

The Whole Dog Journal™



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A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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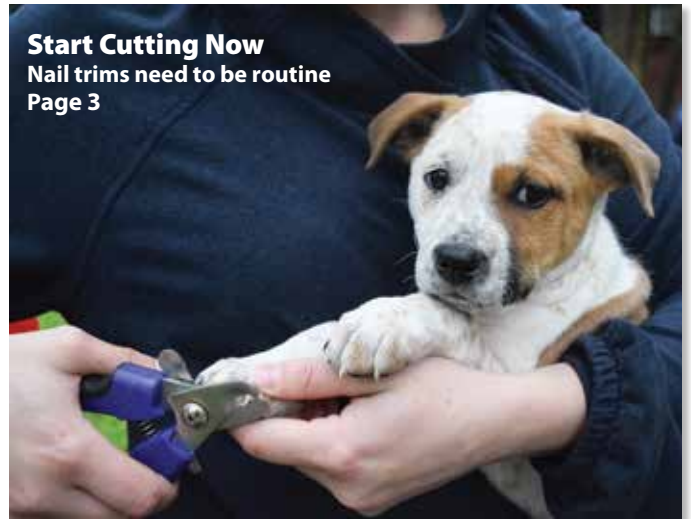
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Puppy Pro's

The appeal of the near-blank slate.

BY NANCY KERNS

Last month, I mentioned how concerned my son was when he heard I had made the decision to adopt one of the bully-breed-mix puppies I had been fostering. He's accustomed to me pretending that I don't like puppies ("Ew, a puppy! Gross! Who likes puppies? Ick!") – a stupid joke meant to soften the hard fact that unprepared people always seem to be magnetically drawn to the puppies in the shelter where I volunteer, passing right over many more suitable, calm, house-trained, non-chewing adult dogs in the process.

I *never* worry that the puppies in my shelter won't get adopted; despite the fact that people often share pictures of the puppies on Facebook (usually with a plea, "Share this album, save the puppies!"), the puppies are in no danger whatsoever. Puppies of all descriptions fly out of the shelter like iPads on sale. So while I *do* foster puppies that are surrendered to the shelter (or are brought in by animal control officers) at a too-tender age, or in poor health and in need of a few weeks of TLC, I *don't* worry about them finding homes. They are often adopted the same day I bring them back to the shelter. What I *do* worry about is them coming back to the shelter a few days, weeks, or months later, when people realize how much work it is to raise and train a puppy. And I worry about them coming back with baggage – such as newly implanted fears of people, noises, and/or other dogs.

So many people adopt puppies without a clue as to their needs – it never fails to amaze me. People will literally walk out the door with their newly adopted puppy, stop, turn around, and ask, "Say, what should I feed him? How much?" I've seen more than one person clip a leash onto the collar they brought to the shelter for their new baby dog, and then look puzzled as the puppy (who has never before worn a collar or been pulled by a leash) bucks wildly in a panic. And they will start calling the front counter staff the next day to ask, "How do we stop him from biting our kids?" and "What should we do to keep him from chewing all of our shoes?"

Only rarely do the staff members get asked, "Can you recommend a good puppy trainer in this area?" It breaks my heart.

Because puppies fly off the shelter shelves, so to speak, whether through thoughtful adoptions or ill-advised ones, usually I focus my fostering efforts on adolescent and adult dogs. It's much harder to find homes for dogs who have a little behavioral baggage, despite the fact that they may also be way past the problems that perplex and plague puppy owners – most notably chewing and housetraining. I deal with those issues and more: teaching the dogs not to eat (or even think about chasing) my cats or chickens; to wait at doors before trying to dart through them; how to get in and out of cars, and how to ride calmly and quietly, even if we are on the way to our favorite trailhead; to stay out of both the garden beds and my family's beds (unless they have been specifically invited); and so on. Sometimes this process takes *months*, because these dogs have had an equal number or even more months to practice behaviors that make them less attractive to potential adopters.

But here's the thing – and I'm sorry for taking so long to get to it: Oh my word, you guys! It's so incredibly *easy* to train a puppy from the get-go, especially when you are equipped (baby gates, crates, puppy toys, superior food and treats, lightweight leashes and well-fitting harnesses, etc.) and you know what you are doing! I haven't raised a puppy from such a tender age (I started fostering my new puppy's litter when they were just about four weeks old) since I was 12 years old (and plumb ignorant) myself. Which is why, maybe, it's such a revelation: Starting with a puppy this young can be – *it is* – an absolute dream.

NK



Long hair on a dog's feet can hide a really painful situation with too-long nails. Keep your dog's hairy feet clipped, or check the length of her nails weekly.

🐾 HEALTH 🐾

Nailing It

Why keeping a dog's nails short and sweet should be a top priority for all dog owners.

BY DENISE FLAIM

Let's get this out of the way first: Nobody, it seems, likes to "do" dog nails. Not you, not the dog, nor anyone else who may be called upon to take on nail-clipping for you (such as a technician at your local veterinary hospital or even a professional groomer). But for the health of your dog, it must be done, and should be done frequently enough to keep your dog's nails short.

This isn't an article about how to make nail cutting a more pleasant experience for you and your dog; this magazine has run plenty of those (see list at right). Don't be tempted to skip that step: You should read up on positive reinforcement and desensitization techniques before you even think about snipping; of *course* your dog should be comfortable with having his feet touched and manipulated before you attempt any type of nail trimming. If he is not – and, especially, if he shows signs of serious distress or aggression – consult a qualified dog behavior specialist to help you modify this behavior. Better safe than sorry.

No, *this* article is what you'll need to know *before* you have appropriately

and positively introduced your dog to the nail-cutting experience. I hope to convince you to commit to a regular nail-maintenance program for your dog.

WHY TRIM?

When dogs spend a good deal of time outdoors, running on various hard surfaces, including concrete and blacktop, their nails are gradually worn down, and they have less of a need for formal nail-grooming sessions. But today, with many suburban and urban dogs increasingly confined indoors when their owners are at work, and running mostly on soft surfaces such as lawns when they are outdoors, this welcome friction is often absent in their daily lives.

Long, unkempt nails not only look unattractive, but over time they can do serious damage to your dog (not to mention your floors). When nails are so long that they constantly touch the ground, they exert force back into the nail bed, creating pain for the dog (imagine wearing a too-tight shoe) and pressure on the toe joint. Long term, this can actually realign the joints of the foreleg and make the foot looked flattened and played.

Again, this isn't just an aesthetic problem, it's a functional one: Compromising your dog's weight distribution and natural alignment can leave her more susceptible to injuries, and make walking and running difficult and painful. This is especially important in older dogs, whose posture can be dramatically improved by cutting back neglected nails.

In extreme cases, overgrown nails can curve and grow into the pad of the foot. But even if they are not that out of control, long nails can get torn or split, which is very painful and, depending on severity, may need to be treated by a veterinarian.

NAIL-TRIM TRAINING ARTICLES

- ❖ **"Must Touch Dogs"** (counter-conditioning and desensitization for dog handling) and "Trimming Toenails" (putting practice into action), WDJ June 2015
- ❖ **"So Long!"** (how to actually cut the nails), WDJ March 2014
- ❖ **"Positive Pedi-Pedi's"** (force-free nail trimming techniques), WDJ August 2012
- ❖ **"Do My Nails . . . Please!"** (Why nail trims should not be forced), WDJ March 2009



It's much easier to trim white nails nice and short, since you can see the pink, sensitive tissue inside the nail, and stop short of cutting into this and causing it to bleed.

And in the end, unattended nails create a vicious cycle: Because the extra-long nails make any contact with his paws painful for the dog, he avoids having them touched, which leads to unpleasant nail-cutting sessions, which makes both human and dog avoid them, which leads to longer intervals between trims, which leads to more pain ...

THE BASICS

So what's the goal? What's the "right" length? While some breeds (most notably the Doberman Pinscher) are often shown with nails so short they can barely be seen, the most commonly accepted rule of thumb is that when a dog is standing, the nails should not make contact with the ground. If you can hear your dog coming, her nails are too long.

The nails of mammals are made of a tough protein called keratin. Technically, dogs have claws, not nails, though we'll use the latter term in its colloquial sense for this article. (The distinction is that nails are flat and do not come to a point. And if your nail is thick enough and can bear weight, it's called a hoof.)

Dog's nails differ from ours in that they consist of two layers. Like us, they have the unguis, a hard, outer covering in which the keratin fibers run perpendicular to the direction in which the nail grows. But unlike us, under their unguis, dogs have the subunguis, which is softer and flaky, with a grain that is parallel to the direction of growth. The faster growth of the unguis is what gives the dog's nail its characteristic curl.

In addition to one nail at the end of each of the four toes usually found on each foot, many dogs also have a fifth nail, called a dewclaw, on the inside of the leg, below the wrist. Some dogs are born with dewclaws in the front only; others are born with dewclaws on every leg. There's a great deal of debate about whether these should be surgically removed; some breeders do this a few days after birth because they believe that

the dewclaws are vestigial, and are likely to rip or tear if they are not removed. (Many shelters also do this surgery on dogs at the same time they do spay/neuter surgery.)

Proponents of dewclaws argue that dewclaws are not vestigial, but indeed used to grip objects such as bones, and to provide important traction when a galloping dog needs to change direction. (Poke around Youtube and you can find videos of Sighthound lure coursing; they actually lay their entire forearms perpendicular to the ground when redirecting their momentum.) Even the floppy double-dewclaws of breeds like the Great Pyrenees are said to have some purpose (traction or a "snowshoe" effect in the snow).

One thing is certain: If a dog has dewclaws, they need to be trimmed – perhaps even more often than nails that routinely touch the ground. Because the dewclaws rarely touch the ground and so aren't worn down, they tend to be pointier than the other nails. But perhaps because dewclaws are so loosely attached to the forelimb, many dogs object to trimming them much less.

QUICK, READ THIS

There's a reason why the phrase "cut to the quick" means to deeply wound or distress: Running through the nail is a nerve and vein called the "quick." Nicking or cutting this sensitive band of tissue is very painful for the dog – and messy for the owner, as blood often continues oozing from the cut nail for what seems like an eternity. (Keeping a styptic-powder product, such as Kwik-Stop, on hand can help promote clotting and shorten the misery. Or, in a pinch, try flour.)

Shortening the nail without "quicking" the dog is easier said than done – unless your dog has white or light-colored nails, in which case, you're

in luck: The quick will be visible from the side, as a sort of pink-colored shadow within the nail. Avoid going near it. If you trim the nail with a clipper or scissors, trim a bit off the end of the nail, and notice the color at the end of the nail (in cross section). As soon as the center of the nail starts to appear pink, stop.

You can't see the quick in a black or dark-colored nail. With these nails, you have to be even more conservative about how much nail you trim off. After making each cut, look at the cross-section of the nail. If you see a black spot in the center – sort of like the center of a marrow bone – stop cutting. It's likely your next slice will hit the quick.

The longer a dog's nails are allowed to grow, the longer the quick will become, to the point that taking even a very small bit of nail off the end "quicks" the dog. Then the goal becomes a matter of snipping or grinding the nails to get as close as possible to the quick, without actually cutting it. This is perhaps easiest to accomplish with a grinding tool (such as a Dremel), though it can be done with clippers, too, with practice. By grinding away the nail all around the quick – above it, below it, and on both sides – the quick has no support or protection, and within days it will begin to visibly recede, drawing back toward the toe.

If a dog's feet have been neglected for months (or, horrors, years) at a time, it might take months to shorten those nails to a healthy, pain-free length. But if you keep at this regularly, it should get easier for the dog to exercise. And the more he moves, the more his nails will come into contact with the ground in a way that will help wear the nails down and help the quicks to recede.

TOOL TIME

Nail clippers use blades to remove the tip of the nail. There are a couple of different styles to choose from, but no matter what



Plier-type clippers (left) need to be sharpened occasionally to be effective. Replacing the cutting blade on guillotine-style clippers (right) is easy, but operating this tool is daunting for some people.

When using a nail grinder, make sure you pull all the dog's hair out of the way. The sandpaper can catch stray hair and cause the tool to spin into the dog's foot, causing serious pain and injury to you and your dog (not to mention, traumatizing your dog for future nail trimming).

type is used, their effectiveness is dependent on the blades being sharp and clean.

Guillotine trimmers have a hole at the end, through which the dog's nail is inserted; then, as the handles of the tool are squeezed together, an internal blade lops off the end of the nail in a fashion reminiscent of the execution device for which the trimmer is named.

Some people find it easier to chop through thick nails with these clippers, but others find it difficult to thread each nail through the hole at precisely the right distance from the end of the nail, especially when the dog is wiggling or uncooperative. On the plus side, though, it's fast and easy to replace the blade in guillotine-style clippers – in fact, most guillotine clippers are sold with replacement blades, which encourages an owner to swap out the blade as soon as the tool loses any effectiveness.

Scissor- and plier-style trimmers are arguably easier to use, but need to be sharpened from time to time – and who knows how to do this, or where this service can be obtained these days? Many people find themselves discarding and replacing these tools as needed, instead.

Grinders are relatively new to the world of canine manicures. So many owners discovered how easy it was to use that old hardware standby, the Dremel tool, that you'll sometimes hear that brand name used as a verb, as in "I Dremel my dog's nails." Soon enough, pet-specific rotary grinders found their way to market – and now Dremel makes a pet-specific grinder, too.



The Dremel 7300 and Dremel 7300-PT: We're pretty sure the pawprint on the case is the only difference.

Regardless of the type of grinder you buy, make sure it is appropriate for your dog. Some cordless models might be perfectly adequate for a Papillon, but simply may not have enough oomph for



trimming the thick, hard nails of a larger breed like a German Shepherd.

Though Dremels and other grinders come with several different attachments, most owners opt for the sandpaper barrel. Change the sandpaper sleeve whenever you see it's becoming worn.

Be sure to acclimate your dog to the sound of the grinder, and then slowly introduce the tool, so that your dog is accustomed to the grinding sensation on his nails. Don't keep the rotary tool stationary one area of the nail, as the heat it generates can be painful for the dog.

Be aware of dangling hair – both yours and your dog's – and take care not to have it get entwined in the tool's spinning drum. To protect your eyes, wear safety glasses. And because nail grinders can generate a good deal of nail dust, a disposable surgical face mask is a sensible idea as well.

TIME SENSITIVE

If this sounds like a lot of work, it is – at least initially, until you and your dog develop a nail-maintenance routine. And "maintenance" really is the name of the game; it's far easier for you (and less painful for your dog) to maintain his short nails than to shorten nails that have gotten long, with the inevitable corresponding long quicks.

If your dog's nails have gotten too long, or you adopted a dog whose nails were too long, you need to really commit to frequent trimming to restore his foot health and comfort. Three to four days is probably the minimum amount of time that's advisable between salon treatments that are intended to encour-

age the quicks to recede. Once a week is ideal if you want to gradually shorten your dog's nails and eliminate all that clickety-clacking on your wood floors. And, depending on the rate at which your dog's nails grow (and what sort of surface he exercises on) once or twice a month is a reasonable goal to maintain the nails at a healthy length.

No matter what frequency you choose, make a commitment. Earmark a specific day of the week or month for your grooming sessions, and stick with it. You'll have a better chance of remembering to do your dog's nails on a regular basis if you get into a routine.

It may also be helpful to dedicate a location in your home for doing your dog's nails – somewhere comfortable for you and your dog and with a good light source. Make sure you have everything you need at hand before you begin: clippers, styptic powder and some tissue or a small clean towel or washcloth (in case you accidentally quick the dog), eyeglasses for you (if you need them to see well up close), and lots of small, high-value treats to keep the experience rewarding for your dog.

It's also smart to have a leash on your dog, even if he's usually fine with having his nails clipped; many dogs will attempt to leave abruptly if they are "quicked." And who could blame them? If you do make a mistake, don't make a huge fuss. Feed your dog some treats, and proceed with more conservative clips. 🐾

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

Tricks for Clicks

How to hone your training skills, improve your relationship with your dog, and have fun!

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

One of the many things I love about today's dog training world is that now, thanks to our culture's paradigm shift toward positive reinforcement-based training, a lot more people are having *fun* teaching their dogs to do tricks. Once a mere afterthought in training, fun is now taking center stage as more trainers offer classes in "just" tricks, and encourage their clients to get creative with the behaviors they teach their dogs. In fact, there are even canine titles to be earned in tricks! Kyra Sundance, a stunt dog trainer/performer and author, offers five levels of Trick Dog titles through her "Do More With Your Dog®" program, from Novice Trick Dog to Trick Dog Champion.



Trainer/author Pat Miller lures her Kelpie, Kaizen, in the first step of teaching him to weave through her legs as she walks. Dogs who are trained to "target" can be initially guided through this exercise with a target stick. (See "New Tricks for a Stick," WDJ January 2007.)

We have gone far beyond the "Sit, Shake, Sit Pretty, Roll Over" list of basic tricks, although these are still favorites with many dog owners. Today's trick-trained dog can play an electronic keyboard, roll himself up in a blanket, put bottles in a recycling bin, and much more. Here are some of my favorite creative tricks that you can teach your dog. All you need to get started are your dog, a clicker (or verbal marker), treats, and any props your chosen trick entails.

LEG WEAVES

For this trick, your dog weaves in and out of your legs every time you take a step forward. No props are needed for this one, and it's a pretty easy trick for most dogs.

- Start with your dog sitting at your left side. Put your right foot forward.
- To lure, put a treat in your right hand and offer it to your dog under your thigh, behind your right leg. As he moves toward the treat, pull it back away from him so he follows it under your leg. Click and treat. (He should move across in front of you.)
- Put your left foot forward and repeat the action with the treat in your left hand this time. Or, you can ask him to target to your hand or a target stick held behind your leg, rather than using a lure.
- If he's hesitant to follow the lure or target under your leg, toss the treat behind you as he starts under, until he's moving more easily – then have him follow the lure or target.
- As soon as he's moving smoothly under your legs, add your cue, and fade the lure or target. Eventually you will only need to cue the first step – after that your steps forward become the cue for him to continue weaving. Look – you're dancing with your dog!

Check out this video by San Diego, California, trainer Emily Larlham, owner of Dogmantics dog training and the Kikopup Youtube channel, showing how she teaches a dog to do leg weaves: tinyurl.com/emily-leg-weaves.



With a clicker in one hand to mark the desired behavior, Pat lures Bonnie into position with her front feet on a bench.



Pat uses the higher lure to help maintain Bonnie's position while moving another lure into place below.



When Pat can easily lure Bonnie's nose down between Bonnie's front legs, she adds the verbal cue, "Say your prayers!"

SAY YOUR PRAYERS

This trick is cute: On cue, your dog goes to a bench, sits, puts his paws up on the bench, then drops his nose between his paws as if he's saying his prayers.

- Have your dog sit in front of his prayer bench. Encourage him to put his paws on the bench; he will probably stand up to do this. That's okay! Click and treat when his paws are on the bench.
- While he is standing with his paws on the bench, ask him to sit. He will probably try to remove his paws from the bench in order to sit. That's okay! Click and treat for any movement toward a sit before his paws come off the bench.
- Alternate repetitions of both behaviors (paws on the bench from a sit, and sit while standing with paws on the bench). As you gradually shape each behavior they will eventually meet in the middle and he will be able to sit with his paws on the bench.
- When he will remain seated with his paws on the bench, hold a treat in front of his nose with one hand to keep him in place while you move a second treat underneath and between his front legs with your other hand.
- Lure his nose down with your first treat until his nose reaches your second

treat, then lure his nose down slightly between his front legs. Click (or use your verbal marker) and treat.

- When you can easily lure his nose between his legs, add your verbal cue, "Say your prayers!" and gradually lure less and less, until he can say his prayers on cue.

PUPS IN A BLANKET

For this more challenging trick, your dog lies down on a blanket, grasps the corner of the blanket in his mouth, and rolls over to wrap himself up. For the best success, teach rolling over and blanket-grasping separately, then put them together.

ROLL OVER:

- Ask your dog to lie down. Kneel or squat next to your dog.
- Use a treat in your hand to encourage your dog to roll flat onto one side (if he is already rolled onto one hip be sure to continue in the same direction) by moving the lure in a "C" shape toward his ribcage, then up to his spine. Repeat until he easily moves into the flat-on-his-side position. (I call this position "Relax.")
- From "Relax," encourage your dog to turn tummy side up using your treat



lure. Place the lure at the end of his nose and move it up in a half-circle above his head. As soon as he shifts so his legs lift off the floor ever so slightly, click and treat. Gradually increase the amount of the arc until he is turning onto his back, and then all the way over. Once the dog passes the point of equilibrium, gravity takes over and the roll just happens.

- Go slowly; some dogs get a little worried when they feel themselves rolling over. Make sure your dog is comfortable at each new step before asking him to roll a little farther.

GRASP THE BLANKET:

- Have your dog lie down on the blanket. If he already knows a “Take it!” cue, offer him the corner of the blanket and ask him to take it. If he doesn’t, encourage him to play with the corner of the blanket, then click and treat any time he puts his mouth on it.

- When he’ll grasp the blanket with his teeth, add your “Take it!” cue. Gradually increase duration until he is holding the blanket in his teeth for several seconds.

- Alternatively, you can fold a treat into the corner of the blanket and click and treat when he grabs it with his teeth. Add your cue, and gradually increase duration until he is holding the blanket in his teeth for several seconds.

COMBINE THE BEHAVIORS:

- When he knows both behaviors well, put them together. Start by having him lie down on the blanket.

- Give him your “Take it!” cue, and when he is holding the blanket in his teeth, cue him to “Roll Over.”

- If he keeps hold of the blanket and rolls over, click, treat and party!

- It is more likely that at first he will probably drop the blanket and roll over. Watch him closely, and click just before he drops the blanket. If he drops it before he rolls over at all, just try again.

- Repeat this step, gradually increasing duration of the blanket hold until he will keep it in his teeth while he rolls all the way over. Pup’s in a blanket!

OTHER TRAINER FAVORITES

Some of my trainer friends shared their favorite dog tricks with me:

■ VALERIE BALWANZ, PMCT, CPDT-KA Pampered Pets, Charlottesville, VA

“My favorite thing to teach the dogs in my tricks class is to hit buzzers that make funny sounds with their paws. Some of the buzzers make animal sounds, mooing like a cow or crowing like a rooster. Others make cartoon-like ‘Boing!’ or honking sounds. Once the dogs have mastered this trick, the classroom explodes into a cacophony of amusing sounds. This gets everyone laughing.”

You can also do this trick using talking buttons, like the Staples “That Was Easy” Button.

Balwanz recommends using shaping to teach this trick. (See “The Shape of Things to Come,” WDJ March 2006.) But first, make sure the dog isn’t concerned about the sound the buzzer makes. Push the buzzer, feed a treat. Repeat this several times and watch for signs of stress. For dogs who are concerned about the sound, use a push-on night light in place of the buzzer. Then start shaping:

- Click and treat for any movement toward the buzzer. This could include looking toward the buzzer, leaning toward the buzzer, or actually moving toward the buzzer.

- When you are starting to get consistent movement toward the buzzer, raise your criteria, and only click/treat for any foot movement toward the buzzer.

- When you are getting lots of foot movement, select which foot you want the dog to use and then only click/treat specific right- or left-foot movement toward the buzzer.

- When you are seeing consistent movement of your chosen foot, raise your criteria again, and click/treat for right-foot movements within six inches of the buzzer.

- Your next criteria might be to click/treat for right-foot movements within three inches of the buzzer.

- Then click/treat for right-foot movements within one inch of the buzzer.



- Then only click/treat for right-foot movements that touch the buzzer anywhere.

- Then only click/treat right-foot movements that touch the buzzer on top.

- Finally, click and treat right-foot movements that touch the buzzer on top and are hard enough to make it make noise.

Once your dog performs this last step consistently, name the behavior (put it on cue). Balwanz asks her students to make up their own cue for this behavior. “My students understand that we always *get* behavior before we *name* behavior, so once their dog is hitting the buzzer, they can call it anything they like. This encourages them to be creative. I enjoy hearing the funny cues they invent!”

Following are links to various sources for buzzers and buttons. Some office supply stores sell “front desk” bells, which are also fun to use for this trick.

- ❖ **Animal Sounds Buzzers** (set of four, including rooster, cow, horse, and dog): tinyurl.com/js7evse

- ❖ **Fun Sounds Buzzers** (set of four buzzers, each of which makes a different sound): tinyurl.com/hjxahqk

- ❖ **Talking Buttons** (link is to a commercial site that sells a wide variety of buttons with recorded phrases): tinyurl.com/hg5ujly

DO MORE WITH YOUR DOG®

Stunt dog trainer/performer and author Kyra Sundance has created an entire program around teaching dogs to do tricks. Trainers can become Certified Trick Dog Instructors (CTDI), and dog owners can earn titles at five levels by having a witness sign the Trick Dog Performance Form found on Sundance's website. To achieve the various levels, you simply need your dog to perform enough tricks from Sundance's Tricks List to meet the requirements for that level:

Novice Trick Dog (NTD): Demonstrate 15 tricks (intermediate and advanced tricks count as two tricks).

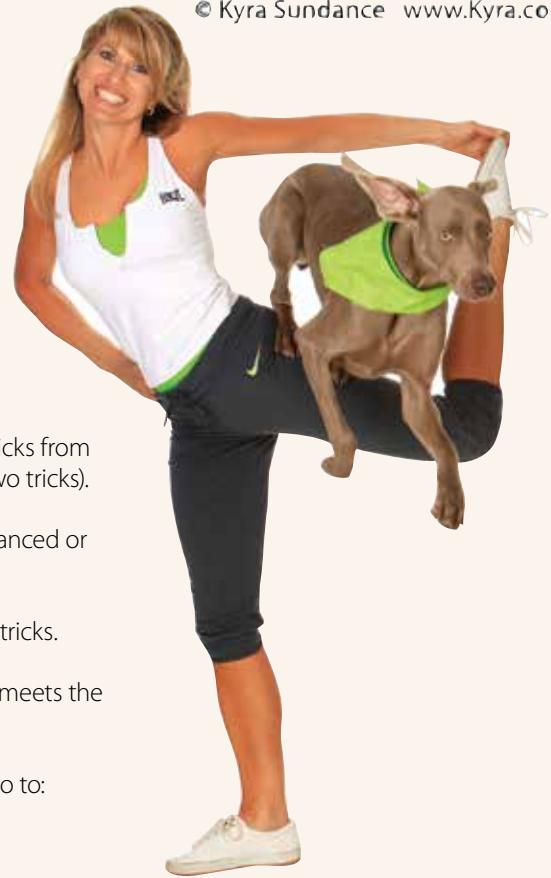
Intermediate Trick Dog (ITD): First earn your NTD, then demonstrate 12 tricks from an intermediate or higher skill level (advanced and expert tricks count as two tricks).

Advanced Trick Dog (ATD): First earn your ITD, then demonstrate five advanced or expert tricks.

Expert Trick Dog (ETD): First earn your ATD, then demonstrate five expert tricks.

Trick Dog Champion (TDC): First earn your ETD, then submit a video that meets the requirements spelled out on the Do More With Your Dog® website.

For Sundance's Tricks Lists and more about her Trick Dog titling program, go to: domorewithyourdog.com/downloads/trickdogtitle.pdf.



■ SHARON MESSERSMITH, Canine Valley Training Facility, Reading, PA

"My favorite trick to teach dogs to play is 'Peek-a-Boo' between the owner's legs," Messersmith says. "It gets the most

reaction from kids and adults when I'm doing a therapy visit or just trying to make someone laugh."

- Stand in front of the dog with your back to him, your feet wide enough apart so the dog can put his head through your legs. Hold a treat at the dog's nose level in front of you to lure him through your legs. Make sure you only put it far enough so he comes through to his shoulders. As the dog is walking toward the treat, mark the behavior with a click or the word, "Yes," and treat your dog.
- Repeat the first step until your dog starts to offer the behavior a few times. Then you can start to add the cue "Peek-a-Boo" as your dog is walking between your legs, but before you mark the behavior with a click or "Yes."
- When your dog is reliably walking through your legs (eight out of 10 tries), begin to fade the lure. Stand in front of your dog with feet apart and say, "Peek-

a-Boo." When your dog starts to walk through your legs, click or say, "Yes" and feed a treat. If your dog doesn't walk through your legs after being cued, wait three seconds, then lure him through.

- As you continue to practice this trick, your dog will need less of a lure. Continue to fade the lure until he will do Peek-a-Boo reliably on cue. Click and treat!

■ JESSICA RING, PMCT, My Fantastic Friend, Ellicott City, MD

"One of my favorite tricks is 'Chill,' in which the dog rests his chin on the ground or on some other designated surface such as someone's lap," Ring says. "This is a simple and great trick to teach a therapy dog, or one who is on crate rest. I taught it to my dog after he had hip replacement surgery. It's useful in the car or to help a dog relax – and it's also ridiculously adorable."

To teach this trick, Ring also uses shaping:

- Start with the dog in the down position and wait for any tiny movement of the head, eyes, or ears toward the ground. Click and deliver the treat on the ground.

Sharon Messersmith and her dog Sunshine demonstrate "Peek-a-Boo."

PHOTO COURTESY OF SHARON MESSERSMITH



- Repeat several times, until you are sure your dog has caught on (you see him offering small but deliberate movement toward the ground), and then hold out for a slightly larger movement.

- Keep repeating this process over the course of multiple short sessions, until your dog is resting his chin on the ground.

- Once you get to the point where your dog's chin is resting on the ground, click and treat after just a split second.

- After several repetitions, gradually build duration over time by waiting just a hair longer before clicking/treating. Be sure that you are clicking and treating frequently. If your dog seems to be getting frustrated or you are not clicking very frequently, back up a few steps and work there a bit longer before increasing your expectations.

ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES

The tricks described here can get you started, and further possibilities are endless! Ask whether your local dog-friendly trainer teaches a trick class. Search Youtube for "dog tricks" to see more dogs doing more tricks than you ever thought possible. Check out Kyrá Sundance's books – *101 Dog Tricks: Step-By-Step Activities to Engage, Challenge,*



Jessica Ring's dog Gus adorably demonstrating "Chill."

and Bond With Your Dog and 101 Dog Tricks, Kids Edition, both available from Dogwise.com (800-776-2665). But most important, remember to have fun training your dog. If you do that . . . it's all tricks! 🐾

For contact information for the trainers mentioned in the article, see "Resources," page 24.

Author Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, is WDJ's Training Editor. She and her

husband Paul and their four dogs live in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center, where Pat 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.

SIX MORE TRICKS FOR CLICKS!

1. Take a Bow - Use the food lure (or touch target) as if asking for a "down." Move the food just a little at first, so only his front end lowers. Gradually move the treat lower and lower until the front end is all the way down but the hind end is still up.

2. Crawl - Have the dog lie down, then move the lure or target forward slowly, close to the ground, to encourage the dog to follow it without getting up.

3. Jump Over (or Through) My Arm(s) - Kneel facing a wall, two feet away, with your dog on your left side. Touch the fingers of your left hand to the wall, arm low. Use the lure or target in your right hand to encourage him to jump over your arm. With your dog on your right side, switch arms and do it again.

4. Spin/Twirl - Move the lure or target in a slow circle at the dog's nose level, so the dog can follow. Use different words for left- and right-hand circles.



5. Side Pass - With the dog standing in front of you, use a lure or target to keep her nose centered in front of you and slowly step sideways.

6. Dance - Hold the lure or target the height of the dog's body length off the ground. When the dog stands on her hind legs, move the lure/target as if asking for a spin.

Holistic Herb Use

It's not "holistic" to replace drugs with herbs to treat Fido's health issue . . . there is a better way.

BY GREG TILFORD

All I could hear was the buzz of a thousand bees as I parted my way through a deep thicket of *Heracleum lanatum*, a tall, broad-leaved member of the parsley family commonly known as "cow parsnip." The big, umbrella-like white flower clusters seem to attract every insect imaginable. The plant is also arguably edible, most notably the root. I say, "arguably" edible, because the flavor is downright overbearing – like bitter carrot tops that have been intensified a hundredfold in flavor, then mixed with a pinch of soap. But that's just my opinion. Much of the wildlife in these mountains relish the flowering tops, and later in the summer, the seeds. On this day I had noticed that several stems that had been chewed, five feet above the ground, making me cautious of spooking a moose, which sometimes nap behind the cool cover of the plants. Maybe a moose with a toothache, I think to myself, smiling as I push through the plants. Although not a food choice for me, I do occasionally use Cow Parsnip as medicine. The unripe seeds possess a unique gum-numbing quality when chewed, making them useful for toothaches and other discomforts of the mouth.

But today my quarry is one of my all-time favorites: dandelions. I enter a clearing where the deep, moist soil always yields the best dandelion roots on the mountain, big juicy ones that are easy to dig. Reaching my target patch, I noticed that a few of these plants had also been chewed . . . but judging from the footprints, it looked like the diner in this case was a coyote. I stopped for a moment to take notes and ponder: what may be one animal's food might serve as medicine for another.

Dandelion, of course, serves as both. Rich with vitamins, protein, iron, and other minerals, dandelion greens are indeed one of nature's superfoods. The flowers are rich with lecithin, an essential nutrient that plays critical roles in fat metabolism and kidney, liver, and gallbladder function. The roots, the target of my efforts, contain

prebiotic inulin (which feeds and maintains healthy digestive flora), strong antioxidant chemistries, and myriad other compounds that combine to make the herb one of my favorite liver tonics.

Dandelion is just one of many useful weeds that may already be flourishing in your own backyard. But before you grab your trowel and start digging, I wish to provide you with a general idea of what to expect from these amazing herbal allies: what they are, what they do, where they stand between food and drugs, and the best ways to use them.

BETWEEN FOODS & DRUGS

Medicinal herbs are simply plants that possess healing properties that extend beyond those that are normally found in most whole, healthy foods. Many herbs are quite nutritious. Parsley, a smaller domesticated cousin of Cow Parsnip, is a perfect example. It is certainly one of nature's superfoods, containing impressive amounts of vitamins K, C, and A; potassium, iron, and myriad other essential nutrients. It also contains limonene, eugenol, alpha-thujene, apiin, apigenin, crisoeriol, luteolin, and various other chemical constituents that make the plant useful in a broad variety of medicinal applications.

Parsley leaves and roots are valued for their antibacterial (bacteria-inhibiting) and diuretic (urination-increasing) activities; the seeds, when brewed into a tea and cooled for use as a skin and coat rinse, can heal bites and repel fleas. It is this unique "medicinal-food" property that sets herbs apart from pharmaceutical drugs.



Your backyard or herb garden may hold a number of remedies that can strengthen your dog's ability to heal himself!

Most conventional drugs are designed to treat the symptoms of disease; in contrast, tonic herbs – the kind I like most – work in concert with what the body is naturally designed to do for itself: stay nourished, stay healthy, and resist disease.

A TONIC AGAINST DISEASE

I consider myself to be a “tonic herbalist,” one who believes that the greatest potential of any herbal remedy rests with its ability to support the body’s innate mechanisms of healing. When used in this context, herbs are not expected to inhibit, bypass, or any way interfere with the body’s natural functions. Instead, they are used to support those natural functions.

For example, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are often used to suppress a fever. But from my perspective, this amounts to working against the body. I see fever as part of the body’s effort to increase peripheral circulation and boost the immune system against bacterial or viral infection. The aim of a tonic herbalist therefore, is not to suppress a fever, but to honor it. Instead of completely suppressing the body’s innate response to infection, herbalists like me use olive leaf extract, *Echinacea*, *Astragalus*, or other “immunotonic” herbs to enhance immune system functions and thereby reduce the body’s need to produce fever in the first place.

Unfortunately, not all herb users think this way. Many will reach for herbal tinctures, teas, pills, or powders with hope of replacing a conventional drug with a healthier, more natural alternative. But such use will often lead to disappointment. Most herbs are much weaker in their abilities to suppress symptoms, leading the would-be user to become discouraged and eventually abandon the herbal alternative altogether.

With that said, if you always remember that the primary purpose of using herbs is to support the body’s natural mechanisms of healing, you will have a much better chance of finding the lasting results you are looking for. Then, I recommend that you begin your journey into the world of herbal medicine by

Tea made from dried chamomile flowers is a gentle yet effective remedy for the dog who suffers from a gassy, upset stomach caused by nervous tension or anxiety.

employing the plants that grow at your feet, or perhaps those that are already waiting in the kitchen spice cabinet. Here are a few of my other favorites that you might find there...

■ **CHAMOMILE** – This is a gentle and effective home remedy that can be safely used in a broad variety of applications. It is easy to access in bulk dried form or in tea bags, and it is also very easy to grow. This is one of the first herbs I reach for in cases of digestive upset that arise from nervousness and hyper-excitability. Dozens of human and animal studies have given us solid information about how chamomile’s chemical compounds contribute to its effectiveness.

For example, when used topically or internally, the apigenenin, chamazulene (and its precursor, matricin), and other volatile oil constituents of chamomile flowers have been shown to help relieve muscle spasms. In the digestive tract, chamomile eases nervous spasms, helps to expel gas, aids in the production of bile to improve digestion, and reduces inflammation throughout. All of these activities combine into an excellent remedy for chronic or acute gastric disorders, including various forms of inflammatory bowel disease.

For these applications the cooled tea can be fed at rate of one to four tablespoons for each 30 pounds of your companion’s body weight, simply by adding it to his drinking water.

■ **FENNEL** – Fennel seed serves as a gentle anti-gas and antispasmodic

agent that can be added directly to your dog’s food. In acute cases – such those which occur when too many goodies are consumed as a result of human weakness at the Thanksgiving dinner table – fennel seed can work wonders. The seeds can be fed directly with food – up to a teaspoon for dogs. However, a cooled tea works even better for this purpose.

Use one teaspoon of the fresh or dried seeds (fresh are better) in eight ounces of boiling water, and steep until cool. The tea can be fed at a rate of two to four tablespoons for each 20 pounds of the animal’s body weight, or it can be added to drinking water as generously as the animal will tolerate.

■ **ROSEMARY** – This is an extremely useful herb. At the top of its medicinal attributes are its “carminative” properties; it relieves flatulence (gas)! and other digestive problems that are secondary to general nervousness, excitability, or irritability.

Rosemary also contains borneol and other volatile oils that are known to exert antispasmodic activity upon the heart and other smooth-muscle tissues. This not only helps moderate cardiac arrhythmia, but also strengthens heart function, making rosemary especially useful in older dogs. The rosmarinic acid contained in the plant is also believed to have pain-killing properties.

For any of these applications, a starting dose of 0.5 ml. (about 1/8 tsp.) of a rosemary tincture can be given orally for each 20 pounds of a dog’s body weight, up to three times daily.



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Rosemary (left) and thyme (right) are easy to find, easy to grow herbs with tonifying qualities, and many uses for you *and* your dog.

■ **THYME** – Most of thyme’s medicinal activity is attributable to its volatile oil constituents, thymol and carvacrol. Thymol is a very good antiseptic for the mouth and throat; useful for fighting gingivitis in dogs. In fact, thyme is used as the active ingredient in many commercial toothpaste and mouthwash formulas.

Combined with thyme’s infection-fighting qualities are antitussive and expectorant properties, making the herb useful for raspy, unproductive coughs that are secondary to fungal or bacterial infection. Thyme also helps ease bronchial spasms that are related to asthma and other respiratory problems.

A glycerin tincture, or an alcohol tincture that has been sweetened with honey, serves well for most internal applications: ¼ of a teaspoon (1 ml) for each 30 pounds of the dog’s body weight, fed as needed up to twice daily. A cooled tea will work too, provided it has been brewed with near-boiling water to draw out the volatile oil constituents. For the above applications, use one teaspoon for dogs, fed directly into the mouth two to three times daily.

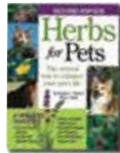
For infections of the mouth or as a preventative against gingivitis, a thyme tincture or a very strong thyme tea can be directly applied to the gums or infected sites with a swab.

In the digestive tract, thyme is a useful carminative and antispasmodic agent; use in cases of dyspepsia, irritable bowel, and colitis. It also helps expel parasites, especially hookworms. In these cases, the dried or fresh herb can be mixed into the dog’s food – one teaspoon per pound of food fed.

Taken in the form of tea or tincture, thymes serves as an antimicrobial in the urinary tract, as well as a mildly astringent tonic that is said to be useful for urinary incontinence.

Used as a skin rinse, a thyme tea or an oil infusion can help eliminate fungal or bacterial infections of the skin. 🐾

Greg Tilford is the author of five books on botanical medicine for animals, including the acclaimed Herbs for Pets: The Natural Way to Enhance Your Pet’s Life (i-5 Publications, 2nd ed. 2009). Tilford is a charter member of the Scientific Advisory Committee of the National Animal Supplements Council (NASC), and founded and currently chairs the Animal Products Committee of the American Herbal Products Association, with a mission to promote and protect responsible commerce of herb products intended for use in animals. Tilford also lectures about herbs to veterinarians and owners worldwide.



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Training Walks

How to get more mileage out of your dog's walk – without going any farther!

BY STEPHANIE COLMAN

We've all heard the saying, "a tired dog is a good dog," but more isn't always better when it comes to physical activity. If you're trying to use exercise to help your dog relax the rest of the day, walking smarter, not farther, can help you meet your goal. It also creates wonderful opportunities for strengthening dog-owner relationships.

There's one question I'd like you to consider every time you snap on your dog's leash and head out for a walk: What kind of walk are you taking?

I have various goals for my dog walks at different times. Sometimes my walk is more about meeting an exercise goal for myself, or an opportunity to socialize with a friend, and I bring my dog along so he can benefit from the exercise as well.

For those walks, my focus is mostly self-centered, as I will myself to push farther up an inclined trail or enthusiastically chat with a friend.

While walking, I might use a no-pull harness to manage my dog's leash pulling (since I know I'll likely be too distracted to train), and my dog and I are largely in our own separate worlds as we walk. Of course, I still keep an eye on the

environment, as it's my responsibility to ensure our safety. Fortunately, my dog doesn't have any major reactivity issues I need to be alert for and prepared to suddenly train through or manage. I might ask for a sit here and there, but largely, he and I are walking together, yet each doing our own thing.

Most of the time, though, my walks are far more interactive. I don't want to take my dog *for* a walk; I want to enjoy a walk *with* my dog. Dogs as a species were bred to work cooperatively with humans, and training time is a wonderful way to honor that evolutionary history, while helping to meet your dog's need for human interaction. Time spent training together can strengthen the connection and bond you share with your dog. Training while on a walk allows you to practice a variety of known skills, and working away from home helps your dog learn to deal with real-world distractions.

"It takes energy to solve puzzles," says Amy Cook, PhD, of Full Circle Dog Training in Oakland, California. "Training on walks means our dogs have to concentrate more and work to filter out distractions, and that's costly in energy." In other words, thinking is



Our dogs pay more attention to us when we aren't so boring! From time to time on the walk, playfully call her name, and then change your pace or direction, rewarding her enthusiastically when she is quick to catch up.

Delilah sits, alert and ready, as her mom revs her up just prior to an exciting release where they both run forward, then stop and ask for another quick “sit” or “down.” Red Light, Green Light is an easy way to add fun training to a neighborhood walk.



hard work. The more your dog thinks, the more energy he uses.

Even a simple walk around the block is full of plenty of opportunities to have fun while asking your dog to think through some simple training challenges. When I head out for a training walk, I still give my dog some “personal time” where he’s allowed to sniff and explore on a loose leash. That’s important, too. Roughly one-third of a dog’s brain is dedicated to olfaction; it feels unfair to deny them a good sniff-fest!

When you’re ready, there are lots of ways to throw some training into the mix, while keeping the walk light-hearted and enjoyable for the animals on both ends of the leash.

■ **MAKE THE FUNDAMENTALS FUN!**

Incorporate basic skills practice into the walk:

- **Practice a quick response to your dog’s name.** When he turns and looks at you, sometimes mark and reward on the fly as you keep moving, and sometimes mark and back up a few steps, encouraging your dog toward you, then deliver several small treats (one after another, rather than a handful at once), paired with praise and petting.

- **Play “Red Light, Green Light!”** This children’s game is a great way to work on sits and downs. At random intervals during your walk, ask your dog to “sit” or “down.” This can be adapted easily to your dog’s level of training, from using a lure to help get the behavior, to challenging your dog to be ready to respond to verbal-only cues when he least expects it.

Vary the challenge by sometimes specifying *where* you’d like your dog to sit or down. For example, if he likes to swing out in front of you, work on keeping him parallel to you, in heel position. Sometimes vary your pace just before you ask for a sit or down. Can your dog contain his excitement and pull off a quick sit or down after you excitedly run forward 10 steps? Try changing sides. If he’s used to working on your left, can he walk on your right (“Green light!”) and

sit or lie down (“Red light!”) on that same side, without trying to drift back to the familiar left side?

These little changes might sound easy, but remember that dogs can be slow to generalize a behavior. Even subtle changes can feel like a totally different behavior to your dog at first.

- **RECALL CHALLENGES.** People often assume they need an extra-long leash in order to practice what looks like a real-life recall, but all of my recall training is done on a regular six-foot leash. The hardest part of coming when called is not the distance the dog travels back to the handler. The hardest part of coming when called is *choosing to leave an exciting distraction* in favor of returning to the handler – whether he’s six feet or 60 feet away.

After I’ve spent time teaching my dog to associate his recall word with an amazing party of treats, praise, petting, and play, and have spent a fair amount of time practicing at home (where it’s easiest to do), I start challenging my dog to come away from distractions while exploring on a walk.

The first few times I introduce this challenge, I warm up the recall behavior with a few practice sessions that closely match how I trained the behavior at home. Then I walk my dog up to what I think will be a relatively easy distraction, for example, the base of a tree (as opposed to a tree full of dog-mocking squirrels). While he’s sniffing, I quietly move behind him, backing up to the end of the leash. Once in position, I call my dog using his name (which I teach to mean, “Quick! Pay attention!”) and his recall word.

If he turns toward me, I immediately mark the correct choice (with the “Click!” of a clicker or a verbal marker, such as the word “Yes!”) and cheer him on as I run away, encouraging him to chase me for several steps. Then we stop and enjoy a full 30 to 60 seconds of praise, petting, and several rapid-fire treats delivered one at a time.

If the dog doesn’t immediately turn away from the distraction when I call him, I’ll quickly step in and make a funny noise to get his attention and/or lightly and playfully goose him. The instant I have his attention, I excitedly repeat the recall word as I run off and invite him to chase me. This sequence ends in an even bigger reinforcement routine than if he’d done it right all on his own.

This often puzzles people who think, “If I had to help him, why should he be rewarded?” The reason? If you had to help him, your dog is telling you he doesn’t believe you’re willing to be as much fun as he was having with the distraction. In other words, he didn’t think it was worth it to leave the distraction. Over time, the magnificence of your reinforcement is what teaches your dog that coming when called is definitely worth it. Be sure to pay well!

Note: If you find your dog frequently needs help leaving distractions, choose less-exciting distractions and revisit your early recall training in a distraction-free environment.

I try to fit at least five recall distraction trials into every walk. Walks are full of myriad opportunities for practice: Call your dog away from a prolonged sniff of a tree. Call your dog away from staring at other dogs across the park. Call your dog away from the neighbor after a quick “Hello.” You can even call your dog during the walk itself. If you’re cruising along and your dog’s focus is fully forward, surprise him with a quick recall trial. Be creative! In my opinion, learning to turn away from distractions is the single most important skill needed for developing a reliable recall – and a reliable recall might save your dog’s life some day!

- **INTERPERSONAL PLAY.** I’m a big fan of interacting with a dog through play. I love teaching tug games because they give dogs a great outlet for normal dog behaviors, while providing opportunities to practice impulse control and relinquishing a prized object. I often

walk my dog with a favorite tug toy in my back pocket. He never knows when I might suddenly invite him to play a quick game of tug during a walk. Sometimes we stop walking and tug for 30 seconds, and sometimes I invite him to tug while we walk.

Many dogs enjoy playing tug games with their owners at home, but are reluctant to engage in the game away from home. For some dogs, it's a matter of habit; they're used to playing tug at home, not while on a walk. Some dogs are so interested in the environment that a game of tug suddenly seems less exciting. And some dogs worry when away from home, and lack the confidence needed to "let their hair down" and play.

Each case provides its own unique training challenge, but it's well worth the effort to systematically work through the issue. Adding quick games of tug while on a walk is a great way to reward polite leash walking and correct responses to cued behaviors, while helping your dog burn additional energy.

If your dog is confident and able to focus away from home, but doesn't enjoy tug games (or you prefer not to play tug), experiment to discover what type of interpersonal play is fun for your dog. Challenge yourself to keep your dog's interest without using food or toys. Turn sideways and crouch down in a playful stalking gesture. Tap into his opposition reflex by gently pushing him away and encouraging him to move back into your space. Send him through your legs as you

Use the environment as an obstacle course! If your dog is physically able, ask (or allow!) him to jump up and walk on low walls or benches, or weave in and out of a row of parking meters or trees in a park.

run the opposite direction and encourage him to turn and chase you. (Okay, that last one is hard to do on-leash during a walk, but it's still fun!)

Play is a key component of building a solid relationship. For some dogs, you'll need to build this skill at home before taking it into the world on a walk. As you practice, watch your dog's body language, and be careful not to overwhelm him with your enthusiasm. While it might sound easy, interspecies play is a complex topic in dog training. To learn more, check out *Dog Sports Skills Book 3: Play!* by Denise Fenzi and Deb Jones.

■ **USE THE ENVIRONMENT TO KEEP TRAINING INTERESTING.** Random objects in the environment are great for helping dogs learn to generalize behaviors while adding novelty to daily walks. Invite your dog to hop up and sit on a bus bench (for you city slickers) or a tree stump (for the rural dwellers). Practice any tricks that can be done safely on an elevated surface. Ask your dog to put his front feet on a raised object such as a drinking fountain, the bottom of a slide in the park, or the base of a tree. Hop up and walk along a raised barrier wall. Walk underneath an A-frame-style advertising sign.



Be creative as you look for new, safe ways to challenge your dog. Using objects in the environment is a great way to engage your dog's body and brain, and is even part of a fun new sport called Dog Parkour. (For more information, check out the International Dog Parkour Association, dogparkour.org.)

■ **CHANGE YOUR ROUTE TO CHANGE THE SCENERY.** I live in a densely populated, busy Los Angeles suburb. When I walk out my door, I have access to several different walking routes. I make a point to not take the same route twice in a row. The change of scenery keeps things interesting for everybody. A familiar walk is always better than *no* walk, but watch your dog while walking in a new environment; you'll likely find his senses are in overdrive as he takes in the novel sights, sounds, and smells. Processing all the new stimuli is tiring work!

If your immediate neighborhood options are limited, consider jumping in the car and driving to the nearest shopping center. Shopping centers offer a wealth of novel stimuli to dazzle your dog's senses, as well as urban distractions around which to train.

With a little forethought and creativity, you'll soon find that training walks set you on a path not just toward better cardiovascular health, but a stronger, more interactive relationship with your dog! 🐾

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



When a puppy's energy and attention start to flag, a quick game like tug may restore his enthusiasm long enough to get back home!

POSSIBLE BARRIERS TO TRAINING WALKS: DISTRACTION ACTION AND FEAR FACTORS

Dogs who struggle to focus on their owners when away from home usually do so for one of two reasons – either the dog is too distracted by the environment, or he’s under the influence of anxiety or fear.

With anxiety and fear, the dog’s body language tells a powerful story. His posture might be slinky – head low, tail tucked, ears pinned back. His pupils might be dilated, with the whites of his eyes visible. He might pant, even if it’s not hot. He might sniff excessively, yawn repeatedly, or lick his lips. His movements could be slow, almost catatonic, or fast and erratic as though he’s trying to escape. Some dogs jump up on their owners in a way that is best described as “clingy,” while others become hyperactive and appear to lack training and be totally out of control. Fearful dogs can also lunge at the trigger (people, other dogs, etc.) as a way of trying to keep the “scary thing” at bay.

In either case, time and patience often go a long way toward helping your dog achieve a mental state that’s more compatible with a training walk. Rather than hit the ground running (or walking), pick a spot not far from your front door and just stand there like a tree. The curious dog is free to sniff around at the radius of his leash. Don’t ask for attention, but reward generously anytime your dog happens to check in with you. Your reward should look dramatically different from when you patiently stand there watching him sniff or look around. Your face should light up in a smile as you back up a step or two, drawing your dog toward you, and feeding several pea-size treats (like, 10!), one piece at a time. After the last treat, release your dog to “go sniff.” Plant your feet and wait for the next time he glances your way. Have another 10-cookie party. (If your worried about too many treats, incorporate pieces of kibble subtracted from his daily ration.)

Do this two or three times as a warm-up before starting the walk. The idea is to give your dog time to engage in a limited version of what he wants – the ability to sniff and look around – while also letting him realize that his choice to interact with you pays quite well. For some dogs, this helps jump-start an ability to focus on the handler during a walk, and the rewards that continue throughout the walk help build and maintain



This dog’s low posture, constant tongue-flicking, and fast, erratic responses to stimuli such as cars passing by or the sight of another dog tell you that she’s overwhelmed by fear. She’ll benefit from lots of encouragement, reinforcing treats, and more time to stop, relax, and just look around.

focus. (To learn more about developing your dog’s choice to focus on you, see “The Eyes Have It,” WDJ February 2016.)

Especially fearful dogs may benefit from quiet visits to new places, with no expectations. Their sniffing and exploration (to whatever degree they are comfortable) are driven less by curiosity and more by a need to realize nothing bad will happen. Don’t press these dogs to perform specific behaviors (as discussed in the main article); they can’t successfully think about attention or cued behaviors if they are worried. Support your dog with calm praise, slow, relaxed petting, and treats (if she will accept them). You can’t reinforce the fear – it’s a feeling, not a behavior. Your calm reassurance can help your dog relax, while treats build positive associations with the “scary place.”

Many owners of fearful dogs are concerned that if they give their dogs treats or praise, they will reinforce the dog’s fearful behaviors; it’s a common misconception. Let’s say you’re nervous about public speaking, and you’re about to give an important presentation. As you head to the boardroom, your friend stops you in the hallway. “Hey, you’re gonna be great. You’ve got this!” she says, as she gives you a reassuring smile and a hug. Then she slips a Godiva chocolate bar into your suit pocket! Did she just reinforce your fear of public speaking, or did you appreciate her kind and thoughtful actions?

To BP or Not to BP?

Canine blood-pressure checks are indicated only when certain other problems are detected.

BY CYNTHIA FOLEY

A health exam for all adults includes a blood-pressure reading. So why not for our dogs? There are a few reasons that veterinarians save blood-pressure testing for only certain cases.

The first is money. Because vets constantly face clients who are unable or unwilling to pay for anything “unnecessary,” veterinary clinics are forced to offer *a la carte* services. The basic office-visit fee includes the veterinarian’s brief examination and writing applicable prescriptions. Anything else is an additional charge; veterinarians say this helps the client determine the cost of veterinary care.

“Veterinary exams would have to climb more than \$100 per visit to include ancillary services that are ‘included’ in physician visits,” says Eve Ryan, DVM, of Baldwinsville, New York. “As unfortunate as it may be, many pet owners do not want or cannot afford all of the high-quality medical services that are recommended, so non-exam services are separated out.”

Another reason that veterinarians are hesitant to perform regular blood-pressure checks is because of the high incidence of false positives. “You don’t want to risk inappropriate treatment due to an invalid diagnosis,” says Bruce Kornreich, DVM, PhD, DACVIM, a cardiologist at the College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell. “We don’t want to over-treat.”

Although an estimated 20 percent of humans suffer from “white-coat syndrome” (temporary high blood pressure caused by the anxiety associated with visiting the doctor), dogs aren’t as easy to sort out. “It’s reasonable to assume that dogs also suffer from white-coat syndrome,” Dr. Kornreich says,

“but validation is different.” In human medicine, the patient sits quietly for a few minutes while the nurse prepares to take blood pressure. She might chat about the weather or an upcoming holiday to distract the patient’s thoughts, hopefully normalizing any white-coat effects. The blood-pressure reading itself is quick.

Visualize your dog in the veterinarian’s office, with the many smells, noises, and distractions. Just getting the dog to stand on a weight scale can throw him into a hyper state. Now add one or two staff members to restrain the dog and a Doppler ultrasound beep as the reading is done.

“It’s difficult to get blood pressures if the dog won’t stay still,” says Eileen Fatcheric, DVM, of Syracuse, New York. “The readings can be falsely elevated in a clinic setting, especially if the dog is anxious, and it is time-consuming.” Veterinarians are advised to take at least three readings – and preferably five to seven! – once the animal is quiet. The first reading is always disregarded.

Of course, the standard back-up plan physicians use is asking human patients to monitor blood pressure at home and report back to them. Over-the-counter human blood-pressure monitors are relatively inexpensive and foolproof. Get a cuff the right size for the patient and you’re good to go. Not so with dogs.

TYPES OF BP MEASUREMENT

There are three main methods of measuring blood pressure in dogs. The gold



standard is direct arterial monitoring, which is invasive (involving a catheter) and usually done only under anesthesia.

The Doppler ultrasound method is used in many clinics, but it, too, is not without drawbacks. “It involves a messy gel that is necessary for the probe to detect the pulse sounds, and operator error is a possibility,” Dr. Ryan says. “In my experience, the noise associated with the Doppler unit often frightens the animal unnecessarily. Headphones are available, but this mode is becoming outdated. New oscillometric devices used in modern veterinary medicine are well-calibrated, easy to use, reliable, and mess-free.”

Indeed, modern veterinary oscillometric devices – similar to human at-home blood-pressure measuring machines – have undergone dramatic improvement, and more veterinary clinics are utilizing them. But that doesn’t mean you can expect to buy a device at Walmart and take your dog’s blood pressure at home.

“Machines made for humans might give a ‘ballpark’ reading on a dog, but it wouldn’t be expected to be accurate, nor should it be used to make any medical decisions regarding medication or treatment,” Dr. Ryan says. “Only an animal-calibrated machine used with the appropriately sized cuff, used on the appropriate parts of the patient’s anatomy, should be used for medical decisions. Choosing the appropriate size cuff and its placement requires an understanding of the anatomy of the patient, which may change, depending on species and breed.”

WHEN TO PAY FOR A BLOOD-PRESSURE CHECK

There are times you won't be offered a choice on blood-pressure reading fees, including during surgery, serious illnesses, shock, trauma, and IV treatments. If your dog has been diagnosed previously with high blood pressure or is on cardiac medications, blood-pressure monitoring may be a necessity. There are aspects of veterinary medicine your pet's doctor will *not* negotiate.

"Patients with disease states that predispose them to hypertension – heart disease, Cushing's syndrome, renal failure, among others – should be monitored, and therapy instituted before a hypertensive crisis occurs," Dr. Ryan says. "Patients on medications that affect the blood pressure need to be monitored even more closely. A dog with certain health conditions, both acute and chronic, may present with high or low blood pressure, and this is often checked if needed, given the illness or situation."

Some lay animal experts advocate that regular blood-pressure monitoring should be part of every canine veterinary exam, as it is with human exams. They are adamant that the service should be included in all wellness exams at a minimum, believing if blood pressure is checked regularly, you'll know what normal is for that dog and be able to catch problems earlier, similar to human medicine. But it's just not that simple.

The problem is that humans usually have *primary* hypertension, which is high blood pressure without a known cause. The most common reasons for high blood pressure in humans really don't apply to most dogs: smoking, drinking, stress, high salt intake, lack of exercise, and obesity. (Those last two are increasingly applicable, of course.)

Dogs are more likely to have *secondary* hypertension, which means another disease is actually causing the high blood pressure. The most likely first offenders are kidney disease, diabetes, Cushing's disease, and eye problems.

One place most veterinarians *do* press for routine blood-pressure screenings is geriatric wellness exams, but even then, money can complicate the decision. "In my senior pets, if money was an issue, I would choose physical exam first, then blood work, then urinalysis for my general health screening," Dr. Fatcherich says. "If kidney, heart, thyroid, or adrenal disease was detected, I would strongly

WHEN A BLOOD-PRESSURE CHECK IS WARRANTED FOR YOUR DOG

If you notice any of these symptoms in your dog:

- ✓ Ataxia (abnormal, uncoordinated movement)
- ✓ Bloody urine
- ✓ Congestive heart failure
- ✓ Coughing
- ✓ Eye disorders (sudden blindness, retinal detachment, eye hemorrhage, abnormal eye movements)
- ✓ Heart murmurs
- ✓ High urinary protein (veterinary lab test)
- ✓ Lethargy
- ✓ Nose bleeds
- ✓ Seizures
- ✓ Stroke-like symptoms (neurologic)
- ✓ If your dog is battling any of these diseases: Cushing's disease, hyperthyroidism, chronic renal/kidney disease, endocrine diseases (like diabetes), adrenal tumor, obesity

TERMS TO KNOW

BLOOD PRESSURE – The pressure on the artery walls created by blood flow

ESSENTIAL HYPERTENSION – Also called primary hypertension and idiopathic hypertension, it is high blood pressure without a known cause

HYPERTENSION – High blood pressure

HYPOTENSION – Low blood pressure

PULMONARY HYPERTENSION – Increased blood pressure in the pulmonary vascular system

SECONDARY HYPERTENSION – High blood pressure due to an underlying cause

recommend blood-pressure monitoring. However, the earliest indicator of kidney disease is actually protein in the urine (microalbuminuria)."

BOTTOM LINE

If your dog has been diagnosed with hypertension – whether due to an underlying disease or not – he will require monitoring, probably once every three months, plus applicable blood work and urinalysis. And that means regular trips to the veterinarian.

Be wary of those YouTube videos showing how to take your pet's blood pressure with a human monitor. Research has shown that the proper cuff is a necessity and the placement of the device on hind limbs vs. forelimbs vs.

tails will generate varying results, none reliable.

If you absolutely want a blood-pressure monitoring at each office visit, chances are all you have to do is pay for it. The wisest course of action is to discuss the option with your veterinarian.

"Every pet parent should have a veterinarian they trust and can have an honest conversation with regarding the best health care they can provide for that pet. Good health care is a team effort," Dr. Ryan says. And part of that team effort is the decision about whether a blood-pressure check is a valid monitoring tool in your dog. 🐾

Cynthia Foley is a freelance writer and dog agility competitor from New York.

High-Density Life With Dogs

How to live harmoniously with hounds (and other people) in apartments and condominiums.

BY HELENE G. GOLDBERGER, ESQ, CPDT-KA, PMCT

If I were to choose two words to summarize how to live harmoniously with dogs in apartment buildings it would be “with consideration.” It really is no different than how we should strive to treat our neighbors even when pets are not involved. For example, before having a party, it’s considerate to inform your neighbors that you will be entertaining, invite them to join in on the fun, and be mindful of not being excessively noisy late in the evening. Similarly, if one has a dog, check in with your neighbors from time to time to make sure that Rocky is not driving them crazy with his whining and barking.

The consideration extends to our dogs as well. It is not fair to leave a young, active dog all day in an apartment with nothing to do and expect that he will be a model citizen. He might be destructive (which may or may not affect neighbors) and vocalize out of boredom and frustration.

If there is an opportunity to meet and discuss the rights and responsibilities of dog owners and other residents, I suggest bringing in a professional positive reinforcement dog trainer to educate everyone involved (building management, pet owners, and affected and/or concerned neighbors), about what constitutes normal dog behavior. Two sources of such trainers are the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (cccpdt.com) and the Pet Professional Guild (petprofessionalguild.com).

Here are some topics that apartment dwellers, landlords, and cooperative/

condominium boards should take up and discuss proactively in buildings where dogs reside:

■ **NOISE (BARKING/WHINING)** – Dog owners should be courteous and respond

promptly to complaints. They should also try to figure out why their dog is barking, perhaps with the help of a qualified professional positive reinforcement-based trainer. Does the dog get enough exercise during the day? A walk around the block is insufficient for most dogs. Can a dog walker be hired to come during the day? If the dog is easy to walk, could a young person in the building perform this task?

■ **NOISE (SEPARATION DISTRESS OR ANXIETY)** – If your dog is whining and/or barking for hours, it’s likely being caused by some amount of separation distress, especially if there is evidence of destruction such as biting the door or walls. If so, you may need to address this with a professional positive reinforcement-based behavior consultant or possibly a veterinary behaviorist. The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior has a list of certified veterinary behaviorists on its website (avsabonline.com). These veterinarians are expert in behavioral issues in animals and may, if necessary, prescribe medications that can help relieve your dog’s anxieties.

■ **BORED DOG** – Leave him with something to do! Fill Kongs with his food, mixed with a spoonful of yogurt or peanut butter and freeze them; leave them around the apartment so he has to hunt for them and work to get the food out, rather than eating it in a few seconds out of a bowl. If he’s a good, safe chewer, provide him with some

Dogs can thrive in a small apartment in a big-city environment, as long as their owners proactively manage and train them, and work with their neighbors to resolve any problems that might arise.



raw bones to work on, or use interactive toys such as Kong Wobblers. You can try something as simple as hiding treats or your dog's kibble in cereal boxes or paper towel rolls (be sure he won't ingest these by first trying this out while you are at home). Leave a classical music radio station on or play "Through a Dog's Ear" CDs (throughadogsear.com). Or try Dog Appeasing Pheromone (DAP or Adaptil plug-in (available in pet supply stores and from dogappeasingpheromone.com).

■ AGGRESSION – We expect dogs in an urban environment to tolerate crowded conditions, weird noises and smells, and all kinds of strange activities. Many dogs, thanks to good training and socialization at an early age, good genes, and/or just the luck of the nature/nurture combination, are wonderfully calm about all this. But others are more sensitive and fearful.

Fear is the main cause of aggression. So what to do? First, don't put your dog in a position where he may feel the need to snap or, worse, bite. For example, if you are about to enter the elevator and there is already a dog in there and your dog doesn't particularly like other dogs, don't take any chances, just say, "Okay, I'll wait for the next one!" Or, take the stairs and give yourselves even more exercise!

If you enter the building with your dog after a walk and the doorman has a package for you, tell him you'll get it later. If your dog is fearful, he may be alarmed by a giant bag of dry cleaning being handed over by the man in the uniform.

Try to continually make positive associations with everything going on by rewarding your dog for calm behaviors in the presence of things he may be uncertain about. How? With tiny yummy treats that you will always carry in your pockets. (But remember to unload them at the end of the day or you may find holes chewed in your clothes when you wake up in the morning!) See "Fear Not Wee One," WDJ June 2012, for information about using counter-conditioning to reduce your dog's anxieties.

Don't take chances in having your dog meet other dogs he does not know, just because he generally likes other dogs. He may not like this one if you're in tight quarters! The other owner may not be aware of her dog's tolerances; many people aren't that good at reading a dog's body language. Speaking of which – educate yourself about canine body language! There is a lot of good



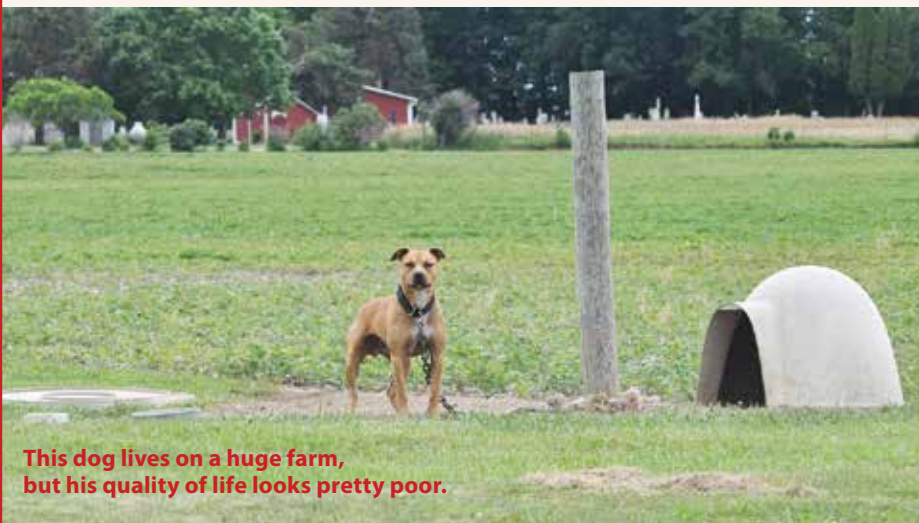
Chicago high-rise dogs relaxing after a walk.

IS APARTMENT-DWELLING UNFAIR TO DOGS?

When people learn you live in an apartment building and have a dog, the question almost always comes up: Is that fair to the dog? Many people believe that dogs are meant to romp in the country or have lots of space to move around in a house.

Having grown up in Brooklyn (where my family owned a home with a yard) and lived in cities for a large part of my adult life, I have witnessed firsthand that dogs can live happily in an urban setting. It's true that different dogs have different energy levels, and a highly active dog may not be the best choice for a studio in the city and little opportunity for exercise. But where there is a will, there is a way, and there are lots of ways that a committed owner can exercise a dog in the city. Because dogs must go out to eliminate (with the possible exception of those tiny breeds who are trained to go indoors on a pad or in a box), they are usually walked multiple times a day. There are parks, dog day care centers, dog parks, and dog walkers. As a child, I walked for miles and miles with our Spitz-mix, Kelev; my best friend; and her Irish Setter, "Lady Tara of Kendrick Blaze." As an adult runner, I spent many a happy morning running with my English Springer Spaniel Max in Prospect Park, where there were even off-leash hours!

I live in the country now, and my dogs and I enjoy the benefits of living on a large property with access to fields and woods. But my heart aches when I see dogs chained outside homes, as is more common in suburban and rural areas. All dogs deserve a quality environment!



This dog lives on a huge farm, but his quality of life looks pretty poor.

information out there. Sarah Kalnajs has an excellent DVD, “The Language of Dogs,” on this subject (bluedogtraining.com/videos-dvds.html).

■ **GREETINGS** – Be very careful about introductions, especially with children. If you have any doubts about your dog’s ability to handle an introduction with grace, say, “Sorry, my dog is too shy to meet you. Maybe another time.” If it’s deemed safe, let the dog sniff the back of the person’s hand. Let the would-be greeter know that she shouldn’t reach out to a strange dog. If your dog is relaxed, with a softly wagging tail and no stiffness, instruct the person to pet his chest or under the chin. Many dogs don’t like to be petted on the head.

If you know that your dog doesn’t care to meet people or if he may jump on someone, until you can train better behavior, just manage with a smile and a good hold on a short leash. Then use treats to maintain your dog’s attention long enough to get past the person without interaction.

■ **EXERCISE** – When it’s subzero or pouring rain, it’s hard to convince ourselves and sometimes even our dogs that we must go out. While it’s very creative to use a hallway to play fetch, it may not be such a great idea. The noise may disturb others and even worse, a person leaving her apartment unaware could get knocked down or trip over your dog. If you have everyone’s permission on the floor to engage in this activity during a certain time of day, great, go for it.

■ **ELIMINATION** – Be courteous. You wouldn’t dump your trash in the hallway or right outside the entrance. Try get your dog to the curb to eliminate and always pick up. If he has an accident, clean thoroughly with an enzyme cleaning solution so other dogs don’t get the idea the elevator is a good place to eliminate. Perhaps a spray bottle could be kept at the front desk in the lobby for this purpose.

MUST NOT LOVE DOGS?

Dog owners need to remember that everyone doesn’t love dogs as much as you

want them to. Some people don’t have the experience of being around dogs and may be afraid or maybe they just don’t like them. Or, worse, perhaps they’ve had a bad experience! So have consideration and, who knows, based on observing your well-behaved ambassador, maybe they’ll come around!

Also keep in mind that non-dog owners may not understand the bond that so many of us form with our furry family members. If they have a complaint about your dog, try to understand and address their concerns, just as you would about any other grievance stemming from living in close quarters. 🐾

Helene Goldberger, Esq., CPDT-KA, PMCT, grew up with dogs and pursued a better way to train in order to help her fear-aggressive dog, Chester Bighead, CGC, TT. This path led her to becoming a professional trainer; her training business is called HeartDog. Helene is of counsel to Tooher & Barone LLP, an environmental law firm, in Albany, NY. She lives with her husband, two rescued pitbulls, and two retired horses in the Catskill Mountains.

AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR INFO

Yellow Ribbon Project – This is a project to encourage the use of a yellow ribbon tied to a dog’s collar and/or leash to let others that this dog needs space. The reason could be varied; perhaps the dog is fearful, may bite, or perhaps just had surgery and is in pain. For more information, go to yellowdogproject.com.

“Dangerous Dogs” – In some states, dogs that have a “vicious propensity” can be deemed dangerous – the canine version of being on probation. This means that while you may know your dog is a sweetheart much of the time, one bite can be enough for the authorities to label him dangerous, and two bites could result in an order to surrender or euthanize the dog. Also, if your dog bites someone you could be sued and found liable, and if the building ownership had knowledge of the dog’s propensity for aggression (a past bite), it could also be found responsible (which is one reason why many building owners and managers are reluctant to rent to dog owners).

Muzzles are Useful Tools! – If you know your dog is prone to biting, get to a positive behavior consultant who can also teach you how and when to use a muzzle, which can keep everyone safe while you work to modify your dog’s behavior. I like Baskerville basket-type muzzles, because they have a lot of ventilation so the dog can pant and even accept treats. Another advantage of using a muzzle is that it will enable

the handler to relax, which will also help the dog! For more information, see clickertraining.com/node/3912.

BREED PROHIBITIONS

It has become all too common to see lists of breed bans in multi-unit residences as well as municipalities. Books could be written about the drawbacks of breed-specific legislation (BSL), but suffice to say that all dogs have the potential to bite and no breed has 100 percent benign membership. The “bully breed” lovers among us (count me in) would point out that many of these dogs are model citizens and great companions.

Further, breed bans provide a false sense of security. See the position statement of the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB) on this subject: avsabonline.org/uploads/position_statements/Breed-Specific_Legislation-download-_8-18-14.pdf.

Rather, encourage or require new owners to provide proof of having properly trained their dogs through programs such as the American Kennel Club’s Canine Good Citizen (CGC) certification and encourage your building’s management to develop and enforce common sense rules, such as, “All dogs must be leashed when outside their apartments,” and “All dogs must be licensed.”

IN A HURRY TO FIND SOMETHING?

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 RESOURCES 

BOOKS AND DVDS

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

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

- ❖ **Stephanie Colman**, Caninestein Dog Training, Los Angeles, CA. Offering training for basic through advanced obedience, competition dog sports, problem-solving, and more! Private lessons and group classes. (818) 414-8559; caninesteintraining.com
- ❖ **Helene Goldberger**, CPDT-KA, PMCT, HeartDog Dog Training, Helderbergs of the Catskill Mountains, NY. Group classes, private training, board-and-train, assistance with dog adoptions. heartdogtraining.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

TRAINERS MENTIONED IN THE TRICKS ARTICLE (PAGES 6-10)

- ❖ **Valerie Balwanz**, PMCT, CPDT-KA, is the Director of Training at Pampered Pets in Charlottesville, VA. (434) 973-7387; pamperedpetsville.com
- ❖ **Sharon Messersmith**, PMCT, owns the Canine Valley Training Facility in Reading, PA. (610) 223-3981; caninevalleytraining.com
- ❖ **Jessica Ring** owns My Fantastic Friend, LLC, in Ellicott City, MD. (443) 741-1044; myfantasticfriend.com (under construction). jessica@myfantasticfriend.com

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