD

In mid-December Dr. Overall emailed her seven-page evaluation with 78 pages of attachments to Dr. Hoffmann and me. When the recommended ophthalmology consult and blood tests ruled out other medical conditions, Asta's diagnosis was obsessive-compulsive disorder.

While much remains unclear about this complex disorder, OCD is currently believed to involve issues with brain circuitry and chemistry. Dr. Overall's attachments and other resources helped us better understand OCD.

In OCD, normal dog behaviors, such as hunting, eating, and grooming, are repeated in excess (duration, intensity, frequency) and out of context. Common canine OCD behaviors include tail-chasing, fly-snapping, light-chasing, and licking. Hallucinations (as when Asta chased things that weren't there) can be involved. The prevalence of OCD is estimated at 1 to 8 percent of the general dog population, but occurs more frequently in certain breeds (such as Bull Terriers and Dobermans) and lines.

While OCD can emerge in dogs as young as three months and into young adulthood (18-36 months), why it develops remains unclear. Many people believe that abuse, neglect, boredom, and stress cause OCD, which can lead to families being blamed for their dog's illness (see "The Blame Game," next page). However, even well-cared-for dogs, like Asta, can develop OCD. A genetic basis has long been suspected; two research studies identifying gene and gene variants in OCD dogs were published in 2010 and 2014.

With no single test for OCD, diagnosis is made by behavior history, observation of behaviors (either directly or by video), and ruling out other medical conditions. The differential diagnosis often includes epilepsy, dermatologic conditions, and gastrointestinal issues. Early diagnosis and treatment are critical; the more the dog has practiced OCD behaviors, the harder it is to extinguish them. Working with a board-certified veterinary behaviorist like Dr. Overall is vital, since these specialists have the training and expertise to diagnose and treat these conditions.

As Asta experienced, untreated OCD typically worsens. OCD behaviors can take hours of a dog's time, interfere with quality of life, and lead to injury, such as bare spots from excessive grooming, bleeding paws from obsessive pacing, and bites during tail-chasing. Dogs can die from OCD, either due to self-inflicted

injury or euthanasia for seriously problematic behavior.

There is no “magic bullet” to treat OCD, which is incurable and usually requires lifelong care. Treatment involves a combination of medication, behavior modification, and management. Certain antidepressants, like Prozac, are used to treat human and canine OCD. Behavior modification involves teaching the dog relaxation and self-calming skills, as well as behaviors incompatible with his OCD symptoms. Management entails controlling the environment (for example, avoiding OCD triggers). Prognosis varies from dog to dog, but is positively affected by owner commitment and early diagnosis and treatment.

THE TIDE TURNS

The use of behavioral medications for dogs can be controversial. One common misconception is that these medicines turn dogs into glassy-eyed zombies. Instead, on medications Asta has become a bright-eyed, energetic dog fully engaged in life, rather than preoccupied with OCD behaviors most of the time.

Dr. Overall recommended two medications for Asta: clomipramine, an antidepressant that treats OCD; and gabapentin, an adjuvant therapy. She requested regular updates be sent to her and Dr. Hoffmann, so they could monitor Asta's progress.

Within a week of starting gabapentin, Asta started cuddling with us again, resumed some normal play behaviors, and showed slight decreases in some OCD symptoms. As her clomipramine dose was increased to the therapeutic range, we saw additional subtle improvements. The tide was slowly turning.

With the medications taking effect, we began behavior modification. Asta and I spent 15 minutes a day doing Dr. Overall's formal relaxation protocol. During walks Asta was reinforced for checking in with us or playing tug on her leash instead of chasing hallucinations. We rewarded sits and downs, behaviors incompatible with tail-chasing. We enrolled Asta in Control Unleashed, a class for “dogs with issues” that uses positive methods. Dr. Overall carefully monitored Asta's progress and compassionately answered our questions.

We didn't know what the future held for Asta. I never asked Dr. Overall for a prognosis because I was too afraid of the answer. I never set recovery goals for Asta to avoid putting pressure on her or

THE BLAME GAME

Dr. Overall's educational materials and other resources helped us better understand OCD. But this information in no way prepared me for being blamed for Asta's illness.

Blaming a person's mental illness on his family or upbringing is an all too frequent practice. Sadly, the same phenomenon occurs with dogs. In a TED talk for her book *Animal Madness*, Laurel Braitman discussed her dog Oliver, who had OCD and other issues. Two themes of blame emerge in the talk's comments section: Laurel needed to give Oliver more time and affection, not drugs, and she didn't understand her dog. In subtle and not-so-subtle words, I too have been blamed for Asta's mental illness and my bond with her has been questioned.

Being blamed for Asta's disease added to the burden of dealing with her challenging illness. In those early months I kept quiet about her diagnosis since my energy needed to be invested in her care instead of coping with thoughtless, and sometimes hurtful, comments. Choosing silence had the unfortunate consequence of cutting us off from potential sources of help and support when we truly needed them. I no longer participate in the blame game because I know Asta's OCD is not her fault or ours.

feeling disappointed with her. Instead I kept trying each day to get a little more “normal” into our lives.

As Asta's primary caregiver, I felt isolated and alone with her diagnosis. Experience taught me that I couldn't tackle the complexities of OCD on my own, but needed help from experts. Instead of getting frustrated at my inability, I gently reminded myself, “Be unafraid to ask for help.”

Despite improvements over those first eight weeks of treatment, life with Asta was still difficult. She quickly lost control when she saw wildlife during walks, which exacerbated her OCD. She had many challenging attention-seeking behaviors. Our nerves were frayed from dealing with these issues on top of her OCD. “Be unafraid to ask for help,” I told myself as I scheduled a consult with Pat Miller, who had worked with and written about OCD dogs.

“WHAT NOW?”

In March 2013, Asta and I drove to Peaceable Paws, Pat's facility in northwestern Maryland. Pat was compassionate, and empathized with the difficulties of living with Asta's OCD. But she also expertly dissected Asta's problem behaviors and had me commit to work her treatment plan. I felt renewed hope.

But there was an unexpected twist to our visit. As Pat commented that Asta's affect was slightly flattened, I realized

that I had noticed some recent mild sluggishness and inappetence. When I informed Dr. Overall, she explained that these mild symptoms could be due to re-regulation, a process where the body adjusts to medication. She was very supportive as she educated us on our options, including the complexities of switching medicines. Since Asta's OCD symptoms were improving, we all agreed to continue with the medication regimen, but monitor closely.

Dr. Overall had warned us that OCD has lots of ups and downs, which I felt anew. After so much improvement, I feared Asta was losing ground. I tried sharing our experiences with people outside of our trusted network of specialists and friends and was told Asta needed a new home and I didn't know how to handle her. I was very discouraged.

Out of the blue, a song helped me cope. “What now?” sang Stephen Curtis Chapman. “What will you do with this treasure you've found?” The lyrics reminded me how precious Asta is and encouraged me to keep trying.

After weeks of watchful waiting, the flattened affect, inappetence, and sluggishness from re-regulation abated. With Asta stabilized on medications, the 8-month-long acute crisis was finally over. Dr. Overall and I agreed that it was time to treat OCD as a chronic condition that we live with and manage.

In this new phase, we took to heart Pat's advice to "make haste slowly." Her point was that we shouldn't rush change, but build a solid foundation. We continued with behavior modification, although sometimes it didn't seem like much was happening.

But the tiny changes from the behavior modification added up. After 10 months of treatment, Asta's tail- and hallucination-chasing symptoms had decreased significantly, and she was often choosing to self-calm. Instead of telling her treatment team about these changes, we made a short video to show them (tinyurl.com/Asta-vid). Their response was touching, a celebration for us all.

DOORS OF OPPORTUNITY

Many educational resources recommend getting OCD dogs involved in performance activities, like agility, to give them a healthy outlet. However, none explain how to do this to truly benefit the dog. While both Dr. Overall and Pat Miller expressed some concerns about agility for Asta, they agreed we could try it as long as I monitored her reactions.

In March 2013 Asta and I started an agility foundation class with a skilled instructor who let dogs learn at their own pace. Before the onset of OCD, Asta learned quickly, but in agility class she was often slow to master new skills. Any time I got discouraged, Ken calmly affirmed that he thought Asta could do it and helped with her training.

After nine months of agility training and a year of treatment, Asta clearly communicated that she wanted "more."



With a door of opportunity opening, I took her to practice sessions where she completed complicated obstacle sequences. Her instructor saw the improvements and moved her up a class level. When a classmate commented that Asta changed dramatically over a three-week period, I couldn't explain why. Following her debut in January 2014, Asta's agility career blossomed.

More doors opened. In March 2014 Asta became less focused on chasing her outdoor hallucinations, and instead of physically stopping her, I could successfully use Pat's verbal positive interruptor technique. In May I was astonished to see her stopping the hallucinatory-chasing behavior before I could interrupt it! These changes enabled Asta to spend some supervised time off-leash in our fenced backyard, sunbathing, digging, and hanging out with us, just like our other dogs.

Asta in January 2014, jumping for joy before the start of an agility run.
PHOTO BY HEREFORDOGS.COM

Even well-controlled OCD waxes and wanes. With ongoing medication, behavior modification, and management, Asta has experienced 80 to 90 percent symptom improvement since diagnosis. Now we get to focus on Asta, instead of her OCD.

BEAUTY FOR ASHES

OCD has cost us dearly. The symptoms were stressful and uncomfortable for Asta – and the rest of the family! The illness took over large parts of her life and ours. Since OCD rarely goes away completely, we must keep dealing with it. Asta will always experience certain OCD-related restrictions, which sometimes affect our other dogs. Being unfairly blamed for Asta's illness also took its toll on us.

But on this side of the recovery process we see how we have been given beauty for ashes. With continued treatment Asta leads a high-quality life. Our bond with her has been strengthened from all that we have been through. Our lives have been immeasurably enriched by the care, kindness, and compassion Asta's treatment team, family, and friends have shown us on this journey. Each day we experience the miracle of Asta's recovery.

Oddly enough, OCD has taught me so much above love. Before she stabilized on medications, Asta's behaviors were so difficult that many times I didn't feel love toward her – or even like her. But as Fred Rogers (of "Mister Rogers' Neighborhood") once said, "Love isn't a state of perfect caring. It is an *active* noun like struggle. To love someone is to strive to accept that person exactly the way he or she is, right here and now." We struggled long and hard, and that reveals the depth of our love for Asta, OCD and all.

We have no idea where Asta's journey will lead us next. But that journey would be incomplete if we didn't share her story so that other families in similar situations know that they are not alone in the struggle. 🐾

Susan Klavon lives in Gaithersburg, Maryland, where she coordinates a county-wide project that provides holiday assistance to needy residents. Asta is working on her CPE and AKC agility championships.

TO LEARN MORE

✓ VETERINARY OVERVIEW OF OCD:

petwave.com/Dogs/Health/Obsessive-Compulsive-Disorder.aspx

✓ PAT MILLER'S WHOLE DOG JOURNAL ARTICLES ON OCD:

whole-dog-journal.com/issues/13_9/features/Dogs-With-OCD_20062-1.html
whole-dog-journal.com/issues/11_10/features/Dogs-With-OCD_16069-1.html

✓ LIST OF BOARD-CERTIFIED VETERINARY BEHAVIORISTS

dacvb.org/about/member-directory/

✓ MANUAL OF CLINICAL BEHAVIORAL MEDICINE FOR DOGS AND CATS

by Karen Overall, MA, VMD, PhD, DACVB, CAAB (2013 Mosby, 832 pages)

✓ "OBSESSIVE-COMPULSIVE DISORDERS"

by Dr. Nicholas Dodman (2009 DVD, Tawzer Dog LLC)



The “cookie stretch” is borrowed from handling horses (where one would call it a “carrot stretch!). Lure your dog with a treat so that he stretches to one side and then the other. Use your leg or free hand to prevent him from moving his feet to follow the treat.

Athletic Support

Reduce the risk of injury to your canine athlete with a little prep and post-exercise attention.

BY CYNTHIA FOLEY

Professional human athletes never skip a proper warmup. That’s because research has proven, repeatedly, that preparing your muscles for upcoming physical activity reduces the risk of physical injury. And for them, an injury could impact their wallet with down time.

Actually, an injury to our dog could impact our wallets, too, translating into veterinary bills. More importantly, it means down time for our canine pal, so we don’t want him to overindulge in activity he isn’t physically ready to perform.

Note: We are assuming your dog is properly conditioned for the task at hand. If your dog isn’t physically fit, the warmup alone could even be too much for him. Fatigue can also result in injuries. Watch for limping, avoidance, loss of interest, cringing when you

touch him, and excessive panting. It’s important to know when your dog has had enough and stop. If you’re not sure how hard your dog can exercise, talk with your veterinarian or a professional trainer.

WARM UP RIGHT

Consider how most dogs spend their days while you’re at work. Whether inside or out, they’re rarely active. They’re waiting for you to return home. Sure, they might mosey on over to the water bowl,

but then they’ll flop down and continue to wait. It’s even worse if you have to keep your dog in a crate or kennel for more than a few hours.

This long period of inactivity causes cold and contracted muscles. Unprepared for activity, a cold muscle is more easily injured – and recovery can take six weeks or more of inactivity, during which time more fitness can be lost. A warm muscle is ready to stretch and support.

Of course, warm muscles can be injured, too, but it’s still wise to get your dog’s “muscle motor” going before engaging in strenuous activity. A warmup increases the heart rate, which generates greater circulation, which delivers more oxygen to the muscles. As his muscles warm and lengthen, they become more pliable, ready to flex, bend, and move. He’ll be alert physically and mentally, whether it’s playing just fetch or practicing a disc dog routine for competition.

Warmup exercises don’t have to be regimented, long, or boring. They’re a gradual build-up that focuses on the muscles your dog will use in the activities you direct. If all you’re going to do is take your dog for a long walk, the warmup might be walking slowly for two or three minutes. In fact, nearly every warmup (for any sport) should begin with five to 10 minutes of walking. Toward the end of the period, you can start ramping things up a bit, depending upon what you plan to do with your dog.

“Warmup routines need to vary for the level of exertion expected of the dog. All dogs who compete should start off with at least a few minutes of walking, especially if they had been crated,” says Andrea Lee, MS, DVM, of Syracuse, New York, an owner and trainer of Brittans with conformation and agility championships. “My warmup routine depends on the age of the dog and the dog’s orthopedic history. My older dog who has had multiple stifle injuries and whose back sometimes gets sore

1



WARMUP GAMES AND EXERCISES

1 WALKING – Every dog should be walked at least two to three minutes prior to starting activity. For more strenuous activities, walk longer and include some jogging toward the end. There is no better gait for overall exercise than a brisk walk.

behavior, until he firmly associates the cue, the behavior, and a reward.) The bow provides a great stretch of the spine, hips, and shoulders.

2



2 TUG – Most dogs love to play tug, which is an excellent active-stretching whole-body muscle warmup.

5 COOKIE STRETCHES – Another steal from the equine world (called “carrot stretches”), these are a dog favorite. Take a treat and ask the dog to reach around his body without moving his feet, stretching his spine and shoulders toward the treat. You want him to reach around his body. Don’t expect him to reach all the way to his hips on the first few stretches. Remember, this is a warmup. Do this to the left and to the right several times, rewarding him when he reaches for it by stretching his shoulders and neck around to the treat. Great for spinal stretching.

5



3 STAND ON HIND LEGS – Use

a treat to lure your dog to put his front feet up on a

chair or stand and then reach for the cookie. This helps stretch his hips.

6 PUPPY GYMNASTICS –

Named because it involved the basic movements a dog learns as a puppy, it involves repeatedly asking the dog to sit, down, stand up, circle left, circle right – done multiple times. It’s a terrific warm-up exercise for the whole body that’s made all the more fun by rewarding the efforts every couple of moves.

3



4 BOW – You may be able to use a treat to lure your dog down into the “bow” position from a stand; alternatively, some people “capture” this behavior and put it on one cue. (This is done by “catching” the dog when he naturally

7 CIRCLE LEFT/RIGHT – Many dogs are actually taught the words right and left with this game. Take a treat, say right, and lure your dog around in a tight circle to the right. Eventually, you may say “Right,” and he’ll spin right around. Repeat to the left. Builds flexibility.

performs a play bow in the middle of a game such as “chase me,” and using the click of a clicker or a verbal marker, such as the word “Yes!” when he bows, and then giving him a

treat. When he starts offering the bow in hopes of getting a treat, add a verbal cue or hand signal, and continue to mark and reinforce the

8 BACKING UP –

There are many ways to teach your dog to back up, but one of the simplest is to ask him to stand still and simply walk toward him. When he takes a step backward, immediately reward it (or click and reward). With repetition, you can eventually say, “Back,” and he’ll quickly back right up, which is a terrific warmup for the rear end muscles.

7



4



9 SIDE-STEPPING – Taught in a manner similar to backing up, this helps exercise helps warm up the glutes and hips.

receives the most extensive warmup (and cooldown). I will take her through five minutes of walking, followed by two to three minutes of trotting and a few sprints – actually, recalls or else I have to sprint with her! Then I use some active stretching.”

Active stretches, not static stretches, are acceptable for warmups. The term “active stretching” means the dog is doing the muscle stretching, not the person, such as the dog reaching forward for a treat, stretching his back. Your dog isn’t likely to stretch himself beyond his comfort zone.

A “static stretch,” on the other hand, is when the person stretches the dog’s muscles, such as by pulling gently on a hind leg. Static stretches can damage cold muscles and should only be used during the after-activity cooldown (more on that below).

“I use warmup stretches with my dog with the orthopedic history, but prefer to do active stretches so that the muscles are not overstretched if the dog is not warm enough yet. I usually do these with something yummy the dog can lick, and these stretches mostly involve the spine and neck because when she runs, she hyperextends her back,” Dr. Lee says.

Timing your warmup is important because as soon as the dog stops moving, his muscles begin to cool and contract. Schedule your warmup for no more than 20 or 30 minutes prior to the activity.

“To keep my dog warm while waiting for her turn in the ring, we walk and practice some of her old rehab moves, mostly moving backward and side-stepping,” Dr. Lee says. “My goal is to have her lightly panting when we are ready to start.”

Tailor your warmup to the activity at hand. If you’re competing in a sport that requires jumping, like agility, you’ll want to include some warmup jumps before entering the ring. If you’re doing lure coursing, you’ll want to include some increasingly fast running. Disc dog? Be sure you have your dog do some turns, circles, and hip exercises.

“My younger dogs get walked for at least five minutes, then outside the ring,

we do hand touches alternating sides so they have to bounce back and forth. We also spin right and left and practice heeling,” Dr. Lee says. “When I did obedience, we practiced lots of heeling outside the ring, not only to warm up the dog, but also to hopefully gain her focus.”

COOL IT

Just as important to your dog’s athletic health is what you do with your dog after her intense exercise.

As we said earlier, muscular cooldown and contraction begins as soon as your dog stops working. Post activity, chances are his heart and respiratory rates are still high, and he may be panting. If your dog’s been running, just slow to a normal walk and gradually allow the dog to slow further. The cooldown period can be as little as five minutes; just watch for signs your dog is returning to normal. For example, her panting should slow down, slow down some more, and unless it’s hot outside, she should begin to breathe with her mouth closed. Offer her some fresh, cool water to keep her hydrated, and then you can start some gentle massage.

Describing how to do static stretches is beyond the scope of this article, but if you already do static stretches on your dog’s front legs/shoulders and rear legs/hips, make sure you attempt these only during this cooldown phase, when the dog’s muscles are warm and fully pliable. Always use gentle, steady pressure, staying within the dog’s comfort level. If he objects, you are pulling too hard or in an improper direction. It’s wise to work with an experienced person the first time you use these stretches, as you can cause harm, too. Remember that you’re not just influencing the limb you manipulate; consider all the muscles, tendons, and joints that are connected to it, as well.

“I do stretches as part of a cooldown

for my dog with the orthopedic history. I do brisk walking, then normal paced walking, then slower walking, then massage and active stretching. My younger dogs just get a walk. I do not want them to be panting heavily when they are placed in the crate after an agility run,” says Dr. Lee.

Keep the ambient temperature in mind, too, when your dog completes exercise. If it’s very warm out, you may want to use a little water to help cool your dog (see “Cool Your Hot Dog,” WDJ July 2015). If it’s cold, you may want to put a coat on your dog prevent a too-rapid cooling of the muscles, which could cause cramps.

PULLING IT TOGETHER

Research has repeatedly shown that warmup and cooldown sessions improve athletic performance. Equestrians have been long-time proponents of warming up and cooling down their horses. When I learned to ride, we were taught that every ride started and ended with a 10-minute walk, followed by walking the horse by hand until he was completely cool. For many dog owners it can be just as simple.

“For pet owners whose dogs like to play, I’d recommend starting off with some leash walking prior to hard play,” Dr. Lee says. “If the dog loves fetch, start with some shorter, lower tosses and build up to the longer, higher throws. Reverse for the cooldown.”

Take the time and care to provide simple, effective, and healthy procedures, tailored for your dog’s activity level. Compared to a painful injury, expensive treatment, and lengthy rehabilitation, it’s worth the small investment of time. 🐾

Cynthia Foley is an active horsewoman and agility-dog competitor in upstate New York.

Consider doing a warmup with your active dog even before something as informal as just allowing him to run off-leash or play chase games with other dogs. This sort of exercise can be as intense as any organized sport.





The success of your dog's surgery is not totally in the hands of his or her surgeon; your actions in the weeks and days before that surgery can have a big impact on how well your dog recovers from the procedure.

🐾 HEALTH 🐾

Operation K9

Preparing your dog for a successful surgery.

BY DENISE FLAIM

The word “surgery,” which dates back to the ancient Greeks and Romans, literally means “hand work.” And, of course, one of the biggest ingredients for a successful outcome is the person at the other end of the scalpel: Everyone wants their dog in the hands of a knowledgeable, experienced, and competent surgeon. But there's also a great deal that *you* can do to help your dog navigate her surgical procedure as smoothly and safely as possible, whether it's a complicated orthopedic reconstruction, or a run-of-the-mill teeth cleaning.

No matter how skillful the veterinarian, surgery is an invasive procedure that puts stress on your dog and can open the door to problems if her body is not up to the challenge. The greater your lead time, the more opportunity you have to help prime her for the physical challenge ahead.

QUESTION THE PREMISE

But let's back up a second. One of the most important considerations about your dog's impending surgery is whether it is even necessary. Obviously, if he's had his leg shattered in a car accident or swallowed a corn cob (which is supremely indigestible, by the way – be very careful

to put those buttery barbecue leftovers in a secure trash receptacle), going under the knife is likely unavoidable. But what about elective surgeries, or those that aren't life threatening? It's worth a little research and a second opinion to determine if there is a less invasive way to deal with the problem.

Consider, for example, a dog who has chronically impacted and infected anal sacs. These glands, located on either side of the anus, secrete a potent-smelling, oily brown liquid that is usually expressed during bowel movements. But sometimes, the ducts in the glands become clogged, leading to “butt scooters” who drag their bottoms across the floor to relieve their discomfort. If infection is present, antibiotics are usually prescribed, along with warm compresses to reduce inflammation; in severe cases where an abscess has formed, the veterinarian might need to lance the area.

For many dogs, impacted or infected anal sacs are a one-time problem that resolves itself with time and treatment, and never recurs. But in dogs for whom

this is a chronic problem, removal of the anal sacs is often recommended.

This surgery – formally called an anal saccullectomy – is not without its risks, one of which is permanent incontinence. But when anal-sac infections are a constant and seemingly intractable problem, what's an owner to do?

Diet modification is one possibility. Many owners have reported that a switch to a raw-food diet has cleared up their dogs' persistent anal-sac woes. Because of their high bone content, the stools of raw-fed dogs are very hard, and they naturally express the anal sacs, arguably much more effectively than the cooked "high fiber" diets that are often recommended for this problem.

Holistic veterinarian Christina Chambreau of Sparks, Maryland, adds torn cruciate ligaments to the list of issues that don't necessarily have to be solved with surgery. "All that most conventional veterinarians can offer are braces, surgery, or just letting the dog limp," she says. "There are multiple holistic approaches that can resolve stretched cruciate ligaments and sometimes resolve even completely torn ones."

Dentistry is another area where she suggests a fresh look; ask your veterinarian if there is an acceptable alternative to putting your dog under for a regular cleaning. If anesthesia is unavoidable, though, don't fret. "Many people are really afraid of anesthesia in their older dogs, though anesthesia is now so safe, other than the odd reaction, that most animals will do fine regardless of their age," Dr. Chambreau says.

Some common elective surgeries can benefit from you taking a step back and reassessing the best timing for your dog. For example, attitudes about the appropriate time for spaying and neutering have evolved in recent years. Once routinely and reflexively done at six months of age, desexing is now sometimes performed much later, allowing the dog to mature physically before shutting off the hormonal spigot.

Today, anesthesia very safe for most dogs, even seniors in good health. However, pre-surgical blood chemistry tests should be performed to make sure there are no underlying conditions, such as low functioning of the liver, which is responsible for clearing the anesthetics from his bloodstream.

Do your research to make sure you are comfortable with the timing your veterinarian is recommending. See "Altered Consciousness," WDJ February 2013, for more information about the timing of spay/neuter surgery.

The bottom line: In cases where surgery is elective, or at least not an emergency, take a moment to research whether there is a less invasive, gentler way of dealing with the problem. Often, an appointment with a holistic veterinarian is invaluable in this regard.

GETTING THE BUGS OUT

Most dog owners know the basics of prepping their dog in the days before surgery: Withhold food and water 12 to 24 hours beforehand, depending on your vet's instructions, to ensure that the stomach is empty and there is no risk of your dog vomiting during the procedure.

Inform your veterinarian of any medications or supplements that you give your dog, and follow directions about if and when to discontinue them. Some herbs and nutraceuticals, such as Ginkgo biloba and Vitamin E, can thin the blood and increase bleeding, which are definitely no-nos with an impending surgery. Still others, such as large doses of Vitamin C, may interfere with anesthesia – another risk you want to avoid.

Expect that your veterinarian will order a pre-operative blood panel (see "It's in the Blood," March 2015) to make sure that there is no underlying condition that could compromise your dog's ability to withstand the physical stress of surgery. If your veterinarian notices

any other medical values that are "off," she might require further screening. For example, a heart murmur in an older dog could be a compelling reason to do an echocardiogram, to rule out congestive heart failure, heartworm infection, or a structural problem in the heart.

Board-certified veterinary surgeon Tomas Infernuso of Veterinary Traveling Surgical Services in Locust Valley, New York, says one of the biggest problems with surgery is the risk of contamination. Virtually everything in the hospital environment – the veterinary staff, the surgical instruments, your dog's skin, even the air in the room – can transmit bacteria into your dog's body. For this reason, many veterinarians administer antibiotics as a precaution before, during, and sometimes for a period after the surgery. With all these external agents for transmitting infection, the last thing your dog needs is a threat from within.

"If your dog has an infection, like a urinary-tract infection, you need to make sure you take care of that before the surgery, or you risk spreading it," Dr. Infernuso cautions. Similarly, he will postpone surgery if a dog has untreated periodontal disease, because of concerns about bacteremia, or bacteria in the blood. "Bacteria from the oral cavity can spread to the bloodstream," he explains. "Many of these patients have a low grade of sepsis, which can potentially turn into a high grade."

Another less obvious risk for a dog headed for surgery is a close haircut. If you're someone who does a "shave down" of your long-coated dog during the hot



summer months (even though most experts say you shouldn't – see "Cool That Hot Dog," July 2015), think again. Trimming a dog's fur isn't an issue; it's shaving that gets down to the skin that is contraindicated before surgery.

"When you shave a dog, it can create a lot of abrasion on the skin," Dr. Infernuso explains. "That can allow staph bacteria to go from the skin into the bloodstream."

CLEAN AND READY

Good grooming doesn't just make your dog look more appealing: It can also make recovery safer for him, especially if his nails are too long; they'll make it that much easier for him to scratch at and dislodge stitches. You can ask for your dog's nails to be clipped while he is under anesthesia, though if they are really long, they won't be able to shorten them enough in one session to prevent your dog from using them to damage an incision. If you have a few weeks before the surgery, you'll likely be more successful doing them yourself. If you grind them with a hand-held rotary tool like the Dremel, you can plan a manicure every three to four days. When you are drilling away, work all around the nail, including the sides, which will prompt the quick to recede that much faster.

If your dog hasn't had a bath in a while, consider bathing her the day before surgery, as you likely won't be able to drench her in water for some time after the surgery. Be on the lookout for fleas. They must be dealt with before your dog goes under the knife; you don't want your dog itching and scratching and chewing herself as she recovers.

Many dogs will be required to wear a cone or Elizabethan collar after surgery, to prevent them from reaching and worrying the surgery site. If your dog is not happy wearing one – or has never worn one before – get her used to wearing it. In the weeks leading up to the surgery, have her wear it for a few minutes each day, gradually leaving it on for longer and longer periods. Instead of the traditional hard-plastic cone, which can impede your dog's mobility, not to mention scratch up all your wood furniture, check out the soft fabric collars that are available. Test one out to see if it can hold up to your dog's contortions.

Think ahead to the accommodations your dog will need once she gets home: If her wound will be draining, make sure you have plenty of fresh, clean bedding



Shop for an alternative to the classic veterinarian-issued "cone" that will prevent your dog from reaching his incision; there are many comfortable options on the market that will distress your dog less.

on hand; keep clean sheets covering her freshly washed dog bed. If she's going to be limping, or hobbling around on three legs, make sure there is a non-slip, easily navigable path to her potty spot. If she's a large dog, look into ways to give her some support or guidance as she's walking, either by making a sling out of a king-sized pillowcase or twin sheet to pass under her body, or investing in a support harness that lets you maneuver and guide your dog when she's less than steady on her feet.

Finally, fat dogs are at a greater risk for surgical complications, including poor recovery from anesthesia. "A lot of these patients are diabetic, or have Cushing's disease," explains Dr. Infernuso, adding that the high levels of glucose in their systems can make them susceptible to post-operative infections and slow healing. And once they go home from the hospital, their extra padding can undo any benefits of the surgery. Excess pounds amplify the impact on the dog's joints; for example, if you dog went in for a knee surgery, putting all his excess weight in the other side might cause that knee to blow out, too, leaving him literally without a leg to stand on. Keeping your dog slim should be a priority at any time, but in the weeks or months before a planned surgery, achieving even a little weight loss would be beneficial. See "Lean This Way," January 2014, and "Counting Calories," September 2009.

EMOTIONAL RESCUE

While ensuring your dog is in peak physical condition before surgery is optimal, his emotional state is just as important.

If you have some lead time, start working on desensitizing your dog to visiting the veterinary clinic, so the day of surgery isn't as traumatic for him. Ideally, pop into your vet's office daily – or as often as you can manage it – just for a quick hello and a windfall of treats. The idea, of course, is for your dog to associate the vet clinic as a place where Good Things Happen.

Dr. Chambreau advises scheduling extra time in the two or three weeks before surgery to do what your dog loves. That might be some games of fetch (if his physical condition permits) or visits to the dog park when his favorite regulars are there.

"If your dog's a cuddler, then make sure she's getting the extra attention she wants," she says. This isn't just feel-good indulgence; tending to your dog's emotional well-being will boost her endorphins and other beneficial hormones, translating into an elevated state of physical wellness as well.

This is a good time to employ any safe and gentle holistic practices you are familiar with to calm, center, or balance your dog, such as reiki, quantum touch, reconnection healing, flower essence remedies, aromatherapy, TTouch, or massage.

And don't forget to calm and center yourself! After all, waiting for your dog to get out of surgery and to receive the veterinary surgeon's report can feel like an eternity. 🐾

Denise Flaim of Revodana Ridgebacks in Long Island, New York, shares her home with three Ridgebacks, 11-year-old triplets, and a very patient husband.

On Guard

Resource-guarding and what to do about it.

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

The term “resource-guarding” sends a chill through most canine behavior professionals. This is because they understand that the aggression a dog displays when guarding a valuable resource can lead to a serious injury to a human in any future home of that dog. And because of this, a display of the behavior means an almost certain death sentence for that dog, especially if the guarding occurs during a behavioral assessment of a dog in a shelter or rescue. But *should* resource-guarding trigger such drastic reactions? There is a growing body of evidence that perhaps we’ve been overreacting all these years.

Resource guarding is, in fact, a natural, normal canine behavior, and an important survival strategy. For a wild animal, loss of important resources can mean death. If they allowed other dogs – or any other animal who happened along as they were eating – to take their food away, they wouldn’t live long enough for the species to survive! So how did a natural, normal behavior come to be so demonized that countless dogs have lost their lives as a result?

ASSESSMENT PROTOCOLS

Prior to the 1990s, assessments of canine

behavior were conducted at shelters on a haphazard basis, if at all. At the time, when some 18 million homeless dogs and cats were euthanized at shelters annually, *any* presentation of aggression, including resource-guarding, was enough reason to land a dog on the euthanasia list.

As spay and neuter efforts and other education programs became increasingly effective, shelter numbers started to decline, and many animal protection professionals were able to begin making more thoughtful and measured decisions through more standardized assessment processes. Still, the often-dramatic

responses dogs can offer when protecting their valuables continued to make it highly likely that a dog who guarded was selected for euthanasia. And since “resource-guarding” had a bad name as an easily identifiable trigger for aggression, even less intense guarding responses were still likely to result in the dog’s death.

In the 1990s, a couple of standardized assessment protocols became popular among animal shelter staffers. One was developed by dog training professional Sue Sternberg, who was at one time employed by the ASPCA in New York City, where one of her responsibilities was assessing dogs for adoption. In 1993, Sternberg established a private animal shelter, the Roundout Valley Animals for Adoption, in upstate New York. In the same time frame, she became a popular presenter in dog training and animal sheltering circles on the value of using a standardized assessment protocol to evaluate dogs for adoption, in order to protect the public and help make better adoption matches. She offered her own protocol as a model that other professionals could use as-is, or as a starting place for development of their own protocol.

Part of Sternberg’s “Assess-A-Pet” protocol was a resource-guarding assessment, using a tool she called the “Assess-A-Hand” – a fake rubber hand mounted at the end of a stick (to put a bit of distance between the dog’s teeth and the person doing the assessing). The fake hand would be used near the canine assessment subject, to determine his response if approached by a human while in possession of a valuable resource.

Another popular protocol was developed and promoted by Dr. Emily Weiss, a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist and the Senior Director of Research and Development for the ASPCA. Her protocol, the Safety Assessment For Evaluating Rehoming (SAFER Test), includes Sternberg’s Assess-A-Hand resource-guarding test.

As animal protection professionals became convinced of the value and importance of assessing adoption dogs

While most of us are alarmed by the dramatic expressions and sounds that some dogs make in order to guard things that are valuable to them (i.e., food, toys, beds), the behavior is actually meant to prevent physical confrontation.



in order to ensure public safety, it seemed logical to refrain from placing dogs who demonstrated overt, identifiable aggressive behaviors, including guarding. The overreaction – euthanasia of all dogs who displayed any signs of resource-guarding, stemmed from a well-meaning desire to not put adopters at risk. But it was, in fact, an overreaction.

For eight years, I volunteered at the nearby Humane Society of Washington County. We assessed dogs using a modified version of a protocol developed by Kelly Bollen for her master's thesis. Bollen's protocol was a modified version of Sue Sternberg's, and also included the resource-guarding test.

When I started volunteering there in 2004, *any* sign of resource-guarding resulted in euthanasia for the dog. By the time I left in 2012, we had created a range of outcomes for dogs who displayed any amount of guarding on the continuum of guarding behavior, and only the most extreme cases were euthanized (see table on page 23).

Because resource-guarding behaviors can often be managed or modified, thoughtful placement on the continuum, paired with appropriate options for dogs of each designation, helped determine positive outcomes for more dogs. Some of the options included careful placement in an experienced home without small children, behavior-modification work in a foster home prior to placement, and transfer to a rescue group with the resources to manage and modify the behavior.

Of course, each shelter and rescue organization has its own tolerance for risk, and has to make its own decisions about what level of guarding they feel is suitable for placement.

MANAGING GUARDING BEHAVIOR

Three of my four current dogs (all adopted from shelters) will readily guard resources, both from other dogs and humans. Because we have no small children in our home, and because my husband Paul and I are knowledgeable and capable canine caretakers, we choose to mostly manage rather than modify our dogs' behaviors.

Our management of the dogs' guarding behavior includes feeding Scooter, our Pomeranian, in a separate room with the door closed, and monitoring the other three while they

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT RESOURCE-GUARDING

Keep the following facts in mind about resource-guarding behavior in dogs:

- ✓ Resource-guarding is a natural, normal behavior.
- ✓ Resource-guarding is often manageable.
- ✓ Resource-guarding is often modifiable.
- ✓ Small children and others who won't or can't moderate their own behavior are at .greatest risk of being bitten.
- ✓ If you confront a dog who is guarding resources you will make the behavior worse.
- ✓ While some dogs who guard can inflict serious injury, especially if their warning signs are ignored or challenged, many dogs who guard do not ever actually bite.

eat. We also separate the dogs when we give them high-value chews, using crates, baby gates, and closed doors. Also, we always ask them to trade for a treat when we need to take something from them, as opposed to trying to grab it from their mouths – a good idea even if your dog *doesn't* guard.

If you are considering the management option for your resource-guarder, critically evaluate your home environment to determine if management is truly a realistic long-term solution. Here are some of the factors that would suggest behavior modification might be needed in addition to management:

- Children live in or regularly visit the home.
- One of more adults living in the home will not dependably adhere to management protocols.
- Dog's guarding behavior is fierce and unpredictable (will guard random dropped/found objects, not just food).

If you decide that your dog needs some behavior modification, remember that for at least the short term, you will *also* need to put stringent management measures in place. While management always carries the possibility of failure, the more you do to reduce that possibility, the safer everyone in the home, canine and human, will be.

MODIFYING GUARDING BEHAVIOR

Dogs guard resources because they fear losing them. Sometimes the fear is learned through experience; someone has been taking valuable resources away from the dog. Some silly humans seem to think they have an absolute right to take anything away from their dogs at anytime, and their dogs should let them, without protest. That's a *terrific* way to create a resource-guarding behavior. It's rude to grab something from someone; we learned that in kindergarten, right? I would no more rudely grab something from a dog than I would from another human. (However, I teach all of my dogs to politely give up valued food or toys, by trading them for even better ones. See sidebar, page 22 for details.)

Other dogs are "guardy" from a very early age, even absent known encounters with rude, resource-grabbing humans. Even six- to eight-week-old puppies can show resource-guarding behavior to their littermates and to humans.

Either way, our goal is to convince dogs that a human approaching them when they are in possession of a resource is not a threat to their resource, but rather, predicts the arrival of *more* good stuff!

Caveat: If your dog has caused serious injury to a person or another animal, or you are not comfortable implementing this protocol on your own, please seek the assistance of a qualified positive behavior professional.

TEACHING TRADE

It's important to be able to ask your dog to give something to you, especially something he is not supposed to have. If you take away only those things that are forbidden to him, he will learn to play the keep-away game, or worse, he may learn to resource-guard. If your dog already guards resources, you may need to do some behavior modification before it is safe to play the "trade" game with him. Ask a professional for help with this if you don't think it's safe.

To teach "Trade," give your dog a toy or other object that he likes to play with. When he is happily playing, offer him a high-value treat. As he drops the toy to take the treat, say "Trade!" and click your clicker (or use a verbal marker, such as the word "Yes!") and feed him the treat while you pick up the object with your other hand. *Be sure to keep his mouth fully engaged with eating treats from your treat hand while you pick up the toy with the other.* Then, give him back the toy or object. If he disengages from the treats, drop the toy and try again. By playing "Trade" with you, he will learn that he doesn't lose



the valuable object, but rather, gets something *else* good and gets his toy or chewie back.

It's really important to maintain the same, happy, "We're playing a game!" demeanor when you need to get something from him that he wasn't supposed to have. Whether he has grabbed a package of rat poison or is playing with your grandmother's antique lace doily, you will get the object back faster and with less damage by playing "trade" than if you go into panic mode and try to grab it from him. Of course, when you do this with a "forbidden object," you won't give it back to him, but that should happen so infrequently that he will learn to willingly give you things when you ask, instead of playing the keep-away game. You can also do this with higher-value items (such as stuffed Kongs and pig ears) as long as you can find a treat with a high-enough value to trade for. You may need to work up to trading him for the items that are of the highest value to him.

If your dog won't give up the toy, do *not* try to push his nose away from it. You want him to give it up happily and voluntarily. Instead, drop a "Hansel and Gretel" trail of treats, with your treat hand at the end of the trail to keep him engaged while you pick up the toy with your other hand. Make sure that at no time you use threatening body posture or movements that make him defensive.

Tito is a great example of a rehabilitated resource-guarder. Even though he can be fairly intense about guarding (especially balls and food), he's small, has good bite inhibition, and does not live with children, so he wasn't a serious threat to anyone, even before management and modification. The only problem is that he's a whiz at the trade game: Bring a low-value treat, and he'd rather keep his ball. Bring a treat that's very high-value, and his speedy dive for the snack may frighten you. (His teeth don't hurt, however; that bite inhibition is good stuff!)

Here is my favorite protocol for modifying resource-guarding behavior. If at any time as you work through these steps, your dog growls or exhibits any other guarding behavior, you are too close and/or have proceeded too quickly.

1 Prepare an ample supply of high-value treats that you can toss. Small bits of cheese or meat work well.

2 Tether your dog to an eye bolt affixed to the wall for that purpose, or to a solid, heavy object. Give him a valuable chew object (not a Kong – it will roll out of his reach!), or a small bowl of food.

3 As your dog chews or eats, walk past him, taking care to stay at a safe

distance from him. This may be six to eight feet beyond the end of the tether, or it may be closer. As you pass, toss several treats where he can easily reach them, near the bowl or chewie. Keep walking; do not pause to toss the treats. If your dog growls, lunges, or shows other obvious guarding behavior, *you are too close.*

4 Repeat Step 3 until, as you approach, you see your dog starting to look up in happy anticipation of the treats you are going to toss. When he does this *consistently*, decrease the distance between you by a *few inches* on your next passes.

5 Continue passing by and dropping treats, *gradually* decreasing the distance between you and your dog when

you see that he is consistently happy (not showing any stiffness or signs of guarding) at each new distance.

6 When he is happy with you walking past at a distance close enough to touch him, pause as you pass, feed him a treat from your hand, then walk on.

7 When he stays happy with your pause-and-feed, gradually increase the length of time you pause and feed him. *The increase should be no more than 1-2 seconds.* As you increase the length of your pause, start talking to him in a happy voice as you feed him.

8 When you can pause for 10 seconds and he stays happy, occasionally bend

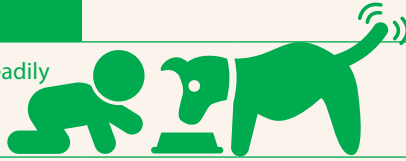
Possible Continuum of Outcomes for Guarding Behavior Exhibited in Shelter Assessments

Dogs who exhibit degrees of resource-guarding can be safely placed in homes with appropriate management and modification.

SHARES RESOURCES

SHARES

Interested in food or object, but will readily and happily give it up. *Appropriate for adoption to any suitable home.*



USUALLY
SHARES
WELL

Continues eating with no signs of uneasiness; mild resistance to giving up object. *Appropriate for adoption to any suitable home.*

SHARES
WITH MILD
RESISTANCE

Continues eating; mild resistance to giving up object or food. *Appropriate for adoption to any suitable home.*

SHARES
WITH SOME
TENSION

Some tension with food bowl or object; eats faster; resists giving or tries to leave with object. *Appropriate for adoption to any suitable home willing and able to implement appropriate management and/or modification.*

CENTER OF
CONTINUUM

Moves muzzle deeper into bowl; resists giving up object. *Appropriate for adoption to any suitable home willing and able to implement appropriate management and/or modification.*

Freeze; low growl; does not move head toward hand. *Appropriate for adoption to any suitable home willing and able to implement appropriate management and/or modification. Recommend no small children.*

MODERATE
GUARDING

Tension; freeze; whale eye; growl; moves head toward hand. *Appropriate for adoption to any suitable home willing and able to implement appropriate management and/or modification. Recommend no children.*

SIGNIFICANT
GUARDING

Growl; freeze; whale eye; snap. *Candidate for breed rescue.*

SERIOUS
GUARDING

Bites. Responds with strong aggression. *Euthanasia.*

GUARDS



GUARDS RESOURCES

slightly and drop a treat into his bowl or next to his chewie, then feed some more from your hand and walk on.

9 Repeat, gradually increasing the number of times you bend and drop treats for him.

10 Now gradually increase how much you bend over until you can touch the bowl or chewie. Remember, if you see any sign of tension you have moved too quickly. Back up a few steps and continue more slowly from there.

11 Finally, as you are pausing, bending, and feeding him, occasionally play the “trade game” (as described on previous page), always

returning the bowl or object to him after he has happily allowed you to take it.

12 Now start the protocol over again at Step 1, with another person in your family serving as the passerby. Choose only an adult (or near-adult) who can follow your explicit instructions. Continue until your dog is comfortable with all family members approaching him, then repeat with trustworthy visitors, again starting with Step 1.

Most important, if you see guarding behavior in your dog, or you’re considering adopting a shelter dog who may have some resource-guarding behaviors, don’t panic. Your dog isn’t evil, he’s just expressing his desire to

maintain possession of something he finds valuable. In fact, recent studies indicate that resource-guarding behavior identified in behavior assessments is less of a problem in adoptive homes than shelter workers have feared for decades. So relax, consider the behavior from your dog’s perspective, empathize, and start teaching him that you’re not a threat to his good stuff. 🐾

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. She is also the author of many books on positive training. See page 24 for information about her dog-training classes, books, and courses for trainers.



RESOURCES

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

❖ **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

❖ **Lisa Lyle Waggoner**, CSAT, CPDT-KA, PMCT2, Cold Nose College, Murphy, NC. Force-free, humane training. Private in-home training, separation-anxiety training, behavior consulting, and more. Also offering a variety of weekend workshops and dog*tec's Professional Dog Walking Academy. Additional locations in Atlanta and the Space Coast of Florida. You can connect with Lisa

on Facebook at LisaLyleWaggoner and on Twitter @ColdNoseCollege. (828) 644-9148; coldnosecollege.com

BOOKS AND DVDS

❖ WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of **Positive Perspectives; Positive Perspectives 2; Power of Positive Dog Training; Play With Your Dog; Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First Class Life**; and her newest book, **How to Foster Dogs: From Homeless to Homeward Bound**. Available from dogwise.com and wholedogjournal.com

❖ DVDs by Lisa & Brad Waggoner of Cold Nose College: **Rocket Recall; What's SUP, Pup? Standup Paddleboarding with Your Dog; Ready, Set, Jump into Dock Diving; Fabulous Focus: Focus & Attention Skills for Both Ends of the Leash**. Available from tawzerdog.com

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How they work for dogs.

❖ PROPERLY SOCIALIZED

What this means, and how to accomplish it with your dog.

❖ DITCH THE DISH

Why you shouldn't feed your dog in a bowl.

❖ BENEFITS OF FERMENT

Why fermented fish oil is good for your dog.

❖ RELAX!!

Why and how to teach your dog a formal "relax" behavior.

❖ POST-SURGICAL HOME CARE

How to make sure your dog recovers as smoothly and quickly as possible.