

# The Whole Dog Journal™



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A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

AUGUST 2016

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

# Letting Go

*It's never easy, but it's part of life.*

BY NANCY KERNS

**M**y sister and I were having a tearful debate about what's worse: Preparing oneself emotionally for the death of an old, beloved dog? Or sending puppies that you have raised out into the world for an uncertain future? Neither one of us won the debate; we just boo-hoed and laughed through our tears until we could go on with our day.

My sister and her husband have three dogs. Once upon a time, they had three senior dogs at once, and that was a sad time, watching all three decline in mental and physical function, and then dealing with their deaths fairly close together. Today, their dogs' ages are staggered a *bit* more, with a three-year-old Jack Russell-mix, a four- or five-year-old Chihuahua-mix (one of my former fosters, actually), and then Bo, a fuzzy gray terrier-mix, about 30 pounds, who is about 15 or 16 years old.

Bo came to them as a golden-years foster dog about five years ago from a friend in crisis. He settled into their household so smoothly, it seems like he's always been there. Today, though, it seems like he's not going to be here much longer. He's had a number of minor strokes lately, and after each one, he's a little less sharp; his expression looks like he understands less and less of the language being spoken in his household. On the other hand, he still loves to eat, and his elimination habits are still good, so they are just sort of loving him as much as possible and letting him be for the time being. He's never been my sister's favorite dog in the house, but now that he's declining, she's getting quite emotional about all they have been through together in the past half-decade.

It's not a competition, but I'm certain that my situation is sadder. Each time I take on a litter of puppies to foster for my local shelter, I say I'm not going to get attached – and it almost seems possible that I could maintain that reserve in the beginning, when

the puppies are little poop and pee machines – when I'm exhausted from spending far too much of my day trying to push food into one end of puppies and cleaning up what's coming out of the other end. Finally, though, they get the eating thing figured out and are able to go more than an hour without making a mess on the floor and they start developing personalities, and before I know it, I have a favorite and a second favorite and actually, come to think of it, every single one of them is a little genius. Darn it!

This week, they officially became up for adoption at the shelter – meaning, I've had to take them to the shelter and put them in those concrete runs in that loud building. If there is a dog who can look sadder than a Great Dane puppy, I don't want to meet him or her; this has been *hard*. I bring them in with toys and treats, and I stay and play with them for a while. But at some point, I have to kiss them goodbye and wish them luck in finding a family during the day – and then the shelter staffers laugh at me (in a kindly way) as I weepily leave the building.

I can't leave them there overnight; I just can't!! So I go back each evening to pick them up and bring them “home” for the night. (That way, they can play outdoors with my adolescent dog and decompress from the stress of the shelter.) There are fewer pups to bring home each evening, and that's a good thing, I know, I'm happy for them . . . but oh my goodness, it's hard, too. Dog good-byes are the *worst*. *NK*

**MISSION STATEMENT:** WDJ's mission is to provide dog guardians with in-depth information on effective holistic healthcare methods and successful nonviolent training. The methods we discuss will endeavor to do no harm to dogs; we do not advocate perpetrating even minor transgressions in the name of “greater good.” We intend our articles to enable readers to immediately apply training and healthcare techniques to their own dogs with visible and enjoyable success. All topics should contribute to improving the dog's health and vitality, and deepening the canine/human bond. Above all, we wish to contribute information that will enable consumers to make kind, healthy, and informed decisions about caring for their own dogs.





We all love taking our dogs to grassy fields to play, but keep in mind that lush, manicured public parks are likely to receive regular treatment with toxic herbicides –and too much sunshine is a hazard, especially for white dogs.

🐾 HEALTH 🐾

# Reduce the Chance of Canine Cancer

*You can't prevent cancer – at least not yet – but you can stack the odds in your dog's favor.*

BY CYNTHIA FOLEY

Veterinary oncologists say that cancers in humans and in dogs are incredibly similar, in terms of growth and prognosis. That's good news for both species, as research of human or canine cancer may yield insight about and new treatments for this deadly disease. In addition, many of the tactics that reduce the incidence of cancer in humans, veterinary oncologists say, can be used by pet owners to reduce the chances that their dogs will develop the disease. Here are four things you can do to help prevent cancer in your dog:

**1 REDUCE YOUR DOG'S EXPOSURE TO CARCINOGENS.** The word "carcinogen" is commonly defined as something that causes cancer. In

reality, a carcinogen doesn't cause cancer; it sets the stage for cancer to develop.

"Cancer relies on gene mutation (abnormal cell growth)," says Dr. Gerald

Post, a board-certified veterinary oncologist and owner of the Veterinary Cancer Center in Norwalk, Connecticut. "We're all born with some basal level of cancer risk, but viruses, diet, environment all interact to raise or lower that risk," he says.

Carcinogens impair a dog's gene-replication devices somehow, setting the stage for cancer to develop. Some carcinogens actually alter the DNA in the body, while others cause cells in the body to divide too quickly, which opens the door for DNA abnormalities and, therefore, cancer growth.

The list of known human cancer-causing carcinogens is long, with an even longer list of *suspected* carcinogens. While a dog's susceptibility depends in part on his genetic makeup, prolonged or frequently repeated exposure to these elements can result in those worrisome cellular changes. In other words, walking by a lawn with pesticide on it isn't as risky as playing daily on that grass. Scope out your home and backyard for possible contaminants and remove or limit your dog's exposure to them. You can see a full list of human carcinogens at [cancer.org](http://cancer.org) (<http://bit.ly/1sQfCsS>).

That said, pesticides are at the top

of the list of concerns for your dog, and are one of two proven causes in pets, Dr. Post says. The chemical “2,4-D,” which is found in some common herbicides, has been linked to lymphoma in dogs. Keep your dog away from herbicides at least until the product has dried.

The other proven pet carcinogen is secondhand smoke. It’s linked to cancer in cats, as it settles on the cat’s coat and the cat licks it off, ingesting it. Dr. Susan Lana, a board-certified veterinary oncologist and chief of clinical oncology at Colorado State University’s Flint Animal Cancer Society, suggests that pet owners who smoke avoid doing so in the home, as the smoke settles on pets.

Long-nosed dogs living in a pollutant-filled air, such as a smoky home or highly polluted city, are at higher risk for developing nasal carcinoma. (See sidebar, below, for potential carcinogens that may your dog may be exposed to on a regular basis.) On average, indoor air contains far more harmful pollutants than outdoor air. Our homes tend to contain high levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which can evaporate from air fresheners, floor and carpet cleaners, paint, furniture, and even the floors themselves, especially new carpet and vinyl floor coverings. Long-term exposure to polluted air can have compounding health effects.

With the human-dog comparison in mind, it’s no surprise that providing shade for your dog to reduce long-term exposure to sunlight (especially for dogs with white hair) is important.

**What You Need to Do:** To protect from environmental hazards, bathe your dog frequently to remove outdoor toxins on his coat and use foot baths to reduce the amount being brought into your home. Check your dog’s immediate environment for carcinogens and work to limit them. Remember, it isn’t the haphazard occasional exposure to a cancer-causing element that’s a problem. It’s long-term prolonged contact with it.

**2 CONSIDER THE TIMING OF OR NEED FOR SPAY/NEUTER SURGERY.** We believe the decision to spay or neuter your dog should be based more on your individual needs and ability to care for and manage your dog than on your dog’s cancer risk. However, the status of your dog’s reproductive structures is indeed a factor in the likelihood of your dog getting cancer.

For years, veterinarians unanimously recommended spaying before the first heat cycle and neutering at six months. This practice did prevent some types of cancer. Obviously, testicular cancer is impossible in a dog whose testicles have been removed, and spay surgery

that removes the uterus and ovaries eliminates the possibility of uterine, cervical, and ovarian tumors. In addition, it’s a well-known fact that the more heat cycles a female experiences, the higher her chances of mammary cancer, so earlier spay surgery is sharply reduces the incidence of that cancer. However, that’s not the whole story.

“Some studies suggest that the risk of some cancer is higher in dogs who are neutered too early (before one year of age),” Dr. Lana says. “It’s being discussed quite a bit.”

Spaying/neutering before the age of one year is associated with a higher risk of osteosarcoma (bone cancer) and hemangiosarcoma (a rapidly growing tumor that originates in the blood vessels).

**What You Need to Do:** The right decision regarding the alteration of your puppy may depend upon your ability to control unplanned breeding and to deal with heat cycles. It may also be a decision that takes the dog’s activity level or genetics. Sporting-dog owners want to maximize the benefits of circulating hormones as the dog matures into an adult for stronger bones, cartilage, and joints. It’s not an easy call. “Weigh the pros and cons,” suggests Dr. Post. “Overpopulation is a huge issue. Make the decision that is right for your pet.” We’d add that your own dog care and management abilities should be considered, too. (See “Risks and Benefits to Spaying/Neutering Your Dog,” WDJ February 2013.)

**3 PROVIDE YOUR DOG WITH A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE.** Health starts with a normal weight. The National Cancer Institute links obesity in humans to increased risk of cancer of the esophagus, pancreas, colon, rectum, breast, kidney, thyroid, and gallbladder. Veterinary research agrees. An obesity-cancer link has been proven in dogs, too, especially for mammary and bladder cancers.

Keeping your dog from getting fat dog has a lot to do with limiting treats, no matter how good he is at begging. It also involves feeding the right, good-quality food, so your dog gets all the nutrients he needs without eating too much.

Regular exercise will help with both your dog’s weight and aid in cancer prevention. A study published in May 2016 in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, a highly respected

## KNOWN AND LIKELY CARCINOGENS YOUR DOG MAY ENCOUNTER

- ✗ Ultraviolet rays (especially for dogs with white fur)
- ✗ Tap water contaminants
- ✗ Electromagnetic radiation from power lines and electrical appliances
- ✗ Second-hand tobacco smoke and e-cigarette vapors
- ✗ Herbicides, insecticides, pesticides
- ✗ Air pollution/smog
- ✗ Environmental elements, including nickel, uranium, radon, cadmium, asbestos
- ✗ Manufactured elements, including benzidene, benzene, vinyl chloride, paints, solvents
- ✗ High-carb foods that have been fried at high temperatures (may contain acrylamide)
- ✗ Formaldehyde

## EARLY WARNING SIGNS OF CANCER

1. ABNORMAL SWELLINGS THAT PERSIST OR CONTINUE TO GROW
2. SORES THAT DO NOT HEAL
3. WEIGHT LOSS
4. LOSS OF APPETITE
5. BLEEDING OR DISCHARGE FROM ANY OPENING
6. OFFENSIVE ODOR
7. DIFFICULTY EATING OR SWALLOWING
8. HESITATION TO EXERCISE OR LOSS OF STAMINA
9. PERSISTENT LAMENESS OR STIFFNESS
10. DIFFICULTY BREATHING, URINATING, OR DEFECATING

Source: National Canine Cancer Foundation



peer-reviewed publication, showed increased leisure-time exercise resulted in a lower risk of cancer in humans. Although the research was not able to find the mechanism by which exercise works, the results showed up to a 20 percent reduction in cancer.

Notice that the study says “leisure-time” exercise. That means not work-related exercise, not daily routine or activity. In dog care, that means turning your dog out in the backyard is not exercise. You need to throw a ball or go for a long walk or short run. Maybe he enjoys romping at the dog park. He’s just got to get out there and move.

Regular exercise helps reduce stress, another lifestyle factor in the development of cancer. Uncontrolled stress has been shown to exacerbate tumor growth in humans. Signs of stress in your dog vary from obvious (digestive upset or lack of appetite) to subtle (persistent licking with no other cause, yawning, scratching for no obvious reason, dropped tail, drooling, low/back ears). See “Managing Your Dog’s Stress: A Holistic Approach,” WDJ December 2009.

**What You Need to Do:** Feed a good-quality food in appropriate amounts to keep your dog fit and slender. Be sure

your dog gets plenty of exercise, and address stress issues by incorporating the help of a trainer or your veterinarian to isolate and eliminate the source.

**4 KNOW EVERY INCH OF YOUR DOG.** Of all the cancer preventatives we’ve discussed, the most important one is early detection. The earlier you catch a developing cancer, the higher the odds of a longer life.

Just like a woman performing her monthly self-breast exam for breast-cancer detection, a dog owner should know every bump and lump on her dog’s body by doing a physical examination every month. Changes in eating, urinating, or defecating should be noted. Signs of cancer including frequent vomiting, difficulty breathing, lameness, and lethargy. It’s important to realize that some problems develop so slowly you may not notice until symptoms significantly worsen.

As your dog ages, his risk of cancer naturally rises, so make sure your veterinarian makes your dog’s wellness exams more involved over the years. Keep in mind that old fractures can set the stage for cancer in later life. Your veterinarian will also palpate your dog’s body to help

detect tumors earlier. (See “Ten Ways to Help Ensure that your Dog’s ‘Golden Years’ are Comfortable and Healthy,” WDJ April 2015.)

“There is no specific blood test that is commonly used in vet med to screen for cancer, although some are on the market,” said Dr. Lana. “During the annual visit, we often recommend a thorough physical exam, and screening blood work after the age of 7. It’s also possible to do screening chest X-rays and abdominal ultrasound after that age as well. That’s the place to start, with other tests based on those findings,” she said.

**What You Need to Do:** Learn what your dog feels like over every inch of his body, and every month, go over him, looking for bumps or lumps. Pay close attention to changes in eating habits, digestive upsets, or signs of sluggishness (see sidebar for early warning signs of cancer). Notify your veterinarian if you have any concerns. Give your veterinarian a chance to get to know your pet. Set up that annual wellness examination, or twice-annual visit for older dogs, and stick with it. 🐾

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



# Best Bait Bags

*Our quest: A pouch that enables us to securely carry treats and access them quickly.*

BY NANCY KERNS

**Y**ears ago, a new acquaintance asked me about the bag I wore on a belt around my waist. She saw me taking dog treats out of the bag and feeding them, one after another after another, to my then-young dog, Otto. I was in the process of teaching Otto to ignore squirrels in trees, pigeons in the street, and cats on the edge of the riverside trail we walked each day, and the tactic required a *lot* of treats. My new friend wanted to know if I *always* wore the bag; surely, since Otto seemed so well-behaved to her, I didn't need to have it with me all the time? Ah, yes, but would Otto be so well behaved if I had no treats? At that point in time, so early in our relationship – no!

Could I carry treats without a pouch? Well, sure, but it's a darn sight easier to carry and dole out cut-up hot dogs, sausage, cheese, chicken, and Goldfish crackers in a bag that's made just for that task than it is to keep them in a pocket – or even in a Ziploc bag in a pocket. And it's not just about the greasy stains or hot dog aroma emanating from one's clothing, though these are good reasons to use a bait bag rather than a pocket. It's really about the speed of treat access and treat deliverance.

When teaching a dog new skills, in particular, it's most effective to get the

reinforcing treats onto the lips of the dog as quickly as possible – and if you are fumbling to extract a bag from a pocket, and then extract a treat from the bag, the moment becomes all about that, rather than what the dog did an increasing number of moments ago.

Otto no longer *needs* treats in order to learn a new behavior – and he certainly doesn't need them to respond to *old* cues; today, he will happily work for petting and praise. However, if I'm carrying treats, I notice that his responses are quicker and more accurate, and his recalls – which are already very good – become Greyhound fast! (He's competitive, and wants to get to me before any of the other dogs do.)

And now I have a new young dog, Woody, who will be nine months old as this issue is printed. He's already a very well-behaved fellow, on- *and* off-leash. But in the course of any given day, things come up that challenge young, inexperienced dogs, some scary and some exciting. It helps to have treats *ready* to deal with either situation.

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**Wearing a treat bag helps you respond quickly and effectively with reinforcement for good behavior, or to help classically condition your dog to feel better about something scary in his environment.**

For example, on a walk the other day, we suddenly heard a *barrage* of loud gunfire at close range. Woody has heard guns being fired before, but at greater distances, and not so many at once. We were pretty close to a firing range that is used *only* by local law enforcement agencies for training, so its use is light; despite the fact that we had walked near it many times, Woody had not heard guns being fired there before. He stopped in his tracks, his hair stood up, and he woofed, spun, and actually started to run back the way we had come from, back toward the car.

Because I was armed with treats, and they were so readily accessible – I didn't have to dig through a pocket to reach them – I was able to shout, “Yes! Good dog!” and theatrically toss several small handfuls of treats onto the ground. It made Woody pause and glance over his shoulder, and because I was able to do this so quickly, he saw Otto and my other dog, Tito (a senior Chihuahua), diving happily into the task of finding and eating the treats. Despite the continued racket, between hearing the well-conditioned happy word (“YES!”) and a glimpse of his canine “brothers” grubbing happily for the food, Woody immediately drew the conclusion that the gunfire was not a big threat after all and “OMG free chicken?!” He reversed course and came readily to me for a handful of treats, and gobbled them up as I clipped his leash back on.

*Maybe* he would have come back if I had only mimed tossing the treats; *maybe* he would have come back if he saw me wrestling the treats out of my pocket. I'm pretty confident that having them ready and *so easy* to grab made the difference.

Why were they so easy to grab? Because I was wearing my favorite treat bag (also known as a “bait bag”) – the one that has surpassed all the others I've tried and tested.

## TRAITS OF A GREAT BAG

Here are the things I'm looking for in a bait bag:

- **SIZE** – Not too big (the more unwieldy, the less comfortable they are to wear) but not too small, either. I have three dogs, and if I go for a walk with a friend, and she brings one to three dogs, I want to be able to carry enough treats to give my dogs *and* hers, if need be – with my friend's permission, of course. (I can trust the friends who go walking



with me and my dogs to ask for polite behaviors from my dogs, and to reinforce them appropriately.)

■ **A SECURE WAY TO WEAR IT** – My favorite bags have belts – straps with a plastic buckle that can be fastened around your waist, holding the bag securely, whether you run, jump, bend over, squat next to your dog, whatever. Some of my friends prefer bags that clip onto the waistband of their pants, or are clipped onto a belt loop on their pants with a carabiner. I find that bags fastened this way flop around too much, often spilling the treats in the process.

One thing about belts: None of the manufacturers provide or make available a belt for larger-than-average people.

■ **AN EASY WAY TO CLOSE AND OPEN THE BAG** – This is a *big* deal. When you work with dogs or puppies who have little previous training, many of them take any opportunity that arises to try to help themselves to the treats in your bag. If the bag lacks a secure closure, you will find your dog's snout buried in your treat bag more and more often – random reinforcement being the most powerful to develop new behaviors. Treats are also apt to fall out of bags that don't close well, littering the ground with treats, and potentially leaving you without any high-value rewards when you really need them.

However, as secure as you need the closure to be, you want one that is easy to open again, too – especially if you are working with just one hand free.

■ **WASHABILITY** – When working with the aforementioned high-value rewards – chicken and cheese, hot dogs, pastrami, and so on – you need to be able to throw the bag in the washing machine once in a while without having it fall apart.

■ **QUALITY OF MATERIALS** – You want the thing to last! Seams should be well-sewn, plastic buckles should be secure, magnets strong, etc.

■ **EXTRA HANDY FEATURES** – The one *extra* feature I really like in a bait bag is a pocket that is big enough and secure enough – and *separate* from the greasy treats – where I can put my cell phone. While I don't often make calls or text on the trail, I do frequently take photos or video. I wear jeans much of the year, and

can often slide my phone into my pants pocket, but in the summer, when I'm in shorts, it's much more convenient to put the phone in the bait bag.

However, I've been quizzing my dog trainer friends about what features *they* like in a bait bag, and different things are more valuable to different people. Some of the features I've heard mentioned as indispensable include:

- A place for carrying and dispensing poop bags
- A clip or loop where a key ring can be secured
- A clip or loop where a leash or a toy can be carried
- A zippered pocket where some cash or a credit card can be stashed super safely

There are treat bags on the market that have a lot of these attributes, and some that have only a single strong feature. I'll name my favorites, but I'll also describe all the other good-quality bait bags that have something to offer other dog owners, even if they aren't my cup of tea, or pouch full of cheese, as it were.

### TOP PICKS IN TREAT BAGS

I buy every interesting or different bait bag I see for sale, and have probably tried 20 or more since I adopted Otto in 2008. But this past year, I resolved to collect and formally test the best or most promising ones for a review here.

My absolute favorite is the **Karen Pryor Clicker Training Treat Pouch**. It's a simple bag, fastened with a belt (a clip is also provided, but doesn't secure the bag well enough in my opinion), and is just the right size, with two large compartments. The compartment that holds the treats features my all-time favorite type of closure – a “French spring hinge” – that pops the compartment closed quickly and tightly, reliably keeping treats in the bag (even if you are running an agility course) and keeping doggie muzzles out, so they can't steal a mouthful of treats when you bend down to tie your shoe. A



**Our top pick in bait bags is the Karen Pryor Clicker Training Treat Pouch: Everything we need, nothing we don't.**

second pocket on the front of the bag is large enough for a large cell phone, and is closed securely with a full-length strip of hook-and-loop fastener. A key ring hanging from a well-sewn loop on one edge of the fully machine-washable bag enables you to clip keys or a clicker onto the ring (you provide the carabiner or clip).

I have two minor quibbles with the product. As I said above, even my largish cell phone fits in the front pocket – but if the phone is wearing a protective case, it becomes too wide for the pocket to be closed with the hook-and-loop fastener. If I take the case off the phone, I can securely close the pocket, but if I take the phone out and then drop it . . . darn it!

The second quibble is applicable to each of the bait bags that utilize the French spring hinge. The hinges are made from thin strips of metal with hinges at either end, and are sewn into the top edge of the bag. If you pry the two sides apart, the spring bends at a joint in the middle and pops open – spreading and holding the top of the pouch wide open. To close the pouch, you just press the sides of the bag together and the hinge slams the bag shut. (If your hands are full and a dog is trying to get into the bag for the treats, you can close it by pressing it against your body with the inside of your elbow, or by leaning against a car.) The hinges work great, until they don't.

These intricate hinges are a little delicate; they break down over time. The metal fatigues, or one of the tiny pins holding the hinges together falls out; one day you open the bag and – ping! – it can't be closed again. If you look at online



reviews of almost any bait bag with one of these closures, you will see complaints that the hinge fell apart too soon.

The Karen Pryor Clicker Training Treat Pouch sells for about \$15 from many retailers; if its spring hinge falls apart after a year of use, I'm not going to get too upset. The bag, and especially its closure, is everything I want in this vital training tool.

## RUNNERS UP

I also tested two other bait bags that are made with spring hinges: the **PetSafe Treat Pouch Sport** and the **Hurttta Pro Treat Bag**.

The PetSafe product is *very* similar to the Karen Pryor bag, with differences in just a couple of minor details. The Karen Pryor bag is sewn with darts along the lower edge, to create a squared bottom. This enables the bag to stand up if placed, open, on a flat surface; this also creates more roominess in the bag, so it's easier to insert your hand into the bag and withdraw treats easily. In contrast, the PetSafe bag is flatter – more like an envelope than a purse. It won't stand by itself, and it's harder to reach in and grab the last few treats at the bottom of the pouch (in particular).

On the other hand, the front pocket on the PetSafe bag is way deeper and just as wide; a large cell phone fits in there easily, even wearing a case. The hook-and-loop closure of this pocket is comprised of two shorter strips, rather than one pocket-wide single strip, but it is effective at keeping the phone secure, even when the handler runs.

**The PetSafe Treat Pouch Sport is flatter than the Karen Pryor bag, but has a deeper front pocket that fits a large cell phone.**



**The Hurttta Pro Treat Bag is big and loaded with features . . . features that not every handler needs, but some may really appreciate.**

Some people may be grateful for the little fabric divider inside the main pocket, secured with a little piece of hook-and-loop fastener, which allows a handler to load the bag with two different types of treats – perhaps a lower-value treat like kibble and a higher-value treat like cheese or ham cubes. I generally load my dogs' treat pouch with a "trail mix" of two to five different types of treats, to keep them guessing, so the divider is of no use to me. It's also difficult to use with just one hand – but if you were bent on keeping treats in your bag separate, you could do so with this bag.

Like the Karen Pryor bag, the PetSafe bag has a small loop sewn on the side, and a light carabiner is provided for clipping onto keys or something else you don't want to put in your pockets.

The PetSafe Treat Pouch Sport is a little more expensive (about \$20) than our top pick Karen Pryor product (about \$15).

Far more expensive than both of these is Hurttta's Pro Treat Bag, which sells for about \$50. Wow! This bag has a lot of other bells and whistles, but it is *also* made with the same type of French spring hinge as the previous two products – and we already know that these hinges fail over time. If I paid \$50 for a bag and it wouldn't close properly after a year (or less) of use, I'd be pretty irritated, and I'd sure not buy another.

So what are the bells and whistles that might make this bag worth the price to some dog owners?

First, it has the longest belt of any of the belted products I tested: about 58 inches. The belt on the Karen Pryor bag is only about 45 inches maximum, and the belt on the PetSafe bag maxes out at about 48 inches). Larger handlers will appreciate not having to supply their own belt in order to wear a belted treat pouch. The Hurttta belt also features a strip of reflective material



woven into the fabric for visibility at night in headlights. Nice!

The Hurttta Pro Treat Bag is considerably bigger (and more cumbersome) than my top two picks – bigger than I need, even when walking with six or eight dogs, but for a person who wanted to bring a lot of things with them on the walk, it might be ideal. Its main compartment is very roomy, especially since, like the Karen Pryor bag, it is sewn with darts that help the pouch, um, *pooch* out a bit on the bottom.

The front pocket in the Hurttta Pro Treat Bag is longer and deeper than those of the previously described bags, safely securing even a large cell phone with a long strip of hook-and-loop fastener. This front pocket also has a hole for dispensing poop bags from a roll that can fit (even with your phone and a couple of other items if you wish) in the pocket.

A larger and well-sewn loop and a color-matched, stronger carabiner are provided on the side of the bag. I'd actually consider fastening my big, heavy bunch of keys to this ring.

On the back of the bag – the side worn against the body – is a third pocket, one with a zipper. It's not deep enough to hold my phone, but it's plenty big enough for some cash, ID and/or insurance cards, and credit cards. Its hidden location increases its security.

All of those features may make it worth the cost to some handlers.

**A zippered pocket is hidden on the back of the Hurttta Pro Treat Bag.**





RANK	PRODUCT, PRICE, CONTACT INFO	FEATURES
1	<b>Karen Pryor Clicker Training Treat Pouch</b> \$15; (800) 472-5425; shop.clickertraining.com	Hinged “quick-close” closure. Fastens with belt (maximum 45 inches) or plastic belt clip. Second large pocket has hook-and-loop closure. Key-ring loop and carabiner. About 9 by 7 inches. Black.
2 (tie)	<b>PetSafe Treat Pouch Sport</b> \$20; (866) 738-4379; store.petsafe.net	Hinged “quick-close” closure. Fastens with belt (maximum 48 inches) or plastic belt clip. Main pocket has fabric divider with hook-and-loop closure, to keep types of treats separate. Second large pocket has hook-and-loop closure. Key-ring loop and carabiner. Two elastic loops on front for holding . . . something. About 7¾ by 6¼ inches. Available in three colors.
2 (tie)	<b>Hurtta Pro Treat Bag</b> \$50; hurtta.com. (Phone # of maker is in Finland) Not sold by maker. Available from retailers including JJDog.com (800-642-2050) and BaxterBoo.com (888-887-0063)	Hinged “quick-close” closure. Fastens with belt (maximum 58 inches, contains reflective fabric) or plastic belt clip. Second pocket has hook-and-loop closure and waste-bag dispenser. Third zippered pocket on back. Key-ring loop and carabiner. About 9½ by 6½ inches. Black, with trim available in three colors.
3 (tie)	<b>Dexas Popware PoochPouch</b> \$7 - \$10; (800) 527-5197; store.dexas.com	No closure; shape of pouch keeps treats in but permits entry of hand easily. Silicone pouch with plastic belt clip. Small zippered pocket on front. About 4¼ by 3½ inches. Available in five colors.
3 (tie)	<b>Doggone Good Rapid Rewards Pouch</b> \$20; (800)660-2665; clickercompany.com Available in pet supply stores and online, including amazon.com and cleanrun.com	Magnetic closure. Fastens with plastic belt clip, or by running your own belt through two sewn loops provided for this purpose (company sells a belt with plastic quick-release buckle separately, maximum length 48 inches, for \$2.75). Roomy main compartment is big enough to hold tennis balls and/or lots of treats; has fabric divider with hook-and-loop closure, to keep types of treats separate. A small, vertical pocket is on each side; one features a poop bag dispenser. Large zippered pocket in rear. Flat pocket in front. Two plastic D-rings for attaching things. About 6¾ by 5¾ inches. Available in three colors.
3 (tie)	<b>EzyDog Snak Pak Treat Bag</b> \$28; (208) 263-3181; store.ezydog.com	Magnetic closure. Fastens with belt (maximum 50 inches) or two plastic belt clips. Small zippered pocket on front. About 6¼ by 4½ inches. Available in four colors.
*	<b>Canine Equipment (a division of RC Pets) Carry All Treat Bag</b> \$13; (800) 681-7940; rcpets.com	Drawstring closure, with drawstring control on side of bag. Fastens with carabiner or plastic belt clip. Waste-bag pocket and dispenser on front. About 5 by 5 inches. Black.
*	<b>Canine Hardware Treat Tote</b> \$13; (738-6283); caninehardware.com Available in stores (such as REI and Petco) and online, including amazon.com and chewy.com	Drawstring closure, with drawstring control on side of bag. Fastens with plastic belt clip, or by running your own belt through a sewn loop provided for this purpose. About 5 by 5½ inches (a smaller size is also available). Available in three colors.
*	<b>Hurtta Junior Treat Bag</b> \$26; hurtta.com. (Phone # of maker is in Finland) Not sold by maker. Available from BaxterBoo.com; (888) 887-0063	Drawstring closure, with drawstring control on front of bag. Fastens with carabiner or plastic belt clip. Waste-bag pocket and dispenser on front. Zippered pocket on back. About 7½ by 5 inches. Black, with trim available in three colors.
*	<b>Outward Hound Dog Treat Bag</b> \$20; (800) 477-5735; outwardhound.com	Hinged “quick-close” closure. Fastens with strap when used as a belt, or use the strap over your shoulder. Outer mesh pocket has no closure. About 8½ by 7½ inches. Blue.
*	<b>Outward Hound Treat Pouch</b> \$5 to \$7; (800) 477-5735; outwardhound.com	Drawstring closure, with drawstring control inside of bag. Fastens with plastic belt clip or Velcro tab that can be fastened over a belt loop on your pants. About 5½ by 6 inches. Available in three colors.
<b>* Not recommended</b>		

Note: All three of these products have a large plastic clip on the back, *theoretically* enabling a handler to use this to clip the bag onto the waistband of their pants. In practice, though, these clips can't fasten an *empty* bag to you securely, much less a bag that's full of treats. The single, centered clip also means that the bag is often in danger of tipping to one side or the other, especially as you reach in to grab some treats. I'm not convinced there is a good reason to include these clips.

## PRODUCTS YOU MAY ENJOY (BUT WE DIDN'T)

Because I'm such a huge fan of the bags with the French spring hinge – fragile as they can sometimes be – I personally wouldn't use a bag with any other sort of closure. Some of you may be less avid about this point, however, so I also tested a number of pouches that had other redeeming qualities.

For example: the **Dexas Popware Pooch Pouch** is an extremely inexpensive, no-frills product that works fairly

well. It's basically a silicone container with a slit in the top and a *wide* clip on the back. If you don't mind a few treats spilling out if you jog or bend over, and don't need to carry anything else, you just may appreciate this simple tool.



I have a number of friends (both professional trainers and regular dog owners) who really like the **Doggone Good Rapid Rewards Pouch**. This is a deeper, more vertical pouch, with a number of pockets: a shallow one on the front, fastened with a bit of hook-and-loop fabric; the main, quite deep compartment; and a large zippered pocket on the back. Two narrow pockets are located on the sides of pouch: one for a clicker, and one for a roll of poop bags; a slit at the bottom permits them to be dispensed one at a time. Cute! There are also two rings, one on each side, that a person can presumably clip things onto – keys? a leash?

The main compartment features a fabric divider – again, presumably for those who want to separate types of treats. This compartment is closed by virtue of magnets sewn into the front and back of the pouch. This makes it incredibly easy to open, reach in, and close, even one-handed, but a handler should be aware that the top is not closed



**The Doggone Good Rapid Rewards Pouch has a vertical design, making its main compartment quite deep.**

as tightly as with one of the hinged pouches; jogging will cause a few treats to splash out, and a dog's nose could definitely dive in and grab some treats from the unwary. But it holds a lot – and that zippered pocket can even safely accommodate a large cell phone.

The Rapid Rewards Pouch utilizes the ubiquitous plastic piece on its back to clip onto your pocket or waistband, but it also has two fabric loops through which a handler could run her own belt to fasten it more securely.



**The Doggone Good bag has a shallow pocket on the front, two small pockets on the sides, and a deep zippered pocket on the back: handy!**

The **EzyDog Snak Pak Treat Bag** also utilizes magnets to close its top. It comes with a belt, and – get this – *two* plastic clips on the back; now we're talking about a secure clip-on solution!

The bag is small – no way to fit a phone or much more than a couple of keys or some cash in the front zippered pocket. But its minimal approach and clean look will appeal to handlers who want or need just a *few* treats along for a walk.



**EzyDog Snak Pak: Minimal yet functional.**

### NOT RECOMMENDED

I also tried out five other bait bags over the past year: the **Canine Equipment Carry All Treat Bag**, **Canine Hardware Treat Tote**, **Hurtt Junior Treat Bag**, **Outward Hound Treat Pouch**, and the **Outward Hound Dog Treat Bag**. I didn't like any of them, but they may be useful to *someone* in certain situations.

I had no use for the first four listed above for the same reason: Each fastens to a handler's pants waistband or pocket by means of a single connection point – a narrow plastic clip – and each is opened and closed with a drawstring. The bag falls off *constantly*. And the only way a person can access a treat quickly with a setup like that, is if she leaves the bag open at all times. Otherwise, it takes two hands and a few long moments to open

the bag and extract something.

While novice trainers might imagine they are rewarding their dogs as their trainers told them to, the fact is, if you can't mark and reward the dog *quickly* and *frequently* when he's doing what you asked him to do, his learning is doomed to progress very slowly. Imagine a first-grader in a classroom being asked to calculate the sum of five plus five, and him giving the correct answer. If the teacher turned her attention to something else, and then, a minute later, told the child, "You were right!" there is a good chance the child will have no idea of what he was right about. The delay that is built into the structure of these treat bags is, by professional animal training standards, interminable.

I ended up using them to carry Tito's tennis ball when he was tired of carrying it himself. They were highly useful for that purpose.

I thought I would like the fifth product, the Outward Hound Dog Treat Bag, since it has a French spring hinge closure and a belt. Alas; this was not to be.

The Outward Hound Treat Bag has a mesh "pocket" on the front; that was stretched out to the point of utter uselessness within days. Strike putting anything in there. Also, while the bag comes with a belt, and its product literature says it can be worn in a belt-like fashion, it's designed as more of a strap that you wear over your shoulder. And when it's worn like that, swinging next to your body, you are up against the same issue as with the other products I have no use for: You can't access the treats quickly enough, defeating the whole purpose of having a bait bag in the first place! 🐾



*Nancy Kerns is Editor in Chief of WDJ.*

# Fear Aggression

**Many types of aggressive behavior in dogs are rooted in fear. The good news: You can reduce your dog's fear and the aggressive behavior.**

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

I saw two clients last week, both for fear-related aggression. That's not surprising, since my practice specialty is aggression (although I also work with lots of other behaviors), and fear is by far the most frequently observed cause of aggression. I see it a lot, and professionals who work with modifying aggressive behavior in dogs generally agree that it is more common than any of the other classifications of aggression. In her excellent book *Manual of Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Dogs and Cats* (Elsevier, 2013), renowned veterinary behaviorist Dr. Karen Overall says, "Fear aggression can be a common condition in part because its exhibition may have been adaptive for the dog." That is, dogs in the wild who fight back against things that frighten and threaten them tend to live. The good news for owners of fearful dogs is that fear-related aggression can be managed and modified. Fearful dogs *can* live long and happy lives.

Fear-related aggression most frequently appears between the ages of eight to 18 months, as a young dog reaches maturity. This may be because increased boldness tends to come with maturity. But it's also likely because, over time, aggressive responses are reinforced; the scary stimulus (most often a human, when we're talking about aggression

issues) backs off. Initially, a fearful pup generally tries to hide from scary humans by moving away, perhaps crawling under a chair. The well-meaning human, feeling sorry for the frightened pup, picks her up and cuddles her to reassure her, thinking, "I just need to show her enough love, and she'll come around." Unfortunately, love is rarely enough.

Initially, the fearful puppy often shuts down, thinking she's probably going to die and there's nothing she can do about it. Humans misread this, thinking the puppy is comfortable with the attention.

At some point, the frightened puppy, feeling trapped, may growl and bare her teeth at an approaching human. Wisely, the human backs off, probably thinking, "Whoa, where did *that* come from?" Meanwhile, the puppy has a light bulb moment, thinking, "Hey, that worked, I'll try that again next time!" The behavior is *negatively reinforced* (the pup's behavior of growling made a bad thing go away), and behaviors that are reinforced increase. Each time the pup growls, snarls, snaps, or even bites, she becomes more convinced that aggression is a successful behavioral strategy for making scary humans leave her alone. She survives. People leave her alone. The aggression increases.

It might seem logical, then, to tell people *not* to back away when a fearful dog offers a growl, snarl, snap, or bite. After all, we don't want to reinforce that undesirable behavior, do we? Logical perhaps, but very wrong. In the moment, the risk of reinforcing the behavior is the lesser of two evils; far better than getting bitten. By all means, back away – without any kind of reprimand, I might add, because this will only confirm your dog's already strongly held conviction that bad things happen when scary humans are around.

The far *better* answer is, first, to prevent people from trespassing on a dog who doesn't welcome the interaction. This takes *management*. Start by managing your dog's environment so he doesn't feel the need to protect himself from humans or other scary stimuli; use leashes, baby gates, exercise pens, closed doors, and clear instructions to anyone who may come in contact with your dog. Don't do – and don't allow anyone *else* to do – the things that you know might make your dog growl, snap, or bite.

**We hope that the expression and posture of this fearful dog makes you feel like backing away, not moving forward to give her a cuddle . . . because the latter would likely result in a bite. Give fearful dogs some space, and then get to work identifying what they are so afraid of, and modifying their response to the stimuli.**



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Woody is an 8-month-old who has just begun to raise his hackles and growl when he sees new people in new settings; developmentally, this behavior is right on schedule for a fearful dog. The moment he can actually meet a person, he reverts to his dorky, friendly self – and yet, meeting people is not always an option, and who wants to meet a growly dog? This is a perfect time to use CC&D!

At a safe distance, Woody's handler starts giving him tiny, delicious treats, one after the other. In less than a minute, Woody's hair went down and he stopped growling. When Woody stopped being concerned about the stranger, it was time for the next step: to move a little closer to the stranger and repeat the process.

## NEW BEHAVIOR?

Clients who come to me with their adolescent dog who has recently started biting often tell me this is a new behavior, with no previous indication of aggression. Upon further questioning, they almost always confirm that their dog has been fearful since puppyhood – it's only the actual *biting* that's new.

The smartest owners address fearful behavior well before biting starts. The next-smartest humans seek professional assistance the first time their dog bites. And then there are those who wait until their dog has a significant bite history...

As with most behaviors, the likelihood of successful behavior modification is much greater if you start sooner rather than later. And with aggression, you're better off seeking the help of a qualified professional than trying to do it on your own. (See "Qualified Professionals to Consider for Help," page 13.)

## MODIFYING FEARFUL BEHAVIOR

There are a number of appropriate techniques for modifying fear-related aggression. Of course, none of them utilize pain, force, or fear. No shock collars, no prong collars, no alpha rolls. These are all significant stressors, and while they can sometimes succeed in shutting down behavior temporarily, they have a very high likelihood of making aggressive behaviors worse in the long run. Here are my favorite techniques for modifying fear-related aggression:

■ **STRESS-REDUCTION** – Aggression is caused by stress – not just the stress of the immediate scary thing, but any stressors in the dog's world. Every dog has a bite threshold – that point at which the stress becomes too much, and the bite happens. Stressors stack up like building blocks, pushing the dog closer and closer to that threshold until, like the straw that broke

the camel's back, the dog bites. This is also sometimes referred to as *trigger stacking*.

If you work to reduce the stressors in the dog's world, there will be fewer building blocks in her stack, moving her farther away from her bite threshold and making her less likely to bite, even when faced with a scary human.

You can reduce some stressors by getting rid of them altogether – for example, by treating medical conditions, alleviating chronic pain with medication, and throwing choke, prong, and shock collars into the garbage can. You may need to *manage* your dog's exposure to other stressors, for example, by putting your dog in the backyard while you vacuum or when your cousin drops by with her three out-of-control children. With still other stressors, you can use the methods listed below. Time to make a comprehensive list of your dog's stressors and get to work!

■ **PRIMING** – This one is simple. Priming simply means doing something fun to put your dog in a happy mood prior to encountering one or more of her stressors. It makes sense; are you better able to deal with a stressful situation if you're in a good mood going into it, or if you're already stressed out and unhappy? A game of tug or fetch, or even doing tricks or other behaviors your dog loves can help set her up for a more successful behavior modification session.

■ **COUNTER-CONDITIONING AND DESENSITIZATION (CC&D)** – This involves *changing* (countering) the dog's existing negative emotional response to a stimulus – in this case, scary humans.

You do this by presenting a human



(we'll call him Bob), standing still, at sub-threshold distance – that distance at which your dog sees Bob and is alert, aware, and only a *little* concerned. The *instant* your dog sees Bob, feed her several very high-value, pea-sized treats (my favorite for CC&D is chicken – canned, baked, boiled, or broiled). Let her look at Bob again, then feed her more chicken. In short order she is likely to glance at Bob and immediately look back at you for chicken. We call this a *Conditioned Emotional Response* (CER) and it tells you that she is now beginning to associate Bob's presence with chicken.

*Note: Continue to deliver chicken as quickly as you can; do not wait for a CER in order to feed her bits of chicken. It's Bob's presence that makes the chicken happen, not the behavior of looking at you.*

Now have Bob start moving around a little (this makes him scarier) and continue the look-feed sequence. *Very gradually* have Bob come closer by moving diagonally (not a direct, head-on approach – that is much scarier). Stop the session when things are going well (20-30 minutes is usually a good time frame).

Over time, do this with lots of different people, not just Bob. You can set yourself up with a comfy chair and your dog in a public place where people will pass by regularly at a safe, sub-threshold distance, and do look-feed every time someone walks past. As she gets happier and happier to have people around (lots of chicken!), you can *eventually* work up



to more direct approaches, and having people drop treats as they walk past.

Finally, when you are sure your dog is ready – because she seems very relaxed and happy to have people moving around her – have people start feeding her treats and carefully interacting with her. Let her come to them, and don't allow them to bend over her and rudely pat her on top of the head.

*Note: Resist the temptation to push your dog too hard, too fast, too soon. We have a saying in behavior modification, "If you think you are going too slow, slow down." Take lots of time. Err on the side of caution.*

**■ TREAT AND RETREAT** – This procedure is commonly attributed to veterinary behaviorist Dr. Ian Dunbar and/or training professional Suzanne Clothier, depending on your source.

Treat and Retreat is very simple and fun. Stand facing the scary person at sub-threshold distance with your dog on leash at your side. Have the person toss a high-value treat so it lands several inches in front of the dog. After she moves forward and eats it, have them toss a slighter lower-value treat several feet behind the dog. Repeat, *very gradually* moving the front-of-the-dog treat closer to the tosser. Do not attempt to have the tosser interact with the dog until the dog is clearly relaxed and happy and inviting interaction.

You will need to do Treat and Retreat with a variety of people to "generalize"

your dog's response and help her realize that all humans are a potential source for this wonderful game.

This process works because the dog is allowed to move away each time, so she gets relief from the pressure of moving closer to the person. If she is unwilling to move forward to eat the treat, you are asking too much of her – have the person toss the treat farther so she doesn't have to come so close.

**■ CONSTRUCTIONAL AGGRESSION TREATMENT (CAT)** – This procedure, developed by behavior professional Kellie Snider for her master's thesis at the University of North Texas, utilizes negative reinforcement – where the dog's behavior makes a bad thing go away – but in this case, the stage is set so that the dog has *good* behavior options for getting the "bad" thing to go away. CAT is more complicated than CC&D, and usually requires the assistance of an experienced behavior professional to implement it correctly.

We assume the fear-biting dog has been previously reinforced by having the scary person move away in response to any display of aggression. With CAT, the person approaches from a distance, and as soon as the person sees any sign of tension in the dog, he stops, marks the spot, and stands still. The instant the dog shows *any* signs of relaxation (a blink, a look away, sniffing, or even just relaxation in muscle tension) the person turns and walks 10-15 feet away. We

have just negatively reinforced the dog's *calm*, relaxed behavior. Pause for 15 to 20 seconds (or longer, if the dog needs more time to recover), and then have the person approach again to the same spot.

The process is repeated until the dog no longer shows any tension when the person reaches the marked spot, and then the person is directed to come a little closer – four inches to a foot or more, depending on the dog. The CAT procedure is repeated at each new distance, with the "scary" person moving closer only when the dog remains relaxed at the previous mark. She learns that calm, relaxed behavior makes scary people go away!

When all goes according to plan, because the dog is being reinforced for *calm*, *relaxed* behavior she actually *becomes* calm and relaxed, and at some point no longer feels the need to make the person go away. In fact, we often see *switchover* at some point, where the dog begins offering clear, *affiliative* signals, such as happy tail wags, play bows, and squinty eyes. She is clearly saying, "Please come closer, I'd like to get to know you!" At that point it is okay to allow her to approach the person, as long as that person understands to stay calm and not reach out to pet her, until it is crystal clear that the dog is comfortable with that.

CAT then also needs to be generalized with a variety of people until your dog decides that all humans are okay. (See "Build Better Behavior," May 2008, and "Revisiting CAT," December 2009.)

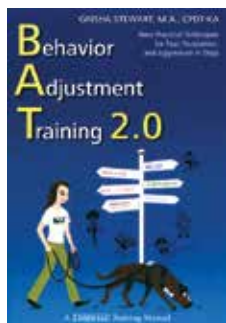


■ **BEHAVIOR ADJUSTMENT TRAINING (BAT)** – BAT also uses negative reinforcement, but the dog gets to move away from the scary human instead of the human moving away.

BAT was developed by trainer Grisha Stewart, CPDT-KA, as an alternative to the CAT procedure, which she felt had the potential to be too aversive to dogs. With the BAT procedure, the aversive stimulus (scary person) is stationary, and the fearful dog is allowed to approach the stimulus.

In the original version of BAT, the handler watches for a cut-off signal – body language that tells the handler the dog would prefer to increase distance from the scary thing, such as sniffing the ground or looking back at the handler. The handler can prompt the dog to increase distance when necessary to keep the dog below threshold (if the dog doesn't offer a signal).

Stewart has evolved the BAT process substantially since its inception in 2009, and now gives the dog even more freedom of choice in his movements by working on a long line. BAT can best be understood in its current format via Stewart's most recent book, *Behavior Adjustment Training 2.0* (Dogwise, 2016; available from [wholedogjournal.com](http://wholedogjournal.com)).



■ **MEDICATIONS** – No discussion of fear-related aggression is complete without a mention of medication. The appropriate use of psychotropic drugs can make all the quality-of-life difference in the world for a fearful dog and the humans who love her. However, few veterinarians have studied behavior! Your vet may not have a thorough understanding of the various behavior modification drugs, how they work, how to determine dosages, and which medication might be appropriate for which types of behavior – if she can even identify the behavior accurately.

When I have a canine client for whom medication might be appropriate, I urge my human client to insist that their veterinarian do a phone consult with a veterinary behaviorist for guidance in selecting the appropriate drug and dosage. While there aren't many of them (fewer than 70 in this country), most veterinary behaviorists will do phone

consults with other veterinarians at no charge, as a professional courtesy. A complete list of veterinary behaviorists in the United States can be found here: [dacvb.org/about/member-directory](http://dacvb.org/about/member-directory).

## FINDING A QUALIFIED PROFESSIONAL

The name of the game in dog training and behavior is *caveat emptor*. Because there are no legal requirements for anyone to call themselves a behavior professional, anyone can claim to be a canine behavior consultant, or even a behaviorist. Finding the right behavior professional for your dog is a hike through a tricky jungle. Even if someone has professionally valid credentials, they may not have the skills and experience your dog needs.

You would do well to research the credentials of any and all training and behavior professionals you are considering, whether they bear an impressive set of letters behind their name or not. Then interview them. Ask about their methods and philosophies. Ask for references. Find out how long they've been practicing. Make sure they have ample experience working with the level and type of canine aggression your dog is presenting. Read their website, blogs and articles to see if what they publish about their work is congruent with what they tell you.

Never, ever allow a professional to use shock, choke or prong collars, physical punishment, coercion or intimidation (such as alpha rolls) with your fear-aggressive dog (or any aggressive dog for that matter). These are all significant stressors, and while they can sometimes succeed in shutting down the behavior temporarily, they have a very high likelihood of making aggressive behaviors worse in the long run.

Commit to working only with a professional who has solid credentials, is committed to modern, science-based force-free methods, and whose personal style you are comfortable with. Dog training and behavior professionals should be as gentle and positive with their human clients as they are with their canine clients.

Despite the lack of legal requirements, the dog training and behavior profession boasts a mind-boggling panoply of

credentials – some of them more meaningful than others. On the facing page are some of the legitimate credentials and affiliations to look for, assuming you are looking for a qualified positive reinforcement-based professional.

Finally, no matter how well you have pre-screened your professional, be prepared to intervene if at any time they try to do anything with your dog that makes you uncomfortable. Trust your instincts.

## MY MOST RECENT CASES

As it turns out, neither of the two fear-aggression clients I saw last week were typical.

Poppy is a four-month-old Boxermix who has already started snapping out of fear – at an age younger than fear aggression commonly presents. Poppy's first snap was at a veterinarian. The pup had fearfully retreated from the vet's advances and was trapped under a chair in the exam room. When the vet was unable to coax her out from under the chair with treats, she decided to try to examine the puppy where she was. When she reached for a paw, Poppy snapped at her but didn't make contact. But, of course, the veterinarian wisely retreated, and Poppy was negatively reinforced. Additional snapping incidents in other circumstances followed in short order.

Coal is a six-year-old German Shepherd Dog, and while she has been fearful her whole life, she has never made any attempt to bite, until now. Her owners had gone on a five-day vacation, and while they were away the area was hit by a series of severe thunderstorms. Coal had always been anxious about storms, and the petsitter was proud that she'd gotten Coal to go outside to go potty during the thunder and lightning (whoops). When Coal's humans arrived home they found a dog who was significantly more anxious and clingy than normal, and has since snapped at humans on two separate occasions. Trigger-stacking, anyone?

Both dogs are now working in counter-conditioning protocols. Like many of my clients who use these protocols for dogs who suffer from fear-related aggression, the owners are already reporting progress. 🐾

Author Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, is WDJ's Training Editor. She and her husband Paul live in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. See page 24 for contact information.



## QUALIFIED PROFESSIONALS TO CONSIDER FOR HELP

It's most effective to hire a professional with an appropriate amount of experience and expertise in dealing with the amount of aggression your dog displays.

If a dog's aggression is not too far advanced, I recommend looking for a trainer with any of the following credentials:

The Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT) confers the titles of "Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Knowledge Assessed" (**CPDT-KA**), "Certified Professional Dog Trainer - Skills Assessed" (**CPDT-KSA**), and "Certified Behavior Consultant, Canine - Knowledge Assessed" (**CBCC-KA**) to trainers who have passed a written exam designed to test broad knowledge in the field. CPDT-KSA means the certificant has also demonstrated that they have a professional level of training skill. The CCPDT has not yet developed a skills-assessed certification for behavior consultants. CCPDT certificants are not required to use "all positive" methods, but they do agree to follow a "humane hierarchy" that puts positive methods first. You can find CCPDT certificants here: [ccpdt.org/dog-owners/certified-dog-trainer-directory](http://ccpdt.org/dog-owners/certified-dog-trainer-directory).

Jean Donaldson is a well-known trainer and teacher, and former director of the trainer academy program at the San Francisco SPCA; she now offers her own rigorous online course and credentials through the auspices of the **Jean Donaldson Academy (JDA)**. You can find JDA graduates here: <https://www.academyfordogtrainers.com/find-an-academy-trainer#>.

Karen Pryor is known as the mother of clicker training in the dog world. She offers an in-depth distance-learning program for training and behavior professionals through the **Karen Pryor Academy (KPA)**. Students work on their own, and meet from time-to-time to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and accomplishments with one of several Karen Pryor trainers. Pryor does not teach the courses herself. You can find KPA trainers here: [karenpryoracademy.com/find-a-trainer](http://karenpryoracademy.com/find-a-trainer).

Pat Miller (yes, that's me) offers academies for trainers, and confers titles with increasing levels of designation (**Pat Miller Certified Trainers, PMCTs**) as a trainer successfully completes more academies. You can find PMCTs here: [peaceablepaws.com](http://peaceablepaws.com).

The Pet Professional Guild is a membership organization committed to force-free training methods. **Pet Professional Guild Members (PPGs)** must agree not to use pain, force, or fear in their training and behavior practices, but there is no test or certification required to be a member. You can find PPG members here: [petprofessionalguild.com/PetGuildMembers](http://petprofessionalguild.com/PetGuildMembers).

### PROFESSIONALS WITH ADVANCED EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In many cases, an experienced trainer with a good education and an interest in and comfort with dogs who display aggressive behavior will be sufficient to help you. But for dogs with more severe aggressive behavior, or complex or confounding aggression, I'd look for one of the following professionals with advanced education and training in animal behavior:

**Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists (CAAB)** and **Associate Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists (ACAAB)** have advanced degrees in behavior and have met rigorous standards to obtain their credentials. Not all CAABs and ACAABs necessarily follow a positive reinforcement-based philosophy, so be sure to investigate. You can find CAABs and ACAABs here: [animalbehaviorsociety.org/web/applied-behavior-caab-directory.php](http://animalbehaviorsociety.org/web/applied-behavior-caab-directory.php).

**Veterinary Behaviorists (VBs)** are veterinarians who are board-certified in behavior. This means they have studied behavior extensively and passed rigorous testing to obtain their credentials. Not all VBs necessarily follow a positive reinforcement-based philosophy, so be sure to investigate. You can find VBs here: [dacvb.org/about/member-directory](http://dacvb.org/about/member-directory).

**Veterinary Behavior Consultant (VBC)** is not an official title or certification; these veterinarians are not (yet) board-certified in behavior but are educating themselves in animal behavior and making behavior a specialty. As there are fewer than 70 boarded Veterinary Behaviorists in the country, VBCs provide a very valuable service to augment this scarce resource. There is no official source that lists Veterinary Behavior Consultants. Try an Internet search for "veterinary behavior consultant" and (your state) to find any who might be near you.

### WHO SHOULD YOU CALL?

Mild aggression cases might involve a dog who growls and might even "air-snap," but who hasn't made contact with a person, or whose teeth touched a person but did not break the skin. For mild aggression cases, I'd consider professionals with one of the following credentials (and of course, experience and interest in aggression cases): CBCC-KA, JDA, KPA, PMCT, PPG, or VBC.

For help with a dog displaying moderate to significant aggression – a dog who has actually bitten and broken skin – I'd look for a professional with any of the following credentials: ACAAB, CAAB, PMCT 2 or 3, VB, VBC and some CBCC-KAs, JDAs, or KPAs.

For dogs with severe aggression (multiple significant bites, mauling), I'd consider only professionals with credentials ACAAB, CAAB, VB, or VBC.



# How Sweet the Sound

*How to tell if your dog is built to last, or even physically able to do the job you have in mind for him – and what to do if he's not!*

BY DENISE FLAIM

If you're not part of the dog-show world, you might think of dog shows as ridiculous beauty contests for four-leggers, only with rosetted ribbons in place of rhinestone tiaras. Admittedly, some coated breeds do use their fair share of hair spray – and even hair extensions if you're in the Poodle ring! And, because judges have different priorities – not to mention different levels of competence – there may be *some* who make their decisions based purely on cosmetic considerations like flash and showmanship. But the real point of shows is a dog's "conformation" – how he's built, and how that structure affects the way he moves and what he can do.

"He has such a beautiful prance," puppy owners will tell me, describing what they see when their dog is moving freely around their property, motoring over to check if that squirrel has dared to reinsert himself among the azaleas. In fact, the dog is likely displaying the gait I've worked hard to maintain in his breed – a smooth, efficient, ground-covering trot that Ridgebacks can ideally use all day long, whether keeping track of the family cat in the backyard or tracking a lion across the savannah in their native Zimbabwe. But I think that novice owners use (or, as the case may be, misuse) the word "prance" to describe movement that even to their untrained eye seems smooth, functional, and sound, even if they don't quite know the correct jargon for it.

No matter what the breed, the sheer soundness of a dog – the strength and balance of her overall anatomy, and how that translates kinetically in the dog's ability to move from Point A to Point B – is a huge consideration, whether the dog is trotting around a show ring or jogging

around your town accompanying you in your quest for 12,000 steps. Soundness is not just an abstract concept for breeders like me; it's an absolute goal! We want nothing more than to produce dogs who can be active throughout a lifetime without injury – and look great (and feel good) doing it.

Even the best and most responsible breeders can't absolutely predict the physical result of every genetic combination, though I assure you we try. Sadly,

not all pedigreed dogs are bred with much thought at all, and many, many dogs are the result of human neglect and mismanagement. Whether your dog is the result of a breeding that took decades of planning and anticipation, or a few moments of careless inattention, you should be aware of his degree of soundness before you plan for his canine sport career (or ask him to keep you company as you condition for your own).

If you are aware of your dog's conformation faults – his points of physical vulnerability – you can take steps to build his condition to improve or preserve as much physical strength and ability as possible. Keep in mind that preservation of his fitness is not just about winning titles in rigorous dog sports, or being able to conduct all-day searches for missing humans; in your dog's case, it may entail simply being able to jump onto your bed or sofa well into his senior years, or enjoying slow but pain-free walks around the block until the day he dies. A dog's soundness should be a goal for *every* good dog owner.

## TRAINING YOUR EYE

For all our desire to understand dogs and how best to care for them, we as a dog culture are woefully undereducated about the basics of canine anatomy and construction, and how they translate to our dogs' well being. Most of us know the very basics, for example, if you have a brachycephalic dog (one with a short head, or flattened face, like Pugs, Boston Terriers, or Pekingese), you should know not to let him overheat in hot weather. If you have a hairless dog, you will surely

**A dog show isn't simply a beauty contest: Judges are looking at the structure of the dogs to ensure they can move soundly.**





**A Rhodesian Ridgeback at the trot. Note the timing of the legs under the dog. As the front foot begins to swing forward, the rear foot is poised to replace it.**

apply sunscreen before going out on a summer outing, or put on his coat if it's the dead of winter.

But many owners are completely ignorant about their dogs' more subtle structural weaknesses, so they can't possibly factor the vulnerabilities into their dogs' activities – they don't know that the deficiencies exist in the first place. And dogs often don't give us clear signals that something is uncomfortable or painful.

A disclaimer before we begin: Every breed is different, because different purposes require different structures. While all dogs should have a basic soundness that ensures their quality of life, their construction varies depending on breed and purpose.

For example, toy breeds that were created primarily for companionship can't match the stamina of Retrievers. Similarly, Greyhounds, which are sprinters, aren't going to have the same structure as endurance trotters like Dalmatians. But even if you have a dog who was bred randomly rather than purposefully, all these same assessments apply; a sound dog is a sound dog, whether or not she has a pedigree. A dog shouldn't have to limp to give you evidence that he's not built to go the distance; if your eye has been trained to look for it, little hiccups in movement and structure can signal the potential for weakness and injuries to come, and prompt an alert owner to take steps to prevent problems.

## GAIT ANALYSIS

The way a dog is constructed reveals itself in how the dog moves, which is why dogs in the conformation show ring are evaluated both standing and moving. They are judged at the trot, despite the fact that some breeds are not natural-born trotters, because the trot is a useful and energy-saving gait. All the exertion in a trot is divided equally over all four limbs, and it's an ideal gait for traversing long distances, even if the terrain is uneven. Wild animals naturally trot when they are looking for food, and all domestic quadrupeds use the gait as well. (In old African safari books, I've even come across photos of a rhinoceros trotting as smartly as a terrier!)



The trot is a rhythmic two-beat diagonal gait, which means that the front left leg and the right rear leg move as a pair, and the front right leg and the left hind leg move together. One diagonal pair moves forward in unison while the other pair swing backward, supporting the dog's weight. As each front foot reaches its most backward swing, the rear foot on the same side should be at its most forward, dropping onto the ground in the next split second to carry the dog forward. Meanwhile, on the other side of the dog, the front and rear legs are in the opposite position, fully extended.

With most breeds, what you want is a smooth, effortless trot – nothing jarring, no interference between the feet or legs as the dog gains speed. That said, some breeds roll as they trot – in other words, you see a bit of side-to-side movement. You'll observe that in Bulldogs, for example, as well as in breeds with who carry a great deal of weight and substance, such as Neapolitan Mastiffs. Neither of those breeds were bred to be endurance trotters, though, and if you own one we hope you don't plan on taking him on 5k (or longer) runs.

Watching from the side as a dog trots can give you a wealth of information about how that dog is structured. If the dog takes short, mincing front steps, or has to lower her head in order to extend her front leg to prevent it from colliding with the rear one, you should take a closer look at her front structure. Similarly, if she reaches by extending her front leg out from the elbow instead of the shoulder

– if you see a pronounced “crack” at the elbow, instead of one relatively unbroken line from the shoulder to the toe – she is also likely not built correctly in the front end. If she is out of balance – if she is too short-bodied, or her rear is too angled for her front – then she might crab or sidewind, literally torquing her body sideways so her rear feet don't strike her front ones when she moves.

Dog breeders and handlers have evolved a number of evocative names to describe movement faults – pounding, paddling, and goose-stepping, to name a few. But the take-home message is that any imbalance or shortcoming in a dog's structure can contribute to the dog breaking down over time.

## THE REAR VIEW

In addition to circling around the ring at a trot, every dog at a dog show is asked to move away from the judge and then back again in a straight line. This “up and back” afford the judge a different view of the dog's anatomy and how it works on the move. As the dog trots away, the judge can gauge the strength of the rear assembly, and on the return trip, she can assess factors like elbow placement and whether there are any deviations from normal front movement, like toeing out (where the forefeet point outward) or paddling (in which the pasterns and feet perform an exaggerated, flipping-outward, circular movement).

As in the side view, the key is to look for smooth, effortless, balanced movement. In many breeds, especially those



**Conformation “problems” can be worked with, if you are aware of them before your dog suffers an injury. For example, you can preserve the soundness of a straight-shouldered dog by limiting the number of repetitions of jumps at agility practice – or at a minimum, limiting the jump height.**

that are bred to work in the field, the dog’s legs will naturally begin to converge on a center line as the dog gains speed and trots away. This is called single-tracking: If your dog was trotting away from you in the snow, all you would see would be one single file of tracks. (Veterinarian and structure maven Chris Zink simulates this at her seminars, dipping a demonstration dog’s feet in chalk and having him gait over the floor.)

A dog’s rear quarters are his propulsion mechanism. When a dog jumps, he naturally pushes off from his rear. So weaknesses here can have orthopedic consequences if you stretch his abilities too far.

Consider, for example, the rear pasterns (sometimes referred to as the hocks). This is the ankle area of the dog, extending from the foot up to that little round knob on the back of the joint. If the rear pasterns are so high or weak that they compromise stability, a judge can see that as the dog moves away; depending on where the weakness is, the rear pasterns might rub together, or move wide, or even wobble.

Earlier this year, one of my puppy



people brought their yearling dog to me to evaluate. Periodically, while playing hard at the dog run, Simba would come up lame. Concerned, his owners took him to the vet to have his hips checked, but all was fine there.

I suspect this was the problem: Simba had hocks that were somewhat high, and his croup (the area from the point of hip to where the tail attaches) was steeper

than the ideal, making it difficult to get his legs out from under him. Together, these conformation faults contributed to instability in his rear, which made it easier for him to injure himself roughhousing.

While we couldn’t change Simba’s conformation, we could strengthen it. I suggested hillwork: Walking up and down inclines, eventually graduating to figure eights, can help build muscles to compensate for weakness elsewhere. I also suggested core-strengthening exercises on canine-conditioning equipment like a peanut-shaped stability ball.

Lax hips weren’t Simba’s problem, but even dogs with this fault can be helped. I have a friend with a Newfoundland with less-than-ideal hips who used daily core training to help improve his stability. Building up his rear-leg muscles helped stabilize his pelvic area and made him much steadier on his feet.

## **STRAIGHT SCOOP ON SHOULDERS**

The holy grail in many breeds, especially those bred for endurance – trotting,

**Cow hocks – in which the pastern joints turn in toward one another – is a serious structural weakness in a dog that hunts by jumping to sight its prey, as the Ibizan Hound was bred to do.**



retrieving, or generally working all day – is a “good front.” The front assembly of a dog involves a number of interrelated factors, including the length and angle of the upper arm; the depth and prominence of the prosternum, or forechest, and the length and arch of the neck. And central to the soundness of a front is the placement of the shoulder blade, or scapula.

The front end of the dog experiences the most wear and tear – 60 percent of the dog’s weight is carried on the front legs. When a dog jumps, he lands on his front feet, but it’s the scapula that acts as a shock absorber, helping dissipate the concussion from that energy transmission.

The general rule is, the more sloped the scapula is, the more effective it will be at the job of shock absorption. Conversely, the straighter or more upright the shoulder, the less effective it will be, and the increased pounding will wear and tear on the dog’s structure, setting the stage for orthopedic problems down the road.

The great irony of breeders who select for good fronts in their breeding stock is that the dogs with poorer fronts are often sold as pets, whose owners may use them as performance dogs.

There is nothing you can do to change the scapula angle that your dog has – that’s genetically determined. But what you *can* do is avoid excessive wear and tear on your dog’s front whenever possible.

For example, if you have a straight-fronted dog that you want to work in agility, then think about jumps the way a dieter does calories: You want to save them up for when they really count, like at an official trial. When training,

minimize the number of jumping efforts. Agility training involves building skills, not jump height, so practice at a lower height to help minimize wear and tear.

Be aware of how much concussion you place on that front end over time. It might hone your awareness to keep some sort of record of how many jumps you ask your dog to take in a day, even if you do this for only a week or two.

## THE WHOLE DOG

Virtually every part of a dog has functional implications. Consider, for example, feet. Many of us never do. But a dog with flat, thin, splayed feet won’t be able to travel comfortably on them for long, especially over uneven or rough ground.

Torn cruciate ligaments – the most common problem treated by veterinary orthopedists, and one that has been steadily increasing in the last several decades – also appears to have a connection to canine conformation. Breeders have long suspected that the width of the stifle (also called the knee) correlates to a predisposition to torn cruciate ligaments.

A 2009 study pointed to tibial tuberosity – the protrusion on the front of the tibia to which tendons attach, suggesting that the narrower the tibial tuberosity, the greater risk of ligament rupture. Newer studies with a focus on Labrador Retrievers are focusing on hind-limb conformation and gait, and how they impact Cranial Cruciate Ligament (CCL) disease.

Even some aspects of the dog’s conformation that seem sheerly cosmetic can have effects on his health. Eyelids that are too droopy can lead to chronic redness and irritation of the conjunctiva and eye infections. Individuals of breeds

that have folding, rolling skin (like Shar Pei, Bulldogs, Pugs, and more) can have excessive skin folds that can trap moisture and bacteria, and set the stage for persistent skin infections – not to mention body odor. Dogs with crowded or crooked teeth may have trouble chewing, and their teeth may develop plaque and tartar faster than dogs with a proper bite and enough room for all their teeth.

You may not have considered the ramifications of some of your dog’s features on his long-term health, but your veterinarian might have useful insights to share. It’s worthwhile to ask whether she sees anything in your dog’s conformation that may predispose him to any particular health problems, and what you can do to prevent these.

## EDUCATING YOURSELF

The study of canine conformation is a lifetime endeavor, and not something you can master in one magazine article. But, luckily, there are plenty of resources for you to kick off a lifetime of learning. For example, veterinarian and performance enthusiast Dr. Christine Zink offers seminars that explain canine conformation and how it translates kinetically. (Visit [caninesports.com/events.html](http://caninesports.com/events.html) for a list of her upcoming seminars.) Also on the must-read list is Pat Hasting’s book, *Structure in Action: The Makings of a Durable Dog* (available from [dogfolk.com/SIAbok.htm](http://dogfolk.com/SIAbok.htm)).

Perhaps the best way to learn about canine conformation and how it impacts structure is to seek out a mentor who can literally show you what it’s all about. Many breeders and performance enthusiasts with an understanding of structure are often surprisingly happy to share their knowledge, as the adjustments you make to your dog’s fitness-building and -maintenance routines can only help him live a happier, healthier, more comfortable life. 🐾

*Denise Flaim raises 12-year-old triplets and Rhodesian Ridgebacks, on Long Island, NY.*

**Your dog doesn’t have to be a competitive athlete in order to suffer a pulled muscle or torn ligament; ordinary play at the dog park can do the job, especially if he only gets one opportunity to play like this per week. Keeping him slender and consistently active will help maintain his fitness and prevent problems.**





# Your Dog's Advocate

*Protecting your dog from physical and emotional harm requires you to be aware, alert, and proactive.*

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

**T**o advocate means to support or promote the interests of another. As a trainer, I'm always encouraging my clients to be advocates for their dogs. To me, this means putting the physical and emotional well-being of your dog before your own needs. This includes protecting your dog from injury, from other dogs, and from other people. It also means that you may need to speak up for your dog in a variety of situations; after all, your dog can't speak for herself! Also, being your dog's advocate builds trust between you and your dog. I want my dog to trust that I will only put her into situations that she can comfortably handle.

Here are some important foundation skills you need in order to promote and maintain your dog's physical and emotional well-being:

## ■ UNDERSTAND CANINE BODY LANGUAGE

Learning how dogs communicate, both with their voice and their body language, is an invaluable skill. Take the time to learn and understand the frequent signals that dogs display. It's important to learn the nuances of that language, especially as it relates to stress signals, so that you can accurately read the dog's body language and then draw a conclusion as to what your dog is feeling. Stress develops from an inability to cope with a current situation. By understanding and observing your dog's body language, you'll know when to intervene or how to change the environment to reduce your dog's stress.

Make sure you look at the dog's entire body, as individual signals have different meanings depending on the context of the situation. Begin first by observing and noting each individual signal you see the dog display. Once you've noted the signals, you're better able to draw a conclusion as to whether it's a stressful situation for the dog. Breed

characteristics can complicate the dog's message, as can docking of tails and/or ears, so please also take these into consideration.

*For more information about how dogs communicate, see "Understanding Canine Language," WDJ August 2011, and Canine Body Language: A Photographic Guide, by Brenda Aloff (Dogwise, 2005).*

## ■ DEVELOP SITUATIONAL AWARENESS

Whenever I am with my dog, her well-being comes first. With my dog, I'm scanning the environment for things that could adversely affect my dog, so I can change direction or adapt appropriately to protect her.

It's not unlike walking with a small child through a crowded street fair; you need to steer clear of strange (stressed!) dogs, people who have had too many alcoholic beverages, broken glass on the street, and so on, all the while pointing out the beautiful handicrafts for sale, the talented juggler, the aroma of delicious food, the harmonious music being played by an enthusiastic band . . . I'm not saying you should be trying to create an inauthentic world for your dog (or toddler) – just that you, as the adult member of the team, have a responsibility

to filter your dog's experience of the world so that she isn't unnecessarily traumatized by things that are beyond her ability to comprehend or absorb.

## ■ MANAGE YOUR DOG'S STRESS

There's not one of us who hasn't passed the tipping point of our own stress threshold. Imagine this scenario: You get up late. You have a flat tire on the way to work. Your boss makes a snide comment when you enter the office. When you get home that evening, your significant other is fussy about something you forgot to do days ago. That's enough to make any of us to lose our good humor!

Multiple stressors can compound the stress your dog feels, too. As you understand dog body language, you'll begin to see how different situations may affect your dog. Is she happy? Is she uncomfortable? Is she scared? As your dog's advocate you may need to intervene or change the environment to help your dog.

Here are five things you can do to help your dog be more comfortable in a specific situation:

- Assess the situation. Look around and attempt to determine the stressor or stressors that are causing your dog to feel uncomfortable.



**Author/trainer Lisa Lyle Waggoner practices "situational awareness" when walking her dog, Willow. She scans for hazards (snakes, loose dogs, rabbits that may pop up and run, tempting Willow to give chase, etc). She also watches Willow for signs of stress or discomfort.**

PHOTO BY BONITA ASH, ASHFORDSTUDIO.COM



A crowded street fair, an inattentive owner, a painful collar, a powerful dog, a stranger's rude petting (on top of head), a small child being pushed toward the dog (at face-to-face level) . . . what could possibly go wrong? None of the adult humans are advocating well for the innocent parties (the dog and the girl).

- Increase distance between your dog and the perceived threat. Sometimes distance alone will help your dog become more comfortable.
- Be prepared to remove your dog from the situation if increasing distance didn't help. Don't be tempted to make the dog endure an uncomfortable environment. Doing so can increase stress and also exacerbate the dog's behavior.
- Change your dog's opinion about the thing that made her uncomfortable. Perhaps it's a small child and the dog hasn't been around children. Instead of a dog thinking, "A child is a scary thing!" you want her to think, "A child is a good thing!" Counter-conditioning and desensitization is the appropriate way to accomplish this and is very effective when implemented slowly and consistently over time.
- If you feel you're in over your head, call a dog behavior professional who is skilled in positive techniques to modify canine behavior.

For more about managing a fearful dog's stress, see "Fear Aggression," page 11 of this issue for more information.

## PUTTING ADVOCACY INTO PRACTICE

Now that you have an understanding of the foundation skills, let's look at the various places to use them:

### ■ AT HOME

No dog should have to be fearful or apprehensive in his or her own home. As my dog's advocate, I have learned to offer a polite "no" response to well-meaning friends who ask if their dog can accompany them to our home. Not all dogs immediately enjoy an interloper in their own home and it's much more fun to visit with my friends without worrying



about how our dogs get along. Besides, we have cats in our house, so I don't trust unknown dogs around our furry felines.

Turnabout is fair play; even if your dog has always interacted well with new, unknown dogs, you should leave your dog at home when visiting the homes of friends or relatives who have pets. Why stress your friends' or relatives' dogs in their own homes? They may not respond well, which would be unfortunate for them and your dog.

If you have dogs (or cats and other pets) who don't get along well, you may have to make some difficult decisions about whether they should live together or not – or, at a minimum, take dramatic steps to stringently manage the flow of traffic in your home so they don't have any opportunities to harm or terrorize each other. No one should have to live in fear in their own homes, either. As much as it would pain you to miss them, consider rehoming whichever pet or pets have the best capacity for a happy life elsewhere.

For more about the potential need to rehome a dog, see "Multi-Dog Household Aggression," WDJ April 2010.

I have such appreciation for those who foster dogs. But if you decide to become a foster home for a needy dog, please keep in mind that your ultimate responsibility is to ensure the comfort and safety of the current dog or dogs

already in your home. A constant flow of new dogs in and out of a home can be extremely stressful to family dogs. I've seen more than a few family dogs develop stress-related behavior issues because of the barrage of new dogs coming and going. As your dog's advocate, carefully consider if fostering is right for you and your dog.

Your dog should also be comfortable and safe from being hurt or scared by other humans in the house. Young children, teenagers, spouses, and elderly parents should be taught to be kind to and respectful of the dog. If anyone in the home can't be trusted to be as protective of the dog as you are, then their interactions with the dog should be supervised, or the dog kept somewhere she can be safe from harassment when you are not there to supervise.

For more information about managing life with kids and dogs, see "How to Teach Kids and Dogs to Get Along From an Early Age," WDJ May 2012, and Living with Kids and Dogs Without Losing Your Mind, by Colleen Pelar (Dream Dog Productions, 2012).

### ■ PARADES, PARTIES AND OUTDOOR GATHERINGS

While we may enjoy having our canine companions accompany us, many dogs aren't comfortable at loud events unless they have been appropriately conditioned

to enjoy the variety of sights and sounds at events like parades. If you're unsure how your dog will enjoy a specific event, leave her in the safety and comfort of your own home or be prepared to create as much distance as necessary for your dog to feel comfortable. You may even need to leave the event.

Even when you've implemented the best training you know how, things can go awry. After four years of training and socialization with my dog, Willow, who had proven to very comfortable at a variety of loud outdoor dog sport and other public events, I felt she was ready to accompany me to one of our local, small-town parades. I armed myself with her favorite treats so that I could use the food, as necessary, to pair any new and unusual sights and sounds. I was thinking about marching bands, riders on horses – perhaps a fire truck!

Well, I hadn't considered the possibility of a dune buggy club and 20-plus loud vehicles with their motors revving! As this parade entry grew closer, Willow began to panic and pull me away from the noise. We retreated 30 or 40 feet – but that was still much too close. When I offered her a treat, she looked away from me. My very food-motivated dog had stress anorexia! As her advocate, I needed to retreat with her to a more comfortable distance – which turned out to be a couple of blocks away, where we could sit together and observe the parade while enjoying yummy treats.

As much as you want to enjoy the event you are attending with your dog, if she's having a bad time, prioritize her experience over yours. You may be sad to miss what you went to see – for example, getting to watch your neighbor's kids in the marching band – but, trust me, you will be far happier if you don't have to spend the rest of your dog's life counter-conditioning her to get over (as just one possibility) her new fear of loud vehicles.

## ■ VET VISITS

Willow was always over her stress threshold within moments of walking in the front door of our former veterinarian's office. When she came into our home as a puppy, I was determined to positively condition her to not only like, but love, the vet. Unfortunately, a chronic urinary tract infection that persisted for more than six months, despite treatment, caused her intense fear of that particular vet practice.

Because it's easier to help a dog develop a positive association with a new location versus changing a negative association with a known location, I decided to switch vet offices. Willow is now comfortable going to see her new vet – especially because the new veterinarian also uses low-stress handling techniques! (See “*Less Stressful Veterinary Visits*,” *WDJ March 2010*.)

Few owners recognize signs that their dogs are stressed at the vet. By learning dog body language, you'll be prepared to recognize stress in your dog at the vet and make the appropriate adjustments.

Observe the waiting room before you enter. Position yourself so that your dog has sufficient space. Take toys or food to keep your dog busy – and speak up if you feel your dog isn't comfortable with a certain vet-handling technique!

Willow is more comfortable with me than the vet tech when restraint is needed for a blood draw. I ask to have the blood drawn in the treatment room rather than the back of the vet practice, or I ask to accompany her to the back where I can be the one to hold her. Explain your concerns to the veterinarian; she may suggest keeping the dog in the room with you petting your dog's head while the tech restrains her.

You can also be proactive in training your dog to enjoy body handling, as well as getting your dog comfortable with restraint, a collar hold (if you have to remove the leash) and even a muzzle. If your dog has already learned to “love” a muzzle, it will be one less moment of stress should a vet need to use one.

## ■ SAFE AT SCHOOL

It's important to help our dogs learn to navigate in our weird human world. One helpful way to further her experience and education is to enroll in a positive training class with your dog. You'll learn how to appropriately familiarize her with the variety of sights and sounds she will encounter in her life with you, and you'll learn how to teach your dog good manners both inside and outside of your home. Training classes should be fun, effective, and build trust between you and your dog that enriches the bond between you.

There are many training classes and workshops available today, however, not all of them provide positive experiences for the enrollees. Please do the research to find a force-free, positive training class

where the focus is on teaching the dog what to do, rather than on punishing unwanted behaviors. Interview the trainer and ask probing questions about the exercises that will be taught and what techniques and methods will be used.

If something doesn't sound right or raises concerns, look for another trainer who will not only have your dog's best interest in mind, but also listen to and address any concerns you may have along the way. And don't ever use a training technique on your dog just because the trainer said to do so. You are your dog's advocate. If you're not comfortable with the situation, you have the right to say, “No, thank you.”

Workshops provide another educational opportunity for you and your dog. Unlike group classes, where a dog has the ability to become accustomed to the new environment throughout the length of the class (normally six to seven weeks), workshops are usually one or two days. A workshop environment with many handlers and dogs can be overwhelming. Some dogs adjust quickly, others may take a few hours, and others may not be able to adjust in the time allotted.

If your dog grows increasingly stressed in a workshop environment, as your dog's advocate, it's better to pack up and leave than force her to endure more than she can handle. Once your dog is secure and happy at home, you can return to the workshop and observe and learn without the worry of an uncomfortable dog at your side.

## USE YOUR VOICE FOR HER

When you bring a dog into your home, you're committing to a 10- to 15-year relationship with an amazing and wonderful creature who doesn't have the ability to verbally speak and say “no.” It's up to you, as your dog's advocate, to ensure her well-being. 🐾

*A passionate advocate for humane, science-based dog training, Lisa Lyle Waggoner is a CPDT-KA, a Certified Separation Anxiety Trainer, a Pat Miller Certified Trainer-Level 2, and a dog\*tec Dog Walking Academy Instructor. She is the founder of Cold Nose College in Murphy, North Carolina, with additional locations in Georgia and Florida. Lisa provides behavior consulting and training solutions to clients in the tri-state area of North Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee. See “Resources,” page 24, for contact information.*



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❖ **Pat Miller**, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, Peaceable Paws Dog and Puppy Training, Fairplay, MD. Group and private training, rally, behavior modification, workshops, intern and apprentice programs. Trainers can become "Pat Miller Certified Trainers" (PMCT) by successfully completing Pat's Level 1 (Basic Dog Training and Behavior) and both Level 2 Academies (Behavior Modification and Instructors Course). (301) 582-9420; [peaceablepaws.com](http://peaceablepaws.com)

❖ **Lisa Lyle Waggoner**, CSAT, CPDT-KA, PMCT2, Cold Nose College, Murphy, NC. Force-free, humane training. Private in-home training, separation-anxiety training, behavior consults, weekend workshops, and dog\*tec's Professional Dog Walking Academy. Additional locations in Atlanta and the Space Coast of Florida. Facebook at

LisaLyleWaggoner; Twitter @ColdNoseCollege. (828) 644-9148; [coldnosecollege.com](http://coldnosecollege.com)

**BOOKS AND DVDS**

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

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



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