

The Whole Dog Journal™



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A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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

EDITORIAL OFFICE

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

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

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

REPRINTS

For price quote, contact
Jennifer Jimolka at (203) 857-3144
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Jocelyn Donnellon, (203) 857-3100

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Readiness

Things you should never be without.

BY NANCY KERNS

A few weeks ago, I spent a couple days in the San Francisco Bay area. I had a dog-food related meeting with some pet supply store representatives, and was taking photos for articles and our annual calendar. I brought my adolescent pit-mix, Woody, and stayed at the home of a friend. On my last night there, my son and his dog came over and joined us for dinner (my son is good friends with my friend's twin sons). After dinner, we took both of our dogs for a walk around the quiet suburban neighborhood. It was around 11 p.m., a beautiful warm night. We were walking in the middle of the dead-end street, with both of our dogs off-leash, when my son's dog suddenly darted into some bushes, and then, almost as quickly, ran back out, sneezing. And then the skunk smell hit us like a cloud of tear gas.

Going shopping for a couple of quarts of peroxide at 11 o'clock at night is not fun – and it just makes bathing the dog outdoors even later. It was well after midnight by the time Cole was mostly odor-free, and we (Cole, my son, my friends, and me) were all tired, and we all had to get up early to work the next day.

Peroxide is one of those things that every dog owner should have on a shelf somewhere. The recipe for the absolute best anti-skunk-spray remedy is a mix of a quart of fresh hydrogen peroxide (the regular 3% kind), a quarter-cup of baking soda, and a small squirt of dishwashing liquid. You have to mix it fresh in a bowl or bucket; it can't be stored. But as long as you don't wet the dog with anything else first, it completely neutralizes the "thiols" in the skunk spray – the substance that stinks. But you must *NOT* wet the dog with water (or tomato juice, or anything else) first; it's the chemical reaction between the fresh skunk spray and the formula that eliminates the stink. If you alter the chemistry, it doesn't work nearly as well.

Take care not to get this in the dog's eyes, as it stings. Wash the dog with shampoo (or at least rinse him with water) afterward, and you will be amazed; the smell will be *gone*. And as long as you had the peroxide on hand

ahead of time, you won't have had to put your stinky, greasy dog in your car or home while you went to buy the peroxide, and he won't have had the chance to rub the smell all over your upholstery.

Having peroxide on hand is also a great idea in case you *just* discovered your dog ate something he shouldn't have. Again, time is of the essence. Having to send someone to the store might cause enough of a delay to contraindicate the induction of vomiting. (See "How to Make Your Dog Throw Up," WDJ January 2014, for complete directions.)

Speaking of dietary indiscretions, having plain canned pumpkin on hand at all times is another good idea. On another trip to the Bay area and after a trip to the beach with my son and his dog, my pup Woody pooped a small sand castle, with a great deal of discomfort (as you can imagine). It seemed he swallowed a lot of sand while playing with and fetching tennis balls at the beach, which gave him a significant tummy ache and a reluctance to defecate for a day or two. Feeding him pumpkin several times a day for a few days seemed to help sweep the sand through his system, just as it can help push other indigestible objects through the dog's digestive tract.

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.



🐾 PRODUCT REVIEW 🐾

Winter Dog Boots

Results of our test of boots from four companies that specialize in rugged dog gear.

BY KATHRYN SOCIE-DUNNING

On a beautiful, sunny winter's day in the Absaroka-Beartooths near Yellowstone National Park in Montana, I'm out cross-country skiing with my two young dogs, swishing through miles of gorgeous, fluffy snow. The dogs romp happily for hours in temps just barely in the teens. As we turn the final corner to reach the truck, we hit a patch of wind-hardened snow, and they both start punching through the crust every few steps and sinking down. I wince at the sound, worrying over torn-up feet and sore muscles from all the wonky, uneven stepping. Searching my pack for my keys, I watch as my Collie starts holding a paw painfully in the air. At quick glance, it looks like a pad is cracked either from the post-holing, the cold, or a combination of both.

After we arrive home and are sitting fireside, they doze off while I examine them for injuries from the day's adventure, rubbing my favorite paw treatment (Paw Pudding from thescentproject.com) into their winter-weary pads. And I start to think about ways to better safeguard their feet when we're out in harsh winter conditions, realizing it was time to do some research on boots.

When you ask someone why they wear winter boots, chances are that "warmth" will be the answer. It should come as no surprise, that this is also the reason most people consider boots for their dogs. But dogs have a physiological advantage over us in this arena.

Research from Hiroyoshi Ninomiya, a professor at Yamazaki Gakuen University in Tokyo, found that domestic dogs

If your dog's boots are properly sized and you've put them on properly, he should be able to do everything he can do without boots, and even *more* than he can do bootless when covering ground that's covered with snow, ice, broken glass, hot pavement, or sharp rocks or thorns.

have a counter-current heat exchange system in their paws, much like penguins in the Antarctic have in their wings (Ninomiya et al 2011). Veins surround the arteries that deliver warm blood to a dog's paws and, due to their close proximity, warm arteries heat cooler veins. As a result, the temperature in the paw stays balanced. This adaptation is found in the feet, fins, and flippers of a range of species living in cold environments and explains how most of our canine companions are able to walk barefoot comfortably across snow while we, their naked-ape counterparts, find it horrifically painful.

Many dog-boot naysayers cite this as a primary reason not to bother with boots. This assumes two falsehoods, however: First, that all dog breeds are equally gifted with naturally cold-hardy paws. Almost all of us have met a dog that missed out on the full benefits of this nifty trait; domestication gives rise to wide variation between breeds. Second, that warmth is the only purpose to use boots.

As those working alongside canine athletes will attest, when you are in the field, on the job, or competing together, there's no substitute for ongoing aware-

ness of your dog's physical condition – and his paws are top priority.

For sled dogs, the most common injuries they encounter are foot ailments caused by breaking through crusty, icy snow, and the accumulation of snow around the pad of the foot and between the toes. Boots are mandatory gear for races like the Iditarod, and mushers view them as an important tool for the prevention of splits in the webbing of the foot or cracks in the paw pads.

If your four-legged sidekick is a hard-charging Pointer out winter bird hunting, say, snow-abraded pads may not even slow her down the day the injury occurs, but will likely have some tender-footed consequences the following morning. Monitoring feet for the first sign of injury and using boots to protect these from worsening is a top recommendation to keep a bird dog active in the field.

“Once a paw is hurt, a dog can be out healing for two days or two weeks,” says Heath Smith, Program Director for Conservation Canines, an organization that trains and fields dog/handler teams to detect endangered species or their sign around the globe. “Boots are the first line of defense, protecting feet as they get scraped up in the hard snow in winter or walk across hot granite or lava rock in summer. When we are working in these rough conditions, we rely on boots to protect our dogs' feet from these extremes so they can continue doing what they love.”

Using boots for warmth, it seems, takes a back seat to injury care and prevention to the ever-important paws for an active dog in the winter months.

Even if you and your dog are just fresh off the couch, preparing to venture out for a stroll on the mean freshly salted city streets in winter, a boot can provide your dog the protection and stability needed to enjoy the outing when temperatures drop and ice and snow accumulate. And you will look for the same qualities in a boot whether you are walking a half-mile on a city street or skiing 20 miles in the mountains.

TOP PICKS

I spoke to veterinarians, mushers, skijorers, hunters, detection dog handlers, and members of an urban dog club to find out what they look for in a winter dog boot and why. They educated me on the most important characteristics of a good dog boot:

■ **DURABILITY** – If you are like me, boots are that piece of gear you know you'll only use occasionally and so expect them to last many years. I looked for a good rubber sole to provide stability on slick surfaces and protect paws from the harsh elements. I also wanted a boot that is constructed to withstand the test of time without being excessively bulky.

■ FLEXIBILITY AND COMFORT

– Dog boots need to be supple and flexible, especially at the dogs' wrists and ankles. There are a surprising number of dog boots on the market that are stiff throughout, rising high on the leg, with a lot of straps to keep the boot in place, which can hinder movement and provides ample opportunity for a boot to do more damage to a foot than the elements! The best boots are *not* stiff.

Comfort is ultimately a matter of your dog's personal preference and conformation, but, in general, look for boots with as little bulk as possible. Seams, zippers, and patches of hook-and-loop material (such as Velcro) should be minimal, and nothing should feel rough on the inside of the boot. Anything that protrudes on the inside of the boot can cause sores on the dog's foot or leg.

■ **VISIBILITY** – Your dog will throw a boot. Guaranteed. Most likely during a blinding windy blizzard when you are in a hurry and lack both time and patience to go searching for a dog boot that's run amok. In the darkness of winter, a black boot with a black sole will likely end up lost forever. Neon colors may not look becoming on your dog, but sometimes frugality eclipses aesthetics.

TOP PRODUCTS

The following four products were repeatedly recommended, so I bought a set of each and subjected them to months of testing.

I recruited Mingu, “The Goose,” my 2-year-old Smooth-coated Collie to help me put these boots through their paces. As a vociferous protester of all matters that involve the handling of his feet, The Goose was the perfect candidate to teach me some tricks to help the most boot-reluctant dog accept wearing these awkward (at first) accoutrements.

Here's how each of the products met our selection criteria and performed during tests over the past few months:



■ RUFFWEAR'S POLAR TREX WINTER DOG BOOTS

This boot has a rugged Vibram outsole providing exceptional traction and paw protection from sharp, crusty snow and pretty much anything you could possibly encounter. I have to confess that finding Vibram soles (the durable rubber found on mountaineering boots) on a dog boot elicited some eye-rolling; it just seemed totally absurd to me. Listening to the handlers at Conservation Canines (whose dogs are heavy users of Ruffwear boots) talk about the extreme hot and cold, snowy, icy conditions in which their dogs have used those boots year after year, and how well the soles survived – well, I changed my tune. Those Vibram soles are durability champs.

The 2016 Polar Trex is built much like Ruffwear's popular Grip Trex boot with the addition of a zip-up low gaiter to keep snow out of the boot and a soft-shell upper that is weather resistant and breathable. It's technical and durable without a lot of bulk. I'm dubious that the gaiter will successfully keep snow out, so I will likely seal the top with Vetrap, just to be doubly sure.

The boots have a lot of give, they flex easily, and have a soft liner, but it took some maneuvering to figure out how to cinch the hook-and-loop closure without the seams rubbing on The Goose's leg. He threw a few boots, shaking them off in a fit, until I figured out what the problem was; this was an operator error, for sure. For him, adding a sock to the ensemble and some cinching awareness was all it took to get him up and running happily.

As far as visibility goes, I found that the boots I tested, moss green with a turquoise sole, showed up well on snow-covered ground, but disappeared a bit too easily in the grass.

Ruffwear offers these boots in eight sizes, increasing the odds that a dog owner will be able to find a size with just the right fit for her dog. See the company's boot fit guide (which has sizing instructions for all of Ruffwear's boots, not just the Polar Trex) at ruffwear.com/dog-boots-fit-guide. A set of four retails for \$100.

● **SUMMARY:** Ruffwear's Polar Trex boots are WDJ's top pick for use on big winter adventures with your dog. They'd be perfect for excursions in snowy, cold, icy, blustery days in the mountains, and are the best candidates among those we tested for hiking in deep or crusty snow.

■ HURTTA'S OUTBACK DOG BOOTS

With a soft, pliable rubber sole, the Hurтта Outback boots provide less traction and paw protection than Ruffwear's Polar Trex boots, but they definitely still get the job done. These soles may not last as long as the Vibram soles on the Ruffwear boots, but if you aren't trekking through the Rockies every weekend, your dog may not need require this level of durability.

The boots flex freely and easily and have a soft liner. The hook-and-loop fasteners that close and tighten the boots are perfectly placed, and are constructed so they don't rub the dogs' feet. The Goose was up and running in these boots almost immediately and never once tried to flick them off. These were definitely a big hit for him from the very beginning.



BOOTING YOUR DOG



"A garment affixed to my foot! I've never experienced such a thing! How wonderful! Please . . . put them on ALL my feet!" – said no dog ever.

Your dog is unlikely to be *happy* the first time you put boots on him, but if you go about the process slowly, with lots of positive reinforcement for his cooperation – and without forcing the issue or making him wear the boots for too long at first – he will soon adjust and accept the protective footwear.

My Collie's frenetic foot-handling phobia was cured when drops of bacon-flavored Cheez Whiz began falling from the sky. With this magic potion, I was able to slowly, peacefully, and with only minimal protest, introduce him to wearing boots. It took just 10 minutes every day for a week.

While showering him with Cheez Whiz, I'd put boots on his front feet, then we'd run around and play for about five minutes. Then I'd take them off and put them on his back feet, following the same routine.

It took four days of this before The Goose would move normally with the boots on both the front and back feet. Then and only then did I put boots on all four of his feet, during a hailstorm of Cheez Whiz.

We did this for three days in a row, with no single boot session lasting more than 10 minutes or so. It took about an hour total, over the space of a week, to help him understand that boots aren't so bad after all. Now, he's happy getting booted – but I still bring the Cheez Whiz.

Hurтта's Outback Dog Boots have a simple design, a highly flexible sole, and are extremely lightweight. They were our test dog's favorite; he didn't try to flick them off even once.

Their super-light weight and great flexibility made these the perfect boot to help him adjust to the idea of being booted.

These black and gray boots would be nearly impossible to locate in the dark, but they do have 3M reflective piping, which helps if you scan the ground with a headlamp or flashlight. The reflective material could also help a driver spot your dog from a great distance if you were walking on a road or sidewalk in the dark.

The boots are available in five sizes, from Small to XX Large. For sizing instructions, see hurtta.com/EN/SizeTracker/Outback%20Boots. They are sold in pairs, as the company says you might need one size for the front paws and a different size for the back paws. They retail for about \$30 per pair.

● **SUMMARY: Hurtta's Outback Dog Boots are great all-around winter boots.** They will serve your dog well on longer hikes or shorter walks around the 'hood.

■ KURGO'S STEP-N-STROBE DOG SHOES

The thick rubber outsoles on these boots provide traction and paw protection, but they are a bit heavy and bulky; it took my faithful test dog some time to adjust to them – and I have to admit that he was never perfectly comfortable with them on. While they have what seemed to *me* to be sufficient flex, they are the stiffest of the boots that I tested on The Goose. Every time I put the boots on him, he would stand frozen for a bit, seemingly unsure if he could even pick up his newly weighed-down feet.

That said, the seams inside the boot are soft, and didn't rub at all on shorter excursions;



Kurgo's Step-n-Strobe boots were decidedly not our test dog's favorites, but if night-time visibility is important to you, these are the best choice.

given The Goose's discomfort with these boots, I limited his time in them to less than an hour on each outing, so I can't actually testify that they wouldn't rub on a longer hike. The well-placed hook-and-loop closure and ankle cord kept this boot securely on without irritation.

When it comes to the visibility of a lost boot, being a bit bulkier is a benefit. The yellow-orange color makes these easier to spot as well, and they have reflective panels, which is another bonus for spotting a stray boot with a flashlight in the dark.

The "strobe" in the name of the product refers to little lights in the boots (similar to the ones seen in shoes for toddlers) that flash as the dog's feet strike the ground. They are powered by tiny batteries, which the company describes as "long-lasting sealed batteries for water-resistant activity." The batteries are not replaceable but are covered for one year from the date of original purchase.

The lights on the left side of the dog flash red, and the ones on the right side flash green, which theoretically informs you about the direction of the dog's travel. Sailors and aviators would get it immediately, as the red and green lights on boats and planes are similarly situated, but it wasn't intuitive to me, so I didn't find it that useful – and this part of the boot is difficult to see if you are in a grassy, rocky, or snowy area. It was, however, noticed by the driver of a car when we were walking across a street, as the driver kindly informed me, "Love those light-up shoes!"

The Step-n-Strobe boots are sold for \$60 for a set of four. They come in six sizes, from XX Small to X Large. See kurgo.com/outdoor-gear/step-n-strobe-dog-shoes/ for sizing instructions.

● **SUMMARY: Kurgo's Step-n-Strobe boots would be our top pick for situations where nighttime visibility is a concern.**

If most of your winter adventures take place before or after work and in town, these are worth considering, given their reflective patches and blinking lights on the sides.



■ ULTRA PAWS' RUGGED DOG BOOTS

The outsoles on these boots are soft and pliable, and provide just enough traction to prevent slipping on icy concrete or wood or linoleum flooring. Mountaineer-grade soles aren't needed in town, but your dog will appreciate the light rubber layer these outsoles put between his paw pads and salt and other hazards on the sidewalk.

As far as flexibility goes, these are highly pliable boots with good padding at the top where the hook-and-loop closure cinches. The Goose was distracted by something about the boots at first, and, after some trial and error, I discovered the seams on the inside of the boot were the culprit. With a sock, he was happy to wear these and moved comfortably, but I'd suggest paying close attention to make sure the seams are not irritating the sides of your dog's paws, and would use these boots for light excursions only.

I purchased the all-black version of these boots, but I'd recommend getting the boots in red instead, even if your dog wears these only in the house (for traction), to help you find any boot that goes astray. Someday I'll find the runaway boot in hiding in my house or yard, but months later it still hasn't turned up.

Ultra Paws Rugged Dog Boots are sold as a set of four for about \$38 (we found a lot of variation in price among online retailers). They are available in four sizes, from Small to X Large. See ultrapaws.com/ultra-paws-rugged-dog-boots/ for sizing information.

● **SUMMARY: The Ultra Paws Rugged Dog Boots are the most affordable option for protecting your dog's feet from the elements (including salt and de-icing chemicals) on shorter winter outings on roads and sidewalks.**

FINAL THOUGHTS

Should you lose a boot, don't despair. Each of these boot varieties can be purchased in singles. (That is, of course, assuming the style you purchased is still in production when you need it.)

I learned a lot while discussing dog boots with regular boot users, and enjoyed the opportunity to test all of these products. It was well worth the effort to do the research, learn the steps necessary to get a dog adjusted to wearing boots and, ultimately, incorporate this valuable tool into my dog gear.

Whether it's the rough, crusty snow and sub-zero temperatures of winter or sweltering hot asphalt of summer, dog boots are incredibly useful to keep active dogs on their feet and outside. They are essential equipment for working dogs in hazardous environments, such as search and rescue dogs in collapsed buildings. And they are invaluable when a paw injury needs protection to heal and to help a mobility-challenged senior dog safely navigate slippery floors. Cheers to healthy paws! 🐾

Kathryn Socie-Dunning lives with her husband and two dogs in Montana, where they have ample opportunities to field-test mountain gear.



PRO TIPS FOR BEST WEAR

Do everything you can to get boots that are the right size for your dog; if your dog falls close to the border between sizes, order both and return the ones that don't fit. If they seem too big or too small, walking in them for any length of time can do real damage to his feet, or aggravate any already sore muscles or fragile tendons and ligaments he may have.

In some cases, even with a good fit, you have to do a bit of extra work to protect your dog's feet from his boots, just like you might have to with your own hiking boots. People who use dog boots daily in the winter use the following techniques to make sure their dogs are comfortable:

- ✓ **WRAP IT UP:** Securing the top of each boot with a length of Vetrap (or any other brand of self-adherent, stretchy bandage, available from better pet supply stores or online) holds the boot in place and seals the top of the boot to prevent snow, dirt and rocks from getting inside.



- ✓ **DEWCLAW CONSIDERATIONS:** I wrapped non-adhesive moleskin around the leg, placing it under each dewclaw and securing it with a short piece of Vetrap. Cotton padding (the kind that comes in a roll and can be torn off in pieces) could be used instead, but I opted for a slightly thicker material after a few enthusiastic rounds of romping in boots started to show some wear on the cotton.

- ✓ **PADDED ACCOUNT:** Several heavy users of dog boots recommended putting cotton between my dog's paw pads to help prevent chafing. My Collie was against this entirely and refused to move with cotton-padded feet, so for now we're skipping this step.

- ✓ **SOCK OPTIONS:** For day-long adventures, using socks or boot liners can help prevent chafing and keep dewclaws (if your dog has them) in place. I used baby socks, which worked well. Ruffwear is the only maker of dog boots that also sells boot liners (\$15 for a set of four Bark'n Boot boot liners; see ruffwear.com/Barkn-Boot-Liners). Note that the online reviews from users of the boot liners are decidedly mixed. They seem to work great for some dogs and irritate others.

Even with baby socks or the Bark'n Boot boot liners, I saw early signs of wear, so I used the moleskin wrap (described above) *and* the socks or liners with a better result. I highly recommend wrapping the top of the sock with Vetrap, too; it's the final step that keeps dirt, pebbles, and snow out of the boots. Nothing is worse than a rock in your shoe!

Finally, just remember to keep a close eye on your dog while he's wearing boots. Check frequently to make sure they are in position, not slipping or twisted. If your dog lies down, or holds up or favors a booted paw, stop immediately and check to see if the boot has moved out of position or chafed.

Dog House Beautiful

Fuss-free decorating helps keep you and your furry friends comfortable, happy, and healthy.

BY LISA LYLE WAGGONER, CPDT-KA, PMCT-2, CSAT

My husband Brad and I like to think we keep a pretty clean house, but sometimes we're amazed at how much hair and dirt surround us. We're not fastidious about housecleaning, but we do try to keep things relatively hair- and dirt-free and neat – “try” being the operative word. As we're making the bed, sweeping the kitchen floor, or vacuuming the carpet, there's proof positive of the fact that we live with two Australian Shepherds and two furry felines.

All that hair and dirt around our small country home serve to remind us that 1) we adore our dogs and cats and wouldn't want to live without them; and 2) we're happy that we decided to make life easier by choosing fabrics, flooring, and furniture that works well with our pets. Not having to worry about our dogs or cats “ruining” something in our home provides great peace of mind!

Here's a glimpse into how and why we've made decorating decisions that work well for us and our animals.

CAREFREE DECORATING

I can't remember exactly when Brad and I first began talking about “decorating around our animals” – it was probably about 14 or 15 years ago. I believe it started when we were attempting to find a solution to keep our cats from using the front of the upholstered sofa's arms as a scratching post. We had numerous cat scratching posts and other items we defined as “legal scratching items,” but the arms of the sofa were much preferred by our furry felines. Our solution was to

This is lovely but *not* dog-friendly décor. Many dogs (senior dogs in particular) struggle with slick floors – it's no wonder the dog looks uncomfortable. Also, though white sofas and dogs don't generally mix well, at least that's a white leather sofa, which can be wiped clean with a damp cloth.

buy a Mission-style futon with a wooden frame so that the arms wouldn't be optimum scratching areas.

It worked beautifully. The cats moved to using items around our home that we considered “legal.” Lest they consider the futon cover as an alternative scratching surface, we chose a faux-leather cover that wouldn't show damage even if scratched, and it certainly wouldn't pull or run as many materials will do. Happy humans, happy cats.

Fast forward to today, and I'd say our house looks comfortably lived in, and the hair from natural shedding and the dirt that inevitably follows the dogs and cats inside is easily washed off or vacuumed up in no time. We've selected only flooring, fabrics, and furniture that

are comfortable for us and our animals, resistant to scratches, easy to clean, and that don't show the inevitable pet hair.

Remember that no matter your chosen style of décor, if you're striving for “fuss-free” decorating, no matter the item (flooring, furniture, fabrics, etc.), it's nice to keep the following in mind: scratch resistance, damage resistance, comfort for your pet, and comfort for you. Here's what we've found works well for us, and some ideas for what might work for you in your home.

FLOORING

We're unfortunately limited with flooring choices and have carpet in all rooms of our house, except for the kitchen, which has wood flooring. The carpet is necessary because our home is so old that when it was remodeled, insulating the floors was an afterthought, and there is no crawl space under our house to remedy that. Carpet makes it much more comfortable during the winter.

We've chosen a very tight-weave, Berber-style carpet that's a beige color with darker flecks in it. The tight weave keeps it from pulling due to the normal wear and tear of dog toenails and cat claws, and the multiple flecks in the carpet disguise any dirt before it's time for cleaning. It's also very easy to spot-clean when it comes to any potty accidents or the occasional vomit that's inevitable when one lives with animals.

The kitchen has 100-year-old, reclaimed, heart-pine flooring, which is easy to clean – sweep and mop, that's all. However, pine is a soft wood, which





Some of the author's dog-friendly decorating choices include a leather chair in a pre-distressed finish, washable throw pillows, and a tightly-woven Berber carpet that's beige with darker flecks. All of these are durable, washable, and help hide pet dirt in between washing.

means it dents and scratches easily. To me, though, the dents and scratches add character to the floors, and because they contain so many imperfections, I don't fret about any inevitable new ones.

Flooring is the most heavily used surface in our homes, particularly when we have dogs. Popular considerations for flooring in your pet-friendly home are usually wood, bamboo, carpeting, tile, vinyl, or linoleum. There are advantages and disadvantages to each, and what works for me may not work for you.

It's not uncommon for a dog to have an aversion to a specific type of surface (our own dog Cody doesn't do well on tile), so if you know your dog won't be comfortable on a certain surface, consider another option. For example, if your dog or cat is prone to allergies to dust or pollen, you might want to avoid carpet. And if he's habitually anxious on slick floors, hardwood might not be the way to go. You want to keep your pet's comfort and health in mind just as much as you do your own comfort.

If you opt for wood, solid hardwood floors have an advantage over softer woods, such as the pine we have in our own home. Choices include solid wood, hardwood veneer, and laminate flooring. Solid wood is just that; each exposed part of the flooring is made of genuine hardwood and nothing else. Hardwood veneer is a type of construction that's made up of slides of hardwood bonded to composite board or plywood (sometimes called "all wood"). Laminate refers to

a surface of plastic, foil, or paper, often printed with photographs of wood-grain patterns bonded to something like particleboard or fiberboard.

Bamboo flooring seems to have exploded in popularity. Technically it's a grass, but I've learned that bamboo is as tough as most hardwood when dried. It comes in a variety of plank styles and colors, too.

Tile is also a popular choice. It's easy to clean because dirt, stains, and liquids all rest on the surface. However, it's a hard product that can be cold in the winter and not comfortable for a dog to lie on.

Almost every brand-name carpet manufacturer has a stain-free and pet-friendly version. Stainmaster® is probably the most widely known brand. However, when I talked with the carpet expert in our local big-box-remodeling store, she told me that many carpets today have the same qualities as the ones that are advertised as pet-friendly, only at a lesser price. There are health and environmental effects to be considered with carpeting, though it seems easier to today to find better choices than ever before. Four-legged traffic takes a toll on carpet (we can attest to that), so do your research to determine what works best in your own home: stain-resistant, wear-resistant, or stain- and wear-resistant carpet.

Vinyl flooring is one of the least expensive options available, but pet owners should be aware that it also has the most potential for contributing to poor in-

door air quality in your home. The word "vinyl" is short for polyvinyl chloride (PVC). Vinyl itself is a relatively stable product, but most vinyl flooring also is permeated with phthalates, the common name for phthalate esters, which make vinyl soft and cooperative. They do this very well in part because their molecules do not bond to PVC, but rather move freely through it and into the surrounding environment.

The phthalates used to plasticize PVC are what give it that familiar "vinyl" smell. If you can smell vinyl, then you and your pets are inhaling phthalates that are out-gassing. The stronger a vinyl product smells, the greater the amount of phthalates it contains. If you or your pets are particularly sensitive to chemicals, or live in an apartment with limited access to fresh air from the outdoors (as in many high-rise buildings), vinyl flooring is a risky choice.

In contrast, old-fashioned linoleum, made with natural, renewable materials such as linseed oil, tree resins, recycled wood flour, cork dust, and mineral pigments, and mounted on jute or canvas backing, is considered a "green" product. Who knew? Not me. Linoleum has been around since the mid-1800s and is naturally anti-bacterial, biodegradable, and can last up to 40 years with proper care and maintenance. Because the color in linoleum runs all the way through the material (unlike vinyl flooring), if it gets stained or scratched, you can buff out any damage and refinish the floor.

FABRICS

In our home, the fabric on our sofa is faux leather and our soft chair is real leather. The colors are dark brown and deep red; we chose them because they don't show much dirt. Though not totally scratch-resistant, if either is scratched inadvertently, it only adds to the distressed-leather look. Oh, how I adore white upholstery or white leather. But it just doesn't work in a home where our animals are invited up on sofas and chairs. We keep the white on the walls and the colors on the furniture. Because



The owner of this darling Rat Terrier calls herself “glampycamper” on her Instagram account, where she documents her dog-friendly thrift-and antique-store finds. Like the author, she uses a colorful mix of sheets, bedspreads, and quilts that are heavily patterned (to hide traces of dog) and washable. This tactic means her cute Rattie is comfortable and welcome on any soft surface in the house.

our dogs and cats sleep on the bed with us, we like choosing bedspreads and quilts that are patterned and in colors that blend with the colors of our dogs’ hair. The more heavily patterned the fabric, the less I’ll see the inevitable paw prints and pet hair until it’s time to be washed.

There’s so much to consider with the wide variety of fabrics available today. No matter what you choose, take into consideration that even if your pets don’t join you on the bed, chair, or sofa (though I sure hope they do!), their hair seems to just pop right off them and head straight for upholstered furniture.

Keep the unique characteristics of your pet’s hair in mind, too. Certain types of stiff dog hair poke into certain types of fabrics, almost instantaneously becoming part of the weave, and are extremely difficult to vacuum our pull out with a tape roller. Soft, downy hair from other breeds (and cats) sticks like lint to other fabrics. Pay attention to what fabrics you have in your home, wardrobe, and even car that your pets’ hair doesn’t stick to, and look for more of the same.

In our experience, real leather, in a pre-distressed finish, is the most durable



fabric for couches and chairs, and it’s easy to brush or vacuum hair away, and wet-wipe off any liquid that a pet might dribble or spill (I don’t want to get more specific than that; we’re all pet owners here, right?).

Consider outdoor fabrics for indoor applications, too! They may not be as soft as your average sofa covering, but they will hold up better over time.

And speaking of covering the sofa, keep in mind that washable and replaceable slipcovers for upholstered furniture, though costly, are less expensive than buying new furniture. It might not be worth the investment if you have one

small dog and live in a condo. But if your home has a dog door and your backyard has a pond or vegetable garden and you live with a swim-happy Labrador or mud-loving Australian Shepherd, it might be worth your while.

FURNITURE

Antiques and flea market finds happen to be our chosen style. No, most antiques aren’t scratch resistant, but when you buy a piece of furniture from an antique store or flea market, there’s no need to worry about the first scratch because every item comes with scratches or some other marks from its previous life. I really like that! Any new scratches just add to the story of our life with our animals. If you

prefer new furniture, you could opt for the distressed look (think shabby chic) or choose furniture made from metal or a hardwood, such as oak.

DOG-SPECIFIC DÉCOR

I don’t quite understand it myself, but I’m aware that many people seem to try to hide the fact that a dog lives in their home, worried that the presence of gates or crates or a big dog bed might detract from tasteful decorating. The good news is that today, there are an endless number of *very* attractive dog-management products on the market, and product lines that are available in a wide variety of finishes

in order to blend with any home’s décor.

For our part, Brad and I put more effort into finding products that offer better-than-average stability, durability, and ease of opening and closing. When shopping for these products, it’s worth it to look farther afield than just your local pet supply store or big-box chain store. They may carry just one brand or type of each sort of product. As just one example, Carlson Pet Products has a stunningly wide range of high-quality, functional gates, crates, and exercise pens that can be ordered from various retailers (see carlsonpetproducts.com).

For crates, gates, and beds that

wouldn't look out of place in a palace, check out Frontgate's pet products (see frontgate.com/pet-products). I wouldn't be surprised if Queen Elizabeth shopped for Corgi-management products here; they're a little pricey. But, no worries, you can DIY it!

One of my favorite DIY crates is a "crate end table" that can be built with the plans at tinyurl.com/AnaWhite-dog-crate. I particularly like crates that are designed to fit nicely and look good in your living room or bedroom, as your dog should live with you and not be banished to a secluded area of your home.

Have you ever thought about a do-it-yourself pet gate? I've discovered so many interesting pet gates that truly do seem easy to make yourself. I'm fascinated by several styles that can be made from pallets and look lovely when stained or painted. (See tinyurl.com/DIYdoggate.) The Sparta Dog Blog also has a variety of ideas that might strike your fancy and work well for you and your pets; see tinyurl.com/sparta-dog-gate.

DOG BEDS

While our dogs sleep on our bed with us at night, we nevertheless have dog beds

that are specifically for them, and periodically, they'll actually choose to use them! The most important thing to keep in mind is the comfort of the bed for your dog. Does your dog get hot or cold easily? Does she prefer smooth fabric or fleece? There are orthopedic beds, allergy-free beds, environmentally friendly beds, cooling beds, warming beds, and even cave-like beds for dogs who like to burrow. Like us, each dog has his or her own preference, so do give some thought to the type of bed your dog may like before you choose.

My personal favorite happens to be the Bumper Bed from West Paw Design. It comes in a variety of patterns and colors, so it's easy to find something that complements the colors in your home. The beds are filled with a thick denier 100 percent recycled IntelliLoft® polyfill, and the cover options include those made with regular cotton, eco-friendly organic cotton, or organic hemp. The covers are all removable and machine-washable, too. I don't know about your house, but that's a *must* in ours. Our West Paw Design beds are six or seven years old now, and while they don't look brand spanking new, they show no wear and

tear at all. And most importantly, our dogs love them.

A PEACEFUL HOME

While it's true that our pets don't care about how we decorate and how our house looks, they certainly do notice when something is comfortable or uncomfortable. Let's make things comfortable!

Our dogs also notice if we display anger when they happen to make a mess on an important piece of furniture. If you tend to get frustrated frequently because something in your home gets scratched, marred, or dirtied by your dog, perhaps it's time to rethink your decorating choices and move to fuss-free decorating. Your dog will thank you for it. 🐾

Lisa Lyle Waggoner is a CPDT-KA, a Certified Separation Anxiety Trainer, a Pat Miller Certified Trainer-Level 2, a faculty member of the Victoria Stilwell Academy of Dog Training, and Behavior and Co-Instructor for the Separation Anxiety Certification Program. She is the founder of Cold Nose College in Murphy, North Carolina, with an additional location in the Space Coast of Florida. See "Resources," page 24, for contact information.



DOG DAYS— All Year Long!

For a dog lover, this is the perfect calendar! Not only will you meet a dozen of the most winsome, lively calendar canines we could find, but also, each month you'll get timely, pertinent guidance for keeping your own dog healthy and happy throughout the year. In this year's edition, each month is introduced with suggested goals – achievements that can improve the relationship between you and your dog!

WDJ's 2017 Calendar is generously sized to make it easy for you to fill in birthdays, anniversaries, vet appointments, and all the dates you need to remember.

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Pro-Choice

Why some handlers strive to empower their dogs to make more of their own choices.

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

Some 30 years ago, Karen Pryor wrote a small volume intended to be a self-help book for humans. That book turned the dog training world upside down. *Don't Shoot the Dog* introduced the general public to the principles of operant conditioning and emphasized the benefits of positive reinforcement over punishment, with the goal of improving *humans'* relationships with each other: husbands and wives, parents and children, employers and employees, etc. The book didn't make much of a splash in the self-help world. But the fortuitous inclusion of the word "dog" in the title captured the attention of dog trainers, who, led by early positive training notables such as Dr. Ian Dunbar and Jean Donaldson, launched a positive reinforcement revolution in the world of dog training.

Thanks to the pioneers in the development of effective, force-free dog training techniques, there are now *thousands* of trainers (including me) who use, teach, and promote force-free training. In the past few decades, we've learned the value of creating relationships with dogs based on voluntary cooperation, built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect.

We learned about the "four quadrants of operant conditioning," and realized that the tools many of us had successfully used in the past, such as choke chains and prong collars, and verbal and physical punishment, worked because they *suppressed* behavior. They taught the dog that if he did the wrong thing, we would hurt or intimidate him.

We learned to ask questions. Not just,

"Does this work?" but "Why does this work?" and the very important "Is this something I am willing to do to my dog?"

We learned that there was an entire body of science behind dog training and behavior. We eagerly embraced the science, and learned about behavior analysis, unconditioned responses, classical conditioning, and much more.

The more we learned, the more we committed to our position that, while old-fashioned punishment-based methods may work, there is no *need* to use them, and no ethical justification to do so. We became operant conditioning junkies. We thought we had it all figured out.

Then the world shifted again.

Cognitive scientists turned their attention to dogs, and confirmed what we had suspected all along: that canine behavior is far more complex than what can be explained by Skinner boxes and Pavlovian responses. Our canine companions not only share a wide range of emotions comparable to our own, but also, they are capable of grasping and applying complex concepts, functioning on a higher cognitive level than we had previously been encouraged to believe. While positive reinforcement-based trainers had long come to value the role of "relationship" in training, to a blossoming new generation of trainers, "relationship" doesn't just have a role; instead, training *is* relationship.

Positive reinforcement-based trainers have acknowledged the importance of relationship, in part, just by altering our

Do you ever give your dog the opportunity to decide which way he wants to go when you are on a walk? You might learn a thing or two about him if you do – and he will surely appreciate the opportunity!



vocabulary. Because they are a reflection of our internal processing, and because they influence our associations, words matter. Many of us now say “*Cue*” (a signal that indicates an opportunity to perform a behavior to gain a reinforcer) instead of “*Command*” (do this behavior or else!). We call our training classes “*good manners*” instead of “*obedience*.” We “*ask*” or “*help*” our dog do a behavior rather than “*make*” him do it. We recognize that, as the supposedly more intelligent species, it’s our job to get our dogs to demonstrate that they happily and eagerly *want* to do what we ask of them.

Some professionals are going one step further, calling themselves “*teachers*” rather than “*trainers*,” and suggesting that we are “*educating*” dogs in a broader, cognitive sense rather than just “*training*” them to do a specific set of rote behaviors. It’s a compelling position.

CHOICE AND EMPOWERMENT

One would expect that the rise of force-free training methods and the increased awareness of and respect for dogs as sentient creatures would make life easier for them. We should expect to see a corresponding rise in the number of calm, stable, well-adjusted dogs who are happily integrated into lifelong loving homes. But many training and behavior professionals note with alarm the large number of dogs in today’s world who seem to have significant issues with stress and anxiety, with high levels of arousal and low impulse control.

It’s quite possible this is a function of societal change. There was a time not so very long ago when life was pretty casual for our family dogs. They ran loose in the neighborhood day and night; ate, slept, played, and eliminated when they chose; and many had jobs that fulfilled their genetic impulses to herd some sheep or cows, or retrieve game felled by a hunter’s gun.

In contrast, life today is strictly regimented for many of our canine companions; many live in social isolation, and when they do get out, their activities are on a tight schedule. Owner expectations and demands are high. Dogs are told what to do from the moment they are allowed to get up in the morning until they are put to bed at night, including when and where they are allowed to poop and pee. Some of

today’s dogs never get to run off-leash or socialize freely on a regular basis with other dogs. During any free time they may have, they are expected to just lie around and be “*well behaved*” (by human standards, not canine ones!). They have virtually *no* control over what happens in their world. Some trainers suggest this strict regimentation is a significant contributor to the stress and arousal levels of today’s family dog. Imagine how stressed you might be if your life was as tightly controlled by someone else.

EMPOWERMENT PIONEER

The word “*choice*” started cropping up in positive training circles well over a decade ago, in no small part thanks to Susan G. Friedman, Ph.D., who was a faculty member in the Psychology department at Utah State University from 1995 to 2014. Today, Dr. Friedman is a frequent presenter at animal behavior and training conferences, always promoting the use of Applied Behavior Analysis – the technology of behavior change, developed originally for human behavior applications – for working with animals of every species.

Dr. Friedman began her career in psychology 40 years ago by working with adolescents with severe behavior problems at a residential treatment facility. After earning a Ph.D. in special education, she worked for a number of years in human education settings. She was drawn into the study of animal behavior after obtaining pet parrots for her young daughters.

“When I read the lay literature for how to care for and interact with the birds, I was horrified at the density of the cultural fog about how behavior works,” Dr. Friedman says. At the time, the field of parrot training was even more densely populated with punishment-based methods than dog training, and most of the advice that could be found was focused on getting rid of problematic (mostly aggressive) parrot behavior.

In Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA), the goal is to develop procedures that will produce objectively measurable changes in behavior. In humans, the work might be aimed at increasing the amount of time that a hyperactive child will focus on homework, or increasing the number and quality of personal self-care skills (brushing teeth, bathing) that an autistic child can be expected to perform. Given her experience with

using ABA to help humans increase the incidence of their socially acceptable or personally beneficial behaviors, Dr. Friedman immediately saw that the same principles could be used to help animals change their behavior, too.

“I started writing about the science of behavior change and its basic focus: that behavior is always conditional. To change behavior we need to change conditions – not the animal! – by making the right behavior easier and more reinforcing. The wrong question is to ask how to stop problem behavior. The right question is, ‘What do you want the learner to do *instead?*’”

Dr. Friedman began writing for and presenting information to animal training audiences, explaining the benefits and strengths of using ABA for teaching children with severe behavior disorders, and suggesting that the same approach can be taken with animals of *any* species.

One of the most basic standards for professional ABA educators is to use the most positive, least intrusive procedures that are effective for teaching new behaviors. Dr. Friedman explains that this standard is upheld in public federal laws that protect children, as well as in the Guidelines for Responsible Conduct for Behavior Analysts. She proposes,

“Surely a similar intervention hierarchy, both ethical and feasible to implement, would be in the best interest of companion animals, their caregivers, and the professionals working with them to solve behavior problems,” she says. “By selecting the least intrusive, effective procedures (i.e., positive reinforcement-based and empowering) we increase the humaneness of our interventions without compromising our learning objectives.”

Today, Dr. Friedman maintains a busy schedule, presenting lectures and behavior workshops to all sorts of animal behavior and training professionals and enthusiasts. She’s a faculty member at Karen Pryor’s Clicker Expo and her online course, “*Living and Learning with Animals for Behavior Professionals*,” has provided even wider dissemination of effective, humane behavior change practices to students in more than 30 countries.

“The power to control one’s own outcomes is essential to behavioral health,” Dr. Friedman frequently tells her audiences, using examples from many captive species of animals, from marine mammals in “*sea parks*” to parakeets

in cages (and, yes, including the dogs in our homes). “Research demonstrates that to the greatest extent possible, animals should be empowered to use their behavior to control significant events in their lives. When a lack of control becomes a lifestyle, it may result in aberrant behaviors.”

I believe that Dr. Friedman’s thesis explains many cases of canine separation anxiety, aggression, and other behaviors that indicate our dogs’ unhappiness and cause problems for dog owners. Perhaps we can help our dogs be emotionally healthier by finding ways to give them more choices in their world.

GOOD SHAPE

One way we can incorporate more choice and empowerment into our dog’s daily lives is through shaping and other positive teaching techniques, where the handler sets up problems for the dog to solve.

In shaping exercises, the dog must figure out what behavior to offer in order to elicit a treat from his handler. It might

be a simple behavior such as a “sit,” or it might be a complex cognitive challenge like “match to sample,” in which the dog indicates a color, shape, or object that matches the “sample” provided to him. When the dog solves the problem and offers the behavior that earns him a reinforcement, you might hear his teacher/trainer enthusiastically praise with “Good choice!” Lots of behavior choices happen in the everyday lessons of any force-free program.

But canine teachers who promote choice and empowerment have a much grander vision than basic problem-solving options. Here are some other ways in which dogs are being offered choices so they have more control in their lives, with the goal of increasing their behavioral health:

■ **DO YOU WANT TO WORK?** Some trainers now ask their dog some version of this question before embarking on any training exercise. If the dog moves agreeably or enthusiastically forward to the task, the activity continues. If the dog

indicates any reluctance to engage, the activity stops, or the trainer initiates a different activity that the dog might be more enthusiastic about participating in.

■ **THE BUCKET GAME.** London-based trainer Chirag Patel developed a protocol he calls “The Bucket Game,” in which the dog has the opportunity to indicate his choice to proceed with a husbandry procedure – or not.

Patel, who has a Bachelor of Science (Hons) degree in Veterinary Sciences from the Royal Veterinary College in London as well as a post graduate certificate at the University of Lincoln in Clinical Animal Behavior (and has a Kelpie!), presented the game to the Pet Professional Guild membership at its first conference in November 2015, and its use is spreading like wildfire. A trainer demonstrated the procedure at a recent Peaceable Paws Behavior Modification Academy. I am now a fan, and will be sharing it with many of my future clients.

In the Bucket Game, the dog is reinforced for focusing attention on the

A BOND-BASED APPROACH

Some canine educators are taking the idea of “choice” to a new level. Jennifer Arnold is the founder of Canine Assistants, a service-dog school in Milton, Georgia, and the creator of the “Bond-Based Choice Teaching” approach to interspecies relationships. This program focuses on developing relationship and communication between human and canine partners rather than teaching a list of tasks. Her just-released book, *Love is All You Need: The Revolutionary Bond-Based Approach to Education Your Dog*, describes her journey through (and disappointments with) positive-reinforcement-based training, and describes her bond-based training system.



Love is All You Need presents the history of and details about the program Arnold uses to successfully develop working assistance dogs at her Canine Assistants facility in Milton, Georgia. She reports an exponential increase in the number of successful canine graduates from her program since the implementation of Bond-Based Choice Teaching.

I love the concept of bond-based teaching. Rather than starting by learning to respond to traditional cues (such as “Sit,” “Down,” etc.), Arnold’s puppies – future assistance dogs – begin by learning concepts. She associates vocabulary words with activities, objects, people, and places rather than the performance of specific behaviors, and introduces games that encourage bonding, trust, and self-reliance. Sounds good!

Still, some of her suggestions fly in the face of some common practices. Her answer to jumping up? She says, “It simply isn’t fair to punish your dog who is asking for attention by removing your attention.” She maintains that a dog who jumps up in order to connect with a person should not be ignored. Rather, she suggests feeding the need by using both hands to massage him while giving him your complete attention. She calls this “Two Hands, All In” and says that in every case where a dog’s problem behavior is the result of an emotional need, it is our obligation to fill that need.

There is a lot of food for thought in this book. There is much that I find intriguing and would like to pursue, and also much that I disagree with. Arnold criticizes modern trainers for their focus on operant conditioning without acknowledging the great interest force-free trainers have already demonstrated in regard to the concepts of empowerment, choice, and cognition in their training programs. She insists that dogs really are “eager to please” their humans – an idea I have long argued against. She hasn’t convinced me on that topic, but I do wholeheartedly agree with her that we need to improve our relationships with our dogs by working with their cognitive abilities and giving them more opportunities for choice and empowerment.

Arnold has plowed fertile ground here. I look forward to seeing what grows from it. I hope it will be generation of dogs who experience far less stress and anxiety in their lives.

Woody is demonstrating the Bucket Game. He has learned that as long as he gazes steadily at a small bucket of treats (or bowl, or whatever container is handy), he is essentially telling his handler to go ahead with whatever husbandry procedure she needs to do (ear cleaning, nail clipping, etc.). If he takes his attention away from the bucket, the handler stops the procedure (and the treats). This gives him a sense of control over the procedure.

bucket (or cup, or any other small item used as a target), and the handler initiates the beginning steps of the husbandry task – perhaps touching the dog’s ears in preparation for ear cleaning. If the dog takes his attention away from the bucket, the task stops – as does the reinforcement! If the dog stays focused on the bucket (or returns his gaze to the bucket), the task (and the reinforcement) is continued. The dog learns that he controls the procedure, and as a result becomes less stressed about it, eventually choosing to continue the procedure by gazing at the bucket.

A Facebook page that has been created by Domesticated Manners for the Bucket Game describes the game as an activity that empowers the dog to indicate when she is ready to start, when she may want to take a break, when she wants to stop, and when she wants her handler to slow down. “This game was initially designed to teach essential husbandry behaviors, (those that allow your dog to actively participate in her daily and veterinary care). But you will soon learn how this game can be integrated into your every day training to help reduce barking, increase confidence, and enhance your overall relationship.”

See “Resources,” page 24, for links to the Domesticated Manners web page, and The Bucket Game page on Facebook.

■ **WHICH WAY?** Next time you take your dog for a walk, how about letting him choose the way? When you get to the end of your driveway, let him decide whether to turn left or right. If the path divides in the woods, at least sometimes follow his lead instead of always telling him which way to go. Let it be *his* walk.

■ **YOU PICK!** If your dog isn’t accustomed to making choices with you, you can teach him to understand the choice concept with this very simple “You Pick” exercise:



1 Hold a high-value treat in one hand, and a lower-value treat in the other.

2 Show both treats to your dog in your open hands. He can sniff, but don’t allow him to eat them.

3 Close your fists, say “You Pick!” and offer both to your dog, palms up, about 6 inches apart.

4 When he “picks” one hand by sniffing it first, open your fist and let him eat that treat.

5 Repeat, using various value treats, making sure the higher value treat is not always in the same hand.

6 When your dog indicates that he understands the game by his prompt eagerness to pick a hand, generalize it by holding two of his toys and letting him pick one. (Then play with him with that toy as the reinforcer for his choice.)

7 Generalize even further by looking for opportunities to ask him to pick – which way on the hike, which food bowl, perhaps even which collar and leash he’d like to wear. Start offering him verbal choices – “Up on the sofa, or on the floor? You pick!” “Inside or outside? You pick!”

WHAT ELSE?

So – where do we go with all this? All the way, with Jennifer Arnold’s Bond-Based

approach (see sidebar, opposite page), where actually teaching your dog to do specific behaviors becomes secondary to developing your relationship with him? Or is there, perhaps, a middle ground, where we are much more sensitive to the role relationships plays in our lives with our dogs, while still using positive-based training methods to help them learn the behaviors we need them know in order to live happily with humans?

We’d love to hear your thoughts. What do you think of the idea of giving your dog more choice and empowerment in his life? What opportunities can you identify in your life with your dog where you might be able to offer him more choices? Do you have examples you’d like to share of choice experiences you’ve had with your dog? As much as it stretches our brains, we’re excited about this step forward in the world of dog training and behavior. Are you? 🐾

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, where Pat offers dog-training classes and courses for trainers. Miller is also the author of many books on positive training. Her newest is Beware of the Dog: Positive Solutions for Aggressive Behavior in Dogs (Dogwise Publishing, 2016).

See “Resources,” page 24, for contact and book-purchasing information, and for contact information for the trainers mentioned in this article.

Herbal Remedies for Arthritis Pain

Herbs can be used internally and externally, individually or in combination.

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Can adding herbs to your stiff old dog's dinner help him run, jump, and play like a puppy? It might. Last month we reviewed causes, risk factors, and nutritional treatments for canine arthritis. This month we'll explore medicinal herbs that bring relief to our best friends.

Plants were the original pharmacy for humans and animals, and over thousands of years, cultures around the world developed remedies that remain in use today. Herbal teas, tinctures, capsules, poultices, rinses, and massage oils are widely sold. American consumers spent nearly \$7 billion on herbal products in 2015, which is \$480 million more than we spent on them in 2014, marking the 12th consecutive year of growth. The medicinal herbs industry is thriving.

While it's true that some herbs recommended for use with canine arthritis have drug-like actions, including contraindications and potentially adverse side effects, the plants mentioned here are easily acquired from reputable sources, widely used, and safe for most dogs. The descriptions that follow include safety notes as applicable. See the "Professional Resources and Quality Control" sidebar on page 20 for additional information.

HERBAL TERMS

Although culinary plants and leafy weeds come to mind when we think of herbs, in botanical medicine all plants are herbs and so are all of their parts, including leaves, stems, blossoms, bark, fruits, and seeds.

A **simple** is a single herb, and whole schools of herbal medicine use one herb at a time to treat a condition

until it improves. In contrast, a **blend** is a combination of herbs – as few as two or as many as dozens. Traditional Chinese remedies often contain 20 or more different herbs. While some herbalists consider blends safer than single-herb formulas because they are less likely to cause adverse side effects, that theory has not been proven. If a blend contains a potentially toxic herb, its smaller quantity may be helpful, but it is not necessarily safer than a tea or other product containing a single well-tolerated herb.

A **specific** is any herb known for its effectiveness in the treatment of a condition, such as turmeric for arthritis pain. Specifics can be used alone, in which case they are simples, or combined with other herbs, where they act as the blend's active ingredients.

A **catalyst, stimulant, activator, carrier, or emissary** herb can be added to herbal blends to increase their effectiveness, usually by improving circulation and digestion, thus helping other ingredients reach their destination. Some catalyst herbs are used alone but most make up a small portion of an herbal recipe. Cayenne and ginger are examples of pain-relieving catalyst herbs that can be used as simples or in blends for the treatment of arthritis.

Herbs can be given continuously or they can be **pulsed** by interrupting treatment, such as five days on and two days off per week, or three weeks on and one week off per month. While this approach has not been scientifically tested, some herbalists theorize that the treatment is less likely to cause adverse side effects, allows the body to recover from treatment, and may improve the overall result.

MEDICINAL TERMS

The medicinal properties of herbs have their own vocabulary, and terms most important to the treatment of arthritis include the following:

Many owners find that herbal remedies can restore an older dog's interest in playing and exercise, and postpone the need for conventional drugs for pain relief.



- **Analgesics**, also called *anodynes*, relieve pain. These can be used internally or externally, depending on the herb.
- **Anti-inflammatory** herbs inhibit the effect of chemicals that cause pain and inflammation in the body at injured areas.
- **Antispasmodic** herbs prevent or ease cramps and muscle spasms.
- **Nervines** calm and soothe the nerves, reducing tension and anxiety.
- **Rubefacient** herbs draw inflammation and congestion from deeper areas, increasing circulation and promoting warmth.
- **Tonic** herbs restore and strengthen the entire system, producing and restoring normal tone. They are usually well tolerated and safe to take daily for long periods. Most tonics have general positive effects on the entire body.

HELPFUL HERBS

Study the labels for products intended to relieve arthritis symptoms in dogs (and humans) and you'll see the following herbs, all of which are widely used for arthritis pain relief and considered safe for dogs.

Note that some herbs inhibit COX-2 enzymes, which promote pain, swelling, and inflammation. Herbal COX-2 inhibitors block those enzymes, as do many nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). Herbs containing COX-2 inhibitors or compounds related to aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) should not be taken together or in combination with COX-2 inhibitor drugs, aspirin, or other NSAIDs.

- **Arnica** (*Arnica montana*) is a small alpine plant with yellow blossoms. The flower heads, made into tea, tincture, or massage oil, are anti-inflammatory and relieve the pain of bruises, sprains, arthritis, and inflammation. Arnica is used externally.
- **Boswellia** (*Boswellia serrata*), a large tree native to India, is a potent anti-inflammatory that effectively shrinks inflamed tissue by improving circulation

MANY WAYS TO ADMINISTER HERBS

Tea is the most basic herbal preparation, and for dogs with arthritis, a properly brewed, room-temperature tea applied as a rinse or simply massaged into the skin can make a difference, as can small amounts of tea added to the dog's food.

To brew an **infusion** or **tisane** (an herbal tea made from leaves or blossoms), add 1 teaspoon dried herb or 1 to 2 tablespoons fresh herb to a cup of water. Start with cold water and heat it to the boiling point in a covered pan before removing it from the heat, or pour boiling water over loose herbs, cover, and let steep. The longer it brews, the stronger and more medicinal the tea. For best results, use a stainless steel, glass, or enameled pan with a tight-fitting lid and leave your tea undisturbed until it cools to room temperature, then strain and use. Tea can be strained through cheesecloth, a kitchen towel, or a wire mesh strainer.

To brew a **decoction** (a simmered tea made from roots, bark, or seeds), start with cold water and chopped or cut dried or fresh herbs in the same proportions as for an infusion. In a covered pan, bring the tea to a boil, then reduce the heat and simmer over very low heat for 15 to 20 minutes or longer. Remove the pan from heat and let the tea continue to steep with the lid on until cool. Unlike leaves and blossoms, roots, bark, and seeds can be reused, usually three to four times. As flavor and color decrease with use, extend the brewing time or replenish herbs by adding small amounts of new material.

Tinctures are liquid extracts, usually made with alcohol or vegetable glycerin. Alcohol is the most widely used tincture solvent because it extracts more constituents and preserves them longer than anything else. While a large dog may safely take an alcohol tincture with food, puppies and small breeds should have minimal exposure to alcohol. Fortunately, well-made tinctures are so concentrated that just a few drops contain a therapeutic dose. Some manufacturers offer tinctures from which the alcohol has been removed, or you can use **glycerites**, which are made with vegetable glycerin. Alcohol tinctures, because they are highly concentrated, can be applied topically to arthritic joints, strained muscles, or other painful areas.

Capsules are convenient because most dogs find them easy to swallow when hidden in food or treats. Encapsulated herbal blends have become popular arthritis treatments for canines and humans.

Poultices are wet herbal packs applied directly to an inflamed, irritated, swollen, infected, or injured part of the body. They are made of fresh mashed herbs or the residue left after brewing tea, and are usually applied cool rather than hot. Use whatever will hold the poultice in place for as long as possible, such as Vetwrap, elastic bandages, plastic wrap, cheesecloth, muslin, or cotton fabric. A layer of plastic over the poultice helps prevent stains on rugs or furniture. Alternatively, fold the plant material into layered gauze or fabric and hold it in place by hand.

A **compress** is a towel or thick cloth saturated with cold or room-temperature herbal tea and held in place for five or 10 minutes. A **fomentation** is a hot or warm compress. One or the other may bring relief to a sore spine or joint.

Washes and **rinses** are just what they sound like. Any beverage- or medicinal-strength tea can be used by itself or as a final rinse after shampooing. For a dog with arthritis, soaking the coat to the skin and gently massaging tea into the neck, spine, or joints can be therapeutic.

Store dried herbs and herbal products away from heat, light, and humidity – in other words, not in the kitchen or bathroom – and tightly sealed. Most herbal tinctures and capsules come in protective packaging such as dark blue or brown bottles.

ARTHRITIS RESEARCH

Search the medical literature or the websites of educational organizations like the American Botanical Council (herbalgram.org), and you'll see many studies examining the effect of medicinal plants on humans with arthritis. But while canine arthritis is a popular veterinary research topic, only a few canine studies have examined plant-based therapies.

A 2004 study of 29 dogs with degenerative osteoarthritis conducted in Switzerland ("Dietary support with Boswellia resin in canine inflammatory joint and spinal disease" by J. Reichling, et al, *Schweizer Archiv Fur Tierheilkunde*) showed that boswellia extract significantly reduced symptoms and increased mobility in more than 70 percent of the canine patients.

In "A medicinal herb-based natural health product improves the condition of a canine natural osteoarthritis model: A randomized placebo-controlled trial" published in *Research in Veterinary Science* in 2014, scientists at the University of Montreal's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine worked with 32 dogs weighing more than 20 kilograms (44 pounds), all of whom had been diagnosed with arthritis by X-ray and orthopedic exam.

The researchers developed their own combinations of medicinal herbs. Their first formula contained devil's claw (*Harpagophytum procumbens*), Indian frankincense (*Boswellia serrata*), black currant (*Ribes nigrum*), white willow (*Salix alba*), and feverfew (*Tanacetum parthenium*), plus small amounts of EPA and DHA (omega-3 fatty acids). The second formula contained smaller amounts of the first two herbs, along with the same amount of black currant and the omega-3 fatty acids (found primarily in fish), added bromelain (*Ananas comosus*) and curcumin (*Curcuma longa*), plus glucosamine sulfate, MSM (methylsulfonylmethane), chondroitin sulfate, l-glutamine, and hyaluronic acid.

Half of the dogs received the first formula for four weeks and the second formula for another four weeks. The other half, acting as the control, received a placebo. To determine results, the dogs were filmed as they walked at a consistent speed over a special platform that captured the strength of each paw; a special electronic collar recorded their daily activities; and owners were asked to provide their own evaluations.

As head researcher Maxim Moreau reported, "After the eight-week course, on average, the strength of the dogs receiving treatment had improved to the equivalent of a kilo of extra strength per paw . . . None of these dogs saw their health decline, unlike 35.8 percent of the dogs who were given the placebo." In addition, the placebo dogs became less physically active while the treated dogs became significantly more active.

and increasing synovial fluid viscosity. Boswellia may help alleviate pain and improve range of motion within a week of daily use, and may slow the progression of cartilage damage. A bitter herb, boswellia is usually taken in capsules.

- **Cannabis** (*Cannabis sativa*) describes both hemp and marijuana. As WDJ contributor Mary Straus wrote in "Dogs Going to Pot?" (April 2013), marijuana can be either harmful or beneficial to dogs, depending on dosage. The plant

contains more than 60 chemicals called cannabinoids, the most important of which are cannabidiol (CBD), which has therapeutic properties, and tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is psychoactive but may provide additional benefits when small amounts are combined with CBD.

"Unfortunately," wrote Straus, "because of the politics surrounding the use of medical marijuana, there is no reliable information about what dosage of marijuana is safe and effective for pets.

This problem is further complicated by the wide variety of products, including flower buds, oils, tinctures, and other extracts, as well as the variation in strengths for each of these based on the strain of marijuana grown, the timing of the harvest, and the preparation of the medical product. Concentrated forms in particular can cause toxicity to dogs even in small amounts."

Given its very low THC content, hemp is not considered intoxicating. Instead, its cannabinoids are known for their anti-inflammatory, analgesic, and anti-spasmodic properties. Hemp capsules, oils, and other products containing cannabinoids derived from hemp are sold throughout the U.S. for human and canine use without restriction.

- **Cayenne** (*Capsicum annuum*) is 2016's official Herb of the Year (see "Not Too Hot for Fido," WDJ May 2016). Its active ingredient, capsaicin, makes cayenne a contact rubefacient, which means that it increases circulation to sore joints and painful areas when applied topically. Capsaicin also acts as a nerve block, reducing pain. Cayenne is an important stimulant or catalyst herb that can be added in small amounts to blends, improving their effectiveness, or added to food or given in capsules.

Cayenne is a member of the nightshade family, and while most dogs appear not to be adversely affected by nightshades, some may be sensitive. If cayenne seems to worsen your dog's arthritis symptoms, try avoiding not only cayenne but its nightshade cousins tomato, potato, eggplant, paprika and other peppers, tobacco, and the medicinal herb ashwagandha (*Withania somnifera*).

- **Chamomile** (*Matricaria chamomilla*, *Anthemis nobilis*) is one of the world's most widely used herbs. This nervine, tonic, antispasmodic plant soothes mind and body, relaxes the nerves, and relieves muscle cramps. Chamomile can be safely added to food or applied topically to dogs of all ages unless they are allergic to plants in the aster family (rare among dogs).

- **Comfrey** (*Symphytum officinale*) is the most significant plant source of the cell-growth stimulator allantoin, which speeds the healing of wounds and even broken bones (comfrey's common name is "knit bone").

This tonic, anti-inflammatory herb

is no longer recommended for internal use because its pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs) may cause liver toxicity, but comfrey tea can be safely applied as a rinse or poultice to inflamed joints or sore spines. Alcohol-based comfrey tincture can be applied to sore joints, injuries, muscle strains, and other painful areas.

- **Devil's Claw Root** (*Harpagophytum procumbens*), native to South Africa, has anti-inflammatory properties, stimulates the lymph system, and is a detoxifying herb for the entire body. Devil's claw is usually taken in capsules. Unfortunately, overharvesting and adulteration have made much of the devil's claw sold in the U.S. of little value. To give devil's claw products a fair trial, look for sustainable sources. This herb contains COX-2 enzyme inhibitors.

- **Feverfew** (*Tanacetum parthenium*), a bitter-tasting green plant with daisy-

ginger helps improve circulation and digestion, and it is often added to blends as a catalyst or stimulant herb.

- **Horsetail** (*Equisetum arvense*) is a good source of the trace mineral silicon, which plays an important role in bone formation and bone and connective tissue health. Horsetail's effectiveness may result from its ability to boost silicon levels, which naturally decline with age. Taking this herb internally improves the skin, coat, nails, and joints; applying it externally as a soak, compress, or rinse speeds the results.

- **Licorice root** (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), contains anti-inflammatory compounds that reduce joint pain and other arthritis symptoms while improving digestion and respiratory function. In small amounts, licorice root has no adverse side effects, but in large quantities or with daily use it can contribute to hypertension, edema,

when metabolized in the gut, act like an herbal aspirin. In fact, the name aspirin is derived from *Spiraea*, meadowsweet's old botanical name. This product should not be combined with NSAIDs.

- **Mullein** (*Verbascum thapsus*), while best known as an herb for the respiratory system, has anti-inflammatory and analgesic properties.

- **Passion flower** (*Passiflora incarnata*) is a mild sedative, antispasmodic, and pain reliever traditionally used to treat insomnia, nervous anxiety, and pain. It has a relaxing influence and can help relieve discomfort.

- **Rosemary** (*Rosmarinus officinalis*), the popular seasoning herb, has traditionally been used to improve memory, relieve muscle pain and spasm, and support the circulatory and nervous systems. Applied topically, rosemary can be used to treat muscle pain and arthritis and improve circulation. Important note: While most dogs respond well to rosemary, which is widely used as a food preservative (including in pet foods), rosemary extract has triggered seizures in some dogs. Avoid this herb if your dog has a history of seizures. If your dog suffers a seizure after consuming rosemary or a food containing rosemary extract, switch to other products.

- **Skullcap** (*Scutellaria lateriflora*) has long been used to relieve the pain and discomfort of inflammation in addition to reducing or alleviating anxiety. Skullcap's active ingredient, scutellarin, is a flavonoid compound shown to have sedative and antispasmodic properties.

- **Sweet Marjoram** (*Origanum majorana*) does more than flavor Italian food. Its anti-inflammatory effects make this a popular herb for arthritis, joint pain, and sore muscles. Like other culinary/medicinal herbs, it can be taken internally or applied topically. In addition to improving arthritis symptoms, marjoram is a relaxing nerve tonic that helps relieve nervous tension and stress-related symptoms.

- **Turmeric** (*Curcuma longa*) contains more than two dozen anti-inflammatory compounds, including six different COX-2 inhibitors. By itself, curcumin – the component in turmeric most



like blossoms, remained an obscure herb until its ability to prevent migraine headaches put it back into home gardens and natural food markets. Because so many arthritis patients report that feverfew's positive effects continue after they stop taking the herb, it appears to do more than temporarily alleviate symptoms. It's usually taken in capsules.

- **Ginger** (*Zingiber officinale*), a familiar spice in cooking and baking, is stimulating, warming, and anti-inflammatory.

and hormone imbalances. Products labeled “deglycyrrhized licorice” or “DGL” have had the problematic substance removed, though some of the herb's benefits are removed along with it.

- **Meadowsweet** (*Filipendula ulmaria*) is a perennial herb with anti-inflammatory, anti-rheumatic, rubefacient, and analgesic actions. Its leaves, root, rhizomes, and flowers contain volatile oils whose compounds may be oxidized into salicylic acid, which,

PROFESSIONAL RESOURCES AND QUALITY CONTROL

How can you be sure that an herbal remedy will be safe and appropriate for your dog? While there is no standardized certification in the United States for herbalists who create pet products, they are represented by professional organizations, as are veterinarians who use medicinal herbs.

The **American Herbalists Guild** (americanherbalistsguild.com), **American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association** (ahvma.org), and **Veterinary Botanical Medical Association** (vbma.org), maintain professional standards and list members with their qualifications.

The **American Botanical Council** (herbalgram.org) is an important educational resource that promotes good manufacturing practices (GMP) and monitors the quality of plant-based medicines sold in the United States. The **National Animal Supplement Council** (NASC, at nasc.cc), an industry trade association of suppliers, manufacturers, and marketers of dietary ingredients and supplements for pets, has endorsed the Botanical Adulterants Program, which is a coalition of the American Botanical Council, the American Herbal Pharmacopoeia (AHP), and the University of Mississippi's National Center for Natural Products Research (NCNPR).

You can ask manufacturers for information about the sources, quality, and testing of their ingredients; asking them about any professional affiliations they have with the above organizations is another good idea.

It's ideal if you can consult an experienced holistic veterinarian and/or herbalist in person. But if you can't, see the following books for in-depth guidelines on using herbal remedies for your dog:

- ✓ **Herbs for Pets: The Natural Way to Enhance Your Pet's Life** by Mary L. Wulff and Greg L. Tilford (2nd Edition, Lumina Media; 2009)
- ✓ **Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care** by CJ Puotinen (McGraw-Hill, 2000)

often cited for its healthful effects – is a multifaceted anti-inflammatory that can reduce arthritis symptoms. In human studies, turmeric extracts containing at least 20 percent curcuminoids are comparable in their effects to the drug ibuprofen. Combining turmeric with bromelain (the pineapple enzyme) provides even more impressive results.

- **Valerian** (*Valeriana officinalis*), whose distinctive fragrance has been compared to old sweat socks, is one of the most effective nerve tonics available.

- **White Willow Bark** (*Salix alba*, *Salix spp.*) contains salicin, a chemical similar to acetylsalicylic acid (aspirin). In combination with white willow's anti-inflammatory flavonoids, salicin is thought to be responsible for the plant's pain-relieving and anti-inflammatory

effects. This product should not be combined with NSAIDs.

- **Yucca** (*Yucca schidigera*, *Yucca spp.*) contains saponins, soap-like chemicals that reduce pain, joint swelling, and stiffness. Yucca is a popular ingredient in animal feeds because it reduces unpleasant odors in urine and feces. It should not be used in large doses for extended periods because it can irritate the stomach lining and cause vomiting.

For best results, use products recommended for dogs, follow label directions, and instead of giving it every day, consider a two-day break from yucca every week and a week-long break every one or two months.

CHINESE HERBS

Conventional Western medicine typically uses symptom-suppressing

drugs and therapies to relieve pain. Traditional Chinese medicine takes a different approach, examining the ways in which *Chi* or *Qi* (pronounced “chee”), the body's life energy, might be slowed or obstructed.

Some traditional Chinese herbs used in arthritis remedies, such as stephania root (*Stephania tetrandra* or *han fang chi*), have been removed from formulas because they contain aristolochic acid, which can (rarely) cause renal damage.

Fortunately, most traditional Chinese blends contain herbs that are well tolerated, especially in small amounts. Chinese therapeutic categories include “vitalizing the blood,” “resolving hidden phlegm,” and “removing obstacles to the flow of *chi*” through the body's meridians or energy channels. Formulas may contain warming herbs, herbs that support the kidneys or blood, or herbs that dispel dampness.

Key herbs used in Chinese blends for the treatment of arthritis include epimedium (*Epimedium grandiflorum*), rehmannia (*Rehmannia glutinosa*), peony (*Paeonia lactiflora*), white mustard (*Sinapis alba*), safflower (*Carthamus tinctorius*), angelica (*Angelica archangelica*), mulberry (*Morus nigra*), frankincense (*Boswellia sacra*), cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*), licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra*), and ligusticum (*Ligusticum porteri*).

For best results, use Chinese herbal formulas that are manufactured in the United States or which have been tested for purity and label accuracy. Many herbal products imported from China contain dangerous ingredients or are incorrectly labeled.

COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS

Most pet-supply stores and natural-food markets sell a variety of herbal products, and so do online retailers. Check with manufacturers regarding their guarantees of purity and label accuracy.

To discover which products work best for your dog, follow label directions and complete one course of treatment (typically four to six weeks) before starting another. Make notes about your dog's arthritis symptoms (such as his willingness or ability to get in the car or jump up on the couch, or how long it takes him to get on his feet after a nap) in your dog's health journal before beginning any new remedy, and again at weekly intervals. Another good way



to track the effectiveness of a new product is to take video of your dog walking, turning, or playing before and after a course of treatment.

If your dog is taking prescription drugs, be sure to discuss herbal products with your veterinarian before adding them to your pet's medications.

The following are some of the leading herbal blends for relieving canine arthritis symptoms:

- **Alenza Chewable Tablets** (from BayerDVM.com), combine *Boswellia serrata* with a proprietary blend of bioflavonoids to help active and aging dogs manage discomfort, recover from stress or injury, and speed

the rehabilitation process. Scored tablets can be given during or after meals or crumbled into food.

- **Animal Essentials Joint Support** (formerly Alfalfa/Yucca Blend, from animalesentials.com) is an alcohol-free vegetable glycerin tincture containing certified organic alfalfa, yucca root, burdock root, and licorice root. The sweet-tasting glycerite can be squirted directly into a dog's mouth from the measured dropper or added to food twice daily.

- **Arnica tincture**, an alcohol extract of *Arnica montana*, is made by several herbal product companies for topical application and is widely available, though you'll find the largest selection online. Arnica tincture is usually effective for acute pain, especially if it is applied topically over the area that hurts as soon as symptoms develop.

- Hemp products from **Canna-Pet** (canna-pet.com), **Bluebird Botanicals** (bluebird-botanicals.com), **Vet CBD** (vetCBD.com), **Dixie Botanicals** (therabis.com), and **Healthy Hemp Pet Company** (healthyhemppet.com) are designed for pet use. Hemp's cannabinoids, terpenes,

and flavonoids help relieve pain, swelling, and other arthritis symptoms in dogs.

- The Australian remedy **DGP** (Dog Gone Pain, see dgpforpets.com) contains marine collagen extract, boswellia, corydalis root, wheatgrass, turmeric, feverfew, celery seed, and a proprietary blend of wild rosella, capsicum, aniseed, mountain pepper, and other ingredients along with the enzymes bromelain and papain.

- **Dr. Christopher's Complete Tissue and Bone Formula** is a dry herb blend containing white oak bark, comfrey root, marshmallow root, mullein leaf, black walnut leaf, gravel root, wormwood, lobelia, and skullcap. It's named for the late Dr. John Christopher and is available from Dr. Christopher's Herb Shop (drchristophersherbshop.com).

I like to simmer four rounded teaspoons of the dry blend in a covered quart of water for up to an hour, then let the tea cool to room temperature before straining it into a glass jar and refrigerating. Because of its comfrey and wormwood content, this tea is *not* recommended for internal use. It can be gently rubbed into

the skin around sore joints, poured over the neck, spine, or other affected joints as a rinse, or applied as a compress where needed. Apply frequently, two or three times a day, for best results. Refrigerated tea keeps for about a week.

- **HerbAprin** (formerly Herbal Aspirin) from Glacier Peak Holistics (glacierpeakholistics.com) provides a proprietary blend of white willow, feverfew, skullcap, valerian, chamomile, rosemary, passion flower, and cayenne for dogs. It is available in tincture, powder, and capsule form.

Note that HerbAprin contains white willow, which should not be combined with COX-2 Inhibitors or NSAIDs. It also contains rosemary, which is not recommended for dogs with seizure disorders.

- **Muscle and Joint Support** from Pet Alive (nativeremedies.com) contains devil's claw, spirulina, lecithin, and glucosamine sulfate. 🐾

In the next issue, we'll discuss essential oils and aromatherapy products that can help a dog with arthritis.

WHERE TO START

There are so many arthritis remedies available; how should you decide which to try first? And, once you start a supplement, how can you tell whether it's helping? Individuals respond differently; what works for your friend's dog might have no effect on yours, and vice versa. Even without treatment, a dog's symptoms can change from day to day, making it hard to measure improvement.

You have to start somewhere, so it's worth trying a remedy that helped a dog you know, that was recommended by someone whose opinion you respect, or that for other reasons looks promising.

We suggest experimenting with one remedy at a time, following label directions for a "course" of treatment, which is typically four to six weeks, or until the package is empty. Of course, if the dog has an adverse reaction or seems worse, discontinue that product and try something else.

Is your dog better? The best way to determine that is with an objective measurement of some kind. For example, can she no longer jump onto the sofa or your car's back seat, climb up and down stairs, or play with friends? If she resumes those activities while on a supplement, it's probably working.

Mary Straus spent years working with her dog Piglet's arthritis. "I was always trying something new," she says. "If I thought I saw improvement, I added it to the regimen. If I didn't see any change, I stopped giving it after I ran out. That gave me another chance to see if it was helping, because if the product was effective, the dog could get worse after stopping."

I love WDJ; I've been getting it for years. But I had to write for the first time. In "Helping Itchy Dogs" (February 2016) the author speaks about the benefits of regular bathing for dogs who are hypersensitive to allergens that are absorbed through the dog's skin. But she never mentions anything about drying the dogs afterward.

I am a dog groomer, and have seen too many double-coated breeds who are bathed often or swim regularly who are not properly dried. Their skin starts to almost mildew, especially if they live in the humid Northeast, as I do. They just never dry completely. It really benefits all dogs (but especially the double-coated ones) to be positively conditioned to an air dryer, and well dried after every bath or swim.

Just thought I would mention this as an important addition to a great article.

Nancy Cusumano
The Grooming Room, Ithaca, NY

Thanks for your contribution! And we're sorry that it took so long for us to include this important information.

Regarding "A Different Tack" (WDJ June 2016), your article on surgery to prevent bloat: I opted for the gastropexy when I had my Mastiff neutered at 2½ years old. I know it's no guarantee, but I felt a bit more comfortable that if he should bloat, it would prevent torsion of the bowel, the most dangerous part of bloating, and give me more time to get him to the ER (in case I didn't pick up on the symptoms as quickly as I should).

About eight months later, he ended up in the ER and underwent surgery for an intestinal blockage (ham bone, raw, packed for dogs and sold at local dog supply - another lesson learned!). Thankfully, it was a success, but when the surgeon came out to discuss the surgery, he also told me that my dog's previous gastropexy had failed! So much for peace of mind! I didn't even know that was a possibility!

This is by no means a commentary on the gastropexy. As long as I have my big boys I will get this surgery; any chance for help is worth it, because this is one condition that scares me to death! I just want people to know that this can happen! If my boy hadn't had this horrible blockage, I'd have never known it was even possible for a gastropexy to fail. It's not like there's a way to see inside them to doublecheck the vet's work! I do feel confident that the surgery won't fail this time, mainly because of the experience of this doctor, who was a surgery specialist, and who assured me with confidence as only a surgeon can, that "this surgery will *not* fail!"

Robin Slayton, via email

We had never heard of a gastropexy failing before, either! It's a good possibility that owners whose dogs had been previously subjected to the procedure might discount the possibility that their dogs were bloating, even in the face of evidence to the contrary, because they didn't know that this "stomach tacking" could fail. Thanks for sharing your story! And best of luck with your dog; you've had enough bad luck for his lifetime!

I always enjoy the WDJ! Even as a trainer, I always learn something.

I do have a comment about an article in the August 2016 issue. Pat Miller's article "Fear Aggression" lists credentials for qualified trainers. Jean Donaldson's Academy graduates are listed as JDAs, but that is incorrect. Graduates of The Academy for Dog Trainers are identified with the initials CTC, which stands for "Certificate of Training and Counseling." (I happen to be a student at the Academy, so I caught this.)

Christine Michaud, PMCT, CPDT-KA
Family Dog Training, LLC, Fairfax Station, VA

We appreciate you for pointing that out. There are a lot of training credentials today, and a lot of initials to keep straight!

First of all, I love your magazine and have subscribed for years. But I was very disappointed that you didn't include the original Woof Hoof Tret Bags in your review of treat bags ("Best Bait Bags," WDJ August 2016). Yes, the product I like is spelled Tret, not treat. With the magnetic closure, sturdy material, and easy cleaning it is a wonderful small, single-pocket treat bag. We have used them for years and love them. They are a top seller in our small retail store within our 30,000 square foot training center. They retail for around \$15. They also offer a slightly larger one with a clicker holder. For more information, see woofhoof.com.

Kim Sykes, CPDT-KA
Broken Arrow, OK

We'll have to order one to check out. Dog people are such equipment devotees, and you never know which one will suit you best until you've tried several. Thanks for the recommendation.

You are likely done with printing all the interesting behaviors that dogs have taught their owners ("Unique Cues," September 2016). But I have to tell you about one more, because it's so healthy.

My dog has learned to demand having her teeth brushed! I read that coconut oil was very good for dogs. About a year ago, I started using it to brush my dog's teeth. Every night for the past year, our 2-year-old dog Lila will come to me and paw my leg while staring straight into my eyes, about an hour after her dinner meal. She will not leave me alone until I say, "Ready for your teeth to be brushed?" She looks at me, licks her lips, and runs into the bathroom. I lift her up (she weighs only 18 pounds) to the sink area and dip her brush into the jar of coconut oil. By now, she lets me insert the brush and do the outside of all her teeth surfaces. I know this will keep us from vet bills down the line, and oh my! Her breath smells great! It's really adorable.

Michele Smith
Via email

That does sound adorable, and healthy! Coconut oil makes a terrific "toothpaste" for dogs, and tastes so good that it reinforces the behavior very nicely. Smart! 🐾

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- ❖ **Chirag Patel**, BSc (Hons), PGCert (CAB), CPBC, DipCABT, Domesticated Manners, London, England. See domesticatedmanners.com/the-bucket-game and [facebook.com/thebucketgame](https://www.facebook.com/thebucketgame) for videos of Patel demonstrating and discussing the Bucket Game.
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