

Your complete guide to natural dog care and training

# Whole Dog Journal™



**On page 3. Getting past trauma:** If you and your dog have been accosted – or even attacked – by loose dogs, both of you may need some help getting past the trauma. Here's how to start.



**On page 14. These shampoos are not** truly hypoallergenic, but some might help prevent your pup's adverse reaction.



**On page 20. Training and preparation** will ensure that you and your dog have a great, safe time out in the world this summer.

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# Reduce Reactivity

*It's not just dogs who seem ever more volatile and on edge— it's dog owners, too. Think there's a connection?*

It's been widely observed that our society has gotten increasingly polarized over the past few years, with massive breakdowns in civil discourse between not just acquaintances, but also good friends, work associates, and even family members. Our most recent presidential election seemed to boost the level of tension and intolerance into the red zone. Many of my friends seem to be on permanent boil; others seem to have just checked out, distancing themselves from all forms of socializing.



Is it any wonder that this could also describe many of the dogs I hear about today? Owners today have more information about dog behavior and training, and more resources and innovative, high-tech equipment available for helping monitor, train, and entertain their dogs, and yet I hear about even more behavior problems than ever – especially dog-dog aggression.

After hearing one story about a dog killing one of the other dogs in its home, Training Editor Pat Miller and I have been discussing writing an article about the phenomenon of intra-pack aggression – and since we started discussing the idea a few months ago, we've heard of *six* additional cases.

I don't claim to have all the answers, but, in my opinion, becoming aware that we have a problem is how we start fixing it. Much of our society is anxious and mad right now – and so are our dogs. For their sake, and ours, and that of our country, I think we all need to take a breath and practice calming ourselves and each other. We can use the techniques trainer Stephanie Colman describes in her article on the facing page! Changing our own emotional responses to things that reflexively make us angry and anxious can't help but improve our moods – and just may improve our dogs' moods, too.

My own calming haven, a local open space preserve, reopens to off-leash dogs at the end of this month. I'm so looking forward to getting back out there with my dogs, so we can fill our lungs to bursting with fresh air, and work our muscles into that good kind of tiredness with swimming and running and playing. If *you* have any such place – or some *other* sort of all-consuming activity that you can enjoy with your dogs – please take the time to enjoy that, and recharge your and your dog's mental and emotional batteries, *soon!* (For more ideas on summer fun with your dog, see trainer Helene Goldberger's article on page 20.)

I sincerely believe if we all do our part to center and calm ourselves (and our dogs, too, of course), we can reduce the aggression in our society, human and canine. And trying certainly can't hurt anything. Join me?

NK



# The Road to Recovery

*Have you and your dog ever been accosted – or even attacked – by another dog or dogs while out on a walk? If so, your dog probably needs some help to put the experience behind her.*

Maybe it was after the time your mild-mannered Maltese puppy was dramatically barrel-rolled by the fun-loving Labrador during a critical developmental period. Or maybe the potentially personality-altering offense was more obvious – like a blatant attack by another dog while on a walk.

In either case, it's very possible the experience has left your dog leery of other dogs. And with good reason! In many dogs, this well-founded fear presents as an aggressive front; after all, the best defense is a strong offense. While your dog might look like he's trying to be a "tough guy," what he's really saying is, "HELP! I'm very frightened of that dog. Please don't let it come any closer. Get back! Get away!"

This is problematic for many reasons. Owners are often embarrassed by their dog's outbursts, not understanding that the unwanted behavior is rooted in an emotional issue (fear) and is not a display of disobedience. A recent Facebook post (author unknown) sums it up beautifully: "Your dog isn't giving you a hard time; he's having one!" Yes!

## STRESS MONKEY ON YOUR BACK

Beyond the human hang-ups and logistical challenges associated with a dog who now displays reactive behavior in the presence of other dogs, we must consider the impact on the dog. Reactive outbursts are the product of distress, and distress is serious business. It takes a long time for the body to recover from the jolt of hormones that happens during a distressful event. This altered brain state can leave your dog susceptible to triggers he might not otherwise react to, which is why many dogs can seem "edgy" for some time following a particularly stressful event.

According to Sara Reusche, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KSA, CVT, of Paws Abilities Dog Training in Rochester, Minnesota, while the initial adrenaline spike begins to subside after about



15 minutes, it can take between two to six days for glucocorticoids, like cortisol, to return to baseline levels, provided no other stressors occur. This is especially challenging for dogs who react to stimuli (other dogs, kids, skateboards, etc.) while on daily walks, as it's unlikely their cortisol and related hormone levels ever have a chance to return to normal.

Reusche adds that dogs who live with chronic distress are more likely to experience chronic health issues such as allergies and gastrointestinal disturbances. Chronic distress can also hasten the aging process, decrease cognitive function, and weaken the immune system, delaying wound healing and making the dog more susceptible to disease and infections (such as urinary tract infections). Here are things you can do to get the stress monkey off your backs:

**1 Give yourselves a break.** Like the joke goes, "I told my doctor it hurts when I bend my elbow. His solution? Don't bend my elbow!" Avoidance is not without its merits.

When helping a dog recover from a reactivity issue, it's important to keep your dog sub-threshold. This means going to great

*A dog or puppy who has had a scary interaction with another dog while on a walk may continue to act spooked while on walks for months. Or, she behave in an aggressive manner, or develop a reluctance to approach other dogs.*

*Create a new, happy, fun association with seeing other dogs when out on a walk by pulling out a special toy or especially delicious treats whenever your dog spots another dog at a distance. (Note that actual dog-reactive dogs should be leashed.)*



lengths to avoid putting the dog in situations where he feels so overwhelmed that he exhibits an emotional outburst. In densely populated areas, this often requires taking neighborhood walks during off-hours, or skipping the neighborhood altogether in favor of a shorter walk in a nearby shopping center. Both tactics serve to reduce unwanted dog encounters, especially when you aren't prepared to train your way through the situation.

Similar tactics include ducking behind parked cars, heading up a driveway, crossing the street, or abruptly changing directions. These are all reasonable, supportive measures that can be taken in an effort to quickly increase distance between yourselves and another dog. (Obviously, this is easier when the other dog is on leash. For tips on handling loose-dog encounters, see "Close Encounters," WDJ May 2016.)

Distance is your friend! Staying "sub-threshold" is largely about understanding at what distance your dog can acknowledge another dog's presence yet still feel safe enough to not react.

**2 Don't punish!** Harsh reprimands, leash-pops, and other forms of punishment might appear to offer relief, but, in reality, punishment often suppresses behavior only temporarily.

Reactivity is an emotional issue. The dog growls, barks, and lunges because of how he feels. Punishing the behavior is an ill-fated attempt to address the issue by focusing on the symptoms, not the cause. It's important to get to the root of the behavior – the dog's fear of other dogs, which is what's driving his behavior.

Punishment can also make problems worse when dogs, who are

masters at making strong associations, pair the punishment with the trigger. For example, let's say a dog growls when other dogs get too close. When he does, his owner issues a sharp collar correction and a harsh, "Quiet!" – both of which are unpleasant to the dog. Many dogs will begin to associate the sight of another dog with the impending act of aggression from the handler. In the dog's mind, "See! Other dogs are bad; they even make my owner aggressive!" And then the dog works even harder to keep the "bad dogs" away!

**3 Change your dog's emotional response.** As you work to keep your dog sub-threshold to help manage his behavior, you can also aim to change how he feels about other dogs. Counter-conditioning is a powerful tool to help change a dog's emotional state in the presence of a trigger. You can use two different types of counter-conditioning for a dog who has been traumatized: classical counter-conditioning and operant counter-conditioning.

Counter-conditioning is used in situations where the dog has already formed a negative association with something, because you're trying to

counter, or change, the association. This is most often accomplished with a powerful primary reinforcer, such as high-value treats, but access to favorite toys can also work for dogs who are highly motivated by toys.

In classical counter-conditioning, the goal is to try to transfer the positive feelings the dog has for high-value treats (or toy play) onto the trigger (in this case, the presence of other dogs), thus creating a new association in the dog's mind. For example, when you know at what distance your dog can see other dogs, but still feel safe enough to not react, be prepared to feed a steady stream of treats the entire time the trigger (another dog) is within eyesight. As soon as the dog is out of sight, the treats stop.

Trainer Jean Donaldson, author of *The Culture Clash*, calls this "Open Bar, Closed Bar." When the trigger is present, the bar is open and the treats flow freely. Once the trigger goes away, the bar is closed. People often mistakenly refer to this as using treats to "distract" the dog, but behavioral science is hard at work behind the scenes!

Also useful in mild cases of reactivity for building a new, improved response to the trigger, is *operant* counter-

conditioning: when in the presence of the trigger, the dog is asked to perform a specific behavior that is incompatible with the unwanted behavior.

For example, a dog who might otherwise bark or lunge at other dogs is asked to “look,” “watch,” or “sit” instead. It works because, through training, the dog has learned to enjoy performing the alternative behaviors (and being rewarded for doing so), and those good feelings help create a new and happy association with the trigger.

**Note:** If this seems difficult for your dog, you’re not keeping him at a sub-threshold distance from his trigger.

**4 Mind your cues!** Owners, too, often become tense in the presence of the dog’s trigger, either because they’re also on hyper-alert following an attack, or because they worry their dog will react undesirably. They may tense their shoulders, hold their breath – and they almost *always* tighten the leash. These behaviors can all be huge red flags to our dogs – a clear sign that danger is imminent!

If you find yourself tensing up as triggers appear, consider the following:

- Remember to breathe. When anxious, our breathing often becomes shallow. Deep, purposeful inhalations and exhalations help relieve tension (yours *and* your dog’s!)

### OTHER WDJ ARTICLES THAT MAY HELP

- *“Close Encounters: What to Do About Loose Dogs on Your Walk,” May 2016*
- *“Understanding Leash Aggression in Otherwise Friendly Dogs,” May 2012*
- *“Be Brave: Help Your Timid Dog Find Courage,” September 2011*
- *“When Packmates Fight,” April 2010*
- *“Constructional Aggression Treatment (CAT) Can Improve Behavior,” December 2009*
- *“Modifying Aggressive Behavior with CAT,” May 2008*

- Shake it off. Just as dogs use full-body shake-offs to relieve tension, humans also benefit. Practitioners of Tension & Trauma Release Exercise® believe a good shake helps release muscular tension, calms the nervous system, and encourages the body to return to a better state of balance.

- Sing to your dog. My training mentor often asks clients to sing “Happy Birthday” to their dogs when she sees them visibly tensing up. It sounds silly, and people feel silly doing it, but that’s why it works. It’s much harder to remain physically tense when you’re laughing about singing to your dog. Plus, most of us have strong positive associations with the song. (Operant counter-conditioning for the win!)

- Relax the leash. Your emotions travel down a tight leash like the Autobahn! Plus, a tight leash restricts natural dog body language and can make your dog feel trapped, increasing the odds he’ll react defensively.

**5 Create “safe” encounters with other dogs.** Dog encounters out in public are unpredictable, which means it can sometimes be hard to keep dogs sub-threshold while on the road to recovery.

While it’s important to try to do the best you can during everyday outings with your dogs, it’s also useful to recruit dog-owning friends to help. Dogs with mild reactivity often benefit from casual dog walks with mellow dogs who are indifferent to other dogs. Consider, also, attending a well-run good-manners class where a dog in emotional rehab can remain sub-threshold while building trust in his owner’s ability to keep everyone safe around other dogs. 🐾

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*It can be extremely challenging to train yourself to stay relaxed and calm – and to maintain a loose leash! – when you see your dog notice his trigger. Try marking a spot on your leash with electrical tape, and holding only that spot.*





HEALTH

# Easier Ear Drops

*Teaching your dog to willingly participate in this common husbandry behavior will pay dividends whether you need to medicate her ears or just keep them clean.*

*Start with a supply of tasty treats (or your dog's favorite toy) on hand, and a bottle of ear medicine or cleaning solution within your dog's sight. If he's already formed a negative response to the appearance of the bottle, you'll practice just having it in sight. If he's new to ear-cleaning or -medicating, you may be able to progress to touching or handling his ear fairly quickly.*



If you share your life with dogs long enough, chances are you'll be tasked with the need to administer ear drops (or similar). Some of us are blessed with profoundly patient dogs who easily tolerate the experience in exchange for a tasty morsel and our heartfelt affection. Other dogs are certain such drops are to be avoided at all cost.

In a perfect world, we'd all take the time to teach our dogs to calmly and cooperatively accept medically necessary handling long before such handling was necessary. In the real world, we often find ourselves scrambling to manage the situation as best as possible, with varying degrees of success.

Some people feel the only option is to increase the level of restraint needed to get the job done. This seems like the "easy answer" (at least for the human) in the short term, but it's important to remember it will likely make things worse in the long run as the dog comes

to associate the already unpleasant (to her) event with the added stress of intense physical restraint. Plus, who wants to knowingly distress their dog?

Fortunately, the following six steps can help teach your dog to more calmly accept ear drops, even when the lessons are taught in conjunction with actual ear drop application.

## **BUILD A POSITIVE ASSOCIATION**

For many dogs, simply seeing the medication bottle sends them packing. If the bottle comes out only when we intend to use it, and our dogs find the experience unpleasant, who can blame them for wanting to suddenly become invisible? Dogs are masters at learning our behavior patterns.

Instead of tending to the bottle only when it's time to apply medicated drops or ear wash, make a point to handle the bottle multiple times per day. Set the drops on the counter and toss your dog several small treats. She might be suspicious and ignore the treats at first. That's fine. Act like you didn't notice and busy yourself in the kitchen, ignoring both the medication bottle and your dog.

When she eats the treats, casually move the bottle to a new (still visible) location and toss more treats. If the medication keeps at room temperature, leave the bottle out to remind you to do this multiple times per day, even changing locations throughout the house. If it has to be refrigerated, leave yourself a note or set a reminder on your phone.

Be totally nonchalant about what you're doing, and most importantly, practice separately from the time when you actually need to apply the solution.

If (or when) the sight of the bottle is not a source of worry for your dog, or better yet, her eyes light up at the thought of the yummy treats to come, practice a similar exercise by holding the bottle in one hand while offering treats. If your dog has a nose-touch targeting behavior, present the bottom of the bottle and ask her

Photo credit: Stephanie Colman

to “touch” it in order to earn a treat. Again, practice often, separate from actual application sessions.

## BREAK IT DOWN

In teaching your dog to willingly participate in any husbandry behavior, the key is to break the desired behavior into several manageable pieces. Administering ear drops requires reaching for and touching the ear, lifting the flap (in dogs with droopy ears), exposing the upper end of the ear canal, juggling a medication bottle, and correctly aiming the nozzle – all before any solution even hits the ear!

Heavily rewarding your dog for each of the following steps can make the experience less stressful for everyone involved, while changing your dog’s emotional response for the better, which supports long-term training goals. Individual steps might include:

- **Investigate the ear.** With a bowl of tasty treats within arm’s reach, ask your dog to sit, and reach for her ear. The target behavior is your dog remaining in a sit as your hand makes contact with her ear. If she seems unfazed, mark (using a clicker, or a short verbal marker such as “Yes!” or “Good!”) as your hand makes brief contact, then deliver a treat. Repeat three to five times.

If your dog shies away as you reach for her ear, break this step into even smaller, easier steps. An easier step might be reaching toward, but not actually touching the ear, or touching the ear with one finger rather than your whole hand. Your goal is to find the version of the behavior that allows your dog to think, “That’s it? Wow. That’s easy!” Advance to the next step only when your dog seems completely

comfortable with the easier behavior. Don’t worry; it usually goes faster than you’d think.

If your dog remains relaxed while you touch the ear, progress to reaching for the ear and lifting the flap to expose the underside and inner ear. Mark and reward your dog’s calm acceptance of this brief behavior. Repeat three to five times. Next, reach for the ear, lift the flap, and briefly manipulate the ear as you would to gain better access to the ear canal. Mark and reward. Repeat three to five times.

- **Add the solution bottle.** If all is going well, repeat the previous steps, this time while holding the closed bottle in your hand. Remember to mark and reward each step along the way, even though it seems “easy” for your dog. That’s the point! If your dog seems reluctant with a step, back up and repeat easier steps for a few more repetitions.

- **Simulate solution application.** Actually dispensing ear drops or ear wash solution requires concentrated focus on the task at hand. It’s common to struggle to accurately aim the nozzle, fumble around in the process, tense up, and hold your breath as you work. Rather than initially pairing your own awkwardness with a shocking squirt of fluid, make tolerance for your behavior its own rewardable step for your dog. Go through all of the motions necessary to administer the ear drops, but leave the cap on the bottle. Mark, reward, and repeat.

- **Administer the drops.** By now, your dog should be thinking, “Hey, this isn’t so bad,” since she’s been rewarded handsomely for several small, easy steps along the way. Now you’re ready to administer the drops.

Approach this step just as you did during the simulated application step; the only difference should be the gentle squeeze of solution. Mark and immediately offer a jackpot of several small treats dispensed one at a time.

If your dog seems especially bothered by a squirt of solution, try soaking a cotton ball and let the solution trick-

le into the ear from the cotton ball, versus a “squirt” from a bottle. If your ear product needs to be refrigerated, ask your vet if a dose can be safely brought to room temperature first for a less shocking experience.

- **You’re almost done!** With the drops safely in place, it might be tempting to call it quits, but rather than end the session on the most difficult step, it’s wise to quickly run through the easier steps in reverse order, continuing to reward your dog along the way. To further stack the deck in your favor, make a point to follow eardrop sessions with one of your dog’s favorite activities such as mealtime, a walk, or a rousing game of tug or fetch.

- **Practice, practice, practice!** While the short-term goal is to successfully get the ear solution into the ear with as little fuss as possible, the long-term goal is to teach your dog to willingly cooperate in the process. To that end, remember to practice often, not just when it’s time to actually administer medication. Working your way through all but the final application step, several times a day, will go a long way toward improving your dog’s opinion of this often-necessary husbandry behavior.

Try keeping the solution bottle and treats handy when you watch television; challenge yourself to run through the practice steps during each commercial break. A one-hour show will provide at least three quick opportunities for training!

As with many things, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. It’s always a good idea to proactively teach our dogs to be comfortable with the many forms of handling they are likely to experience while in our care. At the same time, it’s never too late to break necessary behaviors into smaller pieces in an effort to reduce stress and increase cooperation with our canine friends. 🐾

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### What you should know

- *You can use this protocol to teach your dog to cooperate with any husbandry behavior, from brushing his teeth and taking his temperature, to trimming his nails and taking blood samples. Just break it down, reward, and practice!*



# Don't Whisper, Listen

*Pay attention to your dog's attempts to communicate and learn how to interpret them; it will strengthen the relationship between you – and improve your training efforts.*



would see many more dogs living, long happy lives in forever homes.

## SPEAKING DOG

Dogs are primarily body language communicators. While they are certainly able to understand many of the words we speak to them, and capable of a range of vocalizations themselves (see “Want Some Cheese with That Whine?” WDJ May 2017, and “Oh Shush!” March 2017), their first language is body talk.

For someone who is very experienced with dogs – or someone who just has good

*While we humans often look at faces to help us understand what another individual is trying to express, when working with dogs, we also have to take into account what they are saying with their bodies. Without seeing these dogs' faces, you can tell that the dog on the left is very confident and assertive, and the dog on the right is a little frightened.*

The dog training world has become exponentially more aware of the significance of dog body language communication over the past two decades. We know how critically important it is in keeping dogs and people safe, and in building relationships of mutual trust and respect that result in lifelong bonds between canines and their humans. And yet we still see training and behavior professionals as well as regular dog owners who utterly fail to understand what their dogs are desperately trying to say to them.

This would be unfortunate even if it meant only that dogs and humans didn't have as close a relationship as they otherwise might. But it races beyond unfortunate all the way to tragic when the result of the miscommunication is the severing of the human-animal bond that keeps the dog in her happy home, serious injury to humans, or, all too often, the eventual euthanasia of the dog. This may be the result of a bite, or simply the lack of emotional connection that holds relationships together. If our species universally had a better understanding of what our dogs are trying to communicate to us, we

natural instincts about dog body language – canine communications are obvious and intuitive. But even people with very little experience with dogs can learn to “hear” what dogs are expressing with their ears, eyes, mouths, tails, and posture. And there is immense value in learning how to understand those communications; the ability to read and react appropriately to dog body language not only keeps you safe, it greatly enhances your relationship with your own dog, as well as others you may encounter.

One good way to begin your canine language studies is to pay attention to how dogs may use their body parts in varying ways to express different things.

## TAIL

- Tucked under: Appeasing, deferent or fearful
- Low and still: Calm, relaxed
- Low to medium carriage, gently waving: Relaxed, friendly
- Low to medium carriage, fast wag: Appeasing or happy, friendly



- High carriage, still/vibrating or fast wag: Tension, arousal, excitement; could be play arousal or aggression arousal (note that a wagging tail does not always mean a happy dog!)

## EARS

- Pinned back: Appeasing, deferent or fearful
- Back and relaxed: Calm, relaxed, friendly
- Forward and relaxed: Aware, friendly
- Pricked forward: Alert, excitement, arousal, assertive; could be play arousal or aggression arousal

## EYES

- Averted, no eye contact: Appeasing, deferent or fearful (avoidance); may be a subtle flick of the eyes, or may turn entire head away
- Squinting, or eyes closed: Appeasing, happy greeting
- Soft, direct eye contact: Calm, relaxed, friendly
- Eyes open wide: Confident, assertive
- Hard stare: Alert, excitement, arousal; could be play arousal or aggression arousal

## MOUTH

- Lips pulled back: Appeasing or fearful (may also be lifted in “submissive grin” or “aggressive grin”)
- Licking lips, yawning: Stressed, fearful, or tired
- Lips relaxed: Calm, friendly
- Lips puckered forward, may be lifted (snarl): Assertive, threat

## HAIR

Piloerection or “raised hackles” is a sign of arousal. While it can indicate aggression, dogs may also exhibit piloerection when they are fearful, uncertain, or engaged in excited play.

## BODY POSTURE

- Behind vertical, lowered; hackles may be raised: Appeasing or fearful

## Danger Signs

The number of times a person has been bitten gives a big clue as to his capacity to read, understand, and respond properly to canine communications. Someone who has been bitten numerous times either doesn’t pay attention to what dogs say, or doesn’t respond appropriately.

Dogs almost always give clear signals – though the signs may be subtle – before they bite. A “bite without warning” is truly a rare occurrence. Most of the time the human just wasn’t listening, or didn’t have any education about what the dog was expressing. I have worked with dogs professionally for more than 40 years and, knock wood, experienced only a handful of bites, none of them serious.

I remember with crystal clarity an incident from when I was a humane officer for the Marin (California) Humane Society, responding to a complaint of a Rhodesian Ridgeback who was at large – and reportedly aggressive toward people. I pulled up in my animal control truck, got out, and started up the sidewalk toward the house. Suddenly I saw a brown blur out of the corner of my eye, and realized the Ridgeback was charging at me from behind the house. I froze in place.

She ran straight up to me and muzzle-punched me (hit me with her closed mouth). Although I had not received any in-depth training in understanding dog body language, I realized that this was a strong warning, and if I moved abruptly she would likely bite me. She stepped back a couple of feet, and I slowly backed up to my truck. Once there I was able to retrieve a control pole, gently noose her, load her into my truck and, unscathed, walk back to the house to talk to her owner. Phew!

The ability to read and react appropriately to dog body language can keep you safe with your own dog as well as others you may encounter. Want to guess at the level of danger being presented by these four dogs, who are all expressing some degree of aggression? (See next page for more information.)



## Danger Signs

Let's see how well you read the danger signs that were visible in the pictures on the previous page. It wasn't exactly fair, because we hid some of the information that would have helped you understand the message the dog was sending.



This mother dog is giving the photographer a direct stare – and her eyes look somewhat “hard.” Her stiff, forward-leaning posture and ears, and *slightly* pushed-forward lips, are warning you to stay back. She’s not aroused, just guarding her puppies. It would be wise to heed her warning.

The next dog is also pushing her lips forward, in a slightly more threatening display. Her posture, tail, and ears are quite stiff, and her hair is standing up a little. She’s laser-focused on another dog, and not in a particularly friendly way. This dog hasn’t aggressed yet, but she’s starting to get aroused. We’d give her a wide berth.



Here are two dog body language lessons in one photo. The adult dog is making a fearsome face, drawing his lips back in an impressive snarl, and holding his ears and tail up and stiff. But notice that he’s not leaning at all forward, and his eyes are not super hard (though it’s difficult to see from this angle). He’s giving the puppy a stern warning to “Don’t come near me!” and the puppy reads this loud and clear. She’s responded with a classic puppy grovel: she’s lowered her body posture and leaned

backward, and she’s holding her ears back and wagging her tail. She won’t look directly at the adult, but looks away with soft, squinty eyes. Note that she’s trying to appease the adult dog – she’s acknowledging his warning – but she isn’t terrified or afraid for her life.

This dog is dangerously conflicted. His lips are pushed forward hard, but his ears are pinned back; his eye contact is hard and direct but his tail is low. His posture looks like he’s leaning forward *and* back; he’s frightened *and* willing to come after you. This dog was being held following his (and another dog’s) attack on an elderly woman who was in her own yard. The dogs were untrained, unsocialized, and inadequately contained; both paid the ultimate price for their owner’s negligence and irresponsibility.



- Vertical, full height: Confident, relaxed
- Ahead of vertical, standing tall; hackles may be raised: Assertive, alert, excitement, arousal, possibly play arousal or aggressive arousal
- Shoulders lowered, hindquarters elevated: A play bow – clear invitation to play; dog sending a message that behavior that might otherwise look like aggression is intended in play

Note that many of the body language communications can have multiple meanings. The actual intent is determined by looking at the whole picture. A dog with her ears pricked forward and hackles raised accompanying a play bow is sending an entirely different message from the one with her ears pricked forward, hackles raised, standing tall and ahead of the vertical, giving a hard stare.

Once you’re good at reading canine body language, in a crisis, you will be able to quickly see the whole picture and respond appropriately, without having to take the time to analyze individual body parts.

In less urgent times, make a point of observing dog body language communications more thoughtfully, and respond appropriately – by greeting dogs who are clearly inviting interactions, and helping a dog who may show subtle signs of discomfort by not invading her comfort zone.

### HUMAN BODY LANGUAGE

Your ability to communicate appropriately back to your dog is every bit as important as your ability to read her communications. Making direct eye contact, bending forward from the waist, and reaching over the top of the head are some of the most common body language mistakes humans make with dogs.

Here are more appropriate ways to communicate your friendly intentions to the dog in front of you:

#### ■ Eye Contact

In our culture, direct eye contact is admired. Someone who doesn’t look you in the eye is perceived as shifty,

untruthful, or weak. Though there are other cultures where this is not true, in this part of the world, we humans regard making direct eye contact as the right and honorable way to greet other sentient beings.

In a dog's world, however, direct eye contact is a challenge or a threat, while looking away is a sign of deference, appeasement, or respect. If you make direct eye contact with a dog and see signs of appeasement, fear, deference, or defensive or offensive aggression, you know this is a dog who is not comfortable with direct eye contact. Experienced handlers approach dogs with soft eye contact or without making eye contact at all.

That said, we make it a point to teach our own dogs that direct eye contact with a human is a highly rewarded behavior. Dog trainers from coast to coast go to great lengths to reinforce their dogs for making and maintaining eye contact.

When approaching a dog you don't know, or if your own dog seems wary of you when you approach her, try looking off to the side or over her head instead of directly into her eyes. If she seems comfortable, try making brief, soft eye contact and see how she reacts. If her body language stays soft and she continues to approach you, she is probably comfortable with at least *some* eye contact. Take it slow.

■ **Hands**

What's the first thing you're likely to do when you're introduced to a human stranger? Reach out boldly and shake hands with a firm grip. What's the first thing many humans are likely to do when they meet a dog? Reach out boldly and pat her on top of the head. Non-dog-savvy humans, that is. Many dogs *hate* being patted on top of the head, although some tolerate it; only a small minority may actually enjoy it.

If you want to make a good impression on the canines you meet,

you might do best not to reach out at all. Rather, allow the dog to offer the first contact with you.

If you must reach toward a dog, offer your open hand, palm up, below her chin level, and let *her* reach forward to sniff. If she invites closer contact, try scratching gently under her chin or

behind her ear – most dogs love that. Watch her response; she may not like touch, or she may not yet be ready for that much intimacy from a stranger. If she pulls away or shows signs of fear, appeasement, avoidance, or aggression, respect her message and stop trying to touch her.

## The Eyes Have It

If your dog doesn't already know the value of eye contact with humans, you can easily teach her. This is an operant conditioning/positive reinforcement exercise – your dog learns her behavior can make good stuff happen:



**1** Holding a tasty treat in your hand, have your dog sit in front of you.

**2** Show her the treat and move it to the corner of your eye. When her eyes meet yours, click and treat. Repeat.

**3** Say the cue "Watch!" just before you move the treat to your eye. When she makes eye contact, click and treat. Repeat.

**4** After several repetitions (the number of repetitions needed will depend on the individual dog), pause after you give the "Watch!" cue and see if she looks into your eyes. If she does, click and treat. If she doesn't, move the treat to your eye, click and treat.

**5** Say "Watch!" Move the treat halfway to your eye, and wait. Just wait. Eventually she will glance at your eyes. Click and treat. (If she never looks at your eyes, do several more repetitions of Step 4.)

**6** Say "Watch" and hold the treat at arm's length out to the side. Wait. She will likely stare at the treat for a moment or two, but invariably, within a few moments, she will glance at your face (usually, in an effort to try to figure out what you are doing!). When she makes eye contact, click and treat.

When your dog has come to realize the value of eye contact, she will sometimes offer the behavior without being cued. Be sure to reinforce offered eye contact as well as cued eye contact. To help her be comfortable with eye contact from other humans, ask your friends to play the "Watch" game with her as well.

■ Hugs

Even in the world of humans, you'd be offended if someone you didn't know walked up and wrapped arms around you in an intimate hug. Lots of dogs are equally offended, even by hugs from someone they know well. Sure, there are dogs who invite hugs and snuggles, but they are the exception, not the rule.

Never try to hug a dog you don't know (and don't let your children do it, either!).

If you are in the habit of hugging (or allowing your children to hug) your

own dog, video some hugs in action and take a good hard look at her body language. If your dog leans into the hugs with a relaxed body and soft expression, you're on solid ground. In contrast, if you see your dog ducking, looking away, leaning away, tensing up, or offering other avoidance signals, you might want to rethink your hugging program.

If you're dead set on hugging a dog who isn't loving it, then make a commitment to a counter-conditioning program that can teach her to love – or at least calmly accept – hugs.

■ Body Orientation

Remember that approach for greeting another human and shaking her hand? You probably stood tall and offered a full-frontal presentation at the same time; we humans would think it quite weird if someone crouched and/or sidled up to us to say hello.

However, to a dog, a face-front direct approach along with direct eye contact screams, "Threat!" Equally offensive to many dogs is the human habit of bending or hovering over a dog. If you watch a dog professional making the acquaintance of a new

## Must Love Hugs?

I confess – I love hugging dogs as much as the next human. Of the three Miller dogs, two love to be hugged (Kai the Kelpie and Bonnie the Scorgidoodle), while

Lucy the Corgi, has made her no-hugging preferences abundantly clear with avoidance behaviors, so I don't even try. If we didn't have at least one dog who loved hugs, I might need to teach one to at least tolerate them.

This process involves either classical conditioning (giving a puppy a positive association with something she

doesn't already have an opinion of), or classical counter-conditioning (giving a dog a new association with something she already has a negative opinion of). Either way, the process is similar, but it may go slower if you are working to change an existing opinion rather than simply installing one where none previously exists.

1 Sit next to your sitting dog, with a handful of tasty treats in the hand farthest from your dog. (Assuming your dog is on your left side, have treats in your right hand. If you prefer the other side, just flip the following directions.)



2 Touch the top of your dog's shoulders (the withers) briefly with your left hand. While your hand is touching her, immediately deliver a high-value treat to her mouth with your right hand. Remove both hands at the same time.

3 Repeat the brief touch-then-feed process until you see your dog brighten happily and turn to look for the arrival of the treat when you touch her. (Note: If you can't get her happy at this step, don't go any further. You have three choices now: a) Seek the help of a positive reinforcement-based trainer to help you with the process; b) Resign yourself to hugging other humans instead of your dog; c) Look to adopt a second dog into your family who clearly loves being hugged.)

4 Gradually increase the length of time you touch her. As you increase the length of touch, feed, pause, then feed again. Feed multiple times as the length of touch-time increase.

5 Now touch your dog on her far shoulder, just the other side of the withers, and immediately feed. This will start to move your arm over her back as is you are beginning to hug her.

6 Repeat this touch as you did with the withers touch, gradually increasing length of time and multiple feedings as she looks happy about the process.

7 Slowly increase the approximations of your touch toward an actual hug, making sure you get a consistent positive response at each step before proceeding further.



Thanks to Sarah Richardson of The Canine Connection in Chico, Calif., for demonstrating these techniques.

*This is the safest way to greet a strange dog, especially if he's fearful or wary. Keep your body low and your gaze soft and averted; no direct stares. Hold an open hand toward the dog but low. Allow the dog to smell your hand and decide whether he's comfortable getting closer to you.*

canine friend, you are likely to see her kneel sideways while avoiding eye contact, either keeping her hands close to her body or offering an open hand low to the ground.

Take your lead from professional trainers and handlers. The more wary of you the dog appears, the more important it is for you to turn sideways and make yourself small and non-threatening. Of course, if you're greeting an enthusiastic Labrador Retriever who is happily trying to body-slam you at the end of his leash, you're probably safe to stand up and face front. But, still, no hugs, head-pats, or hovering, please.

■ **Movement**

Dogs, especially dogs who aren't completely comfortable with humans, are very sensitive to our movement. Fast, sudden, and erratic movements can be alarming, especially if they are combined with direct eye contact and inappropriate hand-reaching. Slow, calm movement – or in some case no movement at all – is a better approach with a dog you don't know.

■ **Demeanor**

Now here's the tricky part. Often, when humans are trying to avoid eye contact, move slowly, speak softly, turn sideways, and control the movement of their hands, they end up looking tense

and awkward. Or just plain weird. And that can be very alarming to a dog who isn't sure about the approaching human – or humans in general.

To avoid this, video yourself with your own dog while you train yourself to control your eye contact, hands, and body postures. Practice until you can act natural while doing all the approach and greeting behaviors that feel very unnatural. Then ask your friends if you can try it with *their* dogs. Get really good at it before you try it with random dogs you meet in public. And always remember to ask the dog's owner first for permission to greet – and respect their wishes if they hesitate or say no.

You obviously care about dogs; you are a Whole Dog Journal reader. Care enough about them to learn how to speak their language. Your dog is speaking to you all the time. Remember to listen with your eyes. 🐾

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CONSUMER  
ALERT

# Shampoos for Dogs with Sensitive Skin

*The appellation “hypoallergenic” is a misnomer, but alert owners can find products that are safer and gentler than regular dog shampoos.*



*There are countless so-called “hypoallergenic” dog shampoos on the market, but some are far more likely to provide a safe cleansing experience for your sensitive dog than others. This article explains what to look for and look out for.*

With literally hundreds of dog shampoos on the market, it can be difficult to decide which one is best for your dog. Many of us overly cautious dog owners correctly want to avoid dyes, fragrances, and chemicals, knowing these ingredients can irritate our dog’s skin – and possibly adversely affect his health. We believe a shampoo with the word “hypoallergenic” in its name should be safer and better for our dog’s overall health.

The problem is, there is no legal definition of the term “hypoallergenic” (see sidebar, opposite page).

If you asked any adult for a common definition (rather than a legal definition) of *hypoallergenic*, most would likely guess that it means a product without allergens in it – even though this is impossible. Every substance,

including water, can cause an allergic reaction in someone, somewhere. The prefix *hypo* actually means “beneath” or “below.” Medical dictionaries do the best job of defining the phrase as “having *diminished* (our emphasis) potential for causing an allergic reaction.” In this instance, then, the word should be taken to identify a product that contains fewer potentially allergenic substances than other products on the market.

We have issues with the latter part of the word, too. Technically speaking, an allergen is any substance that causes an allergic response – one that sets off a hypersensitive immune response, ranging from localized inflammation to a fatal, systemic anaphylaxis. We’d submit that it probably is quite rare for a dog to suffer a true allergic reaction to an ingredient in

a shampoo; it's far more likely for a dog to suffer simple (if serious) contact dermatitis.

A dog with contact dermatitis from an ingredient or ingredients in his shampoo will likely have an immediate adverse response that's based on where the ingredients came into contact with his skin, the strength of the solution, and how long it was left on his skin.

In contrast, a dog with an allergic reaction may not exhibit signs of trouble the first time he comes in contact with the allergenic substance; however, subsequent exposures may bring about

more rapid and widespread reactions. He may exhibit skin irritation all over his body, even when exposed to the problematic allergen in a very small amount or for a very short period.

For all these reasons, we don't like the phrase *hypoallergenic* shampoo!

### GOOD INTENTIONS

Despite the lack of a legal or even accurate definition of the phrase "hypoallergenic shampoo," manufacturers that use that phrase are generally trying to identify products that are formulated without ingredients that

commonly cause adverse reactions in sensitive dogs. Given the lack of a legal description, we, too, are forced to use the appellation to discuss the type of product we'd recommend for dogs with super-sensitive skin. For the rest of the article, we're going to grit our teeth and refrain from using quotation marks around the phrase *hypoallergenic* shampoo, and trust that you understand.

Just keep in mind that while these products might reduce the potential for harming a chemically sensitive or allergy-prone dog, there are no

## What is a "hypoallergenic" dog shampoo – and who regulates these things?

The phrase "hypoallergenic" was first used in advertising by the cosmetics company Almay in 1953. Almay was founded in 1931 by Alfred and Fanny May Woititz when Alfred, a chemist, began developing skin care products for his wife – cosmetics that wouldn't irritate Fanny May's sensitive skin. Almay was the first company to market the concept of skincare product safety, and set itself apart by producing fragrance-free products, including all product ingredients on product labels, and testing its products for allergy and irritation. After its introduction by Almay, the description "hypoallergenic" quickly became widespread in the cosmetics industry – even if the products they described were not, in actual fact, less allergenic than other products.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates the cosmetic industry in the United States. The FDA provides guidance and enforcement for cosmetic companies in order to ensure the safety of consumers. It also provides oversight of labels and misrepresentations under the Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act and the Fair Packaging and Labeling Act. These Acts provide definitions for anything that can be on a cosmetic product label. "Shampoo," not incidentally, is defined as a cosmetic: "articles intended to be rubbed, poured, sprinkled, or sprayed on, introduced into, or otherwise applied to the human body . . . for cleansing, beautifying, promoting attractiveness, or altering the appearance... "

In 1974, the FDA attempted to regulate the phrase hypoallergenic as it pertains to cosmetics. It proposed that a product should be permitted to be labeled hypoallergenic only if scientific studies on human subjects showed the product caused a significantly lower rate of

adverse skin reactions than ordinary products.

Comments on the proposal were received from consumers, consumer advocacy groups, and cosmetic manufacturers. The FDA issued its final regulation in 1975 – and two cosmetic companies, Almay and Clinique (another company specializing in "hypoallergenic" products), immediately filed suit to have the regulation ruled as invalid. Eventually, the U.S. Court of Appeals agreed with their objections, stating that the FDA had not demonstrated that consumers perceive the term "hypoallergenic" in the way described in the regulation.

The FDA has not attempted to codify regulations regarding hypoallergenic products since. A 1978 FDA consumer magazine article about the battles over the "hypoallergenic" regulations concluded, "As a result of the decision, manufacturers may continue to label and advertise their cosmetics as 'hypoallergenic' or make similar claims without any supporting evidence. Consumers will have no assurance that such claims are valid."

What about hypoallergenic dog shampoos? Well, it's even less charted territory. We've already established that *hypoallergenic* lacks a legal definition. Dog shampoos that claim to cure, treat, or otherwise mitigate a disease or ailment are regulated by the FDA's Center for Veterinary Medicine. Dog shampoos that claim to kill or control fleas or ticks fall under the regulatory purview of the Environmental Protection Agency. But "regular" dog shampoos, "hypoallergenic" or otherwise, fall under the category of "grooming aids," which are not regulated by any governmental or non-governmental agency in this country.

guarantees that this will be the case for any specific dog. And there are no regulators – only your own informed diligence – making sure that a product marketed as hypoallergenic has any fewer ingredients or less-harmful ingredients than any other ordinary shampoo.

## HALLMARKS OF HYPOALLERGENIC SHAMPOOS

Regular shampoos are developed to cleanse your dog’s skin and coat. Shampoos generally contain at least one “surface active agent” (surfactant), a compound that lowers the surface tension between two liquids. Depending on the surfactant/s used, their activity in the product may be detergent, wetting, emulsifying, foaming, or dispersing. Shampoos may also contain thickeners (to adjust the viscosity of the product), deodorizers, fragrance, color, detanglers, and preservatives.

Products meant for dogs with sensitive skin should contain as few ingredients as possible. A shorter ingredients list means the product has fewer possible ingredients that can potentially cause a reaction.

For this reason, hypoallergenic products generally omit some of the ingredients that provide some of the traits many of us are accustomed to having in a shampoo – compounds we have come to expect in a shampooing experience, but that are unnecessary and potentially harmful to the truly super-sensitive dog. Hypoallergenic shampoos, then, generally won’t be as thick as regular shampoos, and probably won’t lather up in a nice, lush manner; they’re formulated to rinse off quickly.

## TRAITS TO LOOK FOR

Here are the factors we weigh when shopping for a shampoo for super-sensitive dogs:

### ■ Ingredient disclosures

The label on your dog’s food must include a complete list of ingredients, but there is no legal requirement that his shampoo, hypoallergenic or other-



*If a product label promotes its lack of certain allegedly problematic ingredients, we'd appreciate it if it also was clear about what the product does contain.*

wise, must disclose its contents. Most shampoo labels list no ingredients at all or a generic description such as “all natural ingredients.”

In our opinion, though, the products that are marketed as particularly gentle or for dogs with particularly sensitive skin should be held to a higher standard than “regular” shampoos. Ideally, the makers of these products would list *every* ingredient, so that if her dog had a bad reaction to a product, a consumer could try to avoid products with those ingredients in the future – and possibly identify which ingredient caused problems for her dog.

For the most part, however, we’ve had to settle for products that list *most* of their ingredients and will specify which ingredients they *don’t* contain. That said, we consider it equally deceptive to promote a product as not containing specific unwanted ingredients but failing to state all that *is* in the product. If a dog has an adverse reaction to a particular shampoo, without a complete list of ingredients, the owner has no starting point for finding a replacement product.

*While we appreciate products that list ingredients at all (since they are not required by law to be listed), for dogs with sensitive skin, we strongly prefer the specific ingredients be named, rather than just descriptions of the ingredients.*

### ■ Concise descriptions

Label claims that are too vague, such as “all natural ingredients,” “proprietary,” or “herbal extracts,” get our consumer hackles up. What herbs? What plants? With generic ingredient listings like these, a consumer can’t determine if a product poses certain risks to her dog or not.

Also, the term “proprietary blend” doesn’t cut it for us. We understand that pet grooming is a competitive market, and we don’t expect a company to give away their secret formula. However, we’re not asking for the recipe. We just want to know what’s included in the finished product.

### ■ Few and simple ingredients

When choosing a shampoo for a sensitive dog, we look for products that cleanse our dog and rinse out easily, with a minimal number of simple ingredients. We’d avoid all unnecessary ingredients, such as perfumes, fragrances, and dyes.





■ **Dry skin? Avoid sulfates**

If a dog has particularly dry skin, you may wish to sacrifice suds and lather in order to avoid sulfates (including sodium lauryl sulfate, TEA lauryl sulfate, triethanolamine, and alkyl sodium sulfate) that can be irritating to dry skin.

Don't confuse sodium lauryl sulfate with the mild detergent sodium laureth sulfate, which is widely used as a water softener and in baby and other non-irritating shampoos as a wetting and cleansing ingredient.

■ **Long words are okay**

Some advisors recommend that dog owners avoid products that have words that can't easily be pronounced on the label. That's ridiculous. I can't say "rosmarinus officinalis," but I know that it is rosemary, a common ingredient in hypoallergenic shampoos. Rosemary offers natural preservative capabilities as well as deodorizing, anti-inflammatory, and antiseptic properties.

■ **Soap is okay, too**

Of course, your own dog will have to be the judge, but in general, we're not bothered by "soap" as an ingredient. Many hypoallergenic formulas bragged that they were "soap-free." Soap can be chemical or natural, and it isn't always harsh. If you see "saponified coconut oil" or "saponified olive oil" or something similar, the product contains soap. Saponification is the process by which vegetable oils or animal fats are made into soap.

■ **The preservative conundrum**

Preservatives are a double-edged ingredient. The chemicals that most effectively preserve shampoos are most likely to cause adverse reactions in sensitive dogs. Some examples include parabens, which might be listed on the label as propylparaben or butylparaben; these ingredients are also antibacterial. Some shampoos use formaldehyde as a preservative, which might be listed as sodium hydroxymethylhydroxymethylglycinate.

## Why is My Dog's Skin So Sensitive?

If your dog seems chronically itchy, or always seems to have red, irritated skin and/or excessive dander, make an appointment with your veterinarian.

The problem might just be caused by environmental allergies (to things such as pollen or dust mites) or too much sun (yes, dogs can get sunburned) – conditions that might benefit from a bath with a gentle, non-irritating shampoo.

But itchy dry skin can be caused by disease as well, including Cushing's, hypothyroidism, bacterial/fungal infections, parasites, environmental allergies, and even cancer. Itchy skin can also be a reaction to something the dog has eaten; your dog may be allergic to something in his diet. While a bath might give the skin temporary relief, you can't bathe away reactions to food.

Alternatively, a food might offer some relief; your veterinarian may recommend a nutritional supplement, such as fish oil, to promote skin health. But without a correct diagnosis, you delay proper treatment and the problem can worsen.

Or, you might just learn that your dog has inherited a propensity for irritated skin. "Genetics plays a big role in many of the skin diseases that veterinarians deal with. Coat color has an impact in some instances, such as white dogs sunburn more easily, but in many cases it's the breed that's the issue; for example, we see allergies in black, yellow, or chocolate Labs," says William H. Miller Jr., VMD, DACVD, Professor of Dermatology and Medical Director of the Companion Animal Hospital at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine.

"Some blue-colored dogs will lose hair because of a defect in their coat color genetics while other blue-colored dogs have beautiful coats because they don't have the abnormal coat color genes," Dr. Miller says.

The bottom line? Involve your veterinarian any time a skin condition fails to improve within a week after a bath with a gentle shampoo. And certainly take a hard look at that shampoo bottle if it worsens!

See also:

- "Helping Itchy Dogs," 2/16
- "Allergic Dogs and Food Elimination Diets," 3/15
- "Allergies: Common Causes, Best Tests, Effective Treatments," 4/11



*Chronic itching should be investigated with the help of a veterinarian; it can't be simply washed away. In fact, too-frequent washing can worsen many skin conditions, even when hypoallergenic shampoos are used.*

*We know it doesn't look like it, but Woody is **covered** in a hypoallergenic shampoo; he's as lathered up as it's possible to be with this sort of product. Hypoallergenic shampoos often omit thickeners and lathering agents, so they won't feel as sudsy as "regular" shampoos.*

*It's still important to rinse the dog very well, until there is no trace of the shampoo left on his coat, though it may be less obvious when you have accomplished this.*



One common shampoo preservative is methylchloroisothiazolinone, developed as a replacement for formaldehyde, and popular because it's also anti-bacterial and anti-fungal. According to safecosmetics.org, methylchloroisothiazolinone has been "linked to lung toxicity, allergic reactions, and possible neurotoxicity." No, thank you, not for my dogs.

If you choose products with natural preservatives, look to see what, specifically, is the preserving agent. Is it rosemary? Is it grape seed extract? Is it lemongrass? Is it something else?

If you want to avoid preservatives altogether, buy smaller bottles of shampoo with expiration dates. And make sure that if a preservative-free shampoo includes an expiration date, don't use the product beyond that date. It could mean that the preservative is no longer reliable after that date, so using it would totally negate the benefits of that product and, possibly, harm you or your dog.

## BATHING SENSITIVE DOGS

If your dog has an adverse reaction to any shampoo, contact your veterinarian to see if there is anything you should do to ameliorate his symptoms. Then note the product name and its ingredients in your dog's health journal, so you can avoid that product (and perhaps other products with similar formulations) in the future.

Keep in mind that the shampoo that you choose for your sensitive dog isn't the only "bath factor" that can affect his skin. Bathing your dog too often can compromise the health of his skin, even with a gentle product. Excessive bathing can remove your dog's natural oils and dry his skin and coat. Overly dry skin can crack, itch, and even bleed, setting the stage for more itching and possibly infection.

"For normal dogs, the biggest issue probably isn't the shampoo itself but how often the bath is given and what the whole bathing protocol involves," says William H. Miller Jr., VMD, DAC-

VD, Professor of Dermatology and Medical Director of the Companion Animal Hospital at the Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine. "Many people over-bathe their dogs, as far as skin health is concerned. You can *cause* some skin issues if you bathe your dog too often, even with a very mild shampoo." Also, while most groomers will tell you that a dog must be completely dried after a bath in order to prevent aggravating fungal skin conditions (especially if the dog has an extremely heavy coat), Dr. Miller contends that "intense blow drying after the bath can only make things worse."

A final note: Don't bathe your hypersensitive dog with a human shampoo, no matter how gentle it seems to be. Dog skin and human skin have different pH levels, with dogs being more alkaline and humans being more neutral. 🐾

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

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# It's Summer! Get Out and About With Your Dog

*An exhaustive list of resources for summertime fun – no excuses!*

Now that the warmer weather is on its way, many of us will be thinking of the different places and things we can do with our dogs in the great outdoors.

But before you embark on a trip with your dog, think of her individual preferences in addition to yours. It's wonderful when your dog is easygoing and gets along with everyone. Our dog Helen of Troy, CGC, TT, ATD, is one of those – she greets all humans and other dogs (and even cats and rabbits!) with a happy tail wag and sniff. But your dog may not be as social, so determine realistically the sort of places and times where and when your dog will be most comfortable. Is there a particular path or trail that is less populated at certain times? If your dog is reactive, maybe it's time to work on some counter-conditioning and desensitization before embarking. (See "Understanding Leash Aggression," May 2012.)

You could also enroll in a "Reactive Rover" class in your area as a prerequisite to your outdoor experience (but first make sure the trainer uses positive-reinforcement methods!). If there aren't any such classes accessible to you, check out the following resources:

- **The Leash Reactivity Blueprint** (DVD), by Tristan Flynn
- **Reactivity: A Program for Rehabilitation** (DVD), by Emily Larlham
- **Beware of the Dog**, by Pat Miller

Even if your dog is not reactive, get him ready for the great outdoors by practicing some basic manners, such as checking in with you (see "Train Your Dog to Check In," March 2017); playing the "name game" (see "The

*We're not all blessed with nearby areas where we can safely allow our dogs to run off leash – but it's certainly worth the investment in travel and training time to prepare your dog for a summertime field trip (sorry, couldn't resist!) to such a place!*



*Dozens of pet first-aid kits are sold, and each contains some unique and helpful items and some useless ones. See our review of these kits in the May 2015 issue.*

Importance of Your Dog's Name," January 2011); reliable recalls (see "Rocket Recalls," September 2015); and loose-leash walking ("Loose Leash Walking," April 2017). You can practice all of this in the comfort of your own home and, if available, your own backyard before venturing far afield. Or if possible, take a brush-up Good Manners class with a trainer who uses positive-reinforcement-based training.

Part of your spring planning might be to evaluate the equipment you currently use to walk your dog. If it's working for you, great. If your dog is pulling hard, apart from working on your technique, perhaps look into a front clip harness ("Harness the Power," April 2017), combined with a martingale collar or a head halter. (See [youtu.be/1wakterNyUg](https://youtu.be/1wakterNyUg) for a Jean Donaldson video on conditioning your dog to enjoy wearing a head halter.)

## ALWAYS CHECK THE RULES TO AVOID DISAPPOINTMENT

In preparing for your outing, make sure you check the rules. In our area, many of the trails and parks permit dogs but they must be leashed. I have, however, encountered locations that don't allow dogs at all. Don't risk receiving a citation after you've spent time and resources to get there; be sure you know you will be welcome with your canine companion.

I always remind my Family Manners clients that everyone is not required to love your dog. So, don't allow your dog to greet strangers – human or otherwise – without an invitation. As for greeting other dogs on leash – it's not the best scenario for a happy outcome. Similarly, if your dog is not comfortable meeting new people, just politely and firmly say to all would-be greeters, "My dog is not friendly" and move on.



Of course, you will always be ready to pick up your dog's waste. If people see owners who allow their dogs to defecate without cleaning up, run amok, and make themselves a nuisance, the areas where dogs are permitted will shrink.

Depending on the jurisdiction, you may need to carry proof of your dog's rabies vaccination and licensing. In some areas it's not enough to have a tag on your dog; you need a copy of the actual license. If you are traveling out of state with your dog, you may need a health certificate from your veterinarian.

## GEAR UP

Assuming your dog is physically and behaviorally ready to hit the trail, prepare yourself and your dog for your outing. It's a great idea to carry a backpack (and there are even nice ones your dog can carry as well) to carry all your trail essentials:

- **Water** (I use a bottle called a Gulpy, a plastic bottle that has a nifty device that allows your dog to drink right from the bottle without an additional bowl; see [newanglepet.com](http://newanglepet.com))
- **Snacks** for you and your dog, including training treats
- **And of course, poop bags!**

Unless your dog has an absolutely rock-solid recall, I suggest keeping her on a leash. You can use a longer one on the trail if that's helpful to you; there are nice 15-footers that will allow you to give your dog more freedom, such as the ones made by Bridgeport Equip-

ment ([Bridgeportequipment.com](http://Bridgeportequipment.com)) or a long line. (WDJ editor Nancy Kerns is never without her favorite, soft long line from White Pine Outfitters, [whitepineoutfitters.com](http://whitepineoutfitters.com).)

I don't recommend using retractable leads; the thin line can do damage to your hands if you grab it, and if dropped, the plastic handle can become a flying missile that scares your dog into a panicked run.

Be sure your dog has a tag on him with your current phone number on it – and carry a cellphone in case of emergency. It's a good idea to put together a basic first-aid kit that you keep in your car, with some essentials like gauze, bandages, sterile tape, cold compress, hydrogen peroxide, blanket, antibiotic cream, Benadryl (check with your vet regarding appropriate dosage for your dog), muzzle, and tweezers. (See our review of pet first-aid kits in the May 2015 issue.)

When hiking in the back country, I also always carry yummy treats and a can of Spray Shield (formerly Direct Stop) citronella spray. You never know when you might encounter a threatening dog and need to use the spray defensively. (See "Tips on Stopping a Loose Dog from Approaching You," May 2016.)

While vacationing on an island a couple of summers ago, my husband, our dog Helen, and I were standing by the harbor as a family came in on their dingy. Their dog visually locked onto Helen, and I sensed trouble even before he jumped out of their boat and made a beeline for us.

My husband scooped up our 39-pound pittie and while the other dog completely ignored his owners' shouts, I tossed treats at him, heading

*You don't have to stand up on a stand-up paddleboard, especially when you are sharing the ride with your dog. It's incredibly relaxing to sit and drift.*



toward his owners while Paul and Helen got away. If the treats didn't work, I was prepared to use the spray (but, thank goodness, I didn't have to). The spray is citronella-based and while it does no permanent harm, it will deter many dogs that are not as easily dissuaded by treats.

You may want to invest in one of the great treat bags WDJ reviewed in the August 2016 issue, which allow you to carry these essentials right on your belt.

Of course, it's critical that you consider your dog's comfort and hydration during any summertime activity. Heat-

stroke is a very real and dangerous (but fortunately preventable) condition, and dogs who haven't been slowly acclimated to exercising in high temperatures are at the highest risk. Make sure you have sufficient water to offer him, and offer it often! (See "Keep Your Dog Cool This Summer," May 2004.)

### ACTIVITY IDEAS

What about swimming? Many dogs absolutely love to engage in this activity, but some don't. Don't coerce your dog into the water; that's not going to improve his association with swimming. Our dog Chester was tentative

when we first introduced him to water, but dove in when we started throwing his beloved toys into the wet stuff.

There are many great floatable toys that your dog may enjoy retrieving, such as the Kong Company's Wubba toy. We found that just 10 to 15 minutes of this game resulted in a happy and tired dog. I do suggest you keep your dog on a long line and even have her wear a life vest made for dogs. (See "The Best Life Jackets for Dogs," July 2016.) Dogs drown, too! Don't even think of letting your dog have access to a pool or other body of water without careful supervision; my cousins lost their beautiful American Staffordshire Terrier when he couldn't get out of a neighbors' pool, and drowned.

Once home, I advise rinsing your dog off well. Whether the dog was in a chlorinated pool or in a natural body of water, there are plenty of potential

### What You Should Know: Premack Principle

*Another great thing about figuring out what makes your dog happy in terms of exercise and play time is you can use it for training. There is a behavioral principle conceived by Professor David Premack, popularly known as the "Premack Principle." (It's also known as Grandma's Law: "You have to eat your vegetables before you can have your dessert.") It states that you can use more probable behaviors to reinforce less probable ones. It means that you can get your dog to perform a less-fun behavior in order to have the opportunity to perform a more desirable behavior.*

*It's a simple concept – if your dog can't wait to get out to play with his favorite toy in the yard, ask him to sit politely at the door. Once he has achieved this, you can say, "Yes!" and throw him the toy.*

*Similarly, at the lake, if he is shaking with excitement to get in the water, don't just let him drag you there. Ask him to sit, walk politely, and, if necessary, even retreat to your vehicle. Don't let him wade or swim until he exhibits the self-control necessary to walk on a loose leash – and then let him have a blast!*

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## Driving With Your Dog

*I always crate my dogs when they are in my vehicle. If we were in an accident, the crate would likely contain them.*

*I have identifying information contained within a plastic sleeve attached to their crates, complete with the phone numbers of friends in case my husband and I were too badly hurt to help our dogs. I keep a copy of my dogs' rabies certificates and licenses there, as well as a statement about each dog and guaranteeing the payment of any vet bills.*

*If you prefer to use a seatbelt for your dog, check out WDJ's top picks for safety harnesses in the January 2015 issue.*

irritants that can make your dog itchy.

Many people love to run with their dogs. Count me among them (when Chester was younger)! It's important to assess the physical condition of your dog and the potential effects of running on his joints.

Consult with your veterinarian about when it's advisable to run a growing dog for extended periods, especially on hard surfaces. Once your dog is fully mature and you have determined he enjoys this activity, go for it! Be prepared with your treats, dog deterrent spray, and water.

Just as we are always advised to start slowly and work up to longer distances, so should we do with our dogs. In very warm weather, keep your runs short, or schedule these outings for cooler early-morning or evening hours. (For tips on starting an exercise program that will benefit you and your dog, see "Fitness Together," April 2013.)

Don't overlook social activities with your dog! Many towns have dog parks and some even have restaurants

that offer "Yappy Hours" for people who want to bring their dogs and socialize. Many farmers' markets allow people to bring their dogs, and parks and ballgames are other potential venues for summer fun.

Assess whether your dog is a candidate for such close quarters with other dogs and people. Be certain your dog will be an ambassador for his species and not a make himself a nuisance by jumping on people or grabbing food out of children's hands. Even if your dog is a good citizen, you may encounter other dogs who are not, and humans who are oblivious to their dogs' behaviors.

If you have a young dog or puppy, socialization is important, but make sure it's a positive experience for your young dog and don't let him get overwhelmed. (See "Puppy Socialization," May 2017.)

If you'd like to try a dog park, go by yourself first, and just observe from outside the fenced area. Does it seem well managed? Are small dogs separated from large? What's the culture like? Are the owners attentive, or just socializing among themselves and ignoring inappropriate canine behavior? Do the dogs get along, or is bullying happening – or even actual fights breaking out? If your assessment is positive, give it a try. (See "Dog Park Etiquette," September 2006.)



If the park looks more hazardous than happy, you may be better off setting up your own play dates, by inviting a couple of friends with nice, friendly dogs to your fenced yard, or borrowing a yard from a friend or neighbor for that purpose. In a familiar environment, you can better manage the dogs' interactions, and keep the number appropriate. If play gets too rough, ask your dog to come, reward her, let her rest a bit, and then rejoin.

For those of us who like more organized canine activities, search out local dog clubs and training centers and try a new sport! See WDJ's past articles:

- Agility (4/02)
- Competitive Obedience (6/10)
- Disc Dog (2/10)
- Flyball (5/02)
- Lure Coursing (9/09)
- Musical freestyle (12/04)
- Parkour (3/16)
- Rally Obedience (7/00)
- Stand-Up Paddleboarding (8/14)
- Tracking (7/10)
- Treibball (4/11)

There are countless other activities for your dogs outside whether, it's in your own backyard chasing a ball, fetching a flying disc, or playing with a flirt pole (such as the one made by Squishy Face Studio and available from Chewy.com and other online outlets), or hiking, swimming, or running. See WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller's book *Play With Your Dog* for even more ideas. Exercising your dog in this way will likely result in a calm and peaceful dog at home, but will also strengthen your relationship with your canine companion. Isn't that what it's all about? 🐾

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

Your complete guide to natural dog care and training

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## RESOURCES



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## BOOKS AND VIDEOS

WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of many books on force-free, pain-free, fear-free training, including *Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First Class Life*; *How to Foster Dogs: From Homeless to Homebound*; *Play With Your Dog*; *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog*, and more. All of these, and her newest book, *Beware of the Dog: Positive Solutions for Aggressive Behavior in Dogs*, are available from [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com) and [wholedogjournal.com](http://wholedogjournal.com)

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## What's ahead...

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Interventions for dogs who live together in a state of war.

### ▶ Non-pharmaceutical treatments for pain

When your senior dog hurts, you want as many tools as possible to get him and keep him out of pain. These unconventional treatments can help.

### ▶ Elizabethan alternatives

More comfortable yet effective options to the classic "cone."

### ▶ Fleas: Old Problem, New Remedies

The latest and safest products available for fighting flea infestations.

### ▶ A plan for poop

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