

The Whole Dog Journal™



VOLUME 18 | NO. 10 | \$5.95

1A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

NOVEMBER 2015

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B THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL (ISSN #1097-5322) is published monthly by Belvoir Media Group, LLC, 535 Connecticut Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06854. Robert Englander, Chairman and CEO; Timothy H. Cole, Executive Vice President, Editorial Director; Phillip L. Penny, Chief Operating Officer; Greg King, Executive Vice President, Marketing Director; Ron Goldberg, Chief Financial Officer; Tom Canfield, Vice President, Circulation. Periodicals postage paid at Norwalk, CT and at additional mailing offices. Copyright ©2015, Belvoir Media Group, LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is strictly prohibited. Printed in U.S.A. Revenue Canada GST Account #128044658. Canada Publishing Agreement Number #40016479.

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Subscriptions: \$39 annually (12 issues). Bulk rate subscriptions for organizations and educational institutions available upon request.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL, PO Box 8535, Big Sandy, TX 75755-8535

In Canada, send to THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL, PO Box 39, Norwich, ON, N0J 1P0



Nutrition Secrets?

It shouldn't be so difficult to learn exactly what's in our dog's food.

BY NANCY KERNS

When WDJ first reviewed dog food, back in 1998, there was but a handful of companies making what we considered good foods. Seriously, I stretched to find five companies that had products that contained only good-quality ingredients – and more importantly, didn't contain unnamed animal fats and meat by-products. And just about every question I asked a pet food company was answered with, "I'm sorry that's proprietary information!"

The industry has come *such* a long way since then. There are dozens and dozens of good foods on the market today – and not only are the makers of the best ones proud to tell us where their products are made, but also, many of them have invited me to tour their plants, meet their executives *and* the plant workers and managers, and some have even taken me to see their ingredient suppliers. This sort of openness with a consumer advocate/critic of the industry is meaningful.

And yet, in my view, pet food makers still have a long way to go to completely earn the trust of the most discerning and demanding dog owners. I was sort of horrified to discover that many of the companies whose products I consider top-of-the-line didn't have information at their fingertips regarding the typical nutritional content of their products. How could that be?

A number of times, we've been asked why we're so demanding and critical of pet food makers, and whether we hold the makers of our *own* food to the same sort of standards we demand for dog food. Do we need to know the provenance of every ingredient in our breakfast cereal? Do we want to know how much of every single nutrient is present in our spaghetti sauce?

Well, no. But there is a significant difference between the diet of most dogs and most humans: *We* eat a wide variety of foods; our dogs eat whatever we feed them, and most people feed their dogs the same type of food every day. If our bodies are lacking certain nutrients, we can act on a craving for a food that can supply us with those nutrients; we deny dogs the same opportunity. If we eat a

diet that makes us feel unwell, we can at least explain to a doctor what we've eaten and how we feel, and she can most likely determine what the problem is.

In contrast, veterinarians are often educated to believe that all foods that are labeled as "complete and balanced" are nutritionally equivalent, even though the nutrient values for foods of a similar type are all over the place.

In my view, if a dog receives only one type of food every day, day in and day out, it had better *truly* be "complete and balanced," containing appropriate amounts of the nutrients dogs need – not too little and not too much. The only way to determine this is to ask, "How much of all these nutrients actually are in your foods?" Lacking a prompt and confident answer in the form of the immediate delivery of a typical nutrient analysis, I wouldn't recommend feeding a single product, or even a single company's product. Personally, I'd try to hedge my bets and achieve some amount of "balance over time" by switching my dogs from one company's foods to another with each and every can and bag.

Truly, it's an exciting time to watch the pet food industry. The investment in innovation and quality control has never been higher, and I increasingly meet well-educated, passionate people who seem truly committed to producing safe, superior foods. I hope they will help lead the industry toward greater transparency in formulation, ingredient sourcing, testing, and more.

NK



These are all good foods – but just because they are all “complete and balanced” doesn’t mean they all contain the same amounts of vitamins and minerals. We’ve started to ask their makers for the “complete nutrient analyses” that would reveal the actual amounts of nutrients in the products – but getting this information was surprisingly difficult.

🐾 NUTRITION 🐾

Canned Demands

We asked more of the wet food makers than usual – and were rather disappointed.

BY NANCY KERNS

How many of you feed canned food to your dog every day? Or maybe I should ask, how many of you feed *only* canned food to your dog every day? While we’d like our annual canned dog food review to be of use to owners who feed any amount of canned food to their dogs, it should be most relevant to people who rely solely on canned products to provide “complete and balanced nutrition” to their dogs, without much supplementation from any other type of food. Why? Because the more we question pet food companies about what’s in their food, the less confident we become about whether they even know.

When we review dog foods, we generally ask the companies that make the foods that meet our selection criteria for a good food some additional questions. This year, we asked this: “Do you have a complete nutrient analysis for each of your products, and, if so, do you make it available upon request or is this infor-

mation on your website?” We were *very* unhappy with most of the answers.

Most pet foods on the market – including *all* the ones we recommend – are what’s called “complete and balanced.” This means they have met the standards of the pet food regulators in this country for a diet that is formulated

to provide everything a dog needs to survive and (one hopes) thrive. But when we asked the makers of “complete and balanced” dog foods whether they have lab tests that show how much of each nutrient required by dogs is typically present in each of their formulas, *very few of them had this information readily available!*

Got that? “Feed our food, it contains everything your dog needs . . . but we can’t (or won’t) tell you exactly how much of each required nutrient it contains.”

We’ve charted the answers we got to our survey on page five. The food companies appear in order of how good we feel about their responses. At the top of the chart are the *two* companies we surveyed that post the complete nutrient analyses for all of their products on their websites. We admire and respect the professionalism and transparency.

Next are the companies that claimed to make their complete nutrient analyses available to consumers upon request, and who were able to follow up this claim by providing some samples of these analyses to us (some in a more timely manner than others). It became apparent that some of them ordered some analyses from their labs just to provide them to us – sweet, but in our opinion, these are something they should have in hand anyway.

Next are the companies that answered our survey by saying, straight up, that

they do *not* make their nutrient analyses available to consumers. While we'd far prefer for a company in the business of making food to openly share information about the nutrients contained in their products, we have a measure of respect for the ones that were straightforward about this *and* had reasons for their policy. Each of the companies in this category claimed that, if need be, they *could* get whatever specific information about their food was needed to a consumer whose dog had a health problem and whose veterinarian needed the nutrient data. Let's hope this is true.

Whether this is justified or not, we were more disappointed with the companies that answered our survey by saying blithely that they *do* make these analyses available to consumers upon request – but then, when asked to provide a couple of these analyses to us in order to verify their claim, couldn't or wouldn't produce the analyses. In some cases, we were left convinced that if they *ever* had the information, it certainly wasn't available to the pet food company employees tasked with answering questions from us – or consumers – about specific nutrient levels in their products.

In a few cases, we found ourselves explaining to the pet food company employees who answered the phone (or email) exactly what a “complete nutrient analysis” *is*. This happened several times; in each case it was after the person sent us either a link to a web page or emailed us a document that contained *guaranteed analyses* for their products, as if they didn't know the difference!

MORE INFORMATION IS ALWAYS BETTER

In case you don't know the difference – as every pet food company employee should – the “guaranteed analysis” is that little box that appears (by federal law) on every pet food label and contains (at least) four things: the minimum amount of crude protein and crude fat in the food, and the maximum amount of fiber and moisture in the food. If pet food companies want to, they can put more nutrients in the guaranteed analysis (GA) box, but only those four macronutrients (protein, fat, fiber, moisture) are required there.

Whether the pet food company puts just the four required nutrients in the GA or lists a *lot* of nutrients, a nutrient's presence in the box means that the pet

food company is *literally* guaranteeing that those nutrients are present in those amounts. The information in a GA is subject to surveillance and enforcement; feed control officials in each state have the authority to run tests on the food and stop its sale (in that state) if anything in the GA is not accurate.

Keep in mind that pet food companies are not required to list *any* other nutrient amounts on their labels; only protein, fat, fiber, and water are considered to be useful for consumers to know in order to compare products and to judge which might be best for their dogs. But even though the amounts of vitamins and minerals present in “complete and balanced” foods may vary widely, you'd never know this from reading the label. As long as the foods met one of the two standards for a “complete and balanced diet,” they get to have that statement on their label, causing almost everyone to consider them as equivalent and interchangeable, even though they are far more variable than that.

There are many good reasons to investigate the “actual” or “typical” nutrient levels in your dog's food, especially if he has any sort of health condition that can be affected by high or low levels of some nutrient, such as copper storage disease or anemia. Some foods may contain very high levels of some nutrient or another – or, as is often the case if extremely high-fat foods, if the nutrients are reported on a caloric basis (corrected for energy density), they may actually fail to reach the minimum levels of many nutrients called for in the Canine Nutrient Guidelines from the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). This latter reason is why we also asked the companies for nutrient analyses “by calories” – in very high-fat foods, this may reveal nutrient levels that are below the AAFCO minimums.

Highly motivated owners can request complete nutrient analyses from the pet food companies – and avoid the companies that can't deliver these. The next step would be to compare the results received with the AAFCO nutrient guidelines (they can be found online). The next hurdle would be converting the “as fed” numbers that most companies report with AAFCO's “dry matter” numbers – not exactly rocket science, but it helps to know your way around a calculator. We will discuss how to do

this in an upcoming issue; our dry food review appears in the February issue and we'd love to help you reach competence at this task (if you are interested) by then.

EARNING THE COMPLETE AND BALANCED TITLE

Consumers should be aware that foods that have earned the appellation of “complete and balanced” via the “feeding trials” qualification – considered by many as the “gold standard” for achieving this status – may have a number of nutrient levels that *don't* meet the AAFCO Canine Nutrient Guidelines. Yes, it's true: Foods that have passed a six-month feeding trial might not meet the AAFCO minimums, because they have “proven” their nutritional adequacy by keeping a population of test dogs alive for a whole six months! In our opinion, it's even more important to take a look at the complete nutrient analysis of a food that has met the “feeding trial” standard than a food that has met the “nutrient levels” standard.

We've discussed this many times in WDJ, but for the sake of our newer readers, let's review how a pet food may earn the privilege of putting a notice on the label that alleges that the product provides “complete and balanced” nutrition for dogs. There are two main ways that a food can qualify for this legally defined designation. We will call the first one “feeding trials” for short, and the second one “nutrient levels.” Look long and hard at the cans of dog food in your pantry; if you look hard enough (get out the reading glasses!) you will find a statement that references either “feeding trials” or “nutrient levels.”

Feeding trials are just that: The food under study is fed to a population of dogs for a set period of time, and most (not all) of the dogs have to survive in reasonably good health. These trials are costly, but big companies, with deep pockets and a decades-long history and plan for the future, may spend a ton of money and a good bit of time putting their food to the test in feeding trials.

If the company is smaller, new, or its plans more modest, it will likely try the second method for proving its products' nutritional adequacy: the nutrient levels qualification. Essentially, this means the food is tested, all the nutrients in it are tallied, and the results are compared to a table of nutrient values that is accepted as “what dogs need” by pet food regulators

**SURVEY: DO YOU MAKE A COMPLETE NUTRIENT ANALYSIS AVAILABLE TO CONSUMERS?
WHAT ABOUT A COMPLETE NUTRIENT ANALYSIS BY CALORIES?**

FOOD (COMPANY, IF NAME IS DIFFERENT)	MANUFACTURING SITE	COMPLETE NUTRIENT ANALYSIS ?	COMPLETE NUTRIENT ANALYSIS BY CALORIES?
Evo (formerly Natura, now Mars)	Simmons (Emporia, KS)	On website.	On website.
Go! (Petcurean)	Simmons (Streetsville, Ontario)	On website.	On website.
By Nature (Kent Nutrition Group)	PetfoodNZ, Gisborne, New Zealand	Available on request (confirmed).	Available on request (confirmed).
Chicken Soup for the Soul	Simmons (Emporia, KS)	Available on request (confirmed).	Available on request (confirmed).
Diamond (Taste of the Wild)	Simmons (Emporia, KS)	Available on request (confirmed).	Available on request (confirmed).
Eagle Pack, Holistic Select, Wellness (WellPet)	ANI, Ogden, UT; Simmons (Pennsauken, NJ, and Streetsville, Ontario); Thailand	Available on request (confirmed).	Available on request (confirmed).
Hound & Gatos	Performance Pet, Mitchell, SD	Available on request (confirmed).	Available on request (confirmed).
Natural Balance	ANI, Ogden, UT	Available on request (confirmed).	Available on request (confirmed).
Nature's Variety	Simmons (Emporia, KS)	Some nutrient values are on the company's website; company says the rest are available upon request (confirmed).	Available on request (confirmed).
Precise	Simmons (Emporia, KS)	Available on request (confirmed).	Company says, "Available by request," but did not produce complete nutrient analyses.
Solid Gold	Simmons (Pennsauken, NJ)	Available on request (confirmed).	Available on request (confirmed).
Spring Naturals	Performance Pet, Mitchell, SD	Available on request (confirmed).	Available on request (confirmed).
Ultra (Mars)	Mars' own canneries (Fort Smith, AK; Columbus, OH; North Sioux City, SD)	Available on request (confirmed).	Available on request (confirmed).
Blue Buffalo	Simmons (Emporia, KS; and Pennsauken, NJ)	No. Company says it will release complete nutrient analyses to veterinarians only.	No. Company says it will release complete nutrient analyses to veterinarians only.
Drs. Foster & Smith	Simmons (Pennsauken, NJ)	Company says, "Specific values available by request." Prefers to have dog owners speak with DF&S veterinary staff regarding nutrient info.	Company says, "Specific values available by request." Prefers to have dog owners speak with DF&S veterinary staff regarding nutrient info.
Party Animal	Evanger's, Wheeling IL	No. Company says it will make specific nutrient information available by request.	No.
AvoDerm and Pinnacle (Breeder's Choice/Central Garden & Pet)	Simmons (Emporia, KS)	Company says "On website." Website says, "Coming soon."	Company says, "Available by request."
Canidae	Performance Pet, Mitchell, SD	Company says "On website." However, only GA is listed on website.	No.
Castor & Pollux, Merrick (Merrick)	Merrick, Hereford, TX	Company provides a partial analysis and says specific nutrients could be made available by request.	No.
Evanger's	Evangers, Wheeling IL	Company says, "Available by request," but did not produce complete nutrient analyses.	Company says, "Available by request," but did not produce complete nutrient analyses.
FirstMate (Taplow)	Taplow Ventures, Chillawack, BC	Company says, "Available by request," but did not produce complete nutrient analyses.	No.
Health Extension (formerly Vet's Choice)	Simmons (Pennsauken, NJ)	Company says these are being produced.	Company says these are being produced.
Lotus	Lotus Pet Foods, Torrance, CA	Company provides a partial analysis and says specific nutrients could be made available by request.	Company provides a partial analysis and says specific nutrients could be made available by request.
Mulligan Stew	Performance Pet, Mitchell, SD	Company says, "Available by request," but did not produce complete nutrient analyses.	No.
Pet Tao Holistic Pet Products	Evanger's, Wheeling IL	Company says, "It will be available by request," but did not produce complete nutrient analyses.	No.
PetGuard	Simmons (Pennsauken, NJ)	Company says, "Available by request," but did not produce complete nutrient analyses.	Company says, "Available by request," but did not produce complete nutrient analyses.
Three Dog Bakery	Select, Springfield, MO (human canned food plant)	Some nutrient values are on the company's website; company says the rest are available upon request, but did not produce complete nutrient analyses.	No.
Verus	Performance Pet, Mitchell, SD; and PetfoodNZ, Gisborne, New Zealand	Company says, "Available by request," but did not produce complete nutrient analyses.	Company says, "Available by request," but did not produce complete nutrient analyses.

in this country (there are other, slightly different tables of nutrient values used by pet food regulators in other countries).

This standard isn't perfect, either. A food may contain all the nutrients it's supposed to have, and yet be highly unpalatable – and if dogs won't eat it, they certainly can't benefit from it. Or, it may be palatable, but indigestible! Just because a dog eats it, doesn't mean he can utilize all the nutrients in it.

In the best of all possible worlds, a food would qualify by a feeding trial and by meeting the AAFCO canine nutrient levels. But this is not a current regulatory requirement!

Make sure when you look for the statement of nutritional adequacy, you notice whether it references "adult maintenance" or "dogs of all life stages." If the label references "dogs of all life stages" it is formulated to meet the higher nutrient levels required by puppies and pregnant or nursing moms.

2015 LIST

Below is our list of selection criteria – hallmarks of quality – that we use to identify products we would consider feeding to our dogs. We also list disqualifiers – traits that eliminate products from our consideration. You can use these criteria to analyze the ingredients list on the label of any food you're considering feeding to your dog.

Starting on the facing page, we've listed brief descriptions of some companies that make foods that meet

MISSING FROM THE LIST

The following companies have products that meet our selection criteria and have appeared on our "approved foods" lists but either do not disclose their manufacturers or did not respond to our inquiries for information this year.

Addiction Foods	Did not respond
Artemis	Did not respond
Azmira	Does not disclose manufacturer
Dogswell	Does not disclose manufacturer
Fromm	Does not disclose manufacturer
Halo	Does not disclose manufacturer
Newman's Own	Does not disclose manufacturer
Tiki Dog	Does not disclose manufacturer
Weruva	Does not disclose manufacturer

our selection criteria. These are listed alphabetically by the name of the company, *not* in any sort of rank order.

All of the foods you see on our list of approved foods are good – way better than what you'd typically find in discount or grocery stores. But it's indisputable that some are better than others on the list. We like to give readers a range, because the availability of some of these foods is so limited in some markets and rural areas, and because some of these foods are wildly expensive – far beyond the means of many pet owners to feed on a daily basis – we've also included some that are more modestly priced.

If you don't see the name of a food you'd expect to see on our approved foods list, make sure you are looking it

up by the name of the company, which may be different from the name of the food. Also, check the list of companies (above) that wouldn't disclose their manufacturing sites or who chose not to respond to our survey this year; those companies make some nice foods, but their lack of disclosure makes us uneasy.

Depending where you live, the foods on our "approved foods" list may be difficult to find; most are sold in independent pet supply stores, or high-quality "pet specialty chain stores." Don't forget that these foods are going to be far more expensive than any "grocery store" foods you may find; quality ingredients really do cost more than low-cost fillers like wheat gluten and animal by-products. 🐾

HALLMARKS OF QUALITY

The following is our selection criteria – the things a canned dog food must have to appear on our "approved" foods list:

- ✓ A whole, named animal protein in one of the first two positions on the ingredients list. "Whole" means no by-products. "Named" means a specific animal species – chicken, beef, pork, lamb – as opposed to "meat" or "poultry." Because we are looking for products with the highest possible inclusion of top-quality animal proteins, we'd choose a product with meat first on the label over one that listed water (or broth) first and meat second.
- ✓ Named fat sources.
- ✓ If vegetables, grains, or other carb sources are used, we prefer to see them whole, rather than by-products (potatoes, rather than potato starch, for example).

DISQUALIFIERS

There are actually far more traits that automatically disqualify a canned food from our consideration. **Quality canned dog foods should *not* contain:**

- ✓ An *unnamed* animal protein or fat source, such as "meat," "poultry," or "animal fat."
- ✓ Any meat by-products or poultry by-products.
- ✓ Wheat gluten, which may be used as a cheap source of plant protein, a thickener, and/or a binder, holding together artificially formed "chunks" of ground meat.
- ✓ Sugar, molasses, or other sweetener
- ✓ Artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives.

BLUE BUFFALO COMPANY

Wilton, CT; (800) 919-2833; bluebuffalo.com

Blue Buffalo's lines include: **Basics** (6 "limited ingredient" varieties); **Blue's Stew** (6 varieties); **Chunky Stew** (3 grain-free varieties); **Divine Delights** (6 varieties, each available in a pouch or plastic tub); **Family Favorite Recipes** (6 varieties); **Freedom** (4 grain-free "Freedom Grillers"); **Healthy Starts** (4 varieties); **Homestyle Recipes** (12 varieties); and **Wilderness** (19 grain-free varieties, 9 are called "grills," 6 of which are denoted as "dinners," 4 as "stews."

CANIDAE

San Luis Obispo, CA; (800) 398-1600; canidae.com

Canidae has two lines of foods: **Canidae Life Stages** (6 varieties); and **Pure** (5 grain-free varieties).

CASTOR & POLLUX PET WORKS

Hereford, TX; (800) 875-7518; castorpolluxpet.com

Castor & Pollux was bought by Merrick Pet Care in 2012; just a couple months ago, Nestlé Purina PetCare Company bought Merrick Pet Care (including Castor & Pollux). Company representatives say the subsidiaries will remain independent, with existing formulas and manufacturing in place. Castor & Pollux has two lines: **Organix** (13 varieties, 9 of which are grain-free and all featuring organic ingredients); and **Natural Ultramix** (14 varieties, 9 grain-free).

BREEDER'S CHOICE

Walnut Creek, CA; (866) 500-6286; avoderm.com;

pinnaclepet.com

Central Garden & Pet bought Breeder's Choice in 2006, but has preserved the "Breeder's Choice" company name. It has two lines: **AvoDerm** (13 varieties, including 4 grain-free); and **Pinnacle** (5 grain-free varieties).

CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL

Cos Cob, CT; (800) 658-0624; chickensoup.com

Formerly licensed and made by Diamond, this label has since been reclaimed by the "Chicken Soup" company, which now markets the three canned varieties of Chicken Soup for the Soul.

DIAMOND PET PRODUCTS

Meta, MO; (800) 442-0402; tasteofthewildpetfood.com

Diamond makes a number of lines, including some that do not meet WDJ's selection criteria. The Diamond line that does meet our selection criteria is **Taste of the Wild** (5 grain-free varieties).

DRS. FOSTER & SMITH

Rhinelander, WI; (800) 381-7179; drsfostersmith.com

Drs. Foster & Smith has five varieties, including "Country Classic Stews" and three loaf-style foods.

EVANGER'S DOG & CAT FOOD COMPANY

Wheeling, IL; (847) 537-0102; evangersdogfood.com

Evangers currently has six lines: **Classic** (10); **Game Meats** (12 grain-free varieties); **Hand-Packed** (6 grain-free varieties); **Organics** (2); **Signature Series** (4); **Super Premium** (7).

HEALTH EXTENSION (FORMERLY VET'S CHOICE)

Melville, NY; (800) 992-9738; vetschoice.com

Three complete and balanced varieties.

HOUND & GATOS

Manhattan, NY; (212) 618-1917; houndgatos.com

Hound & Gatos has 8 limited-ingredient (mostly meat) varieties.

KENT NUTRITION GROUP

Muscatine, IA; (877) 367-9225; bynaturepetfoods.com

By Nature (with 4 grain-free "entrees" and 4 "95%" formulas that are 95% meat).

LOTUS NATURAL FOOD

Torrance, CA; (888) 995-6887; lotuspetfoods.com

Lotus offers two lines: **Lotus Canned Stews** (3 grain-free varieties); and a limited-ingredient line, **Lotus Just Juicy** (with 2 grain-free varieties).

MERRICK PET CARE

Amarillo, TX (800) 664-7387; merrickpetcare.com

Merrick has three lines of canned dog foods: Castor & Pollux (see above), Whole Earth Farms (see below), and Merrick's main, eponymous **Merrick** line, with 39 grain-free varieties. Six are "96%" products (contain 96% meat).

MULLIGAN STEW PET FOOD

Jackson, WY; (888) 364-7839; mulliganstewpetfood.com

Mulligan Stew offers six varieties.

NATURA PET PRODUCTS

Santa Clara, CA; (800) 532-7261; evopet.com

Natura was purchased by Procter & Gamble in 2010, but the Natura lines were made and marketed separately from P&G's other pet foods. In April 2014, P&G sold all of its pet food companies to Mars Petcare. Only one of the former Natura canned dog food lines has survived, and only a shadow of that: **Evo**, with two "95% meat" varieties that in no way resemble their past formulas. (The canned versions of California Natural and Innova have been discontinued by Mars.)

NATURAL BALANCE

Burbank, CA; (800) 829-4493; naturalbalanceinc.com

Natural Balance was purchased by Del Monte Foods in May 2013. Natural Balance has three lines: **LID Limited Ingredient Diet** (8 varieties); **Ultra Premium** (8), and its new "**Wild Pursuit**" line, with 3 grain-free varieties.

NATURE'S VARIETY

St. Louis, MO; (888) 519-7387; naturesvariety.com

Nature's Variety has two major lines: **Instinct** (14 grain-free, including 5 "limited ingredient" varieties); and **Prairie** (9, including 7 "Homestyle by Prairie" stews).

PARTY ANIMAL

West Hollywood, CA; (855) 727-8926
partyanimalpetfood.com

Party Animal has two lines: **Cocolicious** (6 grain-free varieties, each containing organic coconut oil, including 3 that contain organic meats); and **Party Animal** (10 varieties, including 6 organic and 8 grain-free).

PETCUREAN PET NUTRITION

Abbotsford, BC, Canada; (866) 864-6112; petcurean.com

Petcurean has one line of canned food: **Go!** (7 varieties, including 2 grain-free)

PETGUARD

Green Cove Springs, FL; (800) 874-3221; petguard.com

Petguard offers 13 varieties, including 2 organic.

PET-TAO

Fairview, TN; (615) 934-3832; pettao.com

Pet-Tao has two lines, each formulated by holistic veterinarians using the guiding principles of yin and yang and the Five Elements, resulting in what the company describes as "an energetically balanced diet." The first line is supposed to promote harmony. The second line, Solutions, has three foods: one that is meant to be a "cooling" diet, one is a "warming diet," and the third is "suggested as an aid in helping blood and energy flow throughout."

PRECISE

St. Helena, CA; (888) 477-3247; precisepet.com

Precise, formerly owned by Texas Farm Products of Nacogdoches, TX, was purchased by Kodo Inc. (formerly one of Precise's distributors) in September 2015. Precise offers 6 varieties, including 2 grain-free formulas.

SOLID GOLD

Greenville, SC; (800) 364-4863; solidgoldpet.com

Solid Gold offers 6 varieties, including one made with beef tripe as the main protein source.

SPRING NATURALS

Mitchell, SD; (866) 868-0874; springnaturals.com

Spring Naturals is the "house" line made by Performance Pet Products, a cannery in South Dakota. It offers 7 grain-free varieties.



THREE DOG BAKERY

Kansas City, MO; (800) 487-3287; threedog.com

Three Dog Bakery makes two varieties of "Gracie's Gourmet" food (in pouches). The foods are made with all "human grade" ingredients in a human food manufacturing facility.

ULTRA

Franklin, TN; (800) 833-5330; ultraholistic.com

Mars Petcare bought Nutro Pet Products in 2007, but the Nutro products have retained past labels and formulations. Do not confuse the Nutro Ultra products with plain old Nutro dog foods; the Nutro Ultra line is a lot better. Ultra has 14 varieties, including 8 "pate" products that are packaged in small plastic trays.

VERUS PET FOODS

Abingdon, MD; (888) 828-3787; veruspetfoods.com

Verus has 11 varieties, including 4 varieties utilizing Green Lipped Mussel.

WELLPET

Tewksbury, MA; (800) 225-0904; wellpet.com

Wellpet has three lines: Wellness, Eagle Pack, and Holistic Select.

Wellpet's **Eagle Pack** line has 4 varieties; the **Holistic Select** line was recently reformulated, and offers 6 grain-free varieties.

The **Wellness** line itself is large, comprised of **Wellness Chunks and Gravy** (6 varieties); **Wellness Core** (6 grain-free varieties); **Wellness Core 95%** (4 varieties); **Wellness Core Chunky Centers** (6 varieties), **Wellness Complete Health** (8 varieties); **Wellness Simple** (4 limited ingredient varieties, including 2 grain-free); **Wellness Petite Entrees** (8 grain-free varieties for small dogs, packed in small plastic tubs); and its newest line, **Wellness TruFood** (6 varieties, packed in tubs).

WHOLE EARTH FARMS

Amarillo, TX; (800) 323-3353; feedgoodness.com

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Let the Games Begin

Rehabilitating the play-deprived dog.

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

Tug. Fetch. Chase. Search. Most of us love to play with our dogs. Whether we're tugging, tossing a ball or a stick, or playing some other game, one of the great joys of sharing our lives with canine companions is the opportunity to engage in mutually enjoyable activities, i.e., play. However, for dogs, playing with humans is a learned behavior. Dogs who don't have the opportunity to play with humans early in life may grow up with a play behavior deficit – one that can interfere with their ability to connect with the two-legged members of their family in a way that's important and meaningful.

Unfortunately, a significant number of dogs grow up play-deprived. These may be dogs from puppy mills who spent the first formative months of their lives in cages at the mill, and then at the pet store. They may be dogs who were “kennel-raised” by a breeder, with minimal play interaction with humans. They might even be dogs who were purchased as pups by humans with good intentions, but who ended up in the backyard, or in the home of one or more play-deprived humans who just didn't understand the importance of frolicking with Fido.

If you share your world with a play-deprived dog, the good news is that you can teach your dog how to play with you, and have fun doing it. Read on to find out how. As you do, keep in mind this one very important caveat: It is vitally important that you not use verbal or physical corrections in your training program. In order to let his guard down to play, your dog needs to know he can trust you to not to hurt him. Dogs trained with positive methods learn that it's safe to offer new behaviors – and that's exactly what play will be for your play-challenged dog – a new behavior. Dogs trained with punishment or corrections often learn

that the safest thing to do is ... nothing! A dog who is already inhibited about play will be quite content to do nothing, and never engage in play, especially when he knows you could turn violent if he makes a wrong move.

TEACHING PLAY

There are a number of techniques you can use to get your dog to engage in dog-human play. Make note of any times where your dog seems particularly cheerful or lighthearted – these can give you clues as to how he might best

be prompted to play. Food can often encourage a dog to play, since all dogs have to eat.

Experiment with the play-training techniques described below, and see which ones start to capture your dog's interest. Remember, go slow, and control your own excitement. Rein in your natural impulse to celebrate your dog's first small play efforts so you don't accidentally intimidate him. (See “Avoid These When Playing With a Play-Deprived Dog,” next page.)

As you experiment, remember to watch for, appreciate, treasure, and gently reinforce even the tiniest bits of play behavior. These might include:

- A flip of the head
- A flirty sideways glance
- A quick bounce
- A sudden paw movement
- A brief lowering of the head, chest, and shoulders
- A short step forward, sideways, or back
- A dip of the head
- A bark
- A sniff of a toy or other object

Make a note of what might have elicited that behavior, and try to recreate it. Be casual; if you're too obvious or deliberate, your reluctant canine player may shut down.

Matilda, a 7-year-old mixed-breed, has been reluctant to play since she was adopted from a shelter as a puppy. She actively avoids taking or exploring toys.



The following are some other ways to help your dog learn how to play.

BUILD HIS DESIRE TO PLAY

You can sometimes convince a reluctant dog to play by creating interest and desire in a toy. Start by preparing a toy that can be “jazzed up” by the addition of some food. You can do this by cutting a seam in a stuffed toy and pulling some of the stuffing out, cutting a slit in a tennis ball, or purchasing a “food toy” with a Velcro opening designed for this purpose. Place the toy somewhere that the dog can see it but not reach it. Several times a day, go to the toy and play with it: tossing it in the air, letting it fall to the floor and grabbing it, and letting your dog watch you put treats in it.

When your dog is starting to show interest in the toy and your activities with it, create interaction. (It works best to do this when he’s somewhat hungry.) Sit on the floor and let your dog see you stuff the toy with treats. Toss and catch it a couple of times, then let it fall, or drag it around the floor.

If your dog approaches the toy at all, open up the toy and let him eat all the treats, telling him what a good boy he is.

Repeat two more times, then put the toy away, out of reach but where he can see it. You can even feed your dog all his meals this way for a week or so.

Gradually be slower and slower to “help” your dog by opening the toy. You should see your dog begin to take more initiative himself – perhaps touching the toy with his nose or paw, eventually picking the toy up in his mouth or trying to rip it open to get the treats. Continue to open the toy for him as he becomes more



AVOID THESE WHEN PLAYING WITH A PLAY-DEPRIVED DOG

Here are some mistakes commonly made by people trying to convince a reluctant dog to play:

- ✗ Too much intensity; the pressure turns the dog off the game.
- ✗ Pushing a toy in the dog’s face to try to make him play with it.
- ✗ Getting too excited when the dog is just start to show interest in playing and frightening the dog as a result.
- ✗ Expecting the dog to play one particular game, such as “Fetch,” without exploring other possibilities. Dogs have different play preferences; your no-fetch dog might love to dig in the sandbox with you.
- ✗ Giving up on the dog.
- ✗ Failing to recognize and reinforce embryonic play behaviors.
- ✗ Relying on food only as a reinforcer to teach play.
- ✗ “Lumping” rather than “splitting” – expecting full-fledged play rather than taking small play efforts and very gradually shaping them into full-blown play.
- ✗ Getting “stuck” with small play efforts, and not helping the dog build them into bigger games.
- ✗ Not ending sessions soon enough. Keep them short and sweet; leave the dog wanting more!

motivated to interact with it, until he’s enthusiastically interacting with it.

TEACH HIM “FIND IT”

This is a simple behavior that even play-challenged dogs can perform with relative ease. It’s tons of fun! And it also has useful applications, such as finding your lost keys, the TV remote, or even a missing pet or person. “Find it” capitalizes on your dog’s natural desire to eat food – especially high-value treats. Here are some tips for teaching your dog the “Find it” game.

- **Basic version:** Start with a dozen yummy treats and your dog in front of you. Say “Find it!” in an excited voice

Contrast that with this dog, who uses several signals to say that he wants to play, including his “play bow” posture, bright and direct expression, forward ears, waggy tail, and open mouth.

and toss one treat off to the side. Be sure he sees you toss it. As soon as he eats that one, toss another in the opposite direction and say, “Find it!” again. Keep doing this, tossing treats back and forth, until your dozen treats are gone. Most dogs, even play-deprived dogs, can learn to happily dash after treats in no time.

As you toss treats back and forth in this part of the game, watch for small signs that he’s loosening up and enjoying himself. Toss a couple more treats and then stop – remember to end when he’s enjoying the activity, and don’t overwhelm him with your enthusiasm.

You might even start the game when you’re not really thinking about play, but perhaps just sitting on the sofa watching television. Toss a few treats from time to time, and don’t worry if your dog thinks of it as play. When you start to see a little eager anticipation in his eyes as he waits for the next toss, you know you’re on the right track.

Now leave your dog on a “Wait!” or

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However, the toy-phobic dog loves playing with and chewing paper! Here, her owner rustles a little scrap of wrapping paper, and Matilda lights right up! Paper-based games would be right up her alley.

“Stay,” toss a treat 10-15 feet out, and release him with an excited “Find it!” Repeat this a half-dozen times, then leave him on a wait or stay while you walk 10-15 feet out, place a treat on the floor, return to him, pause (so he doesn’t think your return is the cue to release) and release him with your “Find it!” Repeat a half-dozen times.

● Introduce hidden things to find:

Next, let him watch you hide treats in easy-to-find places, such as behind a table leg, on a chair seat, or under a paper bag. Each time you hide a treat, return, pause, and release him with your “Find it!” cue to go get the treat.

When he’s doing very well with that step, make it more difficult for him to see exactly where you hide the treat, by blocking his view with your body as you hide it, or hiding it where a piece of furniture impedes his view. Now he really has to start looking for it. This is the beginning of the real fun. Remember to keep the tone of your “Find it!” cue happy and excited! Your dog will start using his incredible sense of smell to find the treat, and you’ll get to watch and learn how to read him when he’s “on scent.”

During this part of the game, you may be tempted to help him find the treat if he doesn’t find it right away. Be careful! It’s okay to indicate the general area, but don’t find the treat for him – he may learn to just wait for you to show him rather than working to find it himself. If your dog has started to show interest in the “stuff the treat in the toy” game, you could also hide that toy as part of your “Find it” game.

● **Increase the difficulty:** As soon as he’s figured out how to find the hidden treat using his nose, you can increase the challenge by putting him in another room when you hide it. Wipe the object on a clean gauze pad first, and then hide it. When you bring your dog back into the room, hold the gauze pad in front of his nose and say, “Find it,” and then let him look. (Again, you can indicate the general area at first, if necessary, to help him get started, but don’t help too much!)



Allowing your dog to sniff the pad tells him what scent he’s looking for.

Alternatively, you can name the object prior to this stage and use the name to tell him what he’s looking for, as in “Find the cow hoof!” The gauze pad method gives you more flexibility to have him look for new objects in the future that you haven’t pre-named for him. When he’s good at finding one treat or object you’ve hidden, hide several while he is out of the room, then bring him back to look.

OTHER “FINDING” GAMES

There are limitless ways to use of the “Find it!” cue; here are just a few games that you can play with your dog.

■ **FIND AND DESTROY** – Put a few treats in an empty cardboard container destined for recycling, such as an oatmeal cylinder, FedEx box, paper towel tube, layered cereal boxes, etc. Have him wait or stay and show him the container, shaking it with drama, “Ooooooh, what’s this? What do I have here?” Have him wait while you hide the container in another room, then return to him, pause, and tell him to “Find it!” Follow him and have fun watching as he finds and then gleefully shreds the container to get the goodies inside. If he’s reticent to shred, you can help him, once he’s found the box. Remember – don’t overwhelm him!

Caution: If your dog eats cardboard you may choose not to encourage this behavior, or at least you will want to retrieve the cardboard shreds before he ingests them after finding the treats.

■ **FIND TREATS IN TUB** – This one’s as simple as it sounds, and is great for keeping your dog busy for a while as well as teaching him how to play. Put all his toys in a tub (a small child’s swimming pool



Matilda's owner easily entices her to play tug of war using a piece of cardboard as the tug item! She wags her tail and pulls enthusiastically (for her).



Building on Matilda's interest in paper, her owner puts treats in an empty cereal box and lets Matilda get them out. The raised paw shows that Matilda is highly enthused (for her) about this game.

works well for this), then toss a handful of treats in with the toys (mix them all around to make it harder) and let him search for them.

■ **DIG IT** – Digging is another natural dog behavior that lends itself well to teaching play. You could call it “Find it” in the sand. Fill a child’s wading pool half-full of sand and let your dog watch you bury treats and/or toys. Then tell him to find them. Dig in the sand with him to make it a “playing together” activity.

HIDE AND SEEK

There are several ways to play this game. You can have your dog wait while you hide from him, or just duck behind a bush or tree when he isn’t looking. If your dog is very connected to you, or has a little separation distress, he may start looking for you as soon as he realizes you’re out of his sight. If not, you can jumpstart the game by calling him to “Come!” after you’ve hidden yourself. When he finds you, have a celebration – make a fuss (a small one if “fuss” will intimidate him) and feed him some yummy treats. Gradually fade (stop using) the “Come!” cue to encourage him to look for you on his own without being called.

Alternatively, you can have your dog stay with you while someone else hides, and tell him “Find (insert appropriate name here)!” When he finds the person, have her celebrate gently with your dog, and then send him back to you, where you reward him with treats. Teaching him to return to you after he finds someone is useful if you ever want to try your hand at search and rescue work, either

informal or formal.

When your dog is good at finding people in simple hiding places, you can make it harder by hiding in a shower stall, crawling under the bed, climbing up a tree, and so on. Be creative!

Caution: Unless your dog has a really reliable recall, play this game only in a safely enclosed area. Also, some dogs panic when they can’t find their humans. If you’re hiding from your dog outdoors, keep an eye on him to make sure he doesn’t take off on a journey through the woods in his panic to find you.

PHYSICAL PLAY

Remember that different dogs have different natural play styles and play interests. A dog who is intimidated by or simply not interested in playing with a toy may be more amenable to play that involves body contact. Touch him only gently and playfully at first, building to more active contact games over numerous sessions (weeks, maybe months!) as he warms to the game concept. Experiment with touch on different parts of his body to see what might elicit a tiny play response. Some dogs get excited if you softly touch their paw, ear, nose, or belly; just don’t use too much energy and frighten your dog with your touch.

SHAPING PLAY

Shaping lends itself perfectly to teaching remedial play skills. The very definition of shaping – breaking a behavior into tiny pieces and reinforcing the pieces until you build the complete behavior – is exactly what’s needed for many play-deprived dogs or those who are

just reluctant to play. Remember that you need to look for the tiniest pieces of behavior to click and treat so your dog wins a lot and can enjoy success. Even if it doesn’t look like play to you, the more you get your dog to freely and happily offer behavior, the sooner the behavior will start to look like play. (For more about shaping, see “The Shape of Things to Come,” WDJ March 2006.)

CAPTURING PLAY

All but the most unsocialized, fearful dogs will occasionally offer some spontaneous play behavior, even if ever so briefly. If you have conditioned your dog to a reward marker – the clicker, or a verbal signal such as the word “Yes,” or whatever marker you chose, you can teach your dog to play by capturing and rewarding those spontaneous moments.

Watch your dog for the tiniest of play behaviors: a quick bounce, a flip of the head, a sideways flirt. The instant you see anything that even vaguely resembles spontaneous play, click your clicker or utter your verbal marker, and toss your dog a high-value treat. Praise gently; remember not to overwhelm your dog!

Because all living creatures repeat behaviors that are rewarding to them, when your dog realizes he gets rewarded for play behaviors, he will offer them more frequently, and, over time, with increased enthusiasm. In time, your dog will play with you for the sheer joy of play. 🐾

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

Massage Pain Away

To compensate for arthritis pain, a dog may alter his posture and gaits, causing tight muscles and further pain; here's how to help him.

BY PAULETTE JOLLIFFE, CMT, CCMT

Jack wags his tail and runs over to welcome me, eagerly giving kisses. “Hi, Jack,” I say and reach down to pet his big brown head. Jack is a very friendly 9-year-old Rhodesian Ridgeback with arthritis. “How are you feeling today?” I ask him and he grins in response, then turns and walks over to his dog bed. As he walks I watch him and see a bit of stiffness in his left rear leg. My eyes travel up to his back and then over to his right shoulder. I know that a stiff leg affects his entire body, especially his lower back and right shoulder, which will compensate for the left rear weakness. He lays down on his bed, turns over on his side and sighs. He’s ready for his weekly massage from me – his canine massage therapist.

Massage, for dogs? Yes! Dogs, just like humans, usually love a good therapeutic massage. Just like us, they enjoy the relaxation that massage provides and the relief from muscle aches and pains that can come from a day of hard playing, a long hike, or even from just lying around. They don’t know about the benefits they’re receiving, or that they will soon experience a feeling of well-being and rejuvenation. They just know that someone is touching them in a way that takes away pain and feels really good.

Dogs carry about 60 percent of their body weight on their front legs. That means the shoulders work harder than the rest of the body – and that’s why dogs of all ages often experience tight neck and shoulder muscles and can benefit from massage and stretching.

For dogs who are afflicted with osteoarthritis, however, massage plays a particularly therapeutic role, by increasing circulation and breaking up adhesions that tend to form in their connective tissue. Combined with stretching the limbs, massage helps to lengthen constricted muscles, increasing flexibility and mobility. All of this helps decrease inflammation and pain, leaving an arthritic dog feeling much better.

ARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis, also known as degenerative arthritis or degenerative joint disease, affects one out of five dogs and makes up 90 percent of all arthritic cases. Osteoarthritis is most common in older dogs, but it can be experienced by dogs of any age. The hallmark trait of the disease is the loss of the smooth cartilage that covers and protects the end of the bones in a movable joint. When cartilage wears away, the bone ends in a joint touch or rub against each other, causing pain and inflammation.

Conditions that can cause OA include the aging process and the everyday wear and tear on joints, trauma that causes bone fracture and/or joint instability, too much weight bearing on the joint, or an excess of repetitive activities. Other factors include developmental or structural conditions like hip or elbow dysplasia, or osteochondritis desiccans, which manifests as a small segment of bone and cartilage that separates from the rest of its surroundings. *Anything* that upsets the stability of a joint can cause arthritis.

Despite the variable beginnings of OA, the end result always leads to a disruption of normal joint function.



Professional massage therapist Paulette Jolliffe works on Rumi, an 11-year-old service dog who suffers from moderate arthritis in his spine, hips, and knees – and loves being massaged.

OA affects the entire joint, including the cartilage (which surrounds the ends of the long bones and acts as a shock absorber), the synovial fluid and membrane (which lubricates the ends of the cartilage, providing a near frictionless environment), the ligaments and surrounding muscles (which stabilize the joint), and the bones themselves (which house the entire framework). OA can cause the dog to experience joint pain, tenderness, limited mobility, perhaps some swelling, and varying degrees of inflammation. The severe discomfort caused by OA can also depress your dog’s appetite and spirit.

If you notice your dog limping, bunny hopping, having difficulty rising, going up the stairs, or getting into the car, or notice a decrease in stamina and early fatigue with exercise, you should consider a visit to the vet to obtain a definitive diagnosis. An x-ray will show any cartilage or bone changes.

Keep in mind that dogs are stoic in nature and won’t always let you know when they’re experiencing discomfort. It will be up to you to notice any stiffness

or limping that your dog may exhibit. He may also obsessively lick affected limbs.

If your veterinarian diagnoses OA, begin treatment as soon as possible. The sooner treatment is initiated, the more you can do to slow down or stop the arthritic progression. Once the cartilage is damaged, the changes are permanent, but there are still a lot of helpful therapies that will help your furry friend feel better (see sidebar, right). As a massage therapist, of course, my favorite treatment for an arthritic dog is massage!

FINDING A THERAPIST

To find a massage therapist for your dog, start by asking your holistic veterinarian if she works with a particular massage practitioner or knows one that she could recommend. Today, many veterinary sports medicine or physical rehabilitation clinics have massage therapists on staff, or can refer you to practitioners with whom they share a professional relationship.

Without a veterinary reference, look for a therapist who has formal training and education in massage and canine anatomy. Ask about the courses the candidate took, how many hours of training were included, and how much professional experience she has. Then, ask for references – and contact some of the people! Long-term clients are good; veterinary references are even better.

Finally, ask if you can observe the therapist working on another client's dog. The dog should be relaxed and happy during the experience, not anxious, tense, or trying to escape. Never should the dog appear as if the pressure used is painful or uncomfortable.

Dogs who are new to massage may not *immediately* relax with a therapist, but generally calm down after 10 to 15 minutes. Don't be surprised if your dog needs to get up and walk around a bit during the massage; any therapist should understand the dog's need to process the experience and should not attempt to forcibly restrain your dog. Give the therapist and your dog a little time to get to know each other and soon you should see your dog contently getting great, pain-relieving massages.

A PROPER MESSAGE

This is how a typical massage session goes for an arthritic canine client:

Jack and I are sitting on his dog beds. Two are pushed together – one for him and one for me. His human has already

COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES

There are many wonderful complementary treatments for dogs with OA. None will cure or heal the arthritic joint, but a combination of treatments can very well restore vitality and decrease discomfort, making a happy walk in the park a reality once again.

- ✓ Omega-3 fatty acids, glucosamine and chondroitin, and avocado and soybean unsaponifiables (ASU) can all work to slow joint degeneration. The combination of these over several months can improve function and decrease pain. Can also be used as preventive.
- ✓ Turmeric and curcumin together are a potent anti-inflammatory. See "Spice It Up!" WDJ December 2014 for more about what type to buy and how much to give.
- ✓ Adequan is a synthetic, injectable medication, available by veterinary prescription only. It's thought to help increase the viscosity of the synovial fluid, which acts as the lubricant in a joint. It may be administered subcutaneously or intramuscularly. One school of thought is that the earlier Adequan is administered, the better it will modulate the arthritic progression.
- ✓ Hydrotherapy is ideal for arthritic dogs. The buoyancy of the water takes weight off the joints, allowing movement without pain and building strength in muscles that otherwise may become atrophied.
- ✓ Acupuncture is widely accepted by conventional veterinary practitioners, as it is highly effective at reducing pain and the heat that goes along with inflammation. Many dogs relax and fall asleep during treatment and there can be a noticeable improvement in function.
- ✓ Laser therapy can penetrate deeply, down to a cellular level, depending on the type of laser used. At its most powerful, it exponentially increases circulation and works to repair damaged tissue. It is a highly effective pain and inflammation reducer.
- ✓ Practiced under the supervision of a veterinarian and/or physical therapist at canine rehabilitation facilities, strength-building, balance, and conditioning exercises are the *ultimate* in helping your arthritic friend.
- ✓ Conventional veterinary treatments include NSAIDs and steroids. These can be highly effective, but given in high doses or for long periods of time, they can cause serious side effects. Consider these as "heavy artillery" and reserve their use for severe cases and when none of the gentler therapies can relieve your dog's pain. Also, make sure you and your veterinarian follow through with regular blood tests, to monitor whether the drugs are compromising your dog's liver function.
- ✓ Don't forget massage therapy! It can provide relief and improves the healing of soft tissues that are irritated or inflamed, breaks up scar tissue that may form around arthritic joints, relieves stiffness, and promotes better flexibility and range of motion.



told me that he's doing great, which is good to hear. It was just a year ago that Jack could barely walk due to a ruptured disk in his back, which resulted in semi-paralysis and arthritis. With acupuncture, laser therapy, supplements, and a weekly massage, he has recovered and is walking and functioning well.

Calming music fills the air, thanks to my Pandora station, and I've mixed some essential oils – a little coconut oil with a few drops of lavender for relaxation, and one called Panaway for achy muscles. I pour a bit of oil into the palms of my hands, rub them together and then lightly spread the scented oil down Jack's back, my hands traveling on either side of his spine and then down that stiff left leg. I pause over the left leg, my fingers lightly touching to determine where the stiffness is and where it's coming from.

I lightly massage the tight tissues just above his knee and then follow an



especially constricted muscle up his leg and into his hip area. I work lightly, exerting a small amount of pressure through my fingertips to help release some of the tightness. The spot is warm to the touch; a little later I will apply a cold pack to alleviate the heat and

Once a dog is accustomed to massage, he should be completely relaxed (like this little guy). And he should never be forced to comply with something he finds painful.

inflammation (see sidebar, next page, for information on how cold and hot packs are best utilized in a massage session).

I then bring my hands back up to Jack's head and now more slowly travel the length of his body, exploring and feeling for any more tight muscles, warm spots, and any tender areas. I watch Jack's face as my hands move, so I will be able to see from his expression if anything is bothering him. His head will lift, he'll look back at me, and then I know that he's feeling a little uncomfortable with the pressure in that spot. Should that happen, I immediately let up on the pressure; if the spot is extremely sensitive and he doesn't like me touching it at all, I work *around* the area. Eventually I

DO'S AND DON'TS FOR DEALING WITH DOGS WITH OA

DO:

- ✓ Get a definitive diagnosis.
- ✓ Use diet and exercise to take extra weight off your dog.
- ✓ Maintain exercise but change long walks to more frequent, shorter walks.
- ✓ Consider nutrition. Foods that help with arthritis are papaya, alfalfa, celery, and ginger.
- ✓ Raising water and food bowls can reduce strain in the neck or back of an arthritic dog; some arthritic dogs may not eat or drink as much as they should without this sort of accommodation. Note, however, that raised bowls are contraindicated for dogs who are prone to bloat. Ask your veterinarian whether your dog is at risk for bloat.
- ✓ Put carpet runners on hardwood floors. Try to prevent your dog from slipping, as this creates unwanted stress on the entire body.
- ✓ Provide a soft, supportive bed.
- ✓ Keep nails trimmed. If nails are too long they can change the gait on the dog, causing skeletal changes and arthritis in the foot/toes.
- ✓ Use a ramp where needed (for helping your dog get in and out of the car, on to your bed or sofa, etc.). This will reduce strain on his knees and hips.

- ✓ If your dog is having trouble getting up or walking on his own, check out slings, rear-end harnesses, wheelchairs, or carts to help keep him moving. See "A Little Extra Support," WDJ March 2011, and "Even More Support," August 2011, for suggestions on some helpful devices.
- ✓ Consider physical, laser, and massage therapy, acupuncture, and supplements. All or a combination of these will improve the quality of your arthritic dog's life.

DON'T:

- ✗ Self-diagnose.
- ✗ Force an exercise regimen that your dog is not comfortable with.
- ✗ Try any stretching of limbs without being properly trained.
- ✗ Discontinue exercise. A certain amount of exercise remains important for your arthritic dog; it is necessary to help maintain muscle strength and mobility.
- ✗ Ignore your dog's extra weight. Your dog will feel so much better after taking that extra burden off sore joints.
- ✗ Ignore sliding or falling. Don't underestimate how damaging continual sliding and falling can be on the arthritic dog's body.
- ✗ Give any medication without veterinary approval.

will be able to move back in very lightly, always watching him to make sure that everything I do is okay with my furry patient. Giving a beneficial massage requires that my patient trusts me and my hands. Massage should *never* hurt.

After the introductory and exploratory massage strokes, I return to Jack's head and rest my fingers on his cheeks, where the masseter muscle resides, then begin a circular motion to relax those strong, often tight jaw muscles. From there I slip down into the neck and feel several tight spots in his trapezius muscle – generally a pretty tight place on dogs *and* humans. I hold my finger over the tight tissue, and allow some pressure. Jack stretches out and relaxes. He's enjoying his massage.

Jack is almost asleep as I move from stretching his shoulder to running my hands down the thick muscles alongside his spine. I feel another spot that is hot under my fingers, and I pause, resting my fingers there. I smooth out the muscle and then reach for my ice chest full of cold packs. Jack doesn't even wake up as I open the chest and pull out an ice pack, covering it with a cloth and gently placing it over the hot spot next to Jack's spine, so it will gradually cool that hot area, reducing inflammation. I'll leave it there for the next 15 minutes while I massage and carefully stretch his rear leg.

After massaging, stretching, and doing a bit of acupressure, I carefully support his leg while moving it through a passive range-of-motion exercise, an excellent way to keep the limb flexible.

I turn Jack over and massage his other side, finding the right shoulder tighter than the left, as I suspected it would be. I massage and work the tight spots, finally loosening the shoulder. I am able to give it a good stretch, never going too far, always staying within a comfortable range, until I'm satisfied that the shoulder will feel and work better for Jack.

On the lower leg, I gently squeeze the webbing between each toe, and stretch each digit up and down. This stimulates the neural pathways, which send and receive messages from the brain – important for the older dog, all the better to keep the feet and body moving.

I finish by placing a hand on Jack's head and one on his rear, completing our time with some light energy work. "Okay, that's your massage," I whisper and Jack opens his eyes and slowly stands up. I put his collar back on and he meanders out to find his person; by the time I leave,

COLD VS. HOT FOR ARTHRITIC DOGS

One of the best and easiest ways that you can help your arthritic dog is to apply cold and/or hot packs to alleviate pain and provide comfort.

COLD

Cold therapy reduces inflammation, decreases pain, and reduces swelling, and is used for acute injuries, chronic arthritis, or inflammation. Apply no longer than 20 minutes; you don't want to freeze the skin. You can use cold packs up to five times per day. Use a thin cloth between the cold pack and skin.

To make your own cold packs, take a Ziploc bag and add $\frac{2}{3}$ cup water and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of isopropyl alcohol. Seal bag, place in a second bag, and put in freezer. This will turn to slush, which will easily conform to your dog's body. Alternatively, wet a towel and put in freezer to freeze. Take it out, place it in a plastic bag, and wrap it around an affected limb.

When to apply cold packs:

- ✓ Swollen or inflamed joints. (Move your hands over your dog and feel the temperature of the skin. You will be able to feel heat over areas that are inflamed.)
- ✓ Muscle spasms.

HEAT PACKS

Heat creates vasodilation and increases nutrient and oxygen delivery to tissues, which aids in the repair process. Heat helps the muscles relax, is considered soothing, and can improve range of motion. Apply for 15 to 20 minutes.

To make your own heat packs, soak a small towel in hot water and then place it in a plastic bag. Lay a thin cloth or towel over the dog, and apply the warm pack. Alternatively, wet a towel and heat briefly in a microwave (the time will vary depending on the power of your microwave). After making sure that no spot in the towel is too hot, put a thin cloth on the affected area on the dog and apply the towel over the cloth.

When to use heat packs:

- ✓ *After any swelling has subsided*, use heat for stiffness.
- ✓ Use before stretching limbs or going for a walk. This aids with tissue elongation, helping to improve your dog's gait and range of motion.

HOT AND COLD TOGETHER

Applying a hot or warm pack for 15 minutes and then placing a cold pack for 15 minutes stimulates a flushing action. Warmth causes vasodilation, bringing more blood to the site. Then the cold causes vasoconstriction, sending the blood away, taking with it toxins and creating a flushing effect.

he'll be curled up sleeping. I'm happy to have helped Jack. I know that I have relieved him of stress and discomfort. I know that the massage is helping to keep him flexible and mobile and I know that by next week he'll be eagerly looking forward to his next massage therapy treatment. 🐾

Paulette Jolliffe is certified in human and canine massage and works as a vet tech for Healing Touch, a holistic veterinary clinic in Sherman Oaks, CA. Jolliffe spent decades massaging humans before switching to providing massage to domestic animals five years ago. See "Resources," page 24, for Jolliffe's contact information.



Baby Bump?

How to get your “first baby” – your dog! – prepared to meet the “new baby.”

BY STEPHANIE COLMAN

First comes love, then comes marriage ... And a dog! For many couples, starting a family means sharing their lives with a dog before the decision to have kids. Later, with a positive pregnancy test in hand, many dog owners worry about how their “first baby” will accept the “new baby.”

From a trainer’s perspective, it’s not so much about whether or not the dog will “accept” the baby, but rather, how well the dog will adjust to the major change in the household. The good news is that babies generally come with months of lead time, giving expectant parents plenty of time to help prepare their dog for the upcoming transition.

“The transition from being pet parents to parenting with pets can be challenging, and there are a lot of unexpected bumps along the way,” says Jennifer Shryock of Family Paws® Parent Education in Cary, North Carolina. Her business specializes in resources specifically geared toward dog-owning households with babies and toddlers. The

two main programs, “Dogs and Storks” and “Dogs and Toddlers” are available to families through a worldwide network of more than 200 licensed presenters.

Shryock, a mother herself, first developed the Dogs and Storks program in 2002 after volunteering with her local German Shepherd Rescue and fielding a huge number of calls from people looking to surrender a dog. Often, it was because they were going to have a baby, or because an incident – a growl or bite – had already occurred with a child in the home. At the time, there weren’t many resources available that took an in-depth look at preparing and helping the family dog to successfully live with kids.

While there’s considerably more

Many parents-to-be worry that their dog won’t accept or behave well around their baby; the best parents will actively prepare their dog for a major lifestyle change, and set him up for success.

information available today, the trick is convincing people to utilize it ahead of time. “Unfortunately, families aren’t reaching out as much as we’d like before an incident. Most people still reach out for help after an incident occurs,” Shryock says. “That’s a pattern we’d like to see change.”

It’s imperative that homes with dogs who exhibit fear or aggression toward people, especially children, contact a qualified trainer who can help evaluate the situation and develop a training plan designed to keep everyone safe, while minimizing the dog’s anxiety. But even the most easygoing dogs and their owners will benefit from some thoughtful pre-baby preparation. Here are some things you can do to help ready your dog for the big change to come.

BRUSH UP ON TRAINING

As soon as you know you’re expecting, take a good look at your dog’s obedience skills, and set a plan for modifying any undesirable behaviors. It’s important to start as soon as possible, as these often well-rehearsed behaviors don’t go away overnight. Helping a dog successfully change his behavior typically requires a behavior change on your part, too.

For example, a common complaint among pet owners – that suddenly reaches a new level of importance when the family is expecting – is the dog who jumps on people as they enter the home. This might be the owners themselves, visitors, or both. A trainer might offer several approaches to this problem:

- Asking the owner to put a leash on the dog and reward him generously for keeping four feet on the floor as people enter.
- Teaching the dog to hold a down-stay on his bed nearby.
- Asking the dog to “sit” and petting the dog only when his butt is on the floor. If he jumps up, he becomes invisible.
- Teaching the dog to retrieve a toy

when people enter the home, giving him something else to do, and moving him away from the entry point.

- Scattering a handful of kibble on the floor to assign the dog a task (vacuuming up kibble, often called a “Find it!” game) that is incompatible with jumping up.
- Manage the situation by securing the dog behind a baby gate, in a crate or pen away from the entryway, or in the backyard.

Unfortunately, any potential solutions will fail if an owner lacks consistency and the dog is frequently allowed to rehearse the unwanted behavior. It’s not realistic to expect a 3-year-old dog who has been jumping on people since puppyhood to completely and reliably stop defaulting to this behavior in two weeks – you might not even fix it in two *months*.

Remember that changing one’s daily behavior is difficult. Yes, it’s hard to remember to *always* put a leash on the dog (or implement another strategy) on the way to answering the door – but it’s equally as difficult for your dog to give up the jumping habit, especially since it’s likely to have been reinforced by attention of some sort. (Even yelling “Down!” is giving the dog attention – which is usually what he’s after when he jumps up.) Start training as soon as possible, practice often (in the case of jumping, be willing to invite understanding friends and family over to help you), and be patient. Remember, the more time you invest in this training, the smoother the transition will be from pet parent to parenting with pets.

The following are the top skills to master before the baby arrives:

■ SEPARATION.

Proper management is key, says Shryock. Teaching a dog to be relaxed behind a baby gate in another room is a wonderful way to help create a harmonious household with two- and four-legged babies. This type of management gives everyone a break from actively supervising the dog while attending to the baby or receiving guests, and later can provide a “safe space” for a dog as the baby becomes mobile.

“It has to be an early priority,” Shryock says. “We all need a break – the dogs do, too. Waiting until the baby is 8 months old and crawling – that’s not the time to suddenly discover that the dog can’t be comfortably left alone in another room.”

The ability to be calmly separated from the family is a skill that doesn’t come naturally to many dogs. Dogs want to be near those to whom they are bonded. Even dogs who are successfully crate-trained might associate the crate only with sleeping and as a place to stay when the humans leave the house. That’s different, in the dog’s mind, from accepting the crate as a place to rest when the family is home and awake. Teaching a dog to stay behind a baby gate is a nice alternative to a crate, especially for potentially longer stretches of time, as it gives the dog more space to move around.

“I wish this was standard practice for all dogs to learn,” says Shryock, noting that she’s encountered many families for whom this behavior would have likely prevented the family from ultimately deciding to rehome the dog.

■ “ON YOUR SPOT” OR “PLACE.”

This behavior is useful in any home with a dog, but teaching a dog to reliably go to his bed – and stay there until

released – can be especially helpful in homes with newborns. I recommend having multiple spots for ease of access. When a dog can calmly stay on his spot in the living room, he can enjoy calm integration with the family, even when visitors are present. A spot in the nursery offers a similar rest area for the dog that keeps him out from underfoot. Having another spot in your bedroom provides an alternate sleeping arrangement for the dog when you’re nursing the baby in the middle of the night and don’t want him on the bed.

■ PROMPT NAME RECOGNITION.

One of the best ways to ensure that a dog responds to a known cue is to make sure you have the dog’s attention when you deliver the cue. Teach your dog to quickly orient himself to you when he hears his name!

This is also a useful way to help divert potential mischief. Imagine that your dog is cruising around the nursery, about to stick his head in the diaper pail. Or maybe he’s headed for the baby swing and you don’t want him to lick the baby. In both cases, you can use his name in a positive-sounding voice to reorient his attention so that you can redirect his energy to a more desirable behavior.

■ FLUENT “SIT” OR “DOWN.”

Does your dog know how to sit or lie down? How *well* does he know these behaviors? What does “He knows it” mean to you? To be “fluent” in a behavior means that the dog consistently responds to the cue quickly, without the aid of lures (food, toys) or prompts (touching the dog, etc.), and can do so even in the face of distractions and in a variety of settings. Many dogs sit like rock stars in the kitchen when it’s time for dinner, or whenever the owner is holding a treat, but struggle in other settings.

“That can be really tricky for many families, but it’s so important,” Shryock says. “When a new parent is sitting on the couch and can say, ‘sit’ or ‘down’ and their dog can do it ... that means so much to families when they’re holding

Practice while pregnant! Put your feet up and a food-stuffed Kong down, and tell your dog to entertain himself until further notice. There will be lots of this laying around while parents are busy with feeding, changing, and rocking the baby, so practice now!



a newborn. It's definitely worth fine-tuning this behavior."

■ TOUCH.

Teaching a dog to touch his nose to your open palm has several useful applications. Many trainers use "touch" as the foundation for a solid, come-when-called behavior. Some people teach the dog to hold the position in order to "station" the dog during grooming or other husbandry behaviors. In a home with a newborn, Shryock says "touch" is a useful way to move the dog around the room. When a dog learns to love this targeting behavior, a clever parent can use it to cooperatively guide the dog from place to place without having to potentially nag or forcefully move the dog.

■ SAFE LEASH WALKING.

Walking politely on a loose leash is a difficult behavior for dogs to master because it almost always requires them to walk more slowly than their natural pace. Add that to the fact that it's a behavior we typically ask dogs to perform for long periods of time, and under constant environmental distractions, and it's no wonder we see so many dogs traveling through life on a tight leash!

That said, for safety reasons, it's important that dogs learn not to pull expectant mothers. This is especially important when the dog is prone to lunging at things in the environment, whether from excitement or arousal/aggression. The more comfortable you are with your dog's leash-walking skills, the more likely you will feel motivated to continue walking him after the baby arrives. Let's face it, it's sometimes hard to get excited about walking an unruly dog on a good day when you've had a full night's sleep. Now imagine motivating yourself to walk the dog when you're on two hours of sleep and under-caffeinated since you're limiting your coffee intake while breast-feeding!

Many expectant parents worry about the possibility of injury to mom or baby in the event that the dog pulls mom off balance. For this reason, I often recommend that expectant parents teach their dogs to comfortably wear a head halter or front-clip harness to help physically *manage* the dog while working on polite leash walking, and as a bit of added protection for mom. This is especially helpful in cases of big, strong dogs and petite handlers. It can

also make it easier for other people to walk the dog after the baby arrives, when friends and family want to know what they can do to help.

Once your dog can consistently walk politely, it's time to introduce the stroller if you plan to walk the dog with the baby. To be fair to the dog, begin by introducing the stroller as a stationary object, and reward your dog for his calm investigation of the baby's future ride. Gradually introduce the slight movement of the stroller near the dog. Avoid rolling it *at* the dog – we don't want him to think the stroller is chasing him. Always give your dog the option to move away from the stroller if he's uncomfortable. Over time, and only progressing to the next step when your dog is happily engaged in the previous step, work up to short leashed walks with the empty stroller.



Be sure to reward generously to help keep the dog walking alongside you and the stroller while maintaining a loose leash. Always use your best judgment when deciding if you can safely manage a stroller and a dog at the same time, or if walks should become a "family outing" where one person pushes the stroller and another handles the dog.

A word of caution: If your dog is prone to extreme arousal or aggressive outbursts while on walks, please do not single-handedly attempt to walk the baby and your dog. Dogs who struggle with reactivity need your full attention when out in public, and it's impossible to do this safely while also being responsible for your baby.

PRACTICE EARLY & OFTEN

With all of these behaviors, the best advice is to start training as soon as possible. Most of us have dogs who exhibit a least a couple of behaviors we aren't fond of, but that we begrudgingly put up with, often because tolerating the behavior feels easier than investing the

time to implement training solutions. But these same behaviors often seem like potential deal breakers once the baby arrives; not addressing them ahead of time leads to unnecessary stress for everyone. As Shryock says, "So many dog-human relationships go south right there, because the second they bring the baby home, so many of the interactions become about yelling at the dog and it becomes really hard."

EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED CHANGES TO YOUR DOG'S ROUTINE

If your dog is used to a predictable feeding schedule, it's wise to start mixing things up now. The arrival of a newborn often signals the start of sleepless nights and frequent visitors, which can easily throw everyone's – including the dog's – schedule out of whack.

Start small, by varying mealtimes within a short 30-minute window, and consider working up to feeding within the span of as long as three hours. Ideally, you want your dog to trust that his daily sustenance is coming, even though he can't predict when. This way, he's less likely to exhibit attention-seeking behaviors when his internal body clock says it's time to eat. For this reason, many trainers recommend never feeding a dog on a deliberate schedule once they are past the puppy stage where a strict feeding schedule helps with housetraining.

If your dog routinely "demands" to be taken for a walk every evening at 6:30 sharp, consider a similar routine jumble, walking some days at 5 p.m. and others at 9 p.m. You may even go so far as to skip the walk occasionally and substitute a good mental enrichment activity instead. (Serving his dinner from a frozen food-stuffed Kong or kibble scattered throughout the yard are two useful alternatives.)

It's important that your dog continue to have his exercise needs met, but even the best-laid plans will fall short from time to time as parents adjust to new sleep schedules and the reality of caring for a tiny human. Helping your dog adjust to a less predictable schedule before the baby arrives can help reduce his stress level as he adapts to this life-changing event.

RULE CHANGES?

Does your dog sleep on your bed? Might this rule change once the baby arrives? Should it? (If your dog ever displays

“cranky” or aggressive behavior while on the bed, we’d advise nixing that privilege and contacting a trainer for additional support.) Take the time to discuss the options with your spouse and decide what you think will work for your family.

For example, if your dog is used to sleeping between the two of you, and you now want him to sleep on his blanket at the foot of the bed, start this training as early as possible. Realistically, there might also be times where you don’t want the dog on the bed, so make sure to practice having him sleep on a dog bed on the floor nearby, in a crate, or in another room.

Ideally, your dog will learn to be flexible with his sleeping arrangements. Most importantly, don’t just assume that your dog will go with the flow and accommodate the sudden change once the baby arrives. Create specific training situations that simulate you being distracted by something interesting in order to practice having him stay at the foot of the bed or on his bed on the floor while you attend to your activity, and later, the baby.

What about the baby’s room? Will your dog be allowed to accompany you into the nursery, or will you prefer that he wait by the door? Teaching a reliable “place” behavior is a nice compromise for many families. When your dog knows to hold a relaxed down-stay on his bed, a bed in the nursery becomes a comfortable hang-out spot. Be sure to practice this behavior often – in the nursery – even if his bed stays are stellar in other rooms. Dogs can be slow to generalize behaviors, so a dog with a great “place” behavior in the living room while you watch television might not immediately have a solid “place” behavior in the nursery when you’re busy with the baby and the scent of a ripe diaper pail is wafting nearby.

If you prefer that your dog stay out of the nursery, install a baby gate to simplify compliance with the new house rule. This is especially useful for a room where your dog has historically had access. Even the most athletic dogs can be taught to respect a baby gate.

Set up training sessions where you reward your dog for being on one side of the gate (with tasty treats or a food-stuffed Kong toy) while you’re in the nursery. Practice often, long before the baby arrives, and keep a tin of kibble or non-perishable dog treats in the nursery

NEW BABY FACT OR FICTION

Fact or fiction: “If a family member brings the dog my baby’s blanket ahead of time, so he can get used to the smell of the baby, they will be fine together.”

This is perhaps one of the most widely disseminated pieces of advice that’s doled out by well-meaning friends and family members, and even professionals across the board from dog trainers to birthing experts. Shryock says it can’t hurt, but there’s a danger in thinking it’s the end-all, be-all of advice. She likes to quote a colleague who sums up the situation by saying, “If you were to come visit me, I wouldn’t ask you to send your underwear ahead of time so my dogs could get to know you ...”

Yes, scent can be a valuable way to provide information to a dog, but how the information is presented is just as important. Many people enthusiastically show the dog the blanket, getting the dog overly excited and creating a heightened introduction. If dad has been visiting the baby and coming home to the dog, he’s already introduced the baby’s scent without needing to parade the blanket around.

Where the blanket can be especially useful is when the dog is staying with a friend or family members for a few days. In that case, the caretaker can help condition a positive association with the baby’s scent through short training sessions where he feeds the dog treats with the blanket nearby.

“A lot of people put a lot of stock in the idea that, if their dog doesn’t growl or react funny to the blanket, everything will be okay,” Shryock says. This can create a false sense of security. “It’s just not that simple.”



If you held the baby at the hospital, bringing her blanket home for the dog to smell is redundant; you already have eau de bébé all over you!

to continue to reinforce desired behaviors once the baby arrives. Maintaining a high rate of reinforcement not only supports your training, but can also help condition a positive association with the baby, since the rewards often come when the baby is nearby.

WHAT’S THAT SMELL?

Babies often smell like the products we put on them. To help lessen the dog’s natural curiosity in the baby, many trainers recommend habituating the dog to some of the most common odors (baby powder, diaper rash cream, baby lotion, etc.) ahead of time.

To do this, put a small amount of one product on a rag and leave it (out of reach) near the dog’s sleeping area for a couple of days. Take a day off between odors, but randomly work your way through all of the assorted products. The idea is for the

dog’s interest in the novel odors to wane as they become an increasingly common part of the everyday environment. (It reminds me of how, when I first started teaching group dog training classes, my own dogs would give me a thorough sniff-down every time I came home. After a while, they got used to me smelling like I was “stepping out” on them, and the olfactory interrogation ceased!)

WHAT’S ALL THAT NOISE?!

Babies make a lot of noise! The sometimes seemingly endless wails emanating from an unhappy baby can easily stress the calmest of dogs (and humans!). Desensitizing your dog to baby sounds can help him stay relaxed when the baby is fussy and everyone is likely to be feeling the effects.

There are CDs and on-line sources (such as findsounds.com) of assorted

baby noises ranging from baby babble to full-fledged wailing. To start, turn the volume all the way down and begin to *slowly* turn it up, watching for the first sign that your dog hears something. You'll likely see an ear twitch, or maybe he'll cock his head, but it shouldn't be loud enough to cause any concern.

Let the sound play while you feed treats, while he eats a meal, or while you play his favorite game, and sometimes leave it on as simple background noise. After a couple of days, repeat the process at a slightly louder volume, *slowly* working the volume up to a more realistic level. As you progress, if your dog looks at all concerned, you've gone too far; lower the volume back to the level where he appeared not to care.

PLAN FOR THE BIG DAY

As the anticipated due date (or scheduled C-section) approaches and you pack your hospital bag, decide who will take care of the dog, and plan accordingly. Designate a person whose job is to look after the dog, either house-sitting in your home or taking the dog to her house for a few days. Make these arrangements well in advance, as babies are known to arrive early. The last thing you want to deal with in the heat of the moment is trying to remember if your dog sitter has a key!

THE HAPPY HOMECOMING

When mom and baby come home for the first time, remember that the dog will likely be most excited to see mom. She should reunite with the dog first, without the baby, to help lower everyone's stress levels and make sure everyone feels like they get to enjoy a proper greeting.

Your dog will likely be curious about the baby, and it's fine to let them "meet" by allowing the dog to sniff (or briefly lick, if you're comfortable with that) the baby's feet. This should only be done under direct adult supervision.

We recommend letting the dog sniff the baby's feet, rather than the baby's face – *not* as a way of making the dog subordinate to the baby (be wary of trainers who recommend making the baby "alpha" over the dog), but as a responsible safety precaution. All dogs have teeth and it's good practice to routinely keep those teeth away from your baby's face, in favor of safer interactions, which will change as your baby grows.

Important: If your dog does not



Strive for level five supervision whenever the dog is not absolutely secured away from the baby – and avoid having the baby under the first three levels of supervision, ever.

willingly investigate the baby, don't force the issue! Let him acclimate at a pace that's comfortable for him.

THE ROAD FORWARD

As the family settles in to its new dynamic, there will be several things to consider. Many dogs are comfortable sharing space with a newborn, but quickly become concerned when the baby starts to crawl, and later walk. The baby's newfound mobility means she can follow the dog, potentially invading his personal space. The increased coordination that accompanies mobility also signals the opportunity for the infant or toddler to interact with the dog in ways he's not used to. Try as they might, infants and toddlers don't pet dogs like more experienced adults do.

Parents must be sure to teach both species how to properly interact with each other. Take the time to thoroughly learn about dog body language in order to recognize the subtle signs of annoyance or discomfort that often go overlooked in seemingly innocent interactions between dogs and kids of all ages.

Most importantly, they must supervise every interaction. Shryock says a lack of awake, adult supervision is the most common mistake families make.

"People don't take supervision as seriously as they need to," she explains. "We are living in a distracted world, and

people easily forget that when you're looking at your phone, it's easy to get engrossed in something. If your baby is crawling on the floor, and the dogs are around the corner, that can really become a problem quickly."

Awake, adult supervision is not just about setting down the iPad. Parents must understand that lack of sleep or medication can negatively affect their ability to provide proper supervision. This is when employing a management strategy such as separating the dog behind a baby gate becomes so important. "Lack of proper supervision is where a lot of people make mistakes that really are preventable," Shryock says.

Everyone makes parenting mistakes along the way, whether they are parenting a dog, a child or both. Knowledge is power. The more we know, the better prepared we are to handle issues as they arise – and they will! "It's really important that this is ongoing education for families," says Shryock. "Babies grow and dogs age, and we have to continue adjusting with every stage." 🐾

To reach Jennifer Shryock or the Family Paws Parent Education, see familypaws.com or call (877) 247-3407.

Stephanie Colman is a writer and dog trainer in Los Angeles. See "Resources," page 24, for contact information.

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WHAT'S AHEAD ...

❖ **RACIST DOG?**

Does your dog discriminate? How this can develop, and how to get him past his fears.

❖ **GEAR OF THE YEAR**

WDJ's top picks for canned foods.

❖ **PAIN MANAGEMENT**

There are more tools than ever for keeping your dog out of pain – acute or chronic.

❖ **FLUENT IN GOOD BEHAVIOR**

How to help your dog achieve true "fluency" with the behaviors you teach him.

❖ **BUTT SCOOT BOOGIE**

The care and maintenance of your dog's anal glands.

❖ **BEST IN BEDS**

A review of the thickest and most durable orthopedic dog beds on the market.