

Your complete guide to natural dog care and training

# Whole Dog Journal™



**On page 10. Great meeting, people!** – How to teach your dog to greet people and other dogs politely, and walk by them calmly when you would prefer they not meet.



**On page 7. Don't run away!** – How to diagnose and treat chronic diarrhea.



**On page 20. Finding the right dog** – Looking outside the usual adoption sites.

**3** *In the issue*

**THE HEART OF THE MATTER**

What is taurine-deficiency dilated cardiomyopathy, and how can owners prevent it? (Hint: It's not just about grain-free foods.)

**7**

**DOG GOT THE RUNS?**

The messy truth about diarrhea.

**10**

**MEET AND GREET? OR NOT!**

Calm and collected is the name of the game, whether you would like your dog to greet others or pass them by.

**15**

**DON'T SKIP STOOL SAMPLES**

For optimal health, give your dog the gift of a great diagnostic and screening tool.

**16**

**PROPER SUPERVISION**

There are many levels of supervision, and not all of them keep your dog safe.

**18**

**TAKING THE LID OFF**

The causes of and treatments for an especially irritating eye condition: entropion.

**20**

**BASKING IN SUNSHINE**

After losses, the joy of a new dog.

- 2** Editor's Note
- 22** Letters and Corrections
- 24** Resources





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# Be Prepared

*There is nowhere on earth where you and your pets are immune to a potential natural disaster, so why not get ready for one today?*

One of the worst moments in my life came about a year and a half ago, when the dam that looms over my town – the largest earthen-filled dam in North America, mind you – was proclaimed in an emergency broadcast to be in danger of imminent failure. I was 20 miles away, perfectly safe, with my younger dog, Woody. But my husband and my heart dog, Otto, and my son's dog, Cole, were all at my house, just five short miles downstream of the dam, and three blocks from the river channel that would likely be obliterated by the 3.5 million acre-feet of water behind the dam. My mouth went dry and my heart was pounding as I tried to call my husband. Despite the fact this requires pressing only two buttons, with shaking hands it took me over a minute to make the call.



No answer. No answer. No answer. He had been planning to mow the lawn that afternoon. I could just picture him trudging back and forth with the mower and then the string trimmer, phone in the house. I practically screamed at his voice mail. "Brian, grab the dogs and get into the truck and get out of town! NOW!" I sobbed. I sent him texts, too, and paced in circles, trying to catch my breath. THINK, Nancy, I told myself.

I finally reached him by calling each of my neighbors, and asking them to please go yell at him as they packed their cars and tell him to pick up his phone. He finally did look at the phone, and only when he saw my panicked texts did he realize he *had* been seeing a lot of police cars and fire trucks going up and down the streets of our town. Don't get me started about men who can focus on only one thing at a time.

As it happens, we were more or less prepared for the several-day evacuation that followed. We had filled a pickup truck with our most precious possessions, important paperwork, and spare clothes, and parked it upstream of the dam at a friend's house. I had leashes and dog beds and dog food in my car. When Brian called me to confirm that he had the dogs and had joined the traffic jam of thousands of people who were ordered out of the way of the potential wall of water, I could finally breathe, safe in the knowledge that we had friends we could stay with out of the way of danger.

As I write this, dozens of friends and acquaintances have been evacuated out of the way of wildfires that are scorching hundreds of thousands of acres in California. Dozens more are volunteering at human and animal shelters, assisting the evacuees. The most prepared victims managed to bring all the members of their human and animal families with them; the less-prepared have had to bring pets to shelters for safe-keeping, and – the tears start rolling down my face as I even *think* about it – the most unfortunate had to leave pets behind. My heart breaks for them as I check to make sure my own family's emergency evacuation kit is ready to go. Is yours? **NK**



# The Heart of the Matter

*What is taurine-deficiency dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM), and how can dog owners prevent it? (Hint: It involves more than just grain-free foods.)*

In mid-July 2018, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) released an alert to veterinarians and pet owners regarding reports of increased incidence of a heart disease called canine dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM). This disorder is characterized by weakening of the heart muscle, which leads to a decreased ability of the heart to pump, and if untreated, to cardiac failure.

The reported cases occurred in breeds that are not considered to be genetically predisposed to this disorder.

Further, a significant number of the dogs were found to have reduced levels of circulating taurine in their blood and have responded positively to taurine supplementation. It is speculated that these cases are related to the consumption of foods that negatively affect taurine status, leading to taurine-deficiency DCM. Foods containing high levels of peas, lentils, other legume seeds, and/or potatoes were identified by the FDA as potential risk factors. These ingredients are found commonly



in foods that are formulated and promoted as “grain-free.”

As these things go, there followed a lot of hype and a fair bit of hysteria in response. Let us avoid this type of reaction and instead look at the evidence: What do we currently know about the role of diet and taurine in the development of DCM in dogs – and how is it that “grain-free” foods have been recently targeted as a possible dietary cause?

## WHAT IS TAURINE?

The nutrient taurine is a unique type of amino acid, called a beta-amino sulfonic acid. It is not

*It's not the lack of grain, but the increased inclusion of other plant-source ingredients in grain-free and other dog foods that are being implicated in diet-linked DCM.*

## Know the Signs of Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM)

DCM is a disease of the heart, which causes the heart muscles themselves to weaken, which, in turn, reduces the ability of the heart to pump blood through the dog's body as it should. The heart becomes enlarged and flabby, and fluid begins to accumulate in the dog's lungs. As this condition progresses, it causes congestive heart failure.

Early signs of DCM may include:

- Lethargy, decreased energy
- A persistent cough
- Difficulty breathing, rapid or excessive breathing, or seeming shortness of breath
- Episodes of collapse
- Anorexia (chronic loss of appetite)

By the time these signs appear, the disease may already be fairly advanced. That's why it's important to make an appointment to see your veterinarian right away if your dog displays any of these signs, or more than one of these signs. Often, owners of middle-aged or senior dogs think that their dogs' symptoms are “just old age,” but a quick diagnosis and treatment can restore an affected dog's quality of life to nearly normal – and extend the dog's life far past an untreated dog's prognosis.

Treatment usually involves medications that help the dog's heart to contract, slow his rapid pulse, help control the accumulation of fluid in his lungs, and dilate his blood vessels – all actions that will improve the heart's performance.

incorporated into proteins but rather is found primarily as a free amino acid in body tissues and circulating in the blood. Taurine has many functions, but two that are important for this discussion involve its role in normal heart function and its presence as a component of bile acids, which are needed for fat digestion. Most animals obtain adequate taurine to meet their needs by producing it endogenously (in the body) from two other amino acids, methionine and cysteine.

This means that while most animals require taurine physiologically, most do not have a dietary requirement for taurine. The exception to this rule is the cat. Cats (but not dogs) always require a source of taurine in their food. If they do not have it, one of the diseases that they can develop (and possibly die from) is – you guessed it – DCM.

Taurine-deficiency DCM is well documented in cats. We also know quite a lot about the dietary factors that contribute to this disease in that species. In contrast, dogs (usually) do not require a source of dietary taurine. However, we know that some dogs still develop taurine-deficiency DCM. Why does this happen? The history of DCM in cats can help in untangling what may be occurring in dogs.

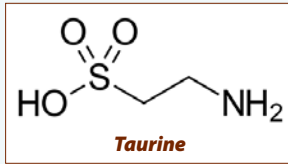
### TAURINE-DEFICIENCY DCM IN CATS

Looking back, I cannot avoid a sense of déjà vu. In the early 1980s, veterinarians began reporting increased incidences of DCM in pet cats. By 1987, a role for dietary taurine was suspected. In a seminal study, a veterinary researcher at UC Davis reported low plasma (blood) taurine levels in 21 cats with clinical signs of DCM.<sup>1</sup> When the cats were supplemented with taurine, all 21 recovered from the disease. This discovery led to a series of controlled studies that supported the existence of taurine-deficiency DCM in cats who were fed diets that contained sufficient concentrations of taurine.

What was going on?

It has to do with bile acids. Another role of taurine in the body is that it is

## A Few Things to Know About Taurine



### Taurine Is Needed For:

- Healthy heart function
- As a component of bile acids
- Retinal function
- Reproductive health

### Dietary Risk Factors for Reduced Taurine Status

- Low-protein diet (limited taurine precursors)
- Heat-damaged or poor-quality protein sources
- High dietary fiber (i.e., rice bran, beet pulp, cellulose)
- Lamb and rice diets (speculated)
- Plant-based protein sources (peas, lentils, legumes) (speculated)

### Possible Risk Factors for Taurine-Deficiency DCM

BREED:	SIZE:	DIET:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amer. Cocker Spaniel</li> <li>• English Setter</li> <li>• Golden Retriever</li> <li>• Labrador Retriever</li> <li>• Newfoundland</li> <li>• St. Bernard</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large-breed dogs</li> <li>• Dogs with slower metabolic rates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Factors that reduce taurine production</li> <li>• Factors that increase taurine-degrading microbes in the intestine</li> <li>• Factors that reduce bile acid production</li> </ul>

necessary for normal bile acid function. Taurine is linked to bile acids in the liver to form bile salts. During digestion, these compounds are secreted into the small intestine, where they function to aid in fat digestion. Animals are very efficient at conserving the taurine that is secreted into the intestine by reabsorbing the bile salts back into the body further down the intestinal tract. This occurs through a process called “enterohepatic reutilization” and prevents a daily loss of taurine in the feces.

Herein lies the problem for cats with DCM: If anything happens during digestion that causes the degradation of the bile salt taurine or that inhibits its reabsorption into the body, more is lost in the feces. If this happens consistently, the cat will experience an increase in his or her daily need for dietary taurine. Simply put – if anything causes the cat to poop out more taurine-bile acid complexes (or their degraded by-products), the cat will be in danger of a taurine deficiency if a

higher level is not provided in the diet.

This is exactly what was happening in the cats with taurine-deficiency DCM – and is possibly what we are seeing today in dogs. The difference is that we know what diet factors caused taurine deficiency in cats during the late 1980s. These factors are not yet fully understood for dogs (but we can make a few guesses).

### HERE IS WHAT WE KNOW

The studies with cats found that several dietary factors influenced taurine status.<sup>2,3,4</sup> These were the level and type of dietary protein, the amount and type of dietary fiber, and the degree of heat that was used during food processing. These factors could affect taurine status in three ways:

**1 BILE ACID BINDING.** Certain fibers and peptides (small protein chains) in the food can bind with bile salts in the small intestine and make them unavailable for reabsorption into the body. This results in an increased dai-

ly loss of taurine in the feces and a subsequent increase in daily taurine requirement to replace that loss.

**2 INCREASED MICROBIAL DEGRADATION.** Thermal processing of protein (extrusion or canning) can lead to the production of Maillard products – complexes of sugars and amino acids that are poorly digested in the small intestine. The undigested complexes travel to the large intestine and provide an intestinal environment that favors increased numbers of taurine-degrading bacteria. An increase in these bacterial populations reduces the proportion of taurine that is available for reabsorption and reuse by the body.

**3 REDUCED TAURINE AVAILABILITY.** Taurine is found naturally in animal-based proteins but is not found in plant-based protein sources. Therefore, providing diets that include a sufficient level of high-quality animal proteins (that are not heat damaged) should ensure adequate taurine intake.

However, protein that is of low quality or that has been excessively heat-treated will be poorly digested, reducing the availability of taurine and of its precursor amino acids, cysteine and methionine.

In the early 1990s, in response to this new information regarding the interaction of dietary factors and taurine status in cats (and their relationship to DCM in cats), the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) increased the recommendations for dietary taurine in extruded and canned cat foods.

## SO, WHAT ABOUT DOGS?

Unlike the cat, dogs who are fed diets containing adequate levels of protein should be capable of synthesizing enough taurine from cysteine and methionine to meet their needs. Therefore, a requirement for dietary taurine has not been generally recognized in dogs.

However, there is evidence – evidence that we have had for at least 15 years – that certain breeds of dogs, and possibly particular lines *within* breeds, exhibit a high

prevalence of taurine-deficiency DCM. Genetically predisposed breeds include the American Cocker Spaniel, Golden Retriever, Labrador Retriever, Saint Bernard, Newfoundland, and English Setter.<sup>5,6</sup> Although the exact underlying cause is not known, it appears that some breeds have either a naturally occurring higher requirement for taurine or a metabolic abnormality that affects their taurine synthesis or utilization.

A second factor that affects taurine status in dogs is size. There is evidence that a large adult size and a relatively slow metabolic rate influences the rate of taurine production in the body and may subsequently lead to a dietary taurine requirement. It is theorized that increased body size in dogs is associated with an enhanced risk for developing taurine deficiency and that this risk may be exacerbated by a breed-specific genetic predisposition.<sup>7</sup>

There is additional evidence that large and giant breed dogs have lower rates of taurine production compared with small dogs. Ultimately, studies suggest that certain dogs possess a genetic predisposition to taurine depletion and increased susceptibility to taurine-deficiency DCM and that this susceptibility may be related to the combined factors of breed, size, and metabolic rate.

## THE ROLE OF DIET

The recent spate of cases and media attention to taurine-deficiency DCM in dogs suggests that this is a very new problem in dogs. However, it is not new. A connection between diet and DCM in dogs was first described in a paper published in the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* in 2001.<sup>8</sup> What is new is the sudden focus on certain pet food ingredients and the target that appears to have been placed upon the backs of all “grain-free” pet food brands by some bloggers and veterinarians.

Not to put too fine a point on this, but the 12 cases of taurine-deficiency DCM described in the 2001 paper were collected between 1997 and 2001, years before grain-free dog foods had

arrived on the pet food scene. Rather than disparage one class or type of dog food (or pet food company), it is more important to look at specific dietary factors that may be involved in DCM in dogs.

Generally speaking, these are expected to be the same as those identified for cats, including low protein levels, poorly processed or heat-damaged proteins (leading to Maillard products), and the inclusion of a high proportion of plant-based protein sources such as peas and legumes.

Over the past 15 years, reduced taurine status in dogs has been associated with feeding lamb meal and rice diets, soybean-based diets, rice bran, beet pulp, and high fiber diets.<sup>9,10,11</sup> As with cats, there appear to be multiple dietary (and genetic) factors involved.

For example, it was theorized that the perceived (not proven) association between lamb meal and taurine status was due to low levels of available amino acids present in the lamb meal, or to excessive heat damage of the protein, or to the confounding factor of the inclusion of rice bran in many lamb meal-containing foods. To date, none of these factors have been conclusively proven or disproven. However, the most recent study showed that three types of fiber source – rice bran, cellulose, and beet pulp – all caused reduced plasma taurine levels in dogs when included in a marginally low protein diet, with beet pulp causing the most pronounced decrease.<sup>11</sup>

Complicated? You bet. This is why it is important to avoid making unsupported claims about certain foods and brands. Taurine-deficiency DCM has been around for a while in dogs and continues to need study before making definitive conclusions about one or more specific dietary causes.

## CURRENT CONSIDERATIONS

We know that any dietary factor that reduces the availability of taurine precursors, binds taurine bile salts in the intestine, or causes an increase in the bacteria populations that degrade taurine can reduce a dog’s ability to synthesize taurine or will increase

taurine degradation and/or loss in the feces. These changes could ultimately compromise a dog's taurine status (especially if the dog was genetically predisposed) and affect heart health. In extreme cases, as we are seeing, this can lead to taurine-deficiency DCM (see "A Few Things to Know About Taurine" on page 4).

The FDA report identified foods that contain high amounts of peas, lentils, legume seeds, or potatoes to be of potential concern. The FDA also stated that the underlying cause of DCM in the reported cases is not known and that at this time, the diet-DCM relationship is only correlative (not causative). However, this has not stopped various bloggers and

even some veterinarians from targeting small pet food companies and/or grain-free brands of food, and implying that these foods, and these foods alone, are causing taurine-deficiency DCM in dogs. Their reasoning is that peas and legumes are present in high amounts in foods that are formulated and marketed as grain-free.

However, the truth is that many companies and brands of food include these ingredients. More importantly, there is no clear evidence showing that a particular dog food type, brand, or even ingredient is solely responsible for taurine-deficiency DCM in dogs.

Rather, it is more reasonable and responsible to speculate that one or more of these ingredients, their inter-

actions, or the effects of ingredient quality, heat treatment, and food processing may play a role. Furthermore, the underlying cause could be the protein, starch, or fiber fractions of these ingredients. As plant-source proteins, peas, lentils, and legumes include varying amounts of starch (both digestible and resistant forms) and dietary fiber. These protein sources are also generally less nutritionally complete and less digestible than are high quality animal source proteins – additional factors that could influence a dog's ability to both produce and use taurine. Potatoes, in contrast, provide a digestible source of starch in an extruded food but also contain varying levels of resistant starch, which is not digested and behaves much like dietary fiber in the intestinal tract.

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## HEART OF THE MATTER

Because any or all of these dietary factors could be risk factors for taurine-deficiency DCM in dogs, and because peas, legumes, and other ingredients identified by the FDA report have not yet been fully studied, the heart of the matter is that *no* conclusions can yet be made about the underlying dietary cause or causes of taurine-deficiency DCM in dogs.

But given what we *do* know, we recommend feeding a diet that contains sufficient levels of high-quality, animal-source protein, does not include plant-source proteins as primary protein sources, and does not contain high levels of dietary fiber.

If you are worried about your dog's taurine status or heart health, whether due to his diet history or physical signs that are of concern, see your veterinarian for a complete physical examination and, if needed, to measure plasma levels of taurine. 🐾

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# What to Do About the Runs

*The messy truth about diarrhea: Diagnosing its cause and firming things up can be complicated!*

All dog owners know the feeling of coming home after a work day and smelling that smell. Uh-oh. Your dog has diarrhea. It's a pretty common affliction of our canine friends. Now comes the inevitable question: "Should we go to the veterinarian?"

The truth is, much like people, sometimes dogs just get diarrhea. Much as we do not see the doctor for every bout of diarrhea, similarly, dogs do not always need medical attention for a short-lived enteritis (inflammation of the intestines). Often, diarrhea can be managed with at-home therapy and convalescent care.

## CAUSES AND MANAGEMENT

The causes for acute diarrhea in the absence of other signs are varied and include dietary indiscretion (for example: getting into the garbage), gastrointestinal bacteria including *Campylobacter*, and GI parasites such as hookworms, roundworms, whipworms, and protozoal infections. In most cases of acute, self-limiting diarrhea, a cause is never identified.

If your dog seems otherwise normal, and he is currently on monthly parasite preventative medication, then symptomatic treatment at home is appropriate. Usually most diarrhea will run its course within two to four days, although in some cases, it can last longer. If there are any other signs of illness like vomiting, loss of appetite, depression, or pain, a veterinary trip is in order.

At-home treatment for acute diarrhea can include the following: a bland diet such as boiled hamburger or chicken with broth and rice for a few days, a probiotic such as Fortiflora (available only through veterinarians) or an over-the-counter probiotic and frequent walks. Avoid using human remedies such as loperamide, also called Immodium. This medication has an opioid in it, and it is easy to overdose a dog unintentionally.

If your dog continues to do well other than



diarrhea, three to four days of at-home treatment is appropriate.

## IF IT DOESN'T CLEAR UP WITH SYMPTOMATIC THERAPY

If diarrhea doesn't resolve with treatment, or your dog develops other signs, it is time to seek a veterinarian's opinion. Diarrhea is considered chronic when it persists for more than three weeks despite treatment.

Diarrhea may seem like a simple problem, but it can actually be very complicated. Your veterinarian will proceed in a stepwise fashion (outlined below) to find the cause:

## THOROUGH HISTORY-TAKING

Your veterinarian will ask a series of questions about your dog's overall health, diet, vaccine history, and preventive care strategy. He will then ask more in-depth questions about the diarrhea itself. This will help determine what kind of diarrhea is occurring.

Diarrhea can be characterized as small bowel, large bowel, or mixed. In the case of small bowel diarrhea, you may see a normal

*Diarrhea can make anyone sad and miserable, but if your puppy doesn't respond to symptomatic treatment in a couple of days, or your dog fails to respond within three or four days, it's time to head to the vet for an examination and testing.*

to increased frequency, small volumes of loose, watery stool that can be tarry or black (representing digested blood). Often, your dog can “hold it” until going outside.

In the case of large bowel diarrhea, there will be an urgency to go. Your dog may not make it outside unless you are paying close attention. There is often mucus covering the stool, and there may be bright red blood as well. Your dog will usually strain for quite some time during or after having a bowel movement.

In some cases, the diarrhea can be mixed small and large, and this can be more difficult to sort out. Your veterinarian will likely ask many questions during this part of the visit.

## HEAD-TO-TOE PHYSICAL EXAMINATION

Next comes a thorough physical examination. Initially, your pet should be weighed. Weight loss is always a concerning sign. The exam will include checking the eyes, mouth, ears, palpating the lymph nodes, listening to the heart and lungs, deep palpation of the abdomen, and a rectal exam.

The **rectal exam** is the most important part! This will help the veterinarian see what the diarrhea looks like, as well as feel for any problems in the rectal area and descending colon. A temperature should also be checked. If a fever is present, this can help focus your veterinarian’s attention to certain areas such as viruses and bacteria.

Once this is completed, your veterinarian should have a good sense of what type of diarrhea your pet is having, possible causes, diagnostics, and treatment options.

## SMALL BOWEL DIARRHEA

Generally, veterinarians will start out with conservative diagnostics and treatment for this type of diarrhea. The causes for small bowel diarrhea can be incredibly varied and run the gamut from fairly benign and treatable (parasites) to more serious (Addison’s disease).

Initially, a **fecal examination** may be the only test conducted. This re-

quires a small sample of stool from your dog. The veterinarian will check this to rule out parasites such as hookworms, roundworms, whipworms, protozoal organisms, and bacterial overgrowth.

Even if your dog is up-to-date on monthly prevention, it is still possible to find breakthrough parasitic infection. This is why a fecal is done. If parasites are found, your veterinarian will treat with an anti-parasiticide like fenbendazole, pyrantel, and/or Albon. He will also discuss environmental control, as these parasites can persist in the soil for long periods of time.

If nothing is found on the fecal, your veterinarian will likely still prescribe a course of the dewormer fenbendazole in case of a false negative fecal. Other treatments at this stage should include a novel protein diet, as your pet may have a dietary sensitivity or allergy. This means switching your dog to a protein and carbohydrate source to which he has no previous exposure. Examples include bison, venison, duck, and kangaroo usually paired with potato, rice, or pea.

At this stage, many veterinarians also prescribe metronidazole (also known as Flagyl). Metronidazole is an antibiotic, but it is also thought to have immunomodulating properties that help calm an inflamed GI tract. Many dogs will have an “antibiotic-responsive” diarrhea that will clear up with this treatment.

With this initial approach, your dog should be back to normal within three to 10 days. If within a week, you are not seeing improvement in your dog’s signs, then your veterinarian will move on to further diagnostics and treatments.

A **complete blood count and chemistry analysis** should also be run (see “Senior Exams,” WDJ May 2018). This will give a global picture of your dog’s health. Significant dehydration, a decrease in protein levels, or changes in your dog’s condition (loss of appetite and/or weight loss) can indicate a more systemic health problem.

If metronidazole is not helping, then Tylosin may be used. Tylosin is another immunomodulating antibiotic that can help with GI inflammation. It may also have a probiotic effect in the gut by increasing the numbers of enterococci bacteria in the small intestine. It is very unpalatable to dogs and cats, and your veterinarian will have this medication compounded, in most cases (or have you place it in their food).

Again, your veterinarian will monitor for around a week. If symptoms do not improve, more advanced testing will be recommended.

A **gastrointestinal panel** (blood test) must be submitted to an outside laboratory. The veterinarian will likely recommend fasting your dog beforehand. This evaluates levels of vitamins found in the body - particularly cobalamin (vitamin B12) and folate (vitamin B9). Dogs with gastrointestinal disease often display impaired absorption of these critical vitamins. This diagnostic also evaluates trypsin-like immunoreactivity. These tests can indicate whether there is a bacterial overgrowth or a condition called exocrine pancreatic insufficiency.

In the case of bacterial overgrowth, antibiotic therapy may be needed.

Exocrine pancreatic insufficiency is a common disorder of German Shepherd Dogs, as well as other breeds. With this disease, the pancreas does not secrete appropriate digestive enzymes. Treatment is supplementing the diet with enzymes to help break down food and assist your pet in absorbing nutrients.

Another test that may be done concurrently is a **resting cortisol test**. Cortisol is a steroid made by the adrenal glands. In Addison’s disease (also called hypoadrenocorticism), the body does not produce enough cortisol or water-regulating hormones (called mineralocorticoids).

Addison’s can be difficult to diagnose, as symptoms can present in many ways including weight loss, shivering, decreased appetite, lethargy, chronic diarrhea, intermittent vomiting, and electrolyte imbalances.





Treatment for Addison's involves replacing the cortisol and mineralocorticoids that the adrenal glands are not making. There is also a form of Addison's called atypical. This occurs when only cortisol production is reduced. Replacing this lack with oral steroids can manage this condition.

If all of these tests are normal, and no obvious cause is found for the ongoing diarrhea, your veterinarian may offer referral to a veterinary internal medicine specialist (DACVIM). At that time, more extensive testing such as abdominal ultrasound, exploratory surgery, and biopsy may be recommended. These will rule out invasive fungal infection such as histoplasmosis and pythiosis, inflammatory bowel disease, and cancer.

## LARGE BOWEL DIARRHEA

Large bowel diarrhea presents a diagnostic dilemma. Frequently, the causes are difficult to fully diagnose. In many cases, a response to treatment rather than extensive testing is used to make a presumptive diagnosis.

Like small bowel diarrhea, large bowel diarrhea can be caused by parasites, particularly whipworms. An initial diagnostic test will be a **fecal examination**. Keep in mind, however, that whipworm eggs are very heavy and are not always found on a fecal examination.

If your veterinarian does not find

parasites, as with small bowel diarrhea, he will likely still recommend a course of fenbendazole, an effective anti-parasiticide that kills whipworms. They persist for long periods of time in the soil, so managing the environment is critical to preventing re-infection. Further, not all preventives cover against whipworm infection. Check with your veterinarian regarding your monthly treatment to ensure that your dog is protected against whipworms.

An **antibiotic trial** may be the next step. Clostridial colitis is a possible cause of large bowel diarrhea. It is poorly understood, as some dogs can have *Clostridium* bacteria but not be ill, while others can become very sick. Diagnosis is very tricky and recommendations change continually. Generally, clostridial infections respond very well to amoxicillin or Tylosin, so your veterinarian may try a course of antibiotics to both diagnose *and* treat the diarrhea.

A **fiber trial** – a dietary trial with a fiber-enriched food – may also help diagnose and resolve the problem. In some cases, the addition of a fiber-enriched food may be all that your dog needs to get back to normal. Your veterinarian can help select a fiber diet appropriate for your dog.

Many dogs are allergic to certain components in food (the immune system responds and causes the diarrhea), while other dogs are just “sensitive to”

to specific dietary items (immune system is not involved). Again, diagnosis might be tricky. As a result, your veterinarian will likely prescribe a **dietary trial**. In this case, your dog will be placed on a hypoallergenic diet. There are several on the market that are made from hydrolyzed protein. This is when the protein is broken down into such small units that the immune system does not recognize the initial protein. This type of diet must be rigorously followed if it is to be successful. Treats, flavored heartworm medications, and table food will render the trial useless.

At this point, more **blood tests** will likely be called for. If your dog has evidence of bloodwork changes and weight loss, concerns for more serious systemic illnesses such as fungal disease and cancer come to the forefront. At that time, you should consider that referral to a veterinary internal medicine specialist (DACVIM) is likely best for your dog.

## NOT A SIMPLE MATTER

As you can see, diarrhea can be a complicated problem to solve. Keeping a thorough history on your dog, documenting his diet and parasite prevention strategy in particular, as well as monitoring bowel movements closely, can help your veterinarian tremendously.

When diarrhea becomes chronic, it can take weeks to months to sort out the underlying cause and find an effective treatment. Be patient and work closely with your veterinarian. Follow recommendations and do not try random remedies recommended by random sources! With time, patience, and a good veterinarian, a solution can generally be found. 🐾

## A Note About Boxers

About 30 years ago, Boxers were noted to have a severe, progressive disease of the colon (histiocytic ulcerative colitis) that caused very bloody, mucoid, large bowel diarrhea and resultant weight loss.

It was recently found that this is highly responsive to a common antibiotic called enrofloxacin (also known as Baytril). If empirical treatment is attempted, it must be continued for several weeks to ensure that all the bacteria are killed; if the bacterial population is not completely eliminated, the most resistant bacteria can come back with a vengeance.

If enrofloxacin doesn't work, a biopsy of tissue from the colon is the best way to diagnose or rule out other possibly treatable diseases such as fungal infections.



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# Meet and Greet? Or Not...

*Calm and collected is the name of the game, whether you would like your dog to greet others or pass them by.*



*It's a great idea to teach your dog to both greet people calmly, and "not greet" just as calmly, passing by humans and/or dogs without fussing or pulling. Don't expect this to happen without practicing and rewarding your dog for the behavior you want!*

On any given day, depending on the circumstances, a dog might have a multitude of opportunities to meet and greet a number of other creatures: dogs, cats, horses, a variety of other species, and all sorts of humans. Some dogs seem to do it with aplomb, while others are clearly overexcited and unable to contain themselves. I suspect most if not all of us would far rather have the dog who's calm, cool, and collected rather than the other option. So how do we get there?

## UNDERMINING YOUR DOG'S SUCCESS

When our dog jumps on someone, we all tend to roll our eyes and apologize. A well-behaved dog shouldn't do this! Why is learning to greet people without jumping on them such a challenge for so many of our dogs?

The answer is *intermittent reinforcement* – which means that the behavior is *sometimes* reinforced. “But wait!” you say. “I don't reward my dog for jumping on people!” Perhaps not. But perhaps you aren't aware of all the *other* times or ways your dog *is* being reinforced for the behavior. Every time your dog jumps on someone and they say, “Oh, it's okay, I don't mind!” and then pet and fuss over her, your dog is being reinforced for jumping up.

It's also likely to be reinforcing for your dog every time she jumps on someone and he physically pushes her away – “Yay, he touched me!”

Intermittent reinforcement makes a behavior more *resistant to extinction* – harder to stop. It is the same force at work when a human finds it difficult to stop playing a slot machine; as long as you get rewarded occasionally (enough so that you don't run out of money!), you may just keep playing and playing. Similarly, your dog may just keep playing the jump-up game, thinking, “Eventually I will win. Maybe this time it will pay off and I will get petted... Jackpot!!”

I'm going to describe three important elements to successfully teaching your dog to greet humans politely; the first and most important one is aimed at putting an end to that intermittent reinforcement.

## THREE STEPS TO GREETING HUMANS POLITELY

**1 MANAGE THE SITUATION.** In this context, “management” means controlling your dog's environment so she isn't intermittently reinforced for jumping up. This mainly entails always keeping her on a leash when she greets people, and providing very clear, simple

*Thanks to Ally Padgett (above and page 13) and Rosi Garcia (above), training assistants at The Canine Connection, Chico, California, for demonstrating the techniques described in this article.*

instructions to everyone who wants to greet her – family, guests, and random humans on the street – regarding how they should interact with her to reinforce polite greeting behavior.

Sometimes, this may mean sacrificing politeness for firmness when you encounter one of those “Oh, it’s okay!” dog lovers. Be ready to tell him no, it’s not okay, and you’d love to have him pet your dog if he will follow instructions. If he scoffs or gives you the sense that he’s going to do what he wants to do anyway, be prepared to say, “Whoops! Sorry!” and do a quick U-turn with your dog away from the would-be management underminer.

When visitors come to your home, consider using a tether to keep your dog away from the door, or park her behind a baby gate, so you can greet your guests without worrying about dog-jumping. Once the initial excitement of your guests’ arrival is over, it’s easier to instruct them on how to greet your dog properly.

Another alternative, if you want your guests to be interactive with your dog at the door, is to set them up to succeed with treats, toys, and a few basic instructions on how to use these to help your dog practice good greetings. This is a fun way to enlist the help of visitors to teach your dog to sit to greet people at the door.

Place a basket of toys by your door

– toys your dog *really* likes. Tape a sign next to it instructing visitors: “Take a toy before you come in. When Bouncy runs up to you, hold the toy at your chest. When she sits, throw the toy for her to chase. If she brings it back, you can do it again.”

For a dog who doesn’t get excited about toys, you can use high-value non-perishable treats instead. (Real Meat Treats are my favorites for this; see [realmeatpet.com](http://realmeatpet.com).) Break the treats into small pieces in advance, hang a reusable, resealable bag of treats by the door, and tape up a sign that instructs your visitor to take a handful, wait for Bouncy to sit, and then fling some treats behind the dog.

## Best Place to Start: Basic Good Manners Training Classes

Most things in life with our dogs are easier if they’ve had some basic good manners training. A well-run force-free group class is my first choice for working on this; it gives your dog the opportunity to generalize her good manners to new environments and distractions, especially other dogs and humans. Your class instructor and assistants will also be able to give you feedback on your own skills – something you miss if you do all your training on your own.

A common goal for basic good manners training is for your dog to learn that her highly reinforced “sit” is a good “default” behavior (the best behavior to offer when she’s not sure what to do), which comes in very handy when teaching polite greetings. In addition, most good manners classes formally teach polite greetings to humans and provide coaching on how to help your dog behave appropriately in close proximity to other dogs.

Both of these methods reinforce Bouncy for sitting to greet your guests and directs her energy away from them as she chases after the toy or treats. Plus, it’s fun for your dog and your guests!

**2 REINFORCE HER FOR SITTING A LOT – EVERY CHANCE YOU GET!** In what I call a “Say Please Program,” your dog’s sit makes everything good happen. A sit makes her dinner arrive. A sit gets her leash clipped on and another one gets the door to open for your walk together. Sits also elicit a toy or a treat. This will help make sit her default behavior and increase the odds that she will offer a sit when she is approached by someone.

**3 PRACTICE POLITE GREETINGS.** You can do this yourself by tethering your dog to a solid object and repeatedly approaching and feeding her a treat when she sits. Have everyone in the family try it, too!

If she tries to jump up on you when she isn’t tethered, say “Oops!” in a cheerful tone of voice, turn your back and step away from her.

You can also practice this with friends or anyone else who would like to greet your dog. Hold your dog’s leash firmly, not allowing your dog to stretch your arm toward the greeter. As your acquaintance approaches, tell him not to interact with or give your dog a treat until she sits.

## If You Love Dogs Jumping Up On You

There’s almost always at least one member of a family who *likes* the dog to jump up on them. (I’m not naming any names, but there’s a possibility I could be guilty of that myself...)

No worries – just teach your dog a cue that means “jump on me,” and reward her for jumping *only* if she does it when the cue is given. Choose a cue that is something people won’t do inadvertently, such as touching your hands to both shoulders, as opposed to something like patting your leg, which many people do when greeting dogs.

Then, if you encounter someone who really wants your dog to jump up to greet them, you can say, “If you want her to jump up, just touch your shoulders!”



## NO NON-CONSENSUAL GREETINGS

Just last week I was sitting with my new dog Sunny in our vet’s waiting room, and a man walked in with his 8-month-old, 120-pound Great Dane, who immediately began straining to come see my 16-pound dog. To my amazement and consternation, the man walked forward, allowing his dog to approach. I held up my hand and said firmly, “Please, no!”

“No? He likes little dogs,” the man responded. “He lives with a Pomeranian and they are best friends.”

“No,” I answered firmly, not bothering to add that my dog *doesn’t* live with a Great Dane and was showing signs of concern about the giant canine looming just six feet away.

The man took a seat on the other side of the small waiting room, and I did a little counter-conditioning with Sunny while both of us regained our equilibrium. Then I engaged in polite chat with the Dane’s owner, suggesting that lots of little dogs don’t like being approached by big dogs. He nodded, seeming to understand.

A few minutes later a woman walked in with a dog half of Sunny’s size, and the man again let his dog approach. The little dog was even more worried that Sunny had been, crying out, backpedaling on his leash, and trying to hide behind his human. This

went on for many long seconds, until the woman finally picked up her dog and took a seat just out of reach of the Dane. Sigh...

Not only do dogs who are routinely allowed to greet other dogs on leash come to *expect* being allowed to do so, they can become quite frustrated and aroused when their desire to meet and greet is thwarted. There is a whole class of reactive dogs who are known as “frustrated greeters.” These are often the dogs who seem to play happily with other dogs when they are off-leash, but when the leash goes on they appear to turn into Cujo.

## GUIDELINES FOR GREETING OTHER DOGS

In order to avoid creating frustrated greeters, or worsening the behavior of the dogs who are already frustrated, my rule for dogs in my classes (and for my own dogs) is, “We don’t greet other dogs on leash. Period.” I see far too many dogs who are routinely allowed to greet other dogs on leash and whose behavior is very problematic. As soon as they see another dog they bark, scrabble, and pull, dragging their human toward the other dog until contact is accomplished, whether the other dog likes it or not.

Hence my solution: Allow dogs to greet and interact *only* in a safely enclosed area, where leashes can be

dropped with a “go play” cue when it’s evident the dogs are compatible. Leashes stay on for the first few minutes of interaction, in case the dogs need to be separated, but are removed as soon as it’s clear that the dogs will play together well.

I do understand that this isn’t always possible. Dog owners who live in cities may find safely enclosed dog-play spaces hard to come by, not to mention compatible playmates accompanied by humans who are willing to arrange play dates. Sometimes, the only social options of urban dogs are on-leash greetings. If you are in the “really have to/want to” category, here are some suggestions to help you avoid future problems:

■ **Teach your dog to approach other dogs on a loose leash.** (See “Loose Leash Walking: Training Your Dog Not to Pull,” WDJ April 2017.) Pulling and straining on leash to reach another dog can send unsettling body language signals to the other dog, making the encounter less likely to be successful. It also increases arousal in your dog, again making the encounter less likely to be successful.

■ **Teach a solid “Walk Away” behavior so you can easily interrupt an encounter that seems to be getting too intense, even if the intensity is playful.** Pulling a dog away forcibly on leash can add tension that causes an otherwise successful encounter to go south. (See “How to Teach Your Dog to Just ‘Walk Away,’” on the next page.)

■ **Greet other dogs only occasionally.** Most of the time, your dog’s job when she is on leash is to be with you. Just as you give her permission to go sniff when it’s appropriate to do so, have a cue that gives her permission to greet another



*The tight leash, high tail, stiff body, and hard, direct gaze tells us that the dog on the left shouldn’t be allowed to greet the smaller dog; the smaller dog agrees. With her lifted paw, curved body, indirect gaze, and laid-back ears, she is indicating fear and apprehension.*

# How to Teach Your Dog to Just “Walk Away!”

(Adapted from Kelly Fahey’s Resource Guarding protocol, which was adapted from Chirag Patel’s “Drop” protocol.)

Being able to teach your dog to move away from something when asked is an invaluable tool, both for your dog’s safety and for your sanity. Note: Be sure to repeat each step eight to 12 (or more) times, until your dog eagerly responds to the cue before progressing to the next step.

**1** Say “Walk Away” in a cheerful tone and toss several treats on the ground six to eight feet behind the dog. Turn and move away with him to encourage him to move quickly. Note: you are trying to get your dog to do a 180-degree turn to get to the treats behind him.

**2** Place a neutral (not valuable to the dog) object on the ground. Walk your leashed dog toward it, and when he reaches to sniff it, say “Walk Away!” cheerfully and toss several treats on the ground four to eight feet from the object, behind him. Turn and move away quickly with him, trying to get the dog to do a 180-degree turn away from the object to the treats behind him. Make it a party! Repeat at least eight to 12 (or more) times until your dog immediately and happily moves away from the object in response to the cue. Practice this step with a variety of neutral objects.



**3** Repeat Step #2 eight to 12 (or more) times but begin hand-feeding the treats to your dog instead of tossing them on the ground. Continue to move away from the object as you feed him the treats.

**4** Place a low-value object (something your dog is mildly interested in) on the ground. When your dog sniffs it, say “Walk Away!” and feed treats from your hand as you and your dog move away from the object. Repeat at least eight to 12 (or more) times until your dog immediately moves away from the object in response to the cue. Practice this step with a variety of low-value objects.

**5** Place a medium-value object (to your dog) on the ground. When your dog sniffs it, say “Walk Away!” and

feed treats from your hand as you and your dog quickly and happily move away from the object. Make it a party! Repeat at least eight to 12 (or more) times until your dog immediately moves away from the object in response to the cue. Practice with a variety of medium-value objects.

**6** Place a high-value object (one of your dog’s favorite things) on the ground. When your dog sniffs it, say “Walk Away!” and feed treats from your hand as you and your dog move away from the object. Repeat at least eight to 12 (or more) times until your dog immediately moves away from the object in response to the cue. Practice with a variety of high-value objects.



**7** Place your dog’s empty food bowl on the ground. When your dog sniffs it, say “Walk Away!” and feed treats from your hand as you and your dog move away from the object. Repeat at least eight to 12 (or more) times until your dog immediately moves away from the bowl in response to the cue.

**8** Put a handful of low-value food (dry kibble) in your dog’s bowl and place it on the ground. When your dog sniffs it, say “Walk Away!” and feed treats from your hand as you and your dog move away from the object. Repeat at least eight to 12 (or more) times until your dog immediately moves away from the bowl in response to the cue.

**9** Put a handful of mid-value (dry kibble mixed with a little canned) food in your dog’s dish and place it on the ground. When your dog sniffs it, say “Walk Away!” and feed treats from your hand as you and your dog move away from the object. Remember to make it a party! Repeat at least eight to 12 (or more) times until your dog immediately moves away from the bowl in response to the cue. Then repeat with high-value food in the bowl.

**10** Finally, generalize the Walk Away behavior to other tempting attractions – a cat or squirrel on your walk, the cookie in a toddler’s hand, the greasy fast-food wrapper on the sidewalk, or the playful Poodle that is straining to greet your dog. Who knows? The Poodle’s owner might just ask you how you taught your dog to behave so well, or ask if your dogs could get together for a play-date sometime!

dog – and use it sparingly. Far more often than not, you want her to “not-greet.”

■ **Use high-value treats and consistently reinforce your dog for paying attention to you in the presence of other dogs.** If we have our dogs’ attention, we can get them to work with us. If we can *keep* their attention, we can keep them working with us in the face of distractions. (See “It’s In Your Dog’s Eyes,” February 2016.)

■ **Know what type of dog yours is likely to be comfortable with.** Even dogs who do well with other dogs don’t necessarily like to engage with *all* other dogs. Size, energy level, and play style are just three factors that may determine play-pal predilections. Some dogs have breed or size preferences; a bad experience with a particular type of dog in the past can give your dog a negative association with that type for life.

■ **When you see a dog you would like yours to greet, ask permission from the other owner first, and respect their wishes.** If they say no, it’s a no – don’t try to talk them into it. Conversely, be politely firm with your “No” if someone wants to approach yours with a dog you’re not comfortable with. Be your dog’s advocate.



### READY TO GREET

Here is how to proceed when you are ready to do on-leash greetings, and you see a dog who fits the bill and whose owner has agreed to the encounter.

Start out by doing some parallel walking first, so the dogs get a little more information about each other prior to actually engaging – and you get a little more information about the dogs! Watch both dogs’ body language throughout the entire encounter and be prepared to abort if appropriate. (For more information about canine body language, see “Don’t Whisper, Listen!” in the June 2017 issue of WDJ.)

If their body language tells you they are comfortable walking in proximity to each other, coordinate with the other owner and give the “go play” cue.

As the dogs engage, keep the leashes loose! This is so critically important it bears repeating: *Keep the leashes loose!* If there’s tension between the

*Managing leashes on dogs who want to play is always challenging – but if your dog is wearing all the wrong gear, like the choke chain and chain leash on the tan and white dog, you shouldn’t even try.*

dogs as they greet, a tight leash greatly magnifies the tension and can cause what otherwise might have been a very successful greeting to fail. This usually take some fancy footwork on the part of the humans; as the dogs circle, sniff, play bow, and bounce you will need to circle with them and always be prepared to move forward to give extra leash slack as needed.

It’s a good idea to interrupt the encounter if play starts to get rowdy. You simply cannot manage leashes well enough if dogs are getting very excited. If the two look like they both want to be rough-and-tumble run-and-chase play buddies, you really do need to find that elusive “safely enclosed area” so they can play together to their hearts’ content. 🐾

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## Meeting Other Species

All of the tools and techniques described above can serve you in good stead when your dog has the opportunity to meet an animal of another species. Some dogs become quite overexcited by the opportunity to meet other species, while others are sometimes a little fearful, perhaps even defensively aggressive. A few rounds (or more!) of counter-conditioning and desensitization will serve you well in these cases, if your dog needs some help learning to keep his cool when a horse, or a cat, or a cockatiel looks her in the eye.





# Don't Skip the Stool Sample

*Give your dog the gift of a great diagnostic or screening tool; collect a stool sample and take it to your dog's next checkup.*

It's that time of year again: Your vet's office has called to schedule your dog's annual visit and wants that dreaded sample.

A fresh stool sample is no one's favorite to collect, but it's important for a lot of reasons. Parasites are not the only thing that can be seen on a fecal check. Whether done as part of a routine screen or when a pet is sick, poop contains a lot of good information.

## GASTROINTESTINAL PARASITES

Worms that live in the intestines are the most common reason for checking a stool sample. Gastrointestinal (GI) parasites can be picked up from other animals or from the environment and range from a mild nuisance to quite dangerous. Some are easily detectable, such as tapeworms (who leave small segments that look like grains of rice in the stool or around the anus). Others are more difficult to notice and require specific tests performed on a fresh stool sample. Hookworms, roundworms, and whipworms are among the most common parasites that are picked up in the environment.

Parasite eggs can be found in the soil or in stool of an affected animal. We all know dogs love to stick their noses in things that stink and what better than the poop of another animal? When a dog ingests the eggs (whether from eating stool or just licking his nose after closely smelling poop), the eggs will go on to hatch and grow into adult worms that live in the gut. These parasites can cause diarrhea, poor weight gain, and even hair-coat changes.

Note, however, that not all dogs may have outward signs of a parasite infection. Some are asymptomatic carriers, meaning that they may be infected, but don't develop illness. This is why it's important to check, even if your dog seems fine.

If you need any more reasons, consider this: Many of these parasites can be transmitted to humans, and they all can be given to other dogs. As a conscientious dog owner, routine parasite checks ensure that your dog is healthy and not putting anyone else at risk.

## OTHER COOTIES

Diarrhea can be triggered by most GI parasites and is frustrating for dog owners and vets alike – and the first thing I want when a client's dog has diarrhea is a stool sample. I want to check for parasites, of course, but I also want to evaluate the poop's bacterial population. Even if it isn't the root cause of diarrhea, an unbalanced gut biome will perpetuate the problem.

Worms and bacteria are not the only parasites that vets see on fecal checks. I've diagnosed skin mites, protozoa, and a range of other things all from a simple fecal sample. Skin mites, especially scabies mange mites, can be very difficult to find. Sometimes, we will have a high index of suspicion, but a skin scraping comes up clear. It's not common, but I have found mites in the poop of affected dogs, who inadvertently consume the mites when they chew at their feet or sides.

Giardia and coccidia are small, single-cell protozoa that can cause explosive diarrhea. Giardia especially can be missed on a standard fecal float, but when diarrhea just won't go away, a giardia screen should be checked. Dogs who board or routinely drink from puddles or ponds are giardia's most frequent victims. Note that dogs can be asymptomatic carriers of giardia. They may exhibit no signs but shed giardia in their stool, so it's a good idea to check to make sure they aren't passing along little friends when they go out to play (and poop)!

## JUST DO IT

Before heading to your dog's check-up, head out into the yard with a clean plastic bag and snag a fresh little present for your vet. If the containment of a single bag gives you the willies, put the bag into a jar or plastic container, double-bag it, triple-bag it – whatever it takes. I've even had stool samples dropped off in gift-wrapped boxes! Just make sure to label it, so we know which dog to credit for the gift. 🐾



*A fresh stool sample should be collected in a clean plastic bag and either delivered promptly to the vet, or stored in a refrigerator until the next day's appointment.*

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# Proper Supervision

*Trainers often say “Supervise your dog!”– but there are many levels of supervision, and not all of them keep all the members of your household safe. Learn how to supervise right!*

*“Active supervision, combined with proactive management, and calm, reward-based training prevent tragic behavioral outcomes.”*

I’ve always been neurotic about the safety of living beings in my care – more so since I became a mother of two at a young age. This only increased when I became a professional trainer. I consider the care and safety of our children and animals to be of utmost importance – and good supervision is at the crux of this, especially in our fast-paced world, where we are all distracted by technology and are fantastic multi-taskers.

I believe that supervision is never more important than when observing our dogs in social settings, whether it is introducing new dogs, exercising our dogs at a dog park, bringing our dogs with us in the public domain, or just living in multi-dog households. When I say “supervision,” I am talking about adult management by someone who is knowledgeable about dog body language.

I would venture to say that many people think they are great at overseeing their dogs, but in reality, they don’t really have a firm grasp of what ideal supervision means. Further, many people lack information about their dogs’ body language – so, even if they are actually actively watching their dogs, if they can’t recognize their dogs’ stress signals, they won’t be able to help the dogs.

Some time ago, I saw a graphic about various levels or types of supervision, created by Family Paws Parenting Education – a wonderful organization dedicated to educating the public about child and dog safety. With their permission, I revised their graphic to the one below, to reflect proper supervision for the safety of dogs in the presence of other dogs.

Let’s explore the difference between supervision that keeps all the members of a household safe and the kind that either does nothing or actually makes things less safe.

■ **Absent supervision.** It’s absolutely fine to leave multiple dogs together, unsupervised, when they are familiar with each other and have a (properly managed) history of peaceful interactions. But if you bring a new dog or puppy into the family, have a friend’s dog over for a play-date, or a family member stops by with their dog, leaving the dogs unsupervised can lead to one or both of them getting injured physically or emotionally traumatized.

In the absent-supervision scenario, a child might be distracted with an electronic device, while the family dog is happily chewing on a shoe – or perhaps there is no one around at all to notice that the sleeping dog is being bothered by the other dog.

Things can happen in an instant and in the end, it’s the dog who will suffer, by either being punished (or even just shunned) for chewing on something or for pestering the other dog into an altercation.

■ **Passive supervision.** This is when we are in the room but not really paying attention or supervising at all. We are distracted with other things, and won’t necessarily notice right away that one dog

## FIVE TYPES OF DOG-TO-DOG SUPERVISION

No adult supervising dogs	Adult present but distracted	Reacting after the dogs are too close	Having a plan, being prepared	Fully present, adult supervision
<p><b>ABSENT</b></p> <p>☆</p>	<p><b>PASSIVE</b></p> <p>★</p>	<p><b>REACTIVE</b></p> <p>★★</p>	<p><b>PROACTIVE</b></p> <p>★★★</p>	<p><b>ACTIVE</b></p> <p>★★★★</p>



is not happy with the interaction and showing signs of stress. Even if we are savvy about canine body language, if we aren't even paying attention, we will miss the signs that an intervention is needed to help one (or both!) of the dogs stay safe.

If one dog wants to rest while the other is instigating play, even in a friendly way, the situation can go awry in minutes. Now imagine that the dog who is resting in the crate is also a little muscle-sore from a long play session that morning, or is an older dog with everyday pain from arthritis, and the younger dog keeps invading his resting space. Without supervision, the senior dog is left to his own devices to protect his space. This is a set-up for failure and an unnecessary risk.

■ **Reactive supervision.** We are all guilty of this at one time or another. We are present, we are watching, but we haven't proactively managed the situation and something has happened. In this situation, we react out of fear.

Be aware that when *we* are reactive, we create a negative association for our dogs. Our stress makes our dogs stressed – and *everyone's* behavior deteriorates under stress.

Say your dog is eating and your new puppy runs up to the dog happily; the pup is not yet aware that this could turn south in a second. Your son or daughter, who knows your older dog doesn't like to be bothered when eating, sees what is about to happen and yells and runs to grab the puppy before he gets any closer.

Dogs often react to our reactions. When we get upset about something, it triggers our dogs to be on the alert that something is not right and they better be on the alert, too.

The adult dog may or may *not* have had a problem with the oncoming puppy; left to his own devices, he may have been about to display some great non-violent communication that would help teach the puppy some boundaries. But since we have reacted negatively to the puppy running up to him, the dog may well be sparked into perceiving that the puppy rushing him is a bad

thing; given the reaction of the small human, he may feel he has to respond in a dramatic way, too.

Or say you are holding a smaller dog (or a cat, or baby) on your lap when your big dog comes rushing in to greet you enthusiastically. If you are surprised and not thinking ahead, but simply reacting, you may yell at the oncoming dog while whisking the smaller dog (or cat or baby) out of reach. Again, this sends a negative tone to the oncoming dog, who may, in turn, develop negative associations to the little one.

■ **Proactive supervision.** This is getting *close* to the best type of supervision. We realize that in order to keep everyone in a household safe, we need to manage the environment and calmly head off potential problems well before unsafe interactions happen. This is crucial to the process of having dogs get along safely, while maintaining a positive association with us and each other.

While the adult is playing with or training one dog, the other dog – perhaps a less-experienced youngster, one with poorer impulse control, or a dog who is new to the household – is laying safely on the other side of a puppy gate. Taking turns playing and training dogs while you are still in the process of learning about the dogs is key to future safe interactions. Teaching each dog to be patient – making sure they each get a turn at individualized, reinforcing attention – will go a long way toward building a true bond with and between your dogs.

In the next image, an adult stands between the dogs while they are eating. This is an alert, proactive way to manage the situation that can be created if one dog finishes first and begins casting about for more food. With the adult watching over them and physically creating a barrier between them, both dogs feel more secure.

This level of supervision is really good – but don't stop here! There's an even higher level that will provide even greater rewards for all the members of your household.

■ **Active supervision is the best and highest level of management.** These adults understand dog behavior and body language and are fully present and actively teaching and interacting with the dogs.

In the scenario discussed earlier – with the adult with a smaller dog in her lap – she hears or sees the excited dog rushing into the house. She is prepared with high-value rewards and ready to calmly and clearly ask the oncoming dog for a sit, then reward him with a treat or toy and warm praise when he does the requested behavior. Her body language and voice are calm and deliberate, showing no signs of reactivity or fear when the dog approaches.

Setting boundaries through teaching builds the dogs' trust in the adult and helps foster calm and pleasant interactions between the dogs. Boundaries help dogs feel safe.

In the active supervision image, you see two adults teaching each dog to sit. The adults are enthusiastic and engaged, and this in turn helps the dogs to engage with them, building the dogs' trust that the humans have created a safe environment for everyone.

## LIFE AND DEATH MATTER

In case any of this seems over-the-top, you should be aware that the most common reason that dogs are relinquished to shelters is due to behavioral issues. It just makes sense to learn as much as you can about canine body language (especially stress signals) and proactive management of your dogs, and to practice calm, reward-based training on a daily basis. These things will reduce our dogs' stress, increase their sense of security, and, critically, prevent tragic behavioral outcomes. 🐾

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*Jill Breitner has been training dogs since 1978 and is a body-language expert. She is the developer of the Dog Decoder smartphone app, which helps people identify and "de-code" their dogs' body language for a better understanding. She is also a certified Fear Free Professional and certified in Animal Behavior and Welfare. She lives on the West Coast and does online training and consultations all over the world.*



# Taking the Lid Off

*A condition called “entropion” causes the dog’s eyelids to touch and irritate his eye; usually, treatment is required to correct the position of the eyelids and preserve the health of the eye.*

**H**ave you ever seen a dog with chronically runny eyes? I have – many times. I used to be surprised that the owners of these dogs thought it was strictly a cosmetic issue, but perhaps this misconception is so common because the condition that causes the irritation isn’t frequently discussed. Let’s fix that!

Many cases of drippy, irritated eyes are caused by entropion, a general term for a condition in which the eyelids roll inward. It can occur at the upper or lower lid but also along the sides of the eyes (medial and lateral). This causes irritation to the cornea and can result in chronic ulcers and painful, squinty eyes. It is a common condition of young, rapidly growing purebred dogs.

## TYPES OF ENTROPION

There are three types of entropion: inherited/genetic, spastic, and acquired.

In the **acquired** form, the eyelids roll inward as a result of changes to the eye or the muscles surrounding it. Anything that weakens the eye muscles or shrinks the “globe” of the eye can lead to inward rolling. This occurs as dogs age or develop ophthalmic problems. Conditions such as end-stage glaucoma can also lead to a shrunken globe.

**Spastic entropion** can occur when there is any painful condition (such as a corneal ulcer or uveitis) in the eye.

Spastic and acquired entropion can occur in any breed at any age.

**Inherited** entropion is the most well-known form. There are many susceptible breeds. Most of them are known for having “extra” skin folds or drooping eyes such as the Shar-Pei and Chow Chow. In these breeds, entropion is generally present at birth.



*This Labrador has acquired entropion, secondary to dehydration and renal disease. It should resolve somewhat once he is rehydrated.*

## SIGNS OF TROUBLE

The signs of entropion include visualization of rolled inward eyelids, excessive tearing, squinting (called blepharospasm), photosensitivity, rubbing and pawing at the eyes, and in some cases, corneal ulceration and dark brown pigment formation on the cornea. Some breeds do not seem particularly bothered by entropion – particularly the brachycephalic breeds – while it can cause significant discomfort and corneal trauma in others.

Diagnosis is made through a straightforward visual exam of the dog combined with knowledge of breed-specific tendencies.

## TREATMENT

Puppy entropion, as seen in the “wrinkly” breeds mentioned above can be managed in two ways. In the first technique, the eyelids can be rolled outward by the owner at home several times a day. This is an attempt to overcome pulling from the orbital muscles.

In the second, a temporary “tacking” procedure is conducted by a veterinarian. This may need to be repeated more than once as the dog grows. Generally, by two to four weeks after placement, the sutures can be removed. In some cases this does not work, and a permanent procedure must be done.

In cases where temporary tacking does not resolve the entropion, a procedure called a Hotz-Celsus will be done. This is rarely done in puppies less than 6 months of age, as they have not achieved their final head conformation. In general, a Hotz-Celsus (also called a blepharoplasty) is when a wedge-shaped area of tissue is removed and then the area is sutured closed, to pull the eyelids outward – similar to an eye-lift in humans! It can be modified to be used in any area of the eyelid and is done under general anesthesia.

Acquired entropion may or may not respond to treatment. It depends on the underlying cause and whether it can be resolved. An example of acquired entropion would be a dog with an eye that has reached end-stage glaucoma and has



*This dog has severe, 360-degree entropion (meaning the eye is being touched by the upper and lower eyelids, and is irritated from all sides). Notice the tearing and matting around the eye from irritation, as well as the prominence of the third eyelid, which has elevated in order to protect the cornea.*



*Here is the same dog is after surgical repair for his severe entropion. The eye is clear and bright, without evidence of matting or squinting. (The greenish-yellow color is fluorescein eye stain. This is a test that uses a dye and a blue light to detect foreign bodies or damage to the cornea. Happily, this dog had neither!)*

shrunk into the socket. In this case, the entropion is a result of the small globe and will not improve.

Spastic entropion will generally resolve with application of topical pain relief and treatment of the underlying condition. An example of this would be a dog with a painful corneal ulcer. Once the ulcer is treated and resolved, the entropion will resolve as well.

### **DIFFERENT FACES REQUIRE DIFFERENT APPROACHES**

Brachycephalic breeds such as Pugs and Bulldogs develop entropion at the medial canthus of the eyelid (near the nose). This can be corrected with a procedure known as a medial canthoplasty. In this surgery, the opening of the eye is actually made

smaller so that the eyelids do not rub the cornea. Without this, the fur and eyelashes will frequently irritate the cornea, causing a dark brown pigment to form. This change is usually permanent and very common in brachycephalic breeds with untreated entropion. It can also lead to chronic eye ulceration.

Similarly, a lateral (away from nose) canthal entropion can develop in German Short-Haired Pointers, Rottweilers, and Chows. There are several, relatively complex surgical procedures that can correct this type of entropion.

Dogs with very droopy eyes such as St. Bernards, Great Danes, Bloodhounds, and Mastiffs often have a combined form of entropion and *ectropion* – a condition in which

the eyelid rolls outward. This forms what is known as “diamond eye.” There are several surgical techniques for management of this condition, but due to breed conformation, failure occurs fairly often. It is important when pursuing surgery that you discuss with your veterinarian the failure and success rate of this procedure. It will help avoid miscommunication and manage expectations.

Breeds with extra skin such as the Shar-Pei and Basset Hound may also benefit from tacking of the forehead. The extra skin of the forehead leads to drooping of the eyelids and secondary entropion.

Unfortunately, entropion is seen most often in purebred dogs. It is recommended that dogs with entropion not be bred, as the mechanism of inheritance is not well-understood. Further, the American Kennel Club does not allow showing of dogs with previous entropion repair. 🐾

## *Should I adopt a dog with entropion?*

It's important to consider breed predispositions when adopting a dog. Entropion can be managed and generally has a good to excellent prognosis, but it can also be frustrating and require multiple repair attempts in some breeds. In occasional cases, despite excellent medical and surgical management, entropion recurs. It is always important to have an open and frank discussion with your veterinarian when deciding how to manage entropion.



*Catherine Ashe graduated the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine in 2008. After a small-animal intensive emergency internship, she practiced ER medicine for nine years. She is now working as a relief veterinarian in Asheville, North Carolina, and loves the GP side of medicine. In her spare time, she spends time with her family, reads voraciously, and enjoys the mountain lifestyle.*

CASE  
HISTORY

# Basking in Sunshine

*Finding just the right dog to join your family can be a challenge today. Here is how WDJ's Training Editor went about the task – and brought Sunshine home.*

It's been a rough year. In the space of six months, my husband and I lost three of our beloved animal companions, with each death coming quite unexpectedly. First we lost our pot-bellied pig, Sturgis; a week later, our 14-year-old Corgi, Lucy, was diagnosed with and died from cancer. In my grief I turned to Bonnie, our wonderful 13-year-old Scottie/Corgi/Poodle-mix, and only half-jokingly told her she would have to live forever.

And then we lost her to cancer, too – also suddenly and unexpectedly. That left us bereft, with only our four-year-old Kelpie, Kai. He was young and healthy, but for the first time in over 40 years we were living with only one dog. Our house felt sad, quiet, and empty.

I had just started thinking about looking for another dog a few weeks before Bonnie died. I had also just started to realize how challenging it might be. For 40-plus years my husband Paul and I have worked at or with animal shelters. We *never* had to go looking for a dog; sooner or later one would arrive at the shelter and clearly say, "I'm yours."

## STARTING THE SEARCH

In the past, we would have looked no farther than our local shelters for our next dog; I have long been a vigorous proponent of shelter adoptions. Today, though, most of the shelters in our immediate area are so-called "no-kill" shelters. While the goal of reducing euthanasia is a great thing, it often results in shelters housing too many dogs who are highly unsuitable for adoption, and we had no interest in supporting this. Our preference is to support open admission shelters (and we did eventually make the trip to a good one).

Additionally, most shelter kennels in this area are filled with pit bull-type dogs, and while I am not anti-pit bull and I vehemently oppose any breed bans, they are simply not the dog for us.

## WHAT IS THE RIGHT TYPE?

In past articles in WDJ, I have advised people who are thinking about adopting a new dog to develop a list of attributes that they must have, would like to have, would prefer not to have, and really do not want at all – and then to use these lists as search criteria. And yet, here we were, not really sure of what we were looking for. Another herding breed? We already have a Kelpie, so maybe, or maybe not. A Bonnie-type terrier-mix? Maybe, but they didn't seem easy to come by.

Trainer friends in the surrounding area promised to keep their eyes and ears open for a candidate for us, but since we couldn't give them much information about what we wanted, this wasn't very helpful. One friend contacted me regarding her neighbor, who was looking for a home for a great 4-year-old German Shepherd Dog. "Yay!" I thought. We had a terrific shepherd in the past (Paul's dog Smokie, many years ago when we first met). But Paul said no; I'd sold him on the benefits of smaller dogs over the years, and he didn't want a big dog.

We tried Petfinder and other adoption websites, but photos on a computer screen don't do much for me – even cute ones. I did click on one photo of a Cattle Dog-mix, supposedly with a rescue group just five miles from us. Funny, we know all the rescue groups around here, and I would swear there's not one within five miles. Sure enough, when the site opened I read, "All of our dogs are in foster homes in Alabama..." You had to adopt sight-unseen, pay the adoption and transport fees (over \$500), and when the dog got here, he was yours, whether you liked him or not. Obviously, that is not something I would ever do.

I looked on Petfinder for a couple of weeks, getting more and more disillusioned. I found ample evidence that a scam that I have heard about many times was still in frequent use: so-called rescues that post pictures of cute dogs that they don't actually have, and when someone contacts them about a particular dog, they say, "Oh shoot, *that* dog just got adopted,

*Trainer/author Pat Miller and her husband had to look outside the box for their newest dog, but their persistence and creativity paid off. Meet Sunshine, a year-old Pomeranian-mix!*



but we have another just like it!” Then they find a shelter dog (often procured at no cost to them from a self-proclaimed no-kill shelter eager to place any dog to any so-called rescue), and then charge you an outrageous adoption fee for their very low investment in acquiring the dog.

A friend who works at the open-admission shelter run by the Frederick County Animal Control contacted us about a young Cattle Dog-mix there. We went to see him, but he wasn’t “the one” – too big and rowdy to be a good companion and playmate for our 30-pound Kelpie. All the other dogs at this shelter were pit bull types, Labs, and hounds. Not for us. I cried for Bonnie, missing her sweet presence, and wondered where else to look.

### UNLIKELY SOURCE

Then I thought of Craigslist. Look – I have warned people about the very real and significant dangers of trying to sell or adopt pets through Craigslist. Scammers get dogs for free or cheap from unsuspecting owners, and then charge exorbitant fees to adopt them to others as “rescues.” Or worse, hoard or abuse them.

But I would be at the other end of the equation. I would be a responsible human trying to adopt a dog for our legitimate home, perhaps even saving a dog from one of those awful fates. I went on Craigslist, looking for dogs in our surrounding area.

I found an 11-month-old intact Pomeranian listed four days prior, in our town. We had two wonderful Poms (Dusty and Scooter) in the past. Perhaps we needed another? I sent an email to the person who posted the dog and she answered. They were giving him up because her 15-year-old daughter had wanted to breed Pomeranians but had changed her mind. However, another woman was coming to see him tomorrow. If she didn’t take him, the lister would contact me back.

When I didn’t hear back, I emailed again, just in case. Sorry, I was told,



*Sunshine is already gaining confidence and training skills.*

the other woman did take him. “But,” she said, “I looked at your website, and if he doesn’t work out there, I would really like you to have him. I think you’d be perfect for him.”

I checked Craigslist over the next couple of days, but nothing interested me. Mostly puppies for sale, at retail puppy prices. Nothing on Petfinder. Then, an email. “She doesn’t want to keep him. Are you still interested?”

YES!

### MEETING OUR NEW DOG

The Craigslist poster said she would bring the dog to meet us the next afternoon. She was picking him up from the other lady and didn’t want to take him back home if she could help it. She arrived the next afternoon and exited her car in Mennonite dress, with the dog in her arms – only, he is clearly *not* a purebred Pomeranian. He is at least twice the size of a Pom (or four times the size of a tiny Pom!).

She carried him into my training center (her daughter had not succeeded in teaching him to walk on a leash) and set him on the floor. His nose was longer than a Pom’s, his body was twice the length of a Pom’s, and his coat was straight and long rather than Pom-fluffy – but he was beautiful.

I sat on the floor, and Paul sat on a chair. The little dog eyed me warily and was clearly even more worried about Paul. He warmed up to me quickly but continued to be suspicious of Paul. My

heart sank. Paul surely wouldn’t want him, since the little dog was barely approaching him. I was certain his decision was going to be “no.”

After a time, the owner cleared her throat and said, “So what do you think? I do have an appointment I need to get to...”

I looked at Paul, and he smiled at me and nodded. Really? I expected the owner to ask for money, but she smiled, stood up, thanked us, and left. He was ours.

It took us a week to name him. Sunshine is wonderful. As I write this, he’s been here just two weeks. He hung out at last week’s Academy and did his first work for Peaceable Paws one evening, socializing perfectly with a fearful Maltese/Poodle-mix. He starts training class tonight, but has already learned to walk on a leash, sit on cue, and lie down for a lure. He’s cheerful and brave, learning not to chew cords or lift his leg (and will be neutered soon), and is making peace with Paul.

Kai seemed a little put out at first (I think he was enjoying being an only dog) but now the two of them happily romp, play, chase, tug, and wrestle. I love that Sunshine is not all Pom and that he’s bigger than a Pom (16.2 pounds at our vet visit this week). He’s probably Pom and American Eskimo (we call him a Pomskimo). He’s getting better about not barking when left alone, and he’s going to be just fine. He brought sunshine back into our world. I keep singing songs with “sunshine” lyrics, smiling all the while. I just told him he has to live forever. 🐾

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*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. 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. See page 24 for contact information, information on her classes for dog owners and trainers, and book purchasing details.*

# Letters and Corrections

Actually, corrections first:

In “Food in the Fridge,” an article about fresh, cooked commercial dog diets the August issue, we made a couple of errors in the description of Just Food For Dogs (JFFD), a California-based company.

JFFD has pioneered a novel (and handy) strategy of installing USDA-approved kitchens in pet supply stores, so shoppers at these stores can watch the food they buy for their dogs being made. However, the article stated that Petco had the first stores that hosted JFFD kitchens; it was *actually* a small chain of California pet supply stores – Pet Food Express – that launched these in-store kitchens. We love Pet Food Express and apologize for the error.

Also, we failed to mention that, in addition to the six “daily” recipes that are offered by JFFD, the company also makes a number of prescription diets and will formulate and manufacture a veterinary-prescribed diet just for your dog. All of these things have been corrected in the online version of WDJ.

Speaking of the online version, we have added another manufacturer or two to the table of companies that make these fresh, cooked diets. Check the WDJ website for updates.

– NANCY KERNS, EDITOR

**I can't find the article you ran about the dangers of grass awns getting into dogs' skin.** There was a mask featured in a sidebar that I want to try on my Springer, since she is now at the vet for the second time this summer getting seeds taken out of her ears.

Love your magazine, please help!

CHRIS MCGONIGLE  
via email

Hi, Chris. The article was probably “Foxtail Grass: Awns of Destruction,” in the June 2018 issue, although we have run a number of articles about foxtails over the years.

The “mask” is the Outfox Field Guard, and we can't recommend it strongly or frequently enough, so thank you for giving us the opportunity to do so again. It can be purchased in many pet supply stores, as well as from Outfox directly. Call the company at (800) 261-7737 or see their website at [outfoxfordogs.com](http://outfoxfordogs.com).

Here is a great photo of four dogs in California who don't go out on the trails during foxtail season without their Outfox Field Guards. (Photo courtesy of Dena Stephens.)



**I just read that horrible article saying that if your two dogs can't get along after trying all of her [the author's] steps then it's okay to euthanize them.** That's disgusting, and she shouldn't be allowed to have anything she has written published.

You people are very clearly not dog lovers and shouldn't pretend to be.

Any monster that says a dog should be murdered because it can't conform the way they want it to should do the world a favor and put themselves down.

I will never visit your site again, and I'm telling everyone I know how

phony you are. Gross! Get some morals, people!

LLIA ESKRIDGE  
via email

I guess, since I just recommended that those interested in the fresh, cooked foods review should revisit the table for additions to the chart, that I should also mention that subscribers to WDJ can access all of our past articles. And that some of our past articles are also available to nonsubscribers.

The article that the writer above is referencing (“Dog-on-Dog Household Aggression”) was originally published in the April 2010 issue. It was recently updated and set “free” on our website.

The article contained more than 4,000 words about how to try to peacefully resolve conflicts between dogs in your family, as well as links to a dozen other articles containing even more training and management strategies for dogs with aggression issues. At the end of the piece, the author wrote:

“No one wants to think of euthanizing an otherwise healthy member of their canine family. Still, if you've done all you can reasonably do given the limits of your abilities and resources, and you've not been able to create a safe environment for your family and one of the dogs can't be rehomed, then euthanasia is not an inappropriate decision. It will be terribly painful for you, and you may always feel guilt and regret about not finding the solution to the problem, although perhaps not as much guilt and regret as you would if one of your dogs badly injured or killed the other, or worse, a person.”

We stand by the article. Its author, WDJ's Training Editor Pat Miller, is still writing for us. 🐾

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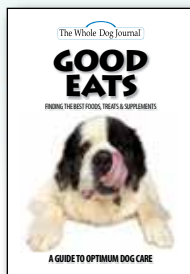
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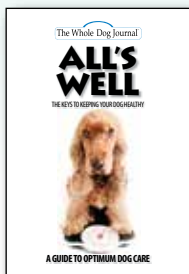
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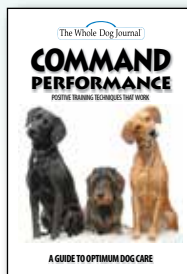
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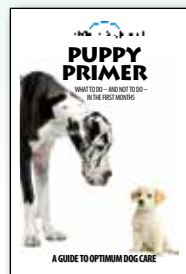
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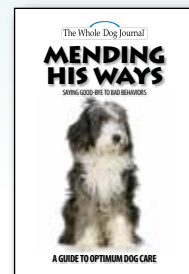
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## RESOURCES

### BOOKS AND VIDEOS

**Linda P. Case, MS**, is author of a number of books on canine and feline nutrition, including *Dog Food Logic*. Her most recent book, however, concerns canine behavior and training. *Dog Smart: Evidence-Based Training with The Science Dog* and Case's other books can be purchased from [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com) and [wholedogjournal.com](http://wholedogjournal.com). Case's blog can be read at [thesciencedog.wordpress.com](http://thesciencedog.wordpress.com).

**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*
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and her most recent:

- *Beware of the Dog: Positive Solutions for Aggressive Behavior in Dogs*

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