

The Whole Dog Journal™



VOLUME 19 | NO. 2 | \$5.95

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

FEBRUARY 2016

FEATURES

3 Food Shopping

Overwhelmed by the options in the dry food aisle? Here's a plan for your next shopping expedition.

8 WDJ's 2016 Approved Dry Foods

An alphabetical list of "complete and balanced" dry dog foods that meet all of our selection criteria.

12 Is Your Dog a Racist?

Why he's not, even if he's afraid of or aggressive to people who look different than you. Also, how to change that behavior so he can be comfortable with humans of any description.

14 Love Story

Five ways to show your dog how much you love him or her. Number five benefits your whole community!

16 The Eyes Have It

How to get your dog to look at you, and why it's such a valuable behavior.

20 Helping Itchy Dogs



Current evidence about what has been proven to treat dogs with allergies, and what hasn't. Hint: Water works!



Shop With a Plan
What to look for when you are looking for good dry dog food
Page 3



Great Citizenship
Teach your dog to be comfortable in a diverse world
Page 12

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Editor's Note
- 24 Resources

\$5.95US



0 74470 29446 7



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

EDITORIAL OFFICE

E-MAIL: WDJEditor@gmail.com
ADDRESS: 1655 Robinson Street
Orville, CA 95965

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

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

REPRINTS

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

NEWSSTAND

Jocelyn Donnellon, (203) 857-3100

WHOLE DOG JOURNAL DOES NOT ACCEPT COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING

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; Philip 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 ©2016, 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.

THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL makes every effort to provide information on dog health, care, and treatment that is authoritative, reliable, and practical. It is not intended, however, to replace diagnosis or treatment from a veterinarian or other qualified dog professional. THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL does not assume any legal responsibility. Readers should always consult qualified healthcare providers for specific diagnosis and treatment.

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



What It Takes

Building a good dog is a huge task.

BY NANCY KERNS

There was a week in December when I had 16 foster dogs staying with me. It's not quite as crazy as it sounds; 15 of them were puppies – they took up only two crates' worth of space at night! Nine of those puppies were from one litter of pit bull-mixes that were brought into my local shelter. Six were from another litter, perhaps Chihuahua/terrier-mixes, and are being fostered by a friend, but she was traveling (with her own three dogs!) over Christmas and couldn't drag the tiny puppies along, too. Both sets of puppies were estimated to be about 4 to 5 weeks old when they were brought to the shelter by people who claimed to "find them." The last foster who was with me – and is still with me – is a year-old hound.

When your dogs are adults and you've had them for years, it's easy to forget how much you've put into making them the dogs you enjoy living with. Having all of these puppies and an active adolescent has been a stark reminder of what a huge investment it takes, in terms of time *and* money, to make a good dog. Let me recount some of the ways . . .

■ **POTTY TRAINING.** If you had *nothing* else to do, I suppose you could start training even *tiny* puppies to go potty in a certain easy-to-clean place. But I had a lot to do in December, and way too many puppies to train. So I bought a lot of puppy pads, and did daily loads of laundry – old sheets, towels, tablecloths, etc. – for the first few weeks in order to keep the puppies clean and dry. By the end of our month together, with them a little older, they were using a potty area outdoors fairly reliably, and the laundry was down to a load every two or three days. The more they went outside, the less clean up was needed, but all those trips outdoors took a lot of time!

■ **FINDING THE RIGHT DIET.** It took weeks (and probiotics) to get their little tummies happy so that they produced nice stool, as opposed to stinky, gloppy piles.

■ **PARASITE CONTROL.** Both litters required deworming twice in the first month. The little pups also needed treatment for fleas.

■ **SOCIALIZING.** I invited everyone I know to come over and play with the puppies. It was hard work, but it has to be done. ☺

■ **TRAINING.** Yes, training. Even tiny puppies need to learn that it's rewarding to come when called, to sit politely if they want to be petted, and not to cry and fuss when they are locked in crates or behind a baby gate. And the year-old foster dog is learning how to wait at doors (rather than darting through), to walk on a leash, and to greet people calmly.

■ **SPECIALIZED PUPPY EQUIPMENT.** I bought a pet-specific heating pad for the puppies to sleep on; they were just so young and it was so cold! They found a small hole in one bed and completely destuffed it overnight; that had to be replaced with a stuffing-free bed. I also bought a bunch of toys and chews.

A person forgets about all of this when her dogs are middle-aged and perfect – and that's a good enough reason to go kiss them right now. And to foster again soon. *NK*

CORRECTION: We failed to include contact information for Paulette Jolliffe, the author of "Massage Pain Away," an article about massaging dogs who have arthritis that appeared in the November 2015 issue. Jolliffe is a certified canine massage therapist in Reseda, CA, and works as a veterinary technician at the Healing Touch, a holistic veterinary clinic in Sherman Oaks, CA. Jolliffe was certified in human massage therapy at the Seattle School of Massage in 1985 and spent several decades massaging humans before switching to domestic animals five years ago. She is also trained in canine cranio-sacral therapy. She can be reached at (818) 859-6582 or paulettk9massage@gmail.com.

Food Shopping

How to choose which dry foods to feed your dog.

BY NANCY KERNS

Be honest: The main reason that many of you are reading this right now – the reason that many of you have subscribed to WDJ! – is to learn which dog foods are the “best” ones. Am I right? If so, then I’m sorry to have to report that there isn’t any product out there that is “best” for *all* dogs On the other hand, I’m *happy* to tell you that there probably are a *bunch* of foods that are “best” for your individual dogs! You’re going to have to do some homework and some feeding trials, though, in order to learn which foods work (and which ones don’t) for each of your dogs. Not to worry, though; we’ll walk you through it!

Many people are under the impression that all foods that are labeled as “complete and balanced” contain an ideal, uniform amount of nutrients – just enough of what dogs need, but not too much. That would be lovely, if anyone knew precisely what the optimum nutrient levels for dogs are, or if the nutrient requirements for *all* dogs were the same. But there is no more consensus among veterinary nutritionists about optimum canine nutrition than there is

about optimum human nutrition among human nutrition experts. There *are* legal standards and definitions for what constitutes “complete and balanced” dog food, but the appellation really only gets you in the ballpark.

In the U.S., there are three very different ways that a dog food can be designated as “complete and balanced.” Once you know what they are, you can see why any single product can’t be counted on to ensure that your dog will

receive optimal nutrition if the “complete and balanced” product is fed as a sole diet long-term. Let’s take a quick look at the three qualifying standards for a “complete and balanced” canine diet.

Speaking from a regulatory perspective, “complete and balanced” means that the food either (A) contains at least the minimum levels of all the nutrients (and not more than the maximum levels of *some* nutrients) that have been determined to be essential for dogs (this is called a “nutrient levels” qualification); or (B), has sustained a population of dogs in a laboratory setting for a period of time (“feeding trial” qualification); or (C) has been formulated to closely resemble another product made by the same company that had passed a feeding trial (“family member” qualification).

The disparity between these qualifying methods has resulted in anything but nutritionally uniform formulation from pet food company to pet food company. Instead, there is a wide range of nutrient levels in the “complete and balanced” dog foods on the market. And this is why we don’t want you to search for just one ideal food for your dog – because there may not be one! Instead, we recommend hedging your bets, as it were, by rotating between a number of good foods that suit your dog.



Shopping for your dog’s food shouldn’t be a “one and done” experience, with you making repeat purchases of the same old food every time your dog runs out. Keep your eyes peeled for other good foods to rotate between.

FOODS, NOT FOOD

The variety of qualifying methods for “complete and balanced” diets results in a product category with a wide range of amounts of macronutrients (protein, fat, fiber, and moisture) and micronutrients (vitamins and minerals). If you feed your dog only one type of food for months and months – perhaps years! – you are, in effect, concentrating the nutritional attributes of that food in your dog.

Is the food a little higher than it should be in some minerals? Does it contain the absolute minimum of some vitamins? These things may not present a problem for any individual dog in the short term, but after months (or years!) of eating the same food, these less-than-ideal nutrient levels can cause health problems, such as a toxic accumulation of minerals (e.g., iron, copper, selenium), or persistently low vitamin D or E levels in the blood.

Fortunately, these problems are easily prevented by switching your dog’s diet from food to food – and using products from different manufacturers, too, since some food makers use the same vitamin/mineral “premix” in all of their products. Switching foods frequently helps guarantee that your dog will receive nutritional “balance over time,” if not in any single product.

“But, wait!” you say. “My vet/breeder/rescue group/doggie daycare operator/best friend told me that I should never switch foods, because it will upset my dog’s stomach. In fact, I switched foods once, when my pet supply store stopped carrying my favorite food, and my dog had diarrhea for a week! I can’t go through that each time I need a new bag of food!”

Here’s a secret: Most dogs have far more robust digestive systems than we do. And for millennia, they have been opportunistic feeders, eating literally anything edible in front of their noses, including grasses, fruits, eggs, animals they killed and animals they found dead (including mammals, birds, fish, amphibians, reptiles, bugs, you-name-it), as well as whatever scraps of human’s food that they could charm us into giving them, as well as the stuff we were throwing away . . . Including poop. Our poop and almost any other poop dogs come across is fair game: deer, rabbit, sheep, cow, horse. Sorry to get disgusting, but it’s true. The point is, dogs are built to be able to eat just about anything and make use of it, without getting sick.

Otto was shocked to learn that the brands closest to the door of his favorite pet supply store had paid for that position.

So why did your dog suffer from a week’s worth of diarrhea the last time you switched his food? When this happens, it’s generally due to one of two things:

✓ **YOU’VE BEEN FEEDING THE SAME FOOD FOR MONTHS (YEARS?)** and his body now lacks a variety of digestive enzymes and gut bacteria. The body quits producing enzymes it doesn’t need, and the population of gut bacteria that help break down your dog’s food changes in response to what it’s fed. If you have fed only a rice and lamb diet for years, and switch overnight to a chicken and quinoa diet, it will take your dog’s body a week or two to adjust.

✓ **YOUR DOG IS ALLERGIC TO OR INTOLERANT OF ONE OR SOME OF THE INGREDIENTS IN THE FOOD, OR INTOLERANT OF DIETS WITH THE MACRONUTRIENT LEVELS PRESENT IN THAT FOOD.** We recommend recording all of your dog’s dietary changes, and his response to them, in a notebook or calendar. It’s the best way to identify trends in any adverse reactions he has to certain ingredients or nutrient levels in his foods (such as a reliably bad reaction to diets containing fish, or to particularly high-fat foods).

In general, the more variety you build into your dog’s diet, the more robust his digestive system will become (unless, again, he has allergies to or a reliable intolerance of certain ingredients). Just keep in mind that the more frequently you switch foods, the more alert you need to be to any problem your dog might experience after each meal.

For example, if you feed one type of food in the morning and another at night, and your dog starts vomiting at 10 p.m., will you be able to definitely tie his digestive upset to his most recent meal? If he’s home alone all day and has a dog door, say, it could be possible that he was actually vomiting on and off all day; in that case, you could end up suspecting his dinnertime food, when in fact it was the breakfast food that contained something that disagreed with him. Your unique schedule and ability to observe your dog throughout the day may dictate how much variety is right for your dog.



LET’S GO SHOPPING!

We hope by now we’ve convinced you to look for at least a *couple* of good foods for your dog the next time you go shopping. If you are shopping for a new dog, or are newly convinced to look for a few prospects to add variety to your dog’s diet, schedule your next shopping expedition for a day when you have a significant amount of time to do some things and observe some things that you may never have done or observed before!

Here’s an ideal strategy for a “major” shopping day, when you have time to really study all your dog’s dietary options at your local pet supply store.

1 First, walk around the entire area where the dry dog food is displayed, checking to see what brands are present in that store. All brands are not available in every store. Things you should know:

■ It’s the pet food *distributors* that service your area that *really* decide which pet food brands are available in a given area. National distributors carry mostly high-volume products from the corporate pet food giants; smaller regional companies may specialize in the “natural/holistic” niche of products. Distributors have to be able to move a certain amount of any given company’s food in order to make it worth their while to carry it – and the same is true for your local store, too.

■ The *type* of store where you shop will partly determine what brands are available to you. Some pet food companies sell only to independent pet

supply stores; others sell their products mostly in “pet specialty chains” (think Petco and PetSmart, as well as smaller, regional chains such as Centinela Feed, Kriser’s Natural Pet Store, Pet Food Express, and Pet Supplies Plus). Still others concentrate their sales in “big box” stores (Target, Walmart) or grocery store chains.

■ Pet food companies offer incentives – sometimes in the form of credit or even as actual payments – to pet supply stores for premium placement of their products. In many stores, the first brands you see as you enter the dry dog food section will have paid the store to be positioned in the most prominent or first location you encounter when entering. The higher-cost foods (which are generally, but not always, also the higher-quality products) will be clustered together close to the most premium position. And, in general, the lowest-cost (generally, the lowest-quality) foods will be located in the farthest corner of the dry dog food section.

In a minute, we’re going to discuss what sort of ingredients meet our selection criteria for good foods, and which ingredients signal a low-cost, low-quality product. If the store where you habitually shop has only a few (or none) of the products that meet the selection criteria discussed more fully below, you should probably shop elsewhere!

When I first moved to the town where I have lived for the past decade, the sole pet supply store in town offered only one brand of food for sale: Science Diet, a company that (at the time) made not a single product that met my selection criteria. And there are no specialty (human) food stores (such as Whole Foods or Trader Joe’s) in my town that might sell a premium pet food. So for years, I drove to one of two nearby towns (about 20 miles to either one) that had independent pet supply stores with a good selection of premium foods to choose from.

People in even more remote areas may end up having to have good foods shipped to them directly from online pet

specialty businesses; that’s an increasingly affordable option these days.

2 Next, walk around more slowly and look at the food prices, getting an idea of which foods are within your budget, and which are too costly to consider.

Price is an important, inescapable factor in the buying decision for many dog owners. It may not strongly influence dog owners who are wealthy, nor a family with a good income and just one dog, or people with small dogs. But for those of us with several dogs, people who foster or breed, and people with very large dogs, the price of food can’t be completely disregarded, especially when it can range so widely, from scarily low (such as \$20 for 52 pounds of Kal Kan Dry Adult Dog Food, or \$.38 per pound) to prohibitively high (such as \$98 for a 28.6-pound bag of Champion’s Orijen “Regional Red” variety, or \$3.32 per pound!).

We have always recommended buying the best food that’s in your budget for your dog – but not everyone can buy the most expensive food, nor should they feel guilty for not doing so. Part of being a responsible pet owner is making sure you can afford his care. It doesn’t make sense to buy expensive food if you might have to surrender your dog because you can’t pay for an emergency vet bill (not to mention the electric bill!).

It should also be said that some dogs do absolutely fine on lower-cost, lower-quality food. If they didn’t, not nearly as much of these foods would be made and sold! But some dogs on low-quality diets will suffer from poor digestion (the most frequent signs being chronic diarrhea or just very loose stools and/or persistent gas); rough, dull coat and itchy skin; and/or poor overall health. Whenever a dog has chronic signs of disease, we recommend improving his diet. But if he looks like a million bucks on a diet comprised of lower-cost foods, more power to you.

I myself have been in the position of buying different foods for the different dogs in my home: the highest-quality food for my hypersensitive, elderly

Border Collie, and a lower-cost food for the younger, healthy foster dogs and litters of foster puppies that may stay with me for months at a time.

A final consideration regarding the cost of food: At some price point, it might make more sense to feed a home-prepared diet, or a good commercial raw (frozen or dehydrated) diet. Some of the best and most expensive dry dog foods are actually comparable in price (or even more expensive than) some of these less-processed (and, we would argue, healthier) diets.

3 Now, the exciting part: reading labels! This is where the rubber hits the road. We’ll start with some of the big type on the front of the bags.

Originally, we wrote #2 as “. . . look at food prices *and* ingredients,” because you’ll find that there’s usually a direct correlation between the food prices and their ingredients.

There is usually big print or a starburst of some kind on the label announcing when a product is **grain-free**. Often, these foods are more expensive than foods that contain grain. Whether you want or need a grain-free food for your dog is a topic for another day, but suffice to say here that not all dogs benefit from them, and some dogs do much better on a more conventional formulation with grains. If you are already aware that your dog’s health and/or digestion is better when he’s on a grain-free diet, then these are the foods you need to focus on. If you don’t have a compelling reason to try them, and your dog is already in fine condition and a good weight, we wouldn’t recommend switching to this type of food.

Similarly, food companies generally go out of their way to make it obvious when a food **contains novel proteins** (such as kangaroo, venison, buffalo, rabbit, and so on). These products *also* tend to cost more than products made with prosaic proteins, such as beef, chicken, lamb, turkey, and pork. Just as with grain-free foods, products that are made with novel proteins are *very* useful for dogs who are allergic to or intolerant



It’s great that there are so many grain-free foods available to dogs who need them, but there may be even more dogs who don’t benefit from them in any way, and in fact, do better on foods that contain grain.

of the far more common protein sources, but come with an unnecessarily high price for dogs who don't need them.

Time to start flipping the bags over and reading the ingredient lists.

THINGS YOU WANT TO SEE ON THE INGREDIENT LISTS

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

- ✓ **Lots of animal protein at the top of the ingredients list.** Ingredients in pet food, just like human food, are listed in order of the weight of that ingredient in the formula, so you want to see a top-quality animal protein at the top of the list.
- ✓ **Importantly, that animal protein should be identified by species – chicken, beef, lamb, etc.** “Meat” is an example of a low-quality protein source of dubious origin. “Poultry” is more specific but not specific enough!
- ✓ **Animal protein “meals”** are made through a process called rendering, wherein the animal tissues (muscle, fat, skin, connective tissue, and some smaller amount of bone, hair, and/or feathers, depending on the species) are ground, and then heated to separate the fat and reduce the moisture. If it's made from rendered chicken, the resulting product is chicken meal; if made from lamb, it's lamb meal, etc. Just as with the fresh animal protein, look for a named species (i.e., “chicken meal”) but avoid “meat meal” or “poultry meal.”
- ✓ **When a fresh, named meat is *first* on the ingredient list (such as “chicken”), there should be a named animal-protein meal (such as “chicken meal”) in a supporting role to augment the total animal protein in the diet.** The closer to the top of the ingredient list that this supporting meal appears, the better.

The ingredient list of the best foods will start out with something like, “Chicken, chicken meal . . .” and go on from there. Fresh meat contains a lot of (heavy) water, so if meat is first on the list, it acts like a diluted protein source; while it adds an appealing flavor and aroma to the food, it doesn't actually contribute that much protein. That's why *another* named source of animal protein should appear in the top three or so ingredients.

- ✓ **Whole-food ingredients: vegetables, fruits, and/or grains or other carbohydrate sources such as potatoes, peas, chickpeas, or sweet potatoes.** Fresh, unprocessed food ingredients contain nutrients in all their complex glory, with their vitamins, enzymes, and antioxidants intact. Don't be too alarmed by one or two “fractions” (a byproduct or part of an ingredient, like tomato pomace or oatmeal), especially if they are lower on the ingredient list. But the more fractions present in the food, and the higher they appear on the list, the lower quality the result.

UNDESIRABLE INGREDIENTS

We also think it's important that you know some ingredients to look *out* for. Avoid the following:

- ✗ **Meat byproducts, poultry byproducts, meat byproduct meal, and poultry byproduct meal.** Some of the animal tissues that go into the ingredients that are identified on labels as animal byproducts are highly nutritious, such as lungs, spleens, kidneys, brains (of some animal species, not all), livers, blood, bone, fat, and emptied stomachs and intestines. Poultry byproducts also includes necks, feet, and underdeveloped eggs. In addition, poultry byproduct meal may contain poultry heads.

However, believe us when we say that these ingredients are not handled as nicely as the higher-value cuts of meat of which they are “byproducts.”

Please recognize this sort of hyperbolic use of adjectives as a ploy to whet your appetite. Carrots are carrots.

Because they are not headed for human consumption, these products are not kept clean and chilled through processing and transport; it's a given that whatever bacterial burden may flourish during this time will be reduced by later processing. As they become oxidized – rancid – these animal tissues develop a certain level of peroxide. Pet-food producers may specify byproducts with lower peroxide values, but these cost more.

- ✗ **A “generic” fat source such as “animal fat.”** This can literally be any mixed fat of animal origin; it need not have originated from slaughtered animals. Meaning, it can be obtained from renderers that process dead animals. “Poultry” fat is not quite as suspect as “animal fat,” but “chicken fat” or “duck fat” is better (and traceable).
- ✗ **Added sweeteners.** Dogs, like humans, enjoy the taste of sweet foods. Sweeteners effectively persuade many dogs to eat foods comprised mainly of grain fragments (and containing less healthy animal protein and fats).
- ✗ **Artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives (i.e., BHA, BHT, ethoxyquin).** The color of the food doesn't matter to your dog. And it should be flavored well enough with healthy meats and fats to be enticing. Natural preservatives, such as tocopherols (vitamin E), vitamin C, and rosemary extract, can be used instead. Note that natural preservatives do not preserve foods as long as artificial preservatives, so owners should always check the “best by” date on the label and look for relatively fresh products.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

Many of the other things we want you to read the label for are neither good nor bad, just things you need to be aware of when shopping for your specific dog. Remember, each dog is an individual, and while it's great when it works out that all of your dogs do well on the same food, don't take it for granted that you will be able to feed them all with the same products.

- ✓ **You will need to become aware of how much protein and fat your dog thrives on – how much is too**



Nutrients listed in the “guaranteed analysis” box are subject for surveillance and enforcement. The levels listed there really are a guarantee.

much, and how much is too little. Top-quality foods contain a lot more protein (and often, more fat, too) than lower-quality foods, so you may have to reduce the amount of food you feed quite a bit if you switch from a low-quality food to a really good one. (One upside is that good foods are much more digestible, and your dog’s poop should shrink a lot, too.)

The fat and protein content appears on the label in an important section called the “guaranteed analysis” (GA). The nutrient levels reported on the GA are literally guaranteed. If a food is tested by a state feed control official, or even by a lab at the bequest of a private consumer, and the food fails to contain even one of the nutrients listed on the GA in at least the amounts shown there, the food may be subject to enforcement.

The more nutrients that a pet food company lists on the GA, generally, the more confident they are in their formulations. We admire companies that include this detail for nutrients that consumers may be paying extra for, such as omega 3 fatty acids, or nutraceuticals such as glucosamine and chondroitin.



Guaranteed Analysis	
Crude Protein	27.0% min
Crude Fat	16.0% min
Crude Fiber	5.0% max
Moisture	10.0% max
Calcium	1.1% min
Phosphorus	0.8% min
Choline	2,750 mg/kg min
ARA*	0.04% min
DHA*	0.10% min
Omega 3 Fatty Acids*	0.75% min
Omega 6 Fatty Acids*	3.0% min

*Not recognized as an essential nutrient by the AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles.

type of dogs the food has been formulated for: adults only, or “all life stages.”

Food that is designated as “puppy” food on the *front* label may say that it’s formulated for dogs of “all life stages,” “puppies,” “growth,” or “growth and reproduction” on the nutritional adequacy statement; all of those phrases mean essentially the same thing. The required nutrient values for puppies (“growth”) are higher than for “adult maintenance,” so if a food meets the requirements for “all life stages,” it meets the standards for puppies.

In contrast, a food with a nutritional adequacy statement that says it is formulated for “adult maintenance” is *not* adequate for puppies, and may not contain enough protein and other nutrients for senior, pregnant, lactating, or high-performance dogs.

- ✓ **Keep in mind that adjectives are present on labels to appeal to your appetite; they mean *nothing!*** Frankly, I get irritated when I see hyperbolic things like “Farm-grown carrots” (where the heck else would carrots be grown?!) and “Sun-ripened cranberries” (ditto).
- ✓ **Look for a “best by” date that’s at least six months away.** A best-by date that’s 10 or 11 months away is

ideal; it means the food was made very recently. Note: Foods made with synthetic preservatives (BHA, BHT, ethoxyquin) may have a “best by” date that is 18 months or more past the date of manufacture.

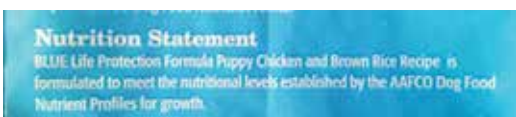
Please don’t forget to check the date! Recently, I was in a store and examining food ingredient lists for almost an hour when I finally chose the last bag of a particular food. I put it in the cart, started to walk it to the register, when I remembered to check the best-by date. I was horrified to see that the food had a best-by date that was more than a year prior! I think the odor of a food that old would have tipped me off when I opened the bag – oxidized (rancid) food has a particular aroma – but I’m glad I didn’t risk feeding it to my dogs, or have to make an extra trip to return it.

LIST OF APPROVED FOODS

On the next few pages is a list of foods that meet all of our selection criteria. Whether or not you have seen them before, or can get them, may depend on where you live and where you shop – although, remember, many of these products are increasingly available through online pet supply retailers.

Please note that these are not the only foods on the market that meet our selection criteria. There may be other foods available to you that we are not familiar with. Read the labels; if they meet the criteria we’ve outlined above, and they fit your budget and suit your dog, they have our blessing.

Last but not least: We’ve always ordered the foods on our “approved foods” list alphabetically under their maker’s name, because some companies make several lines of food and we didn’t want to repeat the contact info for each company. But, every year, we hear from people who want to know why their favorite food is not on our list, because they were looking for it alphabetically under the product name, not its maker. We gave up! **We’ve ordered this year’s list alphabetically by the name of the food.** Happy shopping! 🐾



- ✓ **There is no nutritional difference between “puppy” food and food that is for dogs of “all life stages.”** All “complete and balanced” foods are required to have a “nutritional adequacy” or “AAFCO” statement somewhere on the bag, though sometimes these are printed in incredibly tiny type. The statement contains information about which

Don’t buy food this close to its “best by” date. It was made at least a year ago – and maybe as much as two years ago! – and is bound to be oxidized.



WDJ'S APPROVED DRY DOG FOODS FOR 2016

PRODUCTS THAT ARE NEW TO THIS LIST APPEAR IN YELLOW BOX

THIS YEAR, LIST IS ARRANGED ALPHABETICALLY BY THE FOOD NAMES, NOT THEIR MAKERS

NAME OF FOOD	COMPANY, CONTACT INFO
ACANA	Champion Petfoods Morinville, Alberta (877) 939-0006 championpetfoods.com
ACTIVE CARE	Breeder's Choice (Central Garden & Pet) Walnut Creek, CA (866) 500-6286 goactivedog.com
ADDICTION	Addiction Foods Kent, WA (425) 251-0330 addictionfoods.com
ANNA MAET	Annamaet Telford, PA (888) 723-0367 annamaet.com
ARTEMIS	Artemis Carson, CA (310) 513-4090 artemiscompany.com
AVODERM	Breeder's Choice (Central Garden & Pet) Walnut Creek, CA (866) 500-6286 avodermnatural.com
AZMIRA	Azmira Tucson, AZ (800) 497-5665 azmira.com
BAKE TO NATURE	Three Dog Bakery Kansas City, MO (800) 487-3287 threedog.com
BENCH & FIELD	Bench & Field Grand Rapids, MI (800) 525-4802 benchandfield.com

NAME OF FOOD	COMPANY, CONTACT INFO
BEST BREED (DR. GARY'S BEST BREED)	Best Breed Findlay, OH (800) 500-5999 bestbreed.com
BLACKWOOD	Ohio Pet Foods Lisbon, OH (888) 843-1738 blackwoodpetfood.com
BLUE BUFFALO	Blue Buffalo Wilton, CT (800) 919-2833 bluebuffalo.com
BORÉAL	Boréal Beamsville, ON (800) 253-8128 borealpetfood.com
BYNATURE	Kent Pet Group, Inc. Muscatine, IA (877) 367-9225 bynaturepetfoods.com
CALIFORNIA NATURAL	Natura Pet Products (Mars, Inc.) McLean, VA (800) 532-7261 californianaturalpet.com
CANIDAE	Canidae San Luis Obispo, CA (800) 398-1600 canidae.com
CANINE CAVIAR	Canine Caviar Norco, CA (800) 392-7898 caninecaviar.com
CARNA4	Carna4 Toronto, Ontario (855) 422-7624 carna4.com

NAME OF FOOD	COMPANY, CONTACT INFO
CASTOR & POLLUX	Merrick Pet Care Amarillo, TX (800) 875-7518 castorpolluxpet.com
CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL	Chicken Soup for the Soul Cos Cob, CT (800) 658-0624 chickensoup.com
DOGSWELL (Includes Dogswell Happy Hips, Dogswell LiveFree, and Dogswell Nutrisca)	Dogswell Los Angeles, CA (888) 559-8833 dogswell.com
DR. TIM'S	Dr. Tim's Pet Food Marquette, MI (906) 249-8486 drtims.com
DRS. FOSTER & SMITH	Drs. Foster & Smith Rhineland, WI (800) 381-7179 drsfostersmith.com
EAGLE PACK	WellPet, LLC Tewksbury, MA (800) 225-0904 eaglepack.com
EARTHBORN HOLISTIC	Midwestern Pet Foods, Inc. Evansville, IN (812) 867-7466 earthbornholisticpetfood.com
EVANGER'S	Evanger's Dog & Cat Food Co. Wheeling, IL (847) 537-0102 evangersdogfood.com
EVO	Natura Pet Products (Mars, Inc.) McLean, VA (800) 532-7261 evopet.com
FIRSTMATE	Taplow Ventures North Vancouver, BC (800) 658-1166 firstmate.com

NAME OF FOOD	COMPANY, CONTACT INFO
FROMM (includes Fromm Classic, Fromm Four-Star, and Fromm Gold foods)	Fromm Family Foods, LLC Mequon, WI (262) 242-2200 frommfamily.com
GO	Petcurean Chilliwack, BC (866) 864-6112 petcurean.com
GRANDMA MAE'S COUNTRY NATURALS	Grandma Mae's Country Naturals New York, NY (888) 653-8021 grandmamaes.com
GREAT LIFE	Great Life Performance Pet Products Simi Valley, CA (805) 577-9663 doctorsfinest.com
HALO (Includes Halo, Halo Spot's Stew, and Halo Vigor)	Halo, Purely for Pets Tampa, FL (800) 426-4256 halopets.com
HEALTH EXTENSION	Health Extension Pet Care Melville, NY (800) 992-9738 healthextension.com
HI-TEK NATURALS	Hi-Tek Rations Dublin, GA (800) 284-4835 hitekration.com
HOLISTIC SELECT	WellPet, LLC Tewksbury, MA (800) 225-0904 holisticselect.com
HORIZON (Includes Horizon Amicus, Horizon Legacy, and Horizon Pulsar)	Horizon Pet Nutrition Rosthern, SK (403) 279-5874 horizonpetfood.com

NAME OF FOOD	COMPANY, CONTACT INFO
INSTINCT	Nature's Variety St. Louis, MO (888) 519-7387 instinctpetfood.com
KASIK'S	Taplow Ventures North Vancouver, BC (800) 658-1166 kasiks.com
LEONARD POWELL SIGNATURE	Hi-Tek Rations Dublin, GA (800) 284-4835 leonardpowell.com
LIFE'S ABUNDANCE	Life's Abundance Jupiter, FL (877) 387-4564 lifesabundance.com
LIVSMART	Smartpak Canine Plymouth, MA (800) 461-8898 smartpak.com
LOTUS	Lotus Pet Foods Torrance, CA (888) 995-6887 lotuspetfoods.com
MERRICK	Merrick Pet Care Amarillo, TX (800) 664-7387 merrickpetcare.com
N&D (NATURAL & DELICIOUS)	Farmina Pet Foods Colts Neck, NJ (732) 850-3693 farmina.com
NATURE'S SELECT	Nature's Select Anaheim, CA (714) 993-5500 naturalpetfooddelivery.com
NATURAL BALANCE	Natural Balance Pet Foods (Del Monte Foods) Burbank, CA (800) 829-4493 naturalbalanceinc.com

NAME OF FOOD	COMPANY, CONTACT INFO
NATURAL PLANET ORGANICS	KLN Family Brands Perham, MN (800) 525-9155 naturalplanetorganics.com
NATURE'S VARIETY (See Instinct and Prairie)	Nature's Variety St. Louis, MO (888) 519-7387 instinctpetfood.com naturesvariety.com
NEWMAN'S OWN	Newman's Own Aptos, CA (800) 865-2866 newmansownorganics.com
NOW FRESH	Petcurean Chilliwack, BC (866) 864-6112 petcurean.com
NULO	Nulo Pet Food Austin, TX (512) 476-6856 nulo.com
NUTRAM	Nutram Pet Products Elmira, ON (844) 234-2464 nutram.com
NUTRISOURCE	KLN Family Brands Perham, MN (800) 525-9155 nutrisourcedogfood.com
ORIEN	Champion Petfoods Morinville, Alberta (877) 939-0006 championpetfoods.com
OVEN-BAKED TRADITION	Bio Biscuit, Inc. Saint-Hyacinthe, QE (888) 224-4140 ovenbakedtradition.com
PARTY ANIMAL	Party Animal West Hollywood, CA (855) 727-8926 partyanimalpetfood.com

NAME OF FOOD	COMPANY, CONTACT INFO
SPRING NATURALS	Performance Pet Products, LLC Mitchell, SD (866) 868-0874 springnaturals.com
PET CHEF EXPRESS	Pet Chef Express New Westminster, BC (604) 916-2433 petchefexpress.ca
PETGUARD	Petguard Green Cove Springs, FL (800) 874-3221 petguard.com
PINNACLE	Breeder's Choice (Central Garden & Pet) Walnut Creek, CA (866) 500-6286 pinnaclepet.com
PRAIRIE	Nature's Variety St. Louis, MO (888) 519-7387 prairiepetfood.com
PRECISE (Includes Precise Naturals and Precise Holistic Complete)	Precise Pet Products Nacogdoches, TX (888) 477-3247 precisepet.com
PREMIUM EDGE	Diamond Meta, MO (800) 977-8797 premiumedgepetfood.com
PROFESSIONAL	Diamond Pet Foods Meta, MO (800) 342-4808 professionalpetfood.com
PUREVITA	KLN Family Brands Perham, MN (800) 525-9155 purevitapetfoods.com
RAWZ	Rawz Natural Pet Food Cape Neddick, ME (844) 480-8672 rawznaturalpetfood.com

NAME OF FOOD	COMPANY, CONTACT INFO
SUMMIT	Petcurean Chilliwack, BC (866) 864-6112 petcurean.com
SOLID GOLD	Solid Gold Pet, LLC Greenville, SC (800) 364-4863 solidgoldpet.com
TASTE OF THE WILD	Diamond Pet Foods Meta, MO (800) 977-8797 tasteofthewildpetfood.com
TUSCAN NATURAL	Pyramid Pet Products Las Vegas, NV (888) 408-0895 tuscannatural.com
ULTRA	Nutro Company (Mars Petcare) Franklin, TN (800) 833-5330 ultraholistic.com
VERUS	VeRUS Pet Foods Abingdon, MD (888) 828-3787 veruspetfoods.com
VIAND	PHD Products, Inc. Elmsford, NY (800) 743-1502 viandpet.com
WELLNESS (includes Wellness, Wellness Core, Wellness Simple, and Wellness TruFood)	WellPet, LLC Tewksbury, MA (800) 225-0904 wellnesspetfood.com
WHOLE EARTH FARMS	Merrick Pet Care Amarillo, TX (800) 323-3353 feedgoodness.com
ZIGNATURE	Pets Global North Hollywood, CA (888) 897-7207 zignature.com

A Racist Dog?

Help your dog feel comfortable with people of every description.

BY LAURIE C. WILLIAMS, CPDT-KA

Almost as soon as I walked into Boomer’s house I could tell his owner was nervous. This isn’t all that unusual when meeting a new client for the first time. I always have my new clients put the dog in another room so we can get acquainted with each other and have some time to chat without being distracted. Very often, the clients are uneasy during these initial consultations; I’ve grown accustomed to it. After all, often they have agonized over acknowledging their dog’s issues and their decision to call in a professional. But after a few minutes, I could tell there was something more. I’d been called to help her dog with his reactive behavior. She related that he lunged and barked at some people as they walked by. During our discussion, she seemed unusually pensive and was having difficulty making eye contact with me. So I pressed, “Is there anything else you need to tell me? Whatever it is, you’re safe and can tell me without fear of judgment.” She finally looked up at me and whispered, “I think my dog is racist. He hates black people.”

Race is a touchy subject and most of us try to avoid talking about it. In this case, though, the dog owner was left with little choice. I’m African American, and since I’d be working with her dog, she knew she needed to be up front about it from the start. I responded, “Is that all? I was expecting something bad!” We both started to chuckle, albeit a little nervously, but I felt it was important to try to lighten the mood a bit.

What she *didn’t* know was that it was far from the first time I’ve heard people describe their dogs as such. In fact, it’s a lot more common than I’d like to admit. But is it true? Can dogs be “racists”?

Racism is an ugly concept and an ugly word associated with an ongoing, systemic problem in our society, deeply rooted in history. True racists generally believe that some races are superior or inferior to others, which is why I’ve always felt the term is used way too loosely even when describing human behavior. People might have prejudices and biases, but that doesn’t necessarily mean they are “racist.” More often than not it means they are fearful of, unsure of, have had negative experiences with,

or haven’t been exposed to enough of the type of person they are concerned about. And this goes for dogs, too!

Dogs gravitate toward the familiar and seek out experiences that have formerly resulted in positive, beneficial, and/or pleasurable outcomes. They also tend to avoid situations and other beings who look (or even smell) deeply unfamiliar to them. So, in my view, it’s only natural that they can be biased toward or against people of a particular race, nationality, culture, and/or gender. Of course, as understandable as it may be, their fearful or defensive behavior around people who look very different from those they have more experience with can be difficult and downright embarrassing when it manifests.

What can you do about it? Here are my suggestions:

■ **CONFRONT IT HEAD ON.** It’s understandable to want to just avoid the subject entirely, especially if it’s rare that your dog will come across a person of that particular race. But therein lies part of the problem. We all know the importance of socialization and acclimating

our dogs to all kinds of different people, places, and things. A dog who repeatedly shows fear or reacts negatively to persons of a particular race has probably not been well socialized with people of that race. If you’re fortunate enough to adopt the dog before this issue arises, the most beneficial and proactive thing to do is to make a concerted effort to socialize your dog or puppy with people of every different race or nationality you can think of.

Many dog trainers are familiar with Margaret Hughes’ “Puppy’s Rule of 12s,” which addresses introducing your puppy to 12 different people (outside of family) including children, adults (mostly men), senior citizens, people in wheelchairs, walkers, with canes, crutches, hats, sunglasses, etc. Although the “etc” implies taking it even further, since it doesn’t directly emphasize people of different races, nationalities, and cultures, it’s easy for that to be overlooked, especially if you don’t routinely run into people who might fit into any of these categories. That means you might need to go out of your way, and out of your own comfort zone, to ensure your dog makes friends with a virtual rainbow coalition of people!

■ **STOP USING THE “R WORD.”** There’s too much stigma attached to the word. How many times have you heard people say their dog doesn’t like men? Well, they don’t go on to describe their dogs as “sexist.” There are a lot of dogs who also don’t seem to like children, people wearing hats, people in uniform, etc. Dogs have all kinds of biases, and racial/cultural biases are just like any other and should be treated as such. There shouldn’t be anything taboo about this or anything to be embarrassed about.

■ **DON’T ASSUME ABUSE OR MISTREATMENT.** Particularly when dealing with rescue dogs, people often assume that if a dog reacts fearfully or aggressively toward certain people, he must have been abused by people who resemble the ones who triggered his reaction. I would hazard a guess that this is only rarely the case. More often than not it is more a lack of association and positive interactions, not mistreatment.

The problem with this assumption is it excuses the behavior – a disservice to your dog – and inadvertently places blame

on the person your dog is apprehensive about. So unless you know with absolute certainty that your dog was abused, don't attribute his behavior to this.

■ **SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP.** As a canine behavior counselor, the number one dog problem I deal with is reactive behavior, regardless of the trigger, and I'm sure other canine behavior experts would likely say the same. Research shows that reactive dogs can be helped through behavior modification and counter-conditioning exercises, but these exercises take time and a lot of repetition. A behavior professional not only can develop a customized program for your dog, but also can be your extra set of hands and eyes, giving you feedback, tracking progress, and tweaking the program when necessary. She can also facilitate a more predictable environment to work in; this is especially valuable if your dog (and you) are already scared. The last thing either of you need is an unwelcome surprise at any given corner.

■ **BE PATIENT AND GIVE YOUR DOG TIME.** Reactive behavior does not disappear overnight. Accept that it's going to take some diligence and perseverance to see progress. I always advise my clients to expect to take two steps forward, and sometimes one step back, but to keep working. These methods are time-tested, and you'll be moving full speed ahead again before you know it.

■ **CONFRONT YOUR OWN FEARS AND POSSIBLE BIASES.** I think one of the other reasons people are so reluctant to talk about their dog being "racist" (there's that ugly word again) is they feel it could imply they, too, are racist. Well, let's talk about that for a minute.

A handler's fears, apprehensions, and emotions can travel right down the leash to her dogs, so if you are harboring some fears of your own about people of certain races, your dog could certainly pick up on it and react. Does that make you a bad person? No, it makes you human.

A very nice lady once told me that her dog wasn't racist, but he "didn't like criminals." I asked how she knew that, and she related how, when she and the dog waited in the car while her husband ran into a convenience store, he always growled at the "young men wearing hoodies walking into the store." When I

asked her how her dog knew those kids were criminals, she couldn't answer. Obviously the dog doesn't know anyone's "rap sheet," but if she was uneasy when those young men were around, her dog would most certainly pick up on it.

Again, this is nothing to be ashamed of. What will make the difference is if and how you address it. You have a couple of choices. You can shrug it off and act like it's no big deal, but know that this is not a problem that is going to go away by itself.

Depending on where you live, it's quite possible you could carry on with life in a vacuum without running into anyone of that particular race or nationality for a while. However, if we

take a look around, we can see that the world is getting smaller and our society grows more diverse by the day. There may come a time when it won't be so easy to keep your dog in that protective bubble; then what? Preferably, you'll try to help your dog alleviate his fears, so he can walk with confidence in the world and enjoy all it has to offer. Who knows, if your dog is able to make new friends, you might, too! 🐾

Canine education specialist, dog behavior counselor, and trainer, Laurie Williams is the owner of Pup 'N Iron Canine Fitness & Learning Center in Fredericksburg, VA. For contact information, see "Resources," page 24.

COUNTER-CONDITIONING AND DESENSITIZATION (CC&D)

Counter-conditioning involves changing your dog's association with a scary or arousing stimulus from negative to positive. Desensitization is starting with a very low-level intensity of aversive stimulus until the dog habituates to (or changes his association with) the aversive, and then gradually increasing the strength until the dog is comfortable with the stimulus at full intensity. The easiest way to give most dogs a positive association and to help them become comfortable with a stimulus is by using something he finds extremely pleasurable. For a food-motivated dog you could use very high-value, really yummy treats. If your dog is more motivated by toys, you could use his most coveted and desirable toy to engage him in play. Briefly, here's how a person would use the CC&D process to help change her dog's reaction to people of a different race or appearance from a fearful or aggressive one to a happy, friendly one.

Ideally, the handler would bring her dog to an environment where she would be assured of seeing the kind of people her dog is uncomfortable with – but where there is room to control the distance between the dog and the people.

It's important to start with the scary stimuli (in this case, the people of a different appearance) at a great enough distance from the dog so that the dog notices them, but is not yet extremely fearful or aroused (this is called the threshold distance). As soon as and whenever the handler sees her dog noticing someone, she can begin feeding the dog a constant stream of tiny bits of high-value treats, or begin offering play with the toy to the dog. As soon as the scary stimulus is out of view, or far enough away that the dog stops paying any attention to the stimulus, the handler stops feeding the treats or the game.

This process is repeated until the sight of the scary stimuli consistently prompts the dog to look at his handler with a happy smile and a "Yay! Where's my treat?" or "Are we gonna play?" expression. This is a conditioned emotional response (CER) – your dog's association with seeing people of the novel appearance is now positive one rather than a negative one. The process is continued, with increasing intensity of the scary stimulus: the handler moves the dog closer to the scary stimuli, or stages the exercise in a location where there are even more of the scary stimuli. Care is taken to keep the dog "under threshold" – happy and comfortable, and never stressed or pushed to the point of having a negative reaction to the stimuli.



This dog likes close, personal contact with her person. But if your dog is uncomfortable with being touched, hugging her could be threatening or even punishing. Adjusting your approach to her level of comfort is a sign of true love.

PAW RELATIONSHIP PAW

Love Your Dog?

A Valentine-inspired primer: How to show your dogs that you really love them.

BY DENISE FLAIM

When it comes to love, dogs offer all of the devotion with none of the guile. They won't sign up for a secret account on Match.com, or see another owner behind your back. And that flirtation with the pet sitter ... well, it's harmless. After all, there's a reason dogs have a reputation for being faithful friends. Reciprocating, though, can sometimes be a challenge. Dogs, you remember, approached *our* hearth; it has been in many ways a rather lopsided arrangement in the love department since the dawn of time. And with our busy lives and competing priorities, we humans have altogether too few opportunities to return that cupidity in kind – although, given how utterly and completely most of our dogs rely on us, that's a tall order under even the best of circumstances.

But we can at least try. In the spirit of Valentine's Day, here are some thoughts about how to share the love with the dogs in your life:

■ FOOD IS LOVE; PROVIDE GOOD FOOD! As any Italian grandmother will tell you, the act of providing a meal

is about far more than just calories. Whether you feed a conventional kibble diet or organic, home-prepared fare, study your dog to determine what food she thrives on: What makes her eyes sparkle, her coat shine, her breath smell fresh? Experiment a bit: Don't buy into the scare tactics that you'll create an

intestinal avalanche if you mix things up. (Of course, if you know your dog has a sensitive stomach, or a medical condition that requires a specialized food, don't start offering a buffet.) Try different foods, and keep track of what you feed and how she responds to it – write it down!

Once you know what works for your dog, feed it. If your budget can't support the very best, then feed as high a quality food as you can afford. Don't feel guilty, and don't get behind on the mortgage so your dog can eat organic chicken necks. Dogs are generally hardy souls; what's most important is that you stay healthy, stable, and positive so you can continue to provide the loving home that your dog needs most of all.

■ LOVE MEANS NEVER HAVING TO SAY GOODBYE – LITERALLY. Dogs are dogs, not humans in fur suits. Many of the social rituals we share with our fellow two-leggers aren't appropriate for dogs. Amping up arrivals and departures as if you are dropping off or picking up from the first day of kindergarten isn't a display of love to your dog. For many, it's a great way to seed and feed separation anxiety. If you love your dog, save your displays of affection for another time – one that's more spontaneous, sporadic, and less likely to become a trigger for a behavioral consult.

I never make a big deal when I leave the house, whether it's for a snappy errand or an afternoon-long meeting. I crate the puppy, with just one word – "Crate!" – dispensing a treat or chewie when she complies. As I ready my keys and check that I have my iPhone, the adult dogs just sigh, hop up onto the couch, and settle in.

■ TO KNOW HIM IS TO LOVE HIM – LITERALLY. Dogs are like fuzzy snowflakes – no two are alike. And while the dogs who came before helped shape you into the competent, caring owner that you are today, don't fall into the trap of thinking that what works for one will work for the other.

I come out of the dog-showing world, where the mark of a great handler is being able to adapt your style to the dog at the other end of the leash. This dog lives for liver, but that one would much prefer a squeaky toy. This dog can handle a little tug on the leash to indicate a change of direction, that one will respond by throwing herself on the ground in a fit of apoplexy. (Saluki, anyone?)

And of course, even within breeds, all dogs are individuals. Sacreilegious as it sounds, there are Labrador Retrievers who hate water, Border Collies who couldn't care less about sheep, and Jack Russell Terriers who are the very portrait of mellow. (Well, maybe we can't go that far . . .) You might acquire a purposefully bred dog because of a certain physical or temperament trait, but that's no guarantee, and you need to be okay with that.

The greatest act of love you can offer your dog is to accept him for who he is. He certainly does that for you. Don't get caught up in preconceived, and often romanticized, notions about who he *should* be. If you always wanted a dog you could take to the dog park, and wind up with one who *really* doesn't enjoy being exposed to the attentions of other dogs, continuing to take him there is bound to result in misery, sooner or later; chronically stressed dogs are more prone to behavior *and* health problems.

Some people have loved a now-gone dog so deeply and thoroughly that any subsequent one is always held up for comparison, often in unhealthy ways. If your grief or unresolved mourning makes even the idea of new dog a piercing reminder of the one who is no longer, do yourself a favor and wait until the wound has healed a bit. Often, opting for a dog of the opposite gender, or a very different physical appearance, can give the distance your heart needs to open just a sliver. That's all a dog needs to wiggle his way in.

■ **LOVE ON THE RUN.** We love our dogs so much that there's a temptation to keep



If you take your dog into public places, it's incumbent on you to make sure she is secure, well trained, and prepared to handle all the things that she might be expected to encounter. If she can't handle ordinary things like joggers, she shouldn't be in public.

them from anything that might hurt them – to cover them in cotton batting, away from any sharp edges. But dogs are hard-wired to want to interact with the world – sniffing, poking, running, jumping, dodging, and otherwise shaking it up in the biosphere.

Suburban dogs, in particular, often live their lives behind a picket fence and on a comfy couch. Enrich their lives as much as possible with car rides, visits to the dog-friendly teller at the bank, walks around the neighborhood, romps in a fenced field, and play dates with other friendly, well-adjusted dogs. Let her indulge any of her ancestral instincts: While most Borzoi no longer course here, and a good number of terriers have never gone to ground for a rat, there are organized sports – such as lure coursing and barn hunt trials, respectively – that can simulate it for them. Dock diving, scentwork, agility, rally . . . there is an ever-growing list of dog sports and activities that you and your dog can do together.

After all, what do dogs love – besides us, that is? They love life, and it's our charge to give them access to it. And if we can strengthen our bond with them in

the process, that's the champagne truffle in the chocolate sampler.

■ **THE BIG LOVE.** If you're really a “dog person,” then you would be happy to see more dogs mingling with humans almost everywhere you go. On some days, it seems like we're getting there; never before have we had such a progressive and welcoming attitude toward dogs. From puppy kindergarten classes to therapy dogs in hospitals and nursing homes, our culture has come to regard dogs as social partners, as a source of comfort and solace like no other. That's the good news.

At the same time, our society has come to expect a degree of unparalleled perfection from dogs in everyday interactions – and no one has yet managed to inform dogs everywhere of this new requirement and obtain their consent! The responsibility for your dog's good behavior in public is yours alone; whether the impression she makes is positive or negative is entirely up to you.

If you truly love your dog – and dogs in general – you'll never knowingly put her in a situation that makes her feel insecure, or that she's unprepared for. You'll work hard to ensure that she's properly socialized, calm, and well trained. In short, you'll give her the tools and the confidence to be a model canine citizen – the kind of dog that even non-dog-lovers love the most. 🐾

A regular contributor to WDJ, Denise Flaim raises Rhodesian Ridgebacks in Long Island, New York.



Tiny terriers, lure coursing? Why not? They have more than enough prey drive and desire to run as any Greyhound or Saluki. Also, running at this fun practice event costs very little and pays massive dividends in the form of the dogs' contented sleep that night!

The Eyes Have It

How to get your dog to look at you, and why it's such a valuable exercise.

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

Teaching our dogs to look at us is important for training; if we have their attention, we can get them to work with us. If we can *keep* their attention, we can keep them working with us even in the face of distractions. These things are big accomplishments, but the value of teaching eye contact is even bigger!

I have done behavioral assessments on thousands of shelter dogs over the years. I've adopted a few of them, fostered several more, and helped find forever homes for many. Even after decades of shelter work, I am still touched to my soul by the dog who walks up to me, looks me squarely in the eyes, and sends me the powerful, electric message, "I know how to communicate with you." That's

what teaching eye contact does for our dogs: it opens the door for interspecies communication.

It's really not natural for dogs to offer direct and prolonged eye contact. In the dog world, direct eye contact is a threat, and the appropriate response to a direct stare is to look away as a deference or appeasement behavior ("I'm not challenging you/please don't hurt me!").

In many human cultures, however, direct eye contact is considered polite – it means the other is focused and attentive – and it has certainly come to mean that in the dog training world. Like so many other behaviors we expect of our dogs that are alien to their own basic natures, we've come to expect our dogs to look at us when we ask them to, and to maintain eye contact for extended periods of time in a variety of contexts.

EYE EXERCISES

Because eye contact is important for training purposes, we teach eye contact exercises in our classes at Peaceable Paws. Here are some of the exercises that we practice in our basic classes:

■ **CAPTURING EYE CONTACT** – When dogs come to class for the first time, they are understandably distracted. Rather than letting our students beg and plead for their dogs' attention, we tell them to sit in a chair and wait. The *instant* their dog looks at them or even glances in their general direction, they click their clickers and feed their dogs a treat.

You can do the same with your



If your dog is the sort who gets overexcited when anticipating your next activity with him, teaching him to watch you can give him something to do (other than leaping about) while he waits.

dog. Practice at home first, in the least distracting environment, then when he's ready, take him out in public. Sit on a chair with your dog in front of you, leashed if necessary, and wait. The instant he looks at you, or near you, click (or use your verbal marker) and feed a high-value treat. You're reinforcing offered attention – teaching your dog that if he chooses to look at you, he can make you click.

Over time, “shape” for longer eye contact (reward increasingly longer moments of eye contact), and then for eye contact when you're walking. When your dog is doing well with it, take him out in public and practice there – in a park, on a bench outside your neighborhood pet supply store, in front of the post office, in the lobby of your veterinary clinic . . . the possibilities are endless.

■ **NAME GAME** – If your dog is not offering attention, you can always ask for it – *if you've taught him that his name means “Look at me for something wonderful!”* This is just like “charging” the clicker: say his name, and then feed him a tasty treat when he looks at you. Repeat this game regularly, until your dog *instantly* swivels his head toward you at the sound of his name. Then practice with increasing levels of distraction. Now you can get his attention if he doesn't offer it.

■ **ZEN ATTENTION** – Getting attention is one thing; keeping it is sometimes an entirely different matter. This exercise makes it clear to your dog that eye contact gets reinforced (not just looking at the treat), and allows you to shape for duration. With your dog sitting in front of you, hold a treat straight out at arm's length to the side. He will likely watch the treat. Just wait.

Here's the Zen part. In order to get the treat he has to look away from it – back at you. The instant he looks at you (as if to say, “Hey, what's the deal here?”) you click and feed him the treat. Then do it again. Most dogs figure this out amazingly quickly. When he comprehends that looking at you – not the treat – gets the click (and treat), you can add your “Watch me” cue, and start shaping for eye contact of longer duration.

■ **ME, NOT THAT** – Now it's distraction time. With your “Watch me” cue solidly installed, ask a family member or friend

EYE, EYE, SIR

There are many examples where eye contact is useful in our training and every day activities with our dogs. Here are some of them:

- ✓ Attention for focused heeling
- ✓ Keeping attention while waiting to give next cue
- ✓ Maintaining attention so your dog doesn't pester passersby in public places
- ✓ Keeping focus for duration of a “wait” or “stay”
- ✓ Holding attention during demonstration of behavior for imitation training
- ✓ Keeping attention while hiding treats to teach “Find it” behavior
- ✓ Teaching directional exercise in advanced obedience competition
- ✓ Teaching directional signals for Treibball and herding



Being able to ask for and receive your dog's prolonged eye contact while walking has many uses – but the behavior is quite taxing, and shouldn't be expected for the entire duration of your walks.

As valuable as eye contact can be, there are also times when it can be a hindrance. In K9 Nosework, tracking, earthdog trials, and a variety of other canine activities, the dog is supposed to be focused on the task, not the handler. As I recently learned, this is true of agility, too.

Our Kelpie, Kai, is a master at eye contact. My husband and I recently signed up for a foundation agility class with Kai at Kamp Kitty in nearby West Virginia. We entered the training center proudly on the first day of class with him heeling next to me, and beautifully focused on me. To our dismay, we were told that kind of focus is detrimental to agility, where the dog needs to focus on the equipment, not the handler. Fortunately Kai is bright and adaptable, quickly figured out the new rules, and dearly loves to play the agility game.

As much as we value eye contact, we also need to remember to give our dogs time just to be dogs. Focused leash-walking is great, but it's quite taxing. (Imagine taking



every walk with your eyes fixed on your best friend's face the entire time!) Our canine companions also need plenty of time to smell the flowers, read the pee-mail, and chase the occasional squirrel up a tree.

to walk past while you're reinforcing your dog for looking at you. Use a high rate of reinforcement at first (click and treat a lot) – then decrease the frequency as your dog figures out the game.

If he looks away, use his name or your “Watch me” cue to get his attention back. Click and treat! Gradually increase the intensity of the distraction: Start walking with your own dog toward your human distraction, have your friend whistle, clap his hands or jingle car keys while walking past, then jog, then bounce a ball ... get creative!

■ **TAKE IT ON THE ROAD** – When he's doing well with his eye contact games, take him out in public and practice there – in a park, on a bench outside your neighborhood pet supply store, in front of the post office, in the lobby of your veterinary clinic . . . the possibilities are endless. With each successful session under your belt, you can plan for a more distracting venue the next time.

WINDOWS TO THE SOUL

If we pay attention to teaching eye contact only for training purposes, we are missing out on one of the most fulfilling aspects of the behavior: our dog's ability to use his eyes to communicate with us. As behavior science continues to explore and acknowledge the cognitive capabilities of our canine companions,

we are realizing that our dogs may possess “theory of mind.”

Theory of mind (often abbreviated ToM) is the ability to attribute mental states – beliefs, intents, desires, pretending, knowledge, etc. – to oneself and others, and to understand that others have beliefs, desires, intentions, and perspectives that are different from one's own. It is sometimes expressed in “levels” like this:

Level 1 – I know.

Level 2 – I know you know.

Level 3 – I know you know I know.
And on and on...

Although science may not be ready to conclusively grant ToM to dogs, it's hard to argue that they can't attain at least Level 1, probably Level 2, and possibly Level 3. When our Kelpie, Kai, sees us packing his training bag and gets all excited, it seems like a clear indication that he knows he's going to agility class. When he dances happily in front of us, making strong direct eye contact, one might suggest he's saying, “I know you know we're going to agility class.” And when he runs to the door and looks purposefully back at us, one could hypothesize that he's saying, “I know you know I know we're going to agility class!”

This isn't just an academic exercise. Humans who have close

relationships with their dogs recognize ToM communications in their daily interactions with their canine family members – and it often involves eye contact:

■ Bonnie, our Scotti/Corgi/Poodle-mix, comes and sits next to me as I type on my computer, looking intently into my eyes. “Oh,” I realize. “She has to go out.”

■ As we walk toward the back door, Lucy, our Cardigan Welsh Corgi, runs ahead of us, stops in front of the bookcase, looks at me, looks at the top shelf of the bookcase, and looks toward the door. “Oh,” I realize. “She wants me to take her out and throw the Frisbee that is sitting on top of the bookcase.”

■ I'm assessing a dog at the shelter who looks somewhat stressed and shut down. I say “Sit!” and his eyes light with joy as he plops his bottom to the ground and looks into my eyes as if to say, “Finally! Someone who knows what I know!”

You may have your own examples of this kind of cognitive communication with your dog. To nurture this thrilling connection, pay even closer attention to your dog's efforts to communicate with you. When he makes eye contact, contemplate what he's trying to tell you and respond appropriately. By reinforcing his eye-contact communications you will encourage him to communicate more, and you'll get better and better at translating his messages.

When dogs learn the value of communicating through eye contact, it opens up a whole new door in the relationship between the two of you, and makes your time together even more rewarding and satisfying for you both. 🐾

Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, is WDJ's Training Editor. She lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center, where she offers dog-training classes and courses for trainers. Miller is also the author of many books on positive training. Her two most recent books are Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First-Class Life, and How to Foster Dogs; From Homeless to Homeward Bound. See “Resources,” page 24, for more information about her dog-training classes, books, and courses for trainers.

In some canine sports, including disc dog competition, dogs who consistently make eye contact with their handlers have a big advantage over ones who get distracted. But in other sports, such as tracking or K9 Nosework, the dog needs to work more independently of his handler.



IN A HURRY TO FIND SOMETHING?

All of our back issues are available online!

Log on to whole-dog-journal.com
Then click on “Back Issue Archive”

- 1/16 Gear of the Year • Herbs Help Dogs Help Themselves • The Puppy Conundrum: Socialize or Keep Them Home? • Leashless Leash Training • Anal Sac Problems • New Book Excerpt: *Beyond the Back Yard* • Even More Good Dog Books
 - 12/15 Good Dog Books • Generalization and Fluency • Enter the Vet Clinic • Fear-Free Vet Visits • The Neurochemistry of Fear • Modern Pain Control for Dogs
 - 11/15 Canned Food Review • Rehabilitating the Play-Deprived Dog • Massage for Arthritic Dogs • Get Your Dog Ready for Your New Baby
 - 10/15 Dog Owner Etiquette • Proper Socialization • Preventing Periodontal Disease • Ditch the Dish • Why All Diets Should Meet AAFCO Specs • Not “Guilty” • Divine Intervention
 - 9/15 Rocket Recall • Guidelines for Evaluating Commercial Raw Diets • Post-Surgical Recovery • Teach Relax on Cue • Pet Insurance 101
 - 8/15 Formulating Home-Prepared Diets • Clean Up Your Cues • Case History: Getting a Dog Past Mental Illness • Reduce Injury Risk to Your Canine Athlete • Pre-Surgery Prep • Resource Guarding
 - 7/15 When to Say No to Tug • Stop Begging • Service Dogs and “Fake” Service Dogs • Heat Stress • First Days With a New Dog
 - 6/15 Car Trouble (Motion Sickness) • High-Tech Dog Care Devices • What You Should Know About Anesthesia • Teach Your Dog to Tolerate Touch
 - 5/15 Pet Food Profile: Champion Petfoods • Snake Vaccines, Anti-Venom, and Bite Treatment • Shock-Free Snake Avoidance • Prevent a Bad Adoption • Outfoxing Foxtails • Dog First-Aid Kits
 - 4/15 Dealing With Bees and Bee Stings • “Find It!” • Behavior Myths • Senior Dog Care • Should You Bubblewrap Your Dog? • High-Pressure Pasteurization of Raw Foods
 - 3/15 Food Elimination Trial for Allergic Dogs • Blood Tests • High-Tech Tools • Emergency? Or Not? • How to Stop a Humper
 - 2/15 Dry Food Review • 10 Steps to Healthy Skin and a Silky Coat • Product Review: “Back on Track” Heat Therapy Coat • Solve Crazy Door Behavior
 - 1/15 Gear of the Year • Space Invaders • Timely Intervention • Canine Car Restraints • When Your Dog Is Afraid • Thunder Phobia
 - 12/14 How Much to Feed? • Signs of Fear • Turmeric • Manage vs. Train • Treating Heartworm • Home Care to Save Teeth
 - 11/14 Canned Food Review • Courthouse Dog • Wash the Dog • Pup Driving Senior Dog Crazy? • Stressed (Dog) Moms • First Week With Pup • Training Teens
 - 10/14 If You Witness Abuse • Healing Power of Dogs • De-Worming • Training a Hearing Alert Dog • Sniff Out Cancer • One More Dog?
 - 9/14 Freeze-Dried and Dehydrated Diets • Recalls: “Come” Have Fun • Placebo Power • Ear Hematomas • Dealing With Urine-Marking
 - 8/14 Coping With Cage Rest • Zeuter, Don’t Neuter • Stand-Up Paddleboarding With Your Dog • Training Techniques: Lure, Shape, Capture, Copy, and More • How to Read a Dog Food Label • Mental Illness in Animals
 - 7/14 Snaps at a Guest? • Dock Diving • Tryptophan Claims • When to See a Vet (as Well as a Trainer) • Bladder Infections • Animal Assisted Physical Therapy
 - 6/14 Won’t Come When Called • “Drowning” on Land • Product Review: iCalm Dog • Self-Control Exercises • Vaccine Titer Tests • Adoption Success Stories • Accepting Training Errors With Grace
 - 5/14 Dog Having Accidents? • Tips for Administering Eye Medicines • Adopting Seniors • Dog Food Logic: Book Excerpt • Lumps and Bumps: How to Tell What’s What • Flying With a Small Dog
 - 4/14 Osteosarcoma Vaccine • Ear Care and Cleaning • Gear of the Year • Polite in Public • Catching a Stray Dog • Difficult Adoptions
 - 3/14 How to Trim Your Dog’s Nails • Teaching Your Dog To Accept Handling and Restraint • Preventing and Treating Kennel Cough • Dealing With Arousal Biting • Using a Dog Walker
 - 2/14 Dry Food Storage & Feeding Mistakes • Diabetes Alert Dog • Dry Food Review and “Approved Foods” • How to Brush Your Dog’s Teeth • Trainers’ Titles
 - 1/14 Topical and Oral Flea Treatments • How to Induce Vomiting • Private Professional Dog Training • Keep Your Dog Lean • Perfect Your Cues
 - 12/13 Toxic Chews • What Your Body Language Says to Your Dog • Canned Food Review • Puppy Prep: 8 Weeks and Beyond
 - 11/13 New Hope for Puppies with Parvovirus • Acupuncture for Dogs • Puppy Prep: First 8 Weeks • Favorite Remedies Pt. 3 • Train Your Dog to Do Chores
 - 10/13 Filling Pet Prescriptions • Raw Frozen Food Review • Veterinary Letters: What They Mean • Copy That: A New Training Technique • Favorite Remedies Pt. 2
 - 9/13 Veterinary Nutritionists’ Opinions on Homemade Diets • Why We Train Daily • Raccoon Update • Hallmarks of a Good Rescue Group or Shelter • Favorite Remedies Revisited Pt. 1
 - 8/13 Laser Therapy • Ethical Breeders • Rehoming Responsibly • Surviving the Adoption of a New Adult Dog • Seven Separation Anxiety Myths
 - 7/13 Raccoon Attack • More Freeze-Dried and Dehydrated Foods • Harnesses • Get Along With Other Species • Service Dog Imposters • Tick Paralysis
- TO FIND MORE PAST ARTICLES, GO TO WHOLE-DOG-JOURNAL.COM AND ENTER A TOPIC OR KEYWORDS IN THE “SEARCH” BOX.

Helping Itchy Dogs

Current evidence about what has been proven to work (and what doesn't).

BY LINDA P. CASE, MS

In late autumn, we closed our pool, an annual event that all four of our swimming dogs dread. They will swim as long into the fall season as we allow and I am pretty certain that our Toller, Chippy, would bring out an ice pick and break his way through the ice if he could. In addition to the daily joy, excitement, and happiness that our pool brings to us all, we have found that it has had an additional benefit for some of our dogs. The pool and the daily swims that it provides help to keep itchy dogs from itching all summer long.

Over the years, several of our dogs have suffered from atopic dermatitis (also known as atopy). This is not unusual given that we have Golden Retrievers (a breed that is genetically predisposed to atopy) and we live in the Midwest, an area with lots of allergens for hypersensitive dogs to react to.

We have successfully managed this using frequent bathing, topical medications, and when absolutely necessary, short periods of oral (systemic) medication. And now, we also have the pool. Once our dogs started to have daily swims, we found that this form of frequent bathing kept allergy signs at bay throughout the summer, simply by its ability to physically reduce exposure to allergens and to cleanse the skin.

This benefit is not that surprising because, according to two reports by an international task force on canine atopic dermatitis, frequent bathing of dogs, with the specific purpose of removing and reducing exposure to allergens, is identified as one of the most important factors in relieving pruritus (itchiness).^{1,2} Indeed, the task force has quite a bit more to say about effective and not-so-effective approaches to managing itchy dogs.

TREATMENT GUIDELINES

In 1999, the American College of Veterinary Dermatology (ACVD) established a committee to study canine atopic

dermatitis (hereafter CAD). The initial group spent two years reviewing existing knowledge about CAD and published its findings in 2001. That collection of 24 papers provided practicing veterinarians and dermatologists with up-to-date information about the diagnosis, treatment, and management of CAD.

The committee was eventually expanded to include international representation, and its name was changed accordingly, to the International Com-

mittee on Allergic Diseases of Animals (ICADA). Now comprised of veterinary dermatologists from around the world, the committee has a series of objectives. One of the most important is to develop and distribute a set of practical guidelines for veterinarians to use when diagnosing and treating CAD. The first set of these guidelines was published in 2010 and recently, a revised edition was made available.

A central component of these guidelines is that they follow the tenets of evidence-based medicine. This means that the committee recommends only procedures and treatments that have supporting scientific evidence and that they systematically rate the scientific merit of that evidence. Naturally, there is a lot of information in these reports that is of interest primarily to researchers and practicing veterinarians. However, there is also an abundance of helpful information for *owners* who wish to learn more about CAD and about how to best manage this disorder in their dogs.

CAD IS A DIVERSE (AND COMPLEX) DISORDER

The ICADA's most recent description of CAD is a genetically predisposed pruritic (itchy) and inflammatory skin disorder. It is most commonly triggered by one or more types of environmental allergens such as dust mites, pollens, and



If your dog has seasonal allergies, the single most effective thing you can do to reduce his symptoms is bathe him frequently.

© ADINA MUNTEANU | DREAMSTIME.COM

molds. Although the actual sequence of events that leads to a chronically itchy dog is complex, the general progression involves these steps:

1 Exposure to the allergen (or allergens). These either are absorbed through the dog's skin, are inhaled, or, when a food allergy is the cause (see below), are consumed. Note: Recent evidence suggests that absorption of allergens across the skin, called percutaneous absorption, may be the primary trigger of the allergic response in atopic dogs.³

2 This exposure causes an immune system response in the body, which includes the production of a cascade of immune factors and inflammatory agents. One of these factors is allergen-specific IgE, which is considered to be a hallmark indicator of CAD.

3 IgE migrates from the bloodstream to the dog's skin, where it binds to mast cells (a type of immune cell) and to certain types of nerve cells. When the dog is exposed again to the same allergen, the immunological reaction is amplified and now involves both immune cells and the nervous system. This "neuroimmunomodulatory" response is the major cause of the intensely pruritic (itchy) response that a dog with CAD experiences.

4 Without treatment for the intense itching, the dog begins to scratch, rub, and bite at the affected areas, which causes breaks in the skin, inflammation, and the development of sores and infections. Breaks in the skin (changes in the skin's integrity) allow more allergen access, which further ratchets up the immune response. The result is a vicious and unending itch-inflammation cycle.

The genetic component of CAD means that certain breeds of dogs are at greater risk for developing the disorder, including Golden Retrievers, Labrador Retrievers, Lhasa Apsos, Wire Fox Terriers, West Highland White Terriers, Boxers, and Bulldogs.

Although not completely understood, the underlying mechanisms that make certain individuals more susceptible to CAD include being born with skin and an immune system that are hyper-responsive to allergens, having a highly sensitive (i.e., easily triggered) inflammatory response, and having a

CITED REFERENCES:

1. Olivry T, DeBoer DJ, Favrot C, et al. "Treatment of canine atopic dermatitis: 2010 clinical practice guidelines from the International Task Force on Canine Atopic Dermatitis." *Veterinary Dermatology* 2010; 21:233-248.
2. Olivry T, DeBoer DJ, Favrot C, et al. "Treatment of canine atopic dermatitis: 2015 updated guidelines from the International Task Force on Canine Atopic Dermatitis." *Veterinary Dermatology* 2015; 11:210-225.
3. Marsella R, Sousa CA, Gonzales AJ. "Current understanding of the pathophysiologic mechanisms of canine atopic dermatitis." *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 2012; 241:194-207.

reduced ability to arrest or slow down this response.

CAD AND FOOD ALLERGY

The ICADA recognizes the complexity of the relationship between CAD and food allergies (technically referred to as "cutaneous adverse food reactions"). Although not true for all dogs, some dogs with CAD can also have food allergies or develop food allergy at a later point in time. Difficulties lie in the fact that the clinical signs of food allergy and CAD can be indistinguishable in a given dog, making diagnosis of either disorder very challenging for veterinarians.

Currently, the ICADA recommends testing a dog for food allergy when the signs of CAD are *chronic* and *non-seasonal*. Food allergy should also be suspected in dogs with previously well-controlled CAD who show a sudden return (flare) of symptoms that cannot be explained by environmental allergens.

Unfortunately, the only proven method for diagnosing food allergies continues to be dietary restriction trials lasting at least 8 to 10 weeks. Therefore, in most cases, a diagnosis of CAD is first ruled out or confirmed before moving to include food allergy as a potential cause.

ICADA RECOMMENDED TREATMENTS

The committee makes a distinction between treating acute flares of CAD and treating/managing chronic cases of CAD. An acute flare refers to the sudden onset of clinical signs, usually in a localized region of the body, in a dog who has either not been previously diagnosed or who had been diagnosed but whose symptoms were well managed.

Chronic CAD is identified as long-

term cases that have either remained undiagnosed or have not been treated successfully. Chronic cases are characterized by widespread skin involvement, self-induced lesions, infection, skin changes, and severe and prolonged discomfort in the dog.

The primary goal in treating both acute flares and chronic cases of CAD is to stop the itch. This is of vital importance because it is the itch-scratch cycle that leads to self-induced trauma, unrelenting inflammation, and infection. Stopping the itch not only makes the dog feel better (consider how we feel when we have poison ivy and are able to relieve the itch), but also breaks the itch-scratch cycle and allows the skin to heal. Long-term management approaches of CAD include limiting the dog's exposure to allergens (if they are known) and preventing the recurrences of flares.

The ICADA emphasizes that therapy for the atopic dog must always be approached on an individual basis and will usually be multimodal. This means that it will include various combinations of topical or oral anti-pruritic medications, control of secondary infections and parasites, allergen avoidance when possible, and in some cases, allergy hyposensitization ("allergy shots"). The current ICADA guidelines identify a variety of oral (systemic) and topical medications along with several management approaches that have been demonstrated through research to be effective:

■ **IMPROVED SKIN HYGIENE AND CARE** – Frequent bathing with a non-irritating shampoo physically removes allergens from the body, cleanses the skin, and may reduce bacterial colonization

(growth). One study showed that using a lipid-containing antiseptic shampoo reduced pruritus in dogs with CAD and that the benefit was enhanced when the dog was bathed in a whirlpool.

However, bathing the dog using the whirlpool alone (without the shampoo) *also* reduced itchiness, suggesting that the complete elimination of allergens and thorough cleansing of skin was more important than the type of shampoo that was used. ICADA states that there is currently no evidence supporting the benefit of any specific type of shampoo ingredient, such as oatmeal, antihistamine, or glucocorticoids. The bottom line is that frequent bathing (or perhaps swimming?) may be one of the most important therapeutic approaches for atopic dogs.

■ IDENTIFICATION AND AVOIDANCE OF FLARE FACTORS

– Because dogs may be allergic to more than one allergen in the environment (or in food), flare factors are considered to be anything that causes a sudden return of symptoms in a dog. For example, the implementation of an effective flea-control program will remove flea-associated dermatitis as a potential flare factor.

Because house dust mites are considered to be the most important source of allergens in dogs with CAD, measures for controlling these mites in the home may be effective (though, admittedly, difficult to accomplish). Additionally, as stated previously, the ICADA recommends an elimination food trial for those dogs who have suspected food allergy.

Without question it is difficult (if not impossible) to prevent a dog's exposure to many types of environmental allergens. Therefore, as much as it would be nice to say that simply bathing and reducing exposure to allergens will do the trick, most dogs with CAD will also require some form of medical therapy.

■ **TOPICAL MEDICATIONS** – A wide variety of topical sprays and spot-on treatments are promoted and sold as aids for reducing itching and supporting skin healing in dogs. However, of the many ingredients that are found in these products, only two are supported with scientific evidence.

The strongest evidence is for spray-on medium-potency glucocorticoid sprays. Three randomized, controlled research trials showed that two brands of these sprays, Genesis® and Cortavance®, both

produced by Virbac, effectively reduced pruritus and self-induced skin damage in dogs. The ICADA recommends the use of these sprays (or similar products) primarily during flares on a localized region such as the dog's belly or feet.

Because long-term application of even low concentrations of glucocorticoids can lead to skin thinning and other skin problems, these sprays should never be used in chronic cases and should be limited to a short period of time (less than two months).

There is one study showing that a topical immune-modulating ointment called tacrolimus (Protopic®, Astellas Pharma) reduced signs of CAD when used for several weeks. Tacrolimus may be helpful in healing skin in chronic cases as it does not have the long-term side effects on skin that are associated with topical glucocorticoids.

■ **ORAL MEDICATIONS** – When a dog is chronically affected or when symptoms cannot be controlled using hygiene and topical medications, a short course of systemic oral medications may be required. The two types of oral medications that have the strongest evidence for efficacy are the oral glucocorticoids and cyclosporine. The most commonly used glucocorticoids in dogs are prednisone, prednisolone, and methylprednisolone.

A major difference between glucocorticoids and cyclosporine is that a reduction in pruritus (itchiness) occurs much more rapidly, often within 24 hours with glucocorticoids, while treatment for 4 to 6 weeks is required before clinical benefit is seen with cyclosporine (Atopica®, Novartis).

In both types of drugs, a higher loading dose is used initially to control signs. The prescription is then gradually reduced to the lowest effective dosage. This helps to prevent the side effects associated with glucocorticoids (increased appetite, drinking, and urination and increased risk of urinary tract infection). Although reported at a low rate, side effects of cyclosporine include nausea and vomiting. (Note: When a dog has a concurrent bacterial skin infection, oral glucocorticoid therapy is not recommended prior to treating the infection).

Although some owners (and veterinarians) are resistant to using glucocorticoid therapy because of its long-term risks, the ICADA supports

their use – *for as short a period as possible and at the lowest effective dose*. Similarly, although there are fewer documented side effects with cyclosporine, its use may be cost-prohibitive for some owners. It should be noted that these drugs are recommended *only* when signs are too severe or too extensive to be controlled with frequent bathing and topical formulations.

The ICADA also recommends medications that may have a steroid-sparing effect be investigated. These are adjunctive (supporting) therapies that, when added to a treatment regimen, may allow lower dosages of glucocorticoids or cyclosporine.

Between 2010 and 2015, one new oral medication was tested using a series of clinical trials and was approved for use as an antipruritic (anti-itching) drug in dogs. It is a drug called oclacitinib, marketed by Zoetis under the trade name Apoquel®. Oclacitinib is in a class of drugs known as the Janus kinase inhibitors (JAKs). It has a different mode of action than other anti-inflammatory agents such as prednisone and cyclosporine, and functions to inhibit the neuronal itch sensation – the nervous system component of the itch-scratch cycle discussed above.

The benefits of oclacitinib include a very rapid reduction in pruritus, with dogs showing reduced itchiness within four hours of the initial dose. A series of trials comparing Apoquel to glucocorticoids and cyclosporine reported equal or better effectiveness with the new drug when used to treat dogs with CAD.

■ ANTI-MICROBIAL THERAPY

– Antimicrobial therapy is only needed in dogs who have concurrent skin and/or ear infections that have developed as a result of CAD. While these infections can develop during flares, they are most commonly seen in dogs who are chronically affected. The two most common microorganisms that are involved are *Staphylococcus* bacteria and *Malassezia* yeast.

Similar to its recommendations for anti-inflammatories, the ICADA recommends using *topical* anti-microbial agents for infections whenever possible. Oral (systemic) antibiotics and anti-fungal drugs should be used *only* when needed to control recurrent or severe infections.

■ **ALLERGEN-SPECIFIC IMMUNOTHERAPY (ASIT)** – Better known among dog owners as “allergy shots,” ASIT refers to the practice of administering low and gradually increasing concentrations of an allergen extract subcutaneously.

Intradermal or serology testing is first used to identify the specific agents (allergens) to which the dog reacts. Once identified, the specific environmental (note: *NOT* food) allergens to which the dog reacts are used in the immunotherapy regimen.

ASIT is not universally effective; studies report that between 50 and 80 percent of treated dogs show improvement of signs over a 6- to 12- month period. Because ASIT is time-consuming and expensive, the ICADA recommends it when other anti-inflammatory treatments have been unsuccessful or when other treatments are associated with unacceptable or severe side effects in an individual.

WHAT THE ICADA DOES NOT RECOMMEND

The ICADA has a strong consensus that the diagnosis of atopy in dogs is a clinical diagnosis, based upon the dog's signalment (breed, age, living situation), clinical signs, and disease history. The committee emphasizes that neither serological (blood) nor intradermal (skin) testing is reliable as a tool for diagnosing CAD because of these tests' high risk of false positive results. However, following a diagnosis, these tests may have some use in identifying flare factors for allergen-avoidance management or if immunotherapy is being considered. However, as attractive as it may sound to dog owners, CAD (just like food allergy) cannot be successfully diagnosed through a simple blood or skin test.

There are also several proposed treatments for CAD that do not have sufficient evidence to support them and are not recommended. Perhaps the most important of these, when one considers the popularity of their use with itchy dogs, are the type-1 antihistamines. Examples of these are hydroxyzine, diphenhydramine (Benadryl), clemastine (Tavist), and chlorpheniramine.

When examined as a group, there is no conclusive evidence that these drugs are effective for either acute flares or chronic cases of CAD. There is some evidence of a very moderate prednisone-sparing effect when trimeprazine was administered



If your allergy-prone dog likes to swim, you're in luck! Many dogs with environmental allergies experience a reduction in symptoms during the swimming season.

to dogs with CAD. However, because antihistamines also have a sedating effect in dogs, it is possible that the sedating effect was responsible for the small benefit that was reported in that study. While it is possible that antihistamines may be helpful to prevent recurrence when administered daily after an atopic dog's signs have been controlled, studies are still needed to test (and support) this hypothesis.

The ICADA also reports that increasing a dog's essential fatty acid (both omega-6 and omega-3 classes) intake through either supplementation or by feeding an EFA-enriched diet is unlikely to provide measureable benefit to dogs with CAD *when used alone*. There is evidence that increasing EFAs in a dog's diet can improve coat quality and reduce dry skin (aid in skin hydration). However, there is no evidence that supports the use of any particular combination of EFAs, dosage, or ratio of omega-6 to omega-3 fatty acids.

A single study reported that increasing EFAs in the diet using a Chinese herbal supplement (Phytopica, Intervet-Schering Plough Animal Health) had a glucocorticoid-sparing effect in some dogs with CAD. However, no other product has been shown to be effective, so the ICADA could not make a recommendation for the use of essential fatty acids in general.

Similarly, the ICADA reports note that there is insufficient evidence to support the use of topical formulations that contain essential fatty acids, essential oils, or complex lipid mixtures to benefit dogs with CAD.

THE BOTTOM LINE

Happily for owners of dogs with CAD, it seems that one of the most highly recommended practices to prevent flares and reduce the itchiness in our dogs is the simple practice of frequently rinsing off our dog's coats (and any adhering allergens) through weekly baths using a mild and non-irritating soap (or, perhaps, a nice swim in the pool).

Reducing a dog's exposure to flare factors such as fleas, an identified food allergen (when present), and environmental pollens is also key. Treating flares with topical anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial agents is similarly recommended.

When topical treatment is not effective or when dogs are chronically affected, veterinarians and owners have several medications to choose from for systemic therapy. In all cases, the ICADA emphasizes that treatment for CAD is “multimodal,” involving a variety of possible approaches that meet the needs of the individual patient and owner, with the primary objectives of reducing itchiness, maintaining a healthy skin and coat and supporting the dog's long-term health and well-being.

As for my dogs, I hope that we continue to see the anti-itch benefits of our pool that go beyond enjoying swimming, dock diving, and retrieving! 🐾

Linda P. Case, MS, is the owner of AutumnGold Consulting and Dog Training Center in Mahomet, IL, and author of Dog Food Logic and other books on nutrition for dogs and cats. See her blog at thesciencedog.wordpress.com, and page 24 for contact information.

 **RESOURCES** 

BOOKS AND DVDS

- ❖ Linda P. Case, MS, is author of *The Dog: Its Behavior, Nutrition, and Health*; *Canine and Feline Nutrition*; *Canine and Feline Behavior: A Complete Guide to Understanding Our Two Best Friends*, and the very recently published *Dog Food Logic: Making Smart Decisions for Your Dog in an Age of Too Many Choices*. Her blog can be read at thesciencedog.wordpress.com. You can find all of her books at Dogwise, (800) 776-2665; dogwise.com
- ❖ WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of *Positive Perspectives*; *Positive Perspectives 2*; *Power of Positive Dog Training*; *Play With Your Dog*; *Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First Class Life*; and her newest book, *How to Foster Dogs: From Homeless to Homeward Bound*. Available from dogwise.com and wholedogjournal.com

HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

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

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

- ❖ **Linda P. Case**, MS, AutumnGold Consulting and Dog Training Center, Mahomet, IL. Linda Case is a canine nutritionist, science writer, and companion animal consultant who uses positive reinforcement and shaping techniques to modify behavior in dogs in basic level through advanced classes. (217) 586-4864; autumngoldconsulting.com
- ❖ **Pat Miller**, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, Peaceable Paws Dog and Puppy Training, Fairplay, MD. Group and private training, rally, behavior modification, workshops, intern and apprentice programs. Miller also offers a variety of dog training academies and instructors' courses. (301) 582-9420; peaceablepaws.com
- ❖ **Laurie Williams**, CPDT-KA, CPT, CDTI, Pup 'n Iron Canine Fitness & Learning Center, Fredericksburg, VA. Member of the Pet Professional Guild and former VP and member of the board of directors of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT). An AKC Canine Good Citizen and Pet Partner therapy dog evaluator; Laurie is a WCRL AKC, C-WAGS, and UKC Rally Obedience judge and writes a weekly column for the Stafford County Sun Newspaper. (540) 659-7614; pupniron.com

We know you're focused on other things.



The fastest way to change your mailing address is to go to www.WholeDogJournal.com and then click on "customer service"

WHAT'S AHEAD ...

❖ **NATURE'S VARIETY**

Profile of a pet food company.

❖ **DOGS AND CATS LIVING TOGETHER**

Tips for peaceful multi-species households.

❖ **BLOOD PRESSURE**

When should this test be added to your dog's regular health exams?

❖ **GET OUT OF JAIL, WITH ME**

Prison-based dog training program saves lives, changes others.

❖ **BEST IN BEDS**

The thickest, most durable orthopedic dog beds.

❖ **RAW OR COOKED?**

Pros and cons of both types of homemade diets.