

The Whole Dog Journal™



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A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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Useful

It's our highest goal: to empower you to help your dog.

BY NANCY KERNS

Cowboys are typically laconic, but I never forgot the one-word summation of the well-known reined cowhorse trainer in reference to a colt I was working with many years ago. He watched closely as I put the colt through his paces: walk, trot, lope, reverse directions, and smoothly slide to a stop. I was pleased with the colt's work that day; he was willing yet relaxed, engaged, and seemed appreciative of the strokes I gave his glistening coat as we walked over to the rail to talk to my trainer acquaintance. "What did you think of him?" I asked. The far more experienced horseman squinted and paused before he responded. "Useful," he drawled. I must have looked disappointed, because after a moment, the trainer elaborated. "Yep, he looks *useful* . . . That's a damn fine colt."

After more exposure to the trainer (as a participant or spectator in an occasional training clinic) I gradually realized that "useful" was one of his highest compliments – and I embraced the word. What a good goal it is to strive to be useful! (And in contrast, can you imagine anything more insulting than to be deemed "useless"?)

Above all else with WDJ, being useful is our objective. We're trying to present you with clear, accessible instruction and enough in-depth information about any given topic to enable you to make sound decisions about your dog's health and training. And if I do say so myself, this issue hits the target.

- In "Gear of the Year" (page 4), a number of our regular contributors offer information about some of the training and dog-care tools they use the most and like the best.
- In "Positively Winning" (page 8), author/trainer Stephanie Colman discusses how owners and trainers keep their dogs enthusiastic and precise in the obedience ring – where no treats, toys, or praise is allowed. If you've ever wondered when and how you can reduce the number of treats you need to give your dog without losing his enthusiasm, read this!
- Infectious canine hepatitis made a comeback in the United States in 2012,

necessitating a review of vaccination protocols. In "An Old Infectious Disease Is New Again," on page 12, Denise Flaim tells you what you need to do to ensure that your dog is protected.

- WDJ's Training Editor, Pat Miller, explains how training and managing large and giant breeds differs from training smaller dogs in "Going Big" (page 16). She also discusses the responsibilities that are unique to the owners of large dogs.
- Trainer Nannette Morgan found herself in need of specialized equipment and knowledge to help her care for her dogs while recovering from her own major surgery. In "Dog Care When You're Down" (page 20), she shares her tips for making sure that she and her dogs didn't just survive her convalescence, but thrived.

Useful? I hope so. Of course, I'm not wishing major surgery on any of you! But hang onto the issue; even if information about worthwhile products, show ring competition, puppy vaccines, giant breeds, or temporary disability is not useful to you right *now*, if you own dogs long enough, all of those articles should be useful to you at some point. At least, that's our goal.

NK

HORMONE-ALTERING CHEMICALS A COMMON HAZARD IN DOG TOYS

Present in many dog toys, BPA and phthalates are released by heat, mechanical pressure, and saliva (just like a dog's chewing)

Researchers at Texas Tech University found that many popular “bumpers” (items used for training retrievers) and other plastic toys exude BPA and phthalates when subjected to conditions that simulate chewing by a dog.

We first alerted readers to the danger presented to dogs by these chemicals in an April 2008 article, “Why Vinyl Stinks: The Dangers of Vinyl Dog Toys.” Author Susan Weinstein explained that many “plastic” products contain additives that can be harmful to humans and animals in high-enough amounts. Bisphenol-A (usually abbreviated to BPA), an endocrine disrupter, is the best known of these plastic additives. But there are similar dangers posed by less-well-known chemicals called “phthalates.” These additives are used to make plastic materials flexible.

Philip N. Smith, PhD, a toxicologist at The Institute of Environmental and Human Health at Texas Tech, is co-author of an as-yet unpublished study (“Factors affecting leaching rates of phthalates and bisphenol A from canine training devices”), which was presented in November 2012 at the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry conference in Long Beach, California. Dr. Smith became interested in chemical exposures from bumpers after using them to train his own dogs. “I have two Labs and they’re often carrying a bumper around,” says Smith. “I became curious about what sort of chemical exposure dogs who chew them may be exposed to.”

The researchers, led by Kimberly Wooten, a graduate student in environmental toxicology at Texas Tech, looked at factors that affected the amounts of BPA and phthalates that could leach from plastic bumpers. They compared the amounts of BPA and a variety of phthalates that leached out of bumpers that were made by two different (unidentified) companies; bumpers of different colors (orange and white); and plastic products that were brand-new, some that had been “aged” by storage outdoors for a month, and some that were subjected to simulated chewing. The products were bathed in artificial saliva (similar to what is used in the testing of children’s products) and then the fluid was examined for BPA and phthalates.

BPA and at least five different phthalates – benzyl butyl phthalate (BBP), dibutyl phthalate (DBP), diethylhexyl phthalate (DEHP), diethyl phthalate (DEP), and di-

methyl phthalate (DMP) – were found to have leached into the artificial saliva in varying amounts.

“Some of the analytes were found in very low concentrations; others were found in the low parts per million range,” says Dr. Smith. However, he warned against any attempt to quantify a specific exposure risk from this study. “To determine how much of these substances were actually getting into a dog, you’d have to give them to dogs to chew and then test their blood. We plan to continue this line of research if we can get it funded, but finding funding for studies like this is difficult,” Dr. Smith said.

The study has not yet been published or peer-reviewed. But preliminary results indicate that many plastic pet toys and training tools can expose dogs to endocrine-disrupting chemicals, and that certain storage conditions and usage can increase concentrations of these chemicals that leach into canine saliva. “Consumer education about potential risk from plastic chewing or retrieving products seems to be warranted,” he says.

Broad observations from the study included:

- ❖ There were color effects (the color of the products seemed to affect the amount of chemicals leached) but they were not consistent.
- ❖ Products that were aged outdoors (exposed to sunlight and increased temperatures) leached more phthalates than new products.
- ❖ Products that were physically manipulated in a manner similar to chewing leached greater concentrations of phthalates than the new products.

We asked Dr. Smith to explain why new vinyl products, which often have a strong “plastic” smell, leached lower concentrations of BPA and phthalates than older products. “We looked at only six phthalates and BPA,” he responded. “It’s possible that some of the lighter phthalates, the ones that are more likely to volatilize, are released in greater concentrations in new products.” The phthalates the researchers looked for, however, are among the ones commonly cited as hazardous to humans and other animals; each has been banned in the European Union for use in children’s toys and childcare products.

Plastic retrieve items can be found in every pet supply store and catalog; safe, nontoxic alternatives are harder to find but *are* available. Our favorites are made by Katie’s Bumpers, which makes a wide variety of bumpers and tug toys out of rugged firehose material. Katie’s Bumpers also offers a plastic bumper made of phthalate-free, recyclable #4 plastic. For more information about these bumpers, see katiebumpers.com or call the company at (303) 642-0544.

– Nancy Kerns



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Gear of the Year

Some of our favorite dog-training and dog-care tools and toys.

BY NANCY KERNS

Few of WDJ's contributors are shoppers; most of us have too many dogs to support for us to be in the habit of foraging through irresistibly cute items in boutique pet supply stores! But when pressed to think about it, all of us have one or two items in our dog-care arsenal that we couldn't possibly live without – products that are so useful or so good at fulfilling every aspect of their design, that we use them with our dogs practically every day. Here are some of the products that made their “must-have” lists.

JOYCE CHEN ULTIMATE SCISSORS

As I reached for my Joyce Chen Ultimate Scissors last night, it occurred to me that they're one of the most useful items I've ever found for those who feed a homemade diet. I use mine for everything because they cut through just about anything easily! They're also small enough to control even for small cuts. I use mine to cut up liver, tripe, chicken/turkey/duck necks (they work far better than the several pairs of poultry shears I've invested in over the years), whole large sardines (sharp enough to cut into meal-sized pieces without squeezing out too much of the innards), vegetables, and even to cut between lamb or beef ribs/riplets. I know there's more; I don't think a day goes by that I don't use them.

The blades are chrome molybdenum stainless steel with a rust-resistant, no-stain finish. The handles are a slightly flexible plastic – strong enough for heavy-duty cutting but easy on your hands. The scissors are supposed to be unbreakable, but cutting through bone eventually causes the hinge to weaken, and I've broken a few pairs. When it happens, I'm frantic until I get a new pair. Note that they supposedly have a lifetime warranty, but no one has ever responded to my inquiries when I've broken a pair. I've used them for about 10 years, and have gone through about 4 pairs, counting my current ones.

The scissors are widely available online, but are harder to locate reliably in stores. The price has not increased appreciably in the several years I've been using them; they're always a little under \$20. – *Mary Straus*

JOYCE CHEN ULTIMATE SCISSORS – \$18 FROM AMAZON.COM

**Joyce Chen, a division of Columbian Home Products
Terre Haute, IN
(812) 238-5000
columbianhp.com/products/joyce-chen.html**



KONG

My love affair with the Kong began when they were first introduced in the 1980s. Back then they were marketed (and used) as a fetch toy, and my Australian Kelpie adored the erratic way they bounced when thrown, thanks to their novel beehive shape. Then someone discovered that they could be stuffed with food and used as a canine pacifier, and their value to the canine behavior and training world skyrocketed. While still useful as a fetch toy, they are pressed into service far more often in homes, in crates, in shelters, and in training classes, filled with everything from peanut butter and chicken to broth-moistened kibble, frozen, to make a pupsicle that lasts for hours – especially refreshing to a dog on a hot summer day.

Originally created only in black rubber (still the toughest of the product line), they now come in several different colors and sizes, from Chihuahua teeny to Great Dane huge. The line includes a Kong that floats (for dogs who love water games), and another with a weighted base and a hole in the side that the dog pushes around to make treats fall out.

While not totally indestructible, they are one of the hardest toys on the market, and one that deserves a prominent spot in every dog's toolbox. – *Pat Miller*

KONG – \$5- \$14 (depending on size)

**The Kong Company
Golden, CO
(303) 216-2626
kongcompany.com**



NITE IZE METEORLIGHT LED BALL

Trade in your tired old tennis ball for some bark-after-dark fun with the Nite Ize Meteorlight LED ball. As winter settles in, the Nite Ize ball is perfect for exercising ready retrievers or ball-a-holics on long, dark nights. The bright LED light (in your choice of solid blue, red, green, or rotating "disco" colors) means you'll never lose a ball in the dark again. It's super easy to spot "Spot" as he zooms around the yard with this fun toy. The ball turns on and off with a steady push at a marked point (instructions show you how to step on the ball in a certain way to engage the on-off feature); we've yet to experience an accidental power-up or power-off during play.

The Meteorlight Ball is molded from durable thermo plastic rubber, floats, is water-resistant, and includes long-lasting and easily replaceable batteries. The best part? It fits perfectly in a Chuck It tennis ball launcher! – *Stephanie Colman*

METEORLIGHT BALL – \$10 FROM AMAZON.COM

**Nite Ize
Boulder, CO
(800) 678-6483
niteize.com**

ORIGINAL SOCK DOGS

Plush artist Stacey Hsu is as obsessed with socks as most young puppies. She expertly crafts socks into delightfully adorable, 13- to 16-inch canine companions that sparkle with personality and charm. Her custom creations, modeled after photos of your own four-legged friend, boast a remarkable attention to detail, from the slight cock of a head to the tell-tale flop of an ear. Each custom dog includes an ID tag and a signed and numbered artist's hangtag. Or choose from a colorful array of whimsical, pre-crafted canine creatures in the Sock Dogs Etsy shop.

One of my neighbors ordered an Original Sock Dog to be modelled after her dog, Bella; the Sock Dog and Bella are shown together here. Notice the heart in place of the Sock Dog's right eye? That's in recognition of Bella's blind eye (the result of an injury that happened to her as a puppy, before she was adopted) – an example of the loving, individualized attention the artist puts into these creations. Plus, Hsu donates 10 percent of every sale to her local shelter. – *Stephanie Colman*

ORIGINAL SOCK DOGS – \$56 for pre-crafted dogs; \$85 for custom sock dogs

**Original Sock Dogs
Kansas City, MO
sockdogs@yahoo.com
sockdogs.com**



GREEN

We've seen many products that were designed to slow down a dog who bolts his food. Several were bowls that were molded with a few raised surfaces – nothing that really slowed a dog down. Then there are the food-dispensing toys – some of which make it so difficult for some dogs to eat their meals, they just give up. (Not to mention the fact that many of them make a lot of noise as the dog bashes them about.) Here's the first product we've seen that truly slows the dog's consumption of food, without making it overly difficult or daunting. We tried it with small dogs and large dogs; all of them were able to extract food with a bit of work; perhaps because they could see the food the whole time, none gave up until all the food was gone.

Northmate says Green is made of hard plastic without phthalates, so it can be used outside and cleaned in the dishwasher without posing a risk of leaching. – *Nancy Kerns*

GREEN – \$35 FROM AMAZON.COM

**Northmate
Arslev, Denmark
0045-22-82-16-84
northmate.com**





DAISY RUNNER AND MAX WALKER

I never thought I'd like using a hands-free leash – until I started regularly walking three dogs at once (*my* dog Otto, Tito the former foster, and Diamond, the foster I worried I'd never find a home for). After a few tangled-leash episodes, I went digging through the box of gear that's been sent to WDJ to test, and came up with Spindrift's Daisy Runner and Max Walker hands-free system. I quickly learned that it's much easier to walk multiple dogs when I connect the leash of the dog with the best on-leash manners to a belt designed for this purpose, leaving my hands free to handle the other dogs' leashes and training treats.

After Diamond found a fantastic forever home (yay!), I found myself continuing to use the Daisy Runner hands-free system – sometimes even when I was walking Otto alone! It's great when you are walking with a cup of coffee or pushing a stroller; it's comfortable when you are running! And it's not just the hands-free concept, it's Spindrift's execution of the concept that makes the system so appealing.

The Daisy Runner is a belt, made of 3/4-inch nylon webbing, which is lined with wider neoprene for chafe-free comfort. Reflective piping offers nighttime visibility. There are quick-release leash attachment points on either side of the belt, so you can fasten two

dogs to the belt, or put one dog on either side of you. The Max Walker leash has an internal bungee cord that recoils to a short length as long as your dog is at your side, but stretches to prevent jerking your dog hard if he ranges from that position. It has an adjustable loop at one end, so it can be used as a regular leash or fastened to the Daisy Runner. Spindrift makes the Max Walker available in two lengths (4 or 6 feet) with either a metal or plastic buckle on the dog's end. I like the 4-foot length; it provides the right amount of slack for Otto to jog close to my side without the leash sagging enough to provide a trip- or tangle hazard. And the bungee material has just enough give to allow him a momentary sniff (no more) or provide him with room to dodge out of my path if I happen to stumble (yes, I sometimes text while walking).

My only complaint: The Daisy Runner comes in just two sizes, medium (29 to 34 inches) and large (35 to 40 inches). A wider selection of sizes, or a revised design that would allow a wide range of adjustment, would enable more people to enjoy the product. –Nancy Kerns

DAISY RUNNER & MAX RUNNER – \$36

Spindrift American Made Dog Gear
 Bend, OR
 (541) 280-8283
 spindriftdog.com



CLOUD NINE HERBAL EAR WASH

My previous dog, the sweet Border Collie Rupert, used to be prone to ear infections (it was a symptom of his allergy to a very common food ingredient that took me far too long to identify). Until I determined the ingredient that would trigger an allergic response (of all things, chicken!), he'd come to me at least a few times a month with his head tipped to one side, shaking his head repeatedly in a vain attempt to rid himself of the burning sensation in his ears. Over the years I tried many products to clean and calm his red, irritated ears. But once I tried Halo's Cloud Nine Herbal Ear Wash, I never used any other product. It never failed to gently cleanse and soothe his ears by the next day.

Cloud Nine contains chamomile extract, sage oil, clove oil, horehound extract, southern wood extract, calendula extract, pennyroyal oil, and St. John's wort oil in a base of witch hazel. It effectively softens and loosens ear wax and allows you to wipe dirty debris out of the dog's ear. Plus, it never seems to sting.

My sister recently adopted an almost all-white Jack Russell-mix puppy who is prone to irritated, dirty ears. My sister asked me what she should do for them. I sent a bottle of the Halo ear wash to her via next-day delivery – and she reported that it cleared up her puppy's painful, red ears overnight. Good stuff! – Nancy Kerns

CLOUD NINE HERBAL EAR WASH – 4 oz. \$14

Halo Purely for Pets
 Tampa, FL
 (800) 426-4256
 halopets.com



PLANET PETCO UNDERCOAT COMB AND SLICKER BRUSH

All of Petco's new "earth-conscious pet products" are made with natural, sustainable raw materials. Petco says it donates one percent of the sales of all of these Planet Petco products to nonprofit organizations "that help make the planet a healthier place."

It wasn't the Planet Petco or 1% for the Planet labels that led me to try these grooming tools, however. I liked the way they looked and felt in the hand. The handles are made from bamboo – one of the fastest-growing, sustainable woods available. And they work well! The teeth of the Undercoat Comb swivel, which helps when you're trying to comb out a mat or knot in your dog's fur. And the tips of the Slicker Brush are coated with a dab of plastic; they don't stab like needles like some slickers. – *Nancy Kerns*

PLANET PETCO UNDERCOAT COMB – \$11;
SLICKER BRUSH – \$14

Petco
San Diego, CA
(888) 824-7257
petco.com/planet.com



MAGNET BALL

My dog and I train for and compete in obedience. My goal is to inspire an animated, heads-up style of heeling in my dog, and I use reward-based training methods that include a lot of interactive play. My dog happens to be a ball junkie, and I've seen the Magnet Ball mentioned on different forums as a reward/toy, so I jumped at the chance to try it out.

After excitedly tearing into the package, I was disappointed by a lack of literature with tips on how to make the best use of the toy. I've trained with a ball-on-a-rope stuffed down the back of my pants or concealed under my armpit for years, so the magnetic feature was what intrigued me. Instead, all I found was a list of *safety* information warning me of possible harm when handling the neodymium magnets, which are sewn into oversized packets of strong fabric, which you can use to pull the magnets apart when they attach to each other. The literature warned that the magnets are capable of zapping your credit cards and data carriers, ruining your hearing aids, or jump-starting your pacemaker. I probably should have paid more attention, because the first thing I did when handling the toy was pinch my fingers between the two very strong magnets. Ouch!

It turns out that I didn't need instructions; the concept is simple. You position one magnet on the inside of your clothing, and then carefully (taking care not to put one's fingers between the magnets!) position the other one on the outside. Then you just swing the ball by its rope toward the magnets and bam! The ball (which has another magnet inside) jumps right to the magnets on your clothing and hangs on. You can even jog or jump around; the ball holds firm. Did I mention that these are *very* strong magnets?

For obedience training, I'd use the ball as a visual target on my left, upper-arm (similar to the food-on-the-armband technique) to establish early muscle memory for heads-up heeling. One unique advantage of the magnet ball is that the handler doesn't have to change body position to reach for the reward (some dogs are extremely sensitive to this, and it alters their position). I quickly taught my dog how to pull the magnet ball from the middle of my back, and used releasing him to it (without changing my body posture) as a reward for proper heeling. Having the reward come from behind me should, over time, help address his pesky forging problem.

At \$33 for the complete system (one ball-on-a-rope and two magnets), this is a pricey training tool – especially when I can stuff a regular ball-on-a-rope in the back of my pants for a lot less money. And I'm not crazy about the ball itself; it's a lot harder than the squishier balls more commonly used on a rope as a training reward toy. In fact, most of the ball-crazy dogs I tested it on initially preferred tugging the rope, and needed some prompting to tug the ball itself.

Overall, I'd consider this as a specialized training tool for dedicated training junkies, and one that can double as a toy (as opposed to a toy that can double as a training tool). With the magnet inside, it's definitely not a chew toy, and as with any toys, your dog should be closely supervised when using this device. Especially if he's wearing a hearing aid. – *Stephanie Colman*

MAGNET BALL – \$33

Prodogz
White City, OR
(541) 608-2857
prodogz.com



Positively Winning!

Being successful in the obedience ring without ever using compulsion-based training methods is challenging – and very rewarding.

BY STEPHANIE COLMAN

The team glides across the obedience ring with the precision of Olympic synchronized swimmers. As the handler strides into the 180-degree about turn, the dog remains in perfect heel position. There’s an obedience title at stake, and so far, the team is on-course to qualify. And then it happens: the dog misses an exercise. The team has just been disqualified. There are two extreme alternate endings to this scenario.

In the first – and sadly, more common scenario – the frustrated handler barks out a second command, determined not to let her dog “get away with” failing to perform correctly in the ring. The dog

yawns (a sign of stress) while slowly executing the behavior. When their turn is over, the handler hurriedly exits the ring, immediately strategizing with ringside friends and her trainer about how best

to set the dog up for a future training correction in an effort to make sure that mistake doesn’t happen again.

In a happier ending, the handler accepts the disqualification with a rueful laugh; it’s disappointing, but not the end of the world. She jogs with her dog toward the out-gate, gives the dog one more cue for a simple behavior, and when he performs it promptly, quickly and brightly rewards him with some sincerely affectionate petting and praise as she looks for a good place to watch the rest of the class.

While it’s distressing to witness the former scene, it’s not only an absolute pleasure to witness the latter, but also an example of what competitive obedience is supposed to look like.

According to the American Kennel Club, the origin of competition obedience traces back to 1933 when Helen Whitehouse Walker, who bred Standard Poodles, wanted a tangible way to show others that her dogs were more than a

Trainer Denise Fenzi, of Woodside, California, breeds, trains, and shows Belgian Tervurens.



Can you maintain your dog's rapt happy attention, even if you don't have any treats or toys? That's a significant part of the obedience challenge.

pretty face in a fancy haircut. Borrowing ideas from England's Associated Sheep, Police and Army Dog Society, she gathered the support of area dog clubs and fellow breeders and devised a "test" comprised of on- and off-leash heeling, stays, drop-on-recall and retrieving.

Eight dogs entered the first obedience trial, but enthusiasm grew quickly, prompting Walker to contact the American Kennel Club. She emphasized the importance of owners developing a deeper relationship with their dogs, and stressed that while accuracy and precision should be sought after, a dog's performance should demonstrate "enjoyment and willingness to work." These details remain in today's regulations.

According to the AKC, obedience is open to "anyone who is interested in developing a meaningful relationship with their dog based on communication and fun," and the organization explains that obedience trial participants will "take pleasure in [their] new hobby for many years to come."

But often it's tough to consistently find exhibitors who train in ways that appear to fully embody that sentiment, largely due to the continued prevalence of compulsion-based techniques with ties to early military dog training. Stand outside an obedience ring at a trial, and you're likely to spot a number of dog and handler teams whose lackluster or even robotic performances seem to lack the element of true enjoyment. Some handlers look so sullen, an observer may wonder if they even like their dogs. This does not speak to the intended purpose of competition obedience.

Over the years, competition obedience has become a lot "kinder" to the dogs (using less compulsion), but do exhibitors truly emphasize the development of "meaningful relationships" that are based on "communication and fun?" And does "kinder" training mean "better" training? The use of food in training – either as a lure to induce behavior or as a reward following a successful behavior – is largely what many define as being "positive," yet it's not uncommon to find a trainer working a dog with both leash and collar (choke, pinch, or e-collar) corrections and food rewards.



Today, with an increase in the number of trainers who utilize positive reinforcement training methods, more handlers are putting a greater emphasis on the relationship aspect of training.

CHALLENGES UNIQUE TO OBEDIENCE

In order to succeed in the obedience ring, a dog has to perform a series of behaviors with precision, in response to a single cue and/or signal from his handler – but he also has to perform the required behaviors in a natural, smooth manner.

The "Purpose" section of the AKC's obedience regulations states that it's "essential that the dog demonstrate willingness and enjoyment while he is working, and that a smooth and natural handler be given precedence over a handler moving with military precision and using harsh commands." The "standard of perfection" for the sport is described as combining "the utmost in willingness, enjoyment, and precision on the part of the dog with naturalness, gentleness, and smoothness on the part of the handler." A lack of willingness and enjoyment on the part of the dog is supposed to be penalized, as should a lack of precision in the dog's performance, roughness in handling, military precision, or harsh commands by the handler. Handlers who carry or offer food in the ring or discipline or abuse their dogs in the ring receive a non-qualifying score.

The use of food, toys, and praise is essential to building new behaviors – and maintaining those behaviors over time. But in order to get a dog ring-ready for obedience, you have to reduce and then completely fade the use of food treats and other rewards, without any loss of the dog's enthusiasm or compliance. How?

The short answer is by making the act of working with you so enjoyable that it becomes a reward in itself. But this is the exact point at which many owners (and trainers!) struggle: when they try to make the leap from using a lot of treats to using none, without finding and cultivating ways to keep the work itself engaging and rewarding for the dog. Failure at this phase often drives owners and trainers back to punishment-based techniques.

PHILOSOPHICAL DIFFERENCE

People who use only reward-based methods to train their obedience competitors say that making the commitment to forego the use of force- or fear-based tactics is an important part of the training process. "I think the important question to ask is, 'At the end of the day, does the dog have a choice?'" says Denise Fenzi, a trainer and successful exhibitor from Woodside, California. "That's huge! Because, philosophically, if at the end of the day the dog has a choice, you have no choice but to find ways to make the work interesting for the dog."

A participant in a seminar taught by Denise Fenzi practices having fun with and building a nice relationship with her dog. It's important to be sincere and genuine in the relationship!

It's an important point. No matter how you train, when you step into the ring and can't use training corrections – or rewards – the dog is free to make a variety of performance choices without immediate consequences (good or bad) from the handler. However, many people are still reluctant to let go of the idea that the dog “has to do it.” This mindset stands as a major cultural roadblock toward achieving Fenzi's idea of positive training.

Fenzi is quick to acknowledge that, thankfully, when it comes to methods that differ from hers, she doesn't often see people using methods that inflict pain on their dogs. “It's more like annoyance,” she says. “If I take you by your shirt and drag you around, I'm not hurting you, I'm irritating you; I'm making you not want to be with me, and I'm not doing anything for our relationship. Most of the obedience I see is a combination of really uninspired training. Giving a dog a cookie does not create inspiration. Dragging you to dessert doesn't take away from the fact that I dragged you there.”

In contrast, she says, “If a person takes responsibility for making the work interesting and truly believes that the dog



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE COLMAN

has a choice, that person would qualify in my mind as a positive trainer.”

BUILD A RELATIONSHIP

One of the biggest challenges for would-be positive obedience competitors is to create and maintain a dog who loves to work. One way to do this is by making sure you thoroughly invest in the relationship with your dog. Many reward-based trainers rely so heavily on dispensing treats and toys that it becomes difficult to tell if the dog is working for the tangible reward or the interaction with the handler.

Rewarding a dog is an interactive process, not a sterile act of dispensing a treat or offering a toy. Are you fully present in the relationship with your dog? Consider setting up a video camera to watch how you interact with your dog when you re-

ward him with treats and toys. Are your treats accompanied by genuine praise? How often do you pet your dog before or during treat delivery? Does your dog enjoy your petting? Do you genuinely appear to be enjoying yourself as you reward your dog, or do you deliver a treat as a matter of routine?

Try leaving your treats and toys in your training bag and keep your dog engaged simply by using your sparkling personality. *Does your personality sparkle? Are you being genuine? Are you having fun?* The relationship you share with your dog is the one reward you can bring into the ring. Aspire to build a relationship that has value; make sure your dog has a relationship with you and not the treats and toys you carry in your pocket when you train.

SHAPING FOR A LOVE OF THE GAME

Many reward-based trainers rely on treats and toys to help build a dog's attention on the handler, coupled with various methods of “babysitting” his attention by springing into action with an unexpected move (like a lighthearted verbal cue) to recapture or maintain a dog's focus during training. While arguably “nicer” than issuing a leash correction, it can be just a challenging to fade the motivational cheerleading as it is to fade food and toy rewards. That's where shaping offers a unique advantage.

Fenzi regularly teaches students how to shape their dogs' attention. With the dog on a leash, Fenzi instructs the student to allow the dog to disengage, but not to allow the dog to travel toward any distractions. The dog is free to “see” only what he can explore at the radius of the leash, and the handler should be positioned so that the dog can't actually reach anything too exciting.

POSITIVELY COMPETITIVE

Skeptics often say one can't be truly competitive (obtain championship titles and win in competitive classes) without using at least some punishment, but trainer Denise Fenzi's results are proving otherwise. To date, she has earned Obedience Trial Championship (OTCH) titles on both of her adult Belgian Tervurens:

❖ OTCH TARKATAN CISU, SCHH3, FH1, UDX, TD – “CISU”

Multiple “V” ratings (a distinction of excellence) in protection sports.
Multiple High in Trial (highest scoring dog) awards in obedience.

❖ OTCH SPRITE'S EUREKA, SCHH2, TD, UDX – “RAIKA”

“V” rating in Schutzhund 1.
Multiple High in Trial awards in obedience.

To help others explore what's possible through the decision to avoid physical and/or de-motivating corrections, Fenzi regularly blogs about training topics using her youngest dog, “Lyra,” as an example. Her blog (as well as a list of upcoming seminars) can be found online at denisefenzi.com. Additionally, the first of a three-book series (co-written with fellow trainer Deborah Jones, PhD), *Dog Sports Skills: Building Engagement and Relationship*, will be available at thedogathlete.com in early 2013.

POINTS TO KEEP IN MIND

- ✓ Understand that positive training is as much a state of mind as it is a conscious decision to avoid the use of pain- and compulsion-based techniques.
- ✓ View obedience training and competition as a shared experience with your dog, not a battle of wills where you “win” by achieving compliance.
- ✓ Don't let competitive goals interfere with the opportunity to enhance the bond you share with your dog.
- ✓ Accept that most all of a dog's mistakes are indications of holes in training, not your dog's evil plot to embarrass or defy you.
- ✓ Rather than focus on how to “correct” a mistake, create opportunities to reward correct behavior. Build your partner up, don't tear him down.
- ✓ Teach your dog to work for the joy of interacting with you rather than your food or toys. (In order to do so, you will have to be truly a joy to work with!)
- ✓ Keep in mind that a boring handler can fail to inspire a dog's work ethic just as much as one who employs physical corrections.
- ✓ Release short-term competitive goals in favor of creating a mutually enjoyable experience for you and your dog. Competitive success is often the unintended outcome of released expectations.

Further, the handler quietly moves behind the dog so as not to stand alongside him in distracted solidarity. The handler says nothing and simply waits for the magic moment when the dog turns toward her, at which point the desired behavior (paying attention to/looking at his handler) is marked, rewarded, and the dog is released back to his limited sight-seeing opportunity.

Rather than correct the dog for lack of attention, this technique requires the handler to be adept at limiting the dog's ability to self-reward (by using a leash and working around a level of distraction that's realistic for the dog) and willing to be genuine and interesting in his reward.

Over time, the dog is asked to look at the handler and engage in increasing amounts of work. Throughout the process, the underlying lesson to the dog is, “If you choose to work for me (a task I, the handler, take responsibility for making fun), then you can continue to work. Walking off and sniffing isn't an option.” The choice becomes working for the handler or doing nothing. When working has been reinforced with something truly rewarding and enjoyable to the dog, losing the opportunity to work becomes a powerful consequence.

Through a mix of shaping, the judicious use of lure-based techniques, management, exposing the dog to training pressure in ways that continue to promote success versus failure, and constant attention to building and preserving a solid relationship, Fenzi's goal is to create a dog who learns that working is far more enjoyable than the very limited opportunities for self-reinforcement elsewhere. Over time, and with deliberately slow increases in distractions, the dog becomes so conditioned to working that even new and unusual distractions at show sites fail to seem more interesting.

STILL, SOMETIMES MISTAKES HAPPEN

People often incorrectly believe that in “positive training,” mistakes are never acknowledged. Dogs can benefit from information that tells them their behavior is incorrect, but the information doesn't need to be de-motivating, painful, or scary. It can be as simple as a do-over.

“I don't use any pain-based techniques. Nor do I use techniques that are emotionally painful and make the dog cower, etc. I try very hard not to take the dog out of an enthusiastic place for play-

ing the game, so yelling or anything that causes the dog to have concerns about me is off-limits.”

In a recent blog post, Fenzi writes about “correcting” her youngest dog Lyra during a stay exercise; the word is in quotes because no “correction” is used to address the dog's mistake. In the accompanying video, Lyra breaks her sit-stay while awaiting a formal recall. Fenzi doesn't ignore the behavior; instead, she cheerfully runs the dog back to the intended starting point and tries again. “Close but no cigar!” she exclaims.

“Just help the dog; it's no big deal. Really,” Fenzi writes. “She won't take over the world. She won't think she's ‘getting away with’ ignoring me. She will stay engaged in the game – and that's the hardest thing to get back if you manage to lose it.” She re-sets and leaves her dog, returns to reward her at half the distance of the original attempt, and Lyra proceeds to execute a correct recall with bright eyes and a happy attitude. (See tinyurl.com/WDJ-lyra.)

Accepting that the dog won't take over the world if his mistakes aren't met with stern or forceful corrections can be difficult, especially when people have historically been taught that they must “win” all encounters with their dogs. Abandoning this mindset is an important step in creating a training and trialing experience that is joyful for both the dog and the handler. (After all, if given an effective choice, we'd like to believe that people would rather not employ force- and fear-based tactics when training their four-legged friends.)

KEEPING PERSPECTIVE

At the end of the day, it's not about radically changing your training technique. “What has to change is the underlying philosophy. If that doesn't change, you're adding Band-Aids,” explains Fenzi. “Your belief of why you're doing this with your dog has to change. Positive training is about making it work for both the dog and the human. It's saying, ‘I have some competitive goals I'd like to reach, but first and foremost, I value you as a dog because I like you.’ It's not about what he can do for you – it's about what you are with the dog.” 🐾

Stephanie Colman is a writer and dog trainer in Los Angeles. She shares her life with two dogs, and actively competes in obedience and agility. See page 24 for contact information.

An Old Infectious Disease Is New Again

Infectious canine hepatitis has resurfaced in the United States; owners may need to reconsider their dogs' vaccination protocol.

BY DENISE FLAIM

It's baaaaack. News that infectious canine hepatitis surfaced in New England this summer is not exactly on par with the possessed television sets and otherworldly bedroom-closet portals in the 1980s horror flick "Poltergeist." But the fact that the disease – formally known as canine adenovirus-1, or CAV-1 – has materialized in the United States is likely to induce goosebumps in those who have opted to not vaccinate against it, thinking it was essentially obliterated in the American dog population.

And for a long while, it probably was. While commonplace in the early to mid-20th century, this virus – which attacks the liver and kidneys – had been rare for decades in the United States. Indeed, it is highly unlikely that most middle-aged veterinarians have ever encountered the disease, making its reappearance all the more problematic in terms of being correctly diagnosed.

Epidemiologists have long known that infectious canine hepatitis persists in the Mexican dog population, and about a decade ago, there were several confirmed cases in San Diego, California, believed to have originated from dogs brought across the border. The disease is also known to exist among wild canids in Canada, and the November 2012 issue

of the Canadian Veterinary Journal cited a case of an 11-week-old Alaskan Husky who had been kept outdoors in the Yukon, where infectious canine hepatitis is considered endemic in the wildlife; on

postmortem, the puppy tested positive for CAV-1. As for this summer's New England outbreak, the prime suspect was a red fox, which presumably brought the disease from the north.

Catherine Ford of Omega Rhodesian Ridgebacks in Brookline, New Hampshire, believes her two 3½-month-old puppies contracted infectious canine hepatitis while attending a puppy party at a Massachusetts farm this August. Eight of Ford's puppies from that litter attended the party; four had been vaccinated for canine hepatitis, and four had not. Two of the unvaccinated puppies – Ford's pick of the litter, Zima, and her brother Dhahabu, who went to his new home soon after – became symptomatic three weeks after romping in the farm fields.

Symptoms of infectious canine hepatitis include fever, listlessness, and loss of appetite. When Zima started to refuse food, Ford's vet thought it was a reaction to the antibiotics she had been given for a suspected urinary tract infection. When Zima worsened, the vet was concerned that she might have leptospirosis, and even suggested her illness might be a result of being raw-fed. By the time Ford took her to an emergency clinic at 1 a.m., Zima was beyond hope.

"It was very fast – 24 hours from 'I don't want to eat my breakfast' to dead," Ford says. "Before that, the puppies

The timing of puppy vaccines has been complicated by the threat of canine hepatitis. If CAV-2 and distemper vaccines are given to a pup at the same time, immunosuppression can occur, leaving the pup more vulnerable to disease for a short time.



Infectious canine hepatitis has been regarded as eradicated from the United States for long enough that few younger vets may have ever seen a case – so it may go unrecognized and misdiagnosed.

played, they ate, they were acting normally. That was what was so incredibly difficult to accept.”

Titers showed antibodies to CAV-1, and a necropsy confirmed the diagnosis. That left Ford – whose puppy vaccination protocol did not include canine adenovirus – to scramble.

“I’m in a precarious position with all my dogs,” she says. “When we got the diagnosis, we brought all our dogs in to get vaccinated.” A year-and-a-half-old dog who lives nearby and spent some time with Zima when she was incubating the virus is not symptomatic, but urinalysis showed he is shedding the virus. That means he was infected by canine hepatitis, but survived it, and his kidneys could continue to shed the virus for up to six months.

THE DISEASE

Ronald Schultz, PhD, Diplomate ACVIM (American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine), is professor and chair of the Department of Pathobiological Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Veterinary Medicine. He’s also the person who confirmed Zima’s cause of death. Dr. Schultz thinks this canine hepatitis outbreak is a very valid concern.

“This is the reason I’ve tried to really emphasize the importance of canine adenovirus being a core vaccine, because we have the disease in Mexico, and we know we have the disease in wildlife species in Canada,” he says. “If it’s in the wildlife in Massachusetts, then unfortunately it’s probably elsewhere.” Any wild canid (such as coyotes), or mink, skunk, raccoon, fox, or bear could transmit the disease. “We do have a lot of potential wildlife reservoirs – something we have to be concerned about.”

Dr. Schultz says it is difficult to determine how many cases have gone unrecognized.

“There are many vets who wouldn’t recognize a case,” he says, adding that when he lectures to veterinarians, he asks how many have seen a patient with infectious canine hepatitis, or think they could recognize one. “It would be the gray hairs like me – or no hairs at all – who raise their hands.”



Because the disease is so rare in the American domestic dog population, many vets simply don’t have it on their radar screens. “When you’re looking for something and you know what it is, you find it,” Dr. Schultz says. But with canine hepatitis, “we’ve pretty much come to the conclusion that it couldn’t be that. That’s just human nature. I think there could have been some cases that have been missed, no question about it.”

Dr. Schultz describes infectious canine hepatitis as “just as virulent as parvovirus or canine distemper,” and notes that it causes some similar clinical signs. It is up to 50 percent fatal in puppies under five months of age, and will also infect and cause disease in older dogs who are susceptible. “This virus is very stable in the environment, but not as stable as parovirus,” he says. “When it infects, it has the ability to remain persistent and be shed in urine for months.”

Like parvovirus and distemper, canine hepatitis can be supported with intervention and palliative care like intravenous fluids for hydration. But unlike parvovirus, which affects the intestinal tract, canine hepatitis devastates the kidneys and liver, which, once damaged, severely curtail survivability.

VACCINATION PICTURE

There are two strains of adenovirus that are a concern in dogs. Canine adenovirus type 1, or CAV-1, produces the infectious canine hepatitis described in this article. The other, CAV-2, affects the respiratory

system and is a common cause of kennel cough. A vaccine for CAV-1 fell out of use in the 1970s because one out of 500 vaccinated dogs developed “blue eye,” an ocular discoloration that resulted from a hypersensitivity to the vaccine. Today, the CAV-2 vaccine is used instead of CAV-1 because it is closely enough related to CAV-1 to cross-protect against it, and it does not produce this side effect.

In its 2011 revised canine vaccine guidelines, the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) classifies CAV-2 as a “core” vaccine, or one for which every dog should be vaccinated.

“Puppies should be vaccinated every 3 to 4 weeks between the ages of 6 and 16 weeks (e.g., at 6, 10, and 14 weeks, or 8, 12, and 16 weeks),” the guidelines say, although they go on to note that “one dose is considered protective and acceptable,” provided that there is no interfering maternal immunity.

To minimize this risk of maternal antibody interference with vaccination, the AAHA guidelines say the final dose of the initial series should be administered between 14 and 16 weeks of age.

AAHA recommends that a booster be given no later than one year after the completion of the initial puppy series.

Beyond that, AAHA recommends that dogs be revaccinated every three years, although it notes that “among healthy dogs, all commercially available MLV CAV-2 vaccines are expected to induce a sustained protective immune response lasting at least seven years.”

Dr. Schultz thinks dogs should be

vaccinated according to the AAHA guidelines, which he helped draft. But other experts have reservations about giving the three-way parvovirus/distemper/adenovirus vaccine to young puppies.

Many holistic-minded dog owners follow the minimal vaccination protocol recommended by well-known veterinary hematology and vaccine expert W. Jean Dodds, DVM, which excludes the CAV-2 vaccine. In light of the disease's reappearance, Dr. Dodds says she has been mulling over what the appropriate response should be. For the moment, she has not changed her protocol, other than to note that there has been a clinical outbreak of the disease in the Northeast, and that owners in that part of the country might factor the outbreak into their decision-making.

Dr. Dodds is reluctant to start reflexively recommending a three-way vaccine because when the CAV-2 vaccine is administered to puppies at the same time as the distemper vaccine, and both vaccine viruses replicate in the body simultaneously, immunosuppression can occur. This hiccup of the immune system starts about three days after vaccination and can continue for up to 10 days afterward. For that week-long span, the puppy is immunologically vulnerable, with a compromised immune system.

"This immunosuppressive effect does not occur when adult dogs are vaccinated with CAV-2," Dr. Dodds says, because by then the dog likely has immunity to distemper, and both vaccine viruses must be replicating at the same time for the immunosuppression to occur. One option she is considering is giving CAV-2 at the one-year mark, in two doses three weeks apart.

This, however, does not protect puppies from canine hepatitis. For his part, Dr. Schultz thinks the risks of immunosuppression are minimal. "If those puppies are not in an [at-risk] environment like a shelter" – or they don't already have a disease such as pyoderma or demodectic mange – the immunosuppression goes unnoticed, he says. "It is transient, and only occurs when an animal has no interfering antibodies to one or the other, so both viruses replicate together. It doesn't lead to clinically significant events in the majority of dogs."

Dr. Dodds counters that cases of immunosuppression from vaccination

can go unreported and undiagnosed, just as many vaccine reactions do. "If you asked 100 vets if they've seen a vaccine reaction, maybe one would say yes, when we know it is much more," she says, stressing that the same could be true of awareness of vaccine-induced immunosuppression. She adds that the immunosuppression risk occurs at a time when puppies are particularly vulnerable. "If you take tissue immunity and you suppress it for 10 days at a time when the animal is undergoing new stresses – new home, new food, new everything – it sets the animal up to be susceptible to other stressors," she says. "This is a critical period, in my view."

OTHER OPTIONS

For puppies, the best option, of course, would simply be to vaccinate with CAV-2 some time after a parvovirus-distemper vaccination is administered. The problem? A single CAV-2 vaccine is not commercially available, and likely won't be.

Dr. Schultz notes that there are several ways to get around the immunosuppression problem created when the adenovirus and distemper vaccine viruses are replicating at the same time. None is perfect, and owners will have to consider their individual animals and their risk factors before arriving at a decision that is best for them.

Options include:

■ GIVE A BIVALENT (TWO-WAY) VACCINE CONTAINING PARVOVIRUS AND DISTEMPER, AND THEN GIVE THE CAV-2 VACCINE INTRANASALLY.

Since CAV-2 is part of the kennel-cough complex, it is available as an intranasal vaccine along with B bronchiseptica (Bb) and canine parainfluenza (CPI). Because it triggers a different immune response, the intranasal vaccine does not cause immunosuppression, Dr. Schultz says, even if the distemper/parvovirus vaccine is injected at the same time.

Dr. Schultz says he has recommended this approach to those who have adminis-

tered the distemper/parvovirus vaccine because he was always concerned about susceptibility to adenovirus. "I generally like to wait until after the last dose with distemper-parvovirus, which is 14 to 16 weeks." He adds that CAV-2 can cause severe respiratory disease, and is worth vaccinating against in its own right.

Downside: Many vets dislike administering the intranasal vaccine, as many dogs don't find having liquid shot up their noses to be particularly pleasurable. Also, because many vets routinely give three-way vaccines that contain CAV-2, the intranasal vaccine they stock more than likely does not contain it.

■ GIVE AN INITIAL PARVOVIRUS-DISTEMPER VACCINE, THEN ADMINISTER A THREE-WAY VACCINE CONTAINING CAV-2 ONCE THE DOG HAS DEVELOPED IMMUNITY TO DISTEMPER.

The trick with this approach is determining when the dog has mounted immunity to distemper. Both Drs. Dodds and Schultz recommend waiting until 12 to 16 weeks, a time when distemper immunity has been achieved by the majority of puppies.

Dr. Schultz says once immunity to distemper has been demonstrated after vaccination by a simple titer, or blood test, then the dog could receive the three-way vaccine. "The dog isn't going to get immunosuppression because he has already developed distemper immunity," he explains.

Dr. Dodds sees two possibilities for adapting her vaccine protocol to encompass infectious canine hepatitis without risking immunosuppression:

Give a two-way vaccine (parvovirus-distemper) at 9 and 14 weeks, then give the first three-way vaccine containing canine hepatitis at 17 weeks, with a final dose at 24 weeks. Or give the two-way at 9 weeks and 12 weeks, and then give the three-way at 15 and 18 weeks.

Both scenarios not only try to avoid immunosuppression, but also seek to give parvovirus at or shortly after 14 weeks, as studies show that many puppies are not protected against parvo-





The virus that causes infectious canine hepatitis is present in the feces, urine, blood, saliva, and nasal discharge of infected dogs. It is contracted through the mouth or nose – which is why unprotected puppies and dogs shouldn't be exposed to high-traffic places like dog parks.

virus before that age, despite having been vaccinated for it.

Downside: Waiting until the third installment of the initial vaccine series leaves the puppy susceptible to infectious canine hepatitis in the interim.

■ **ADMINISTER A RECOMBINANT THREE-WAY VACCINE, AS OPPOSED TO A MODIFIED LIVE-VIRUS, OR MLV, VACCINE.**

A recombinant vaccine is sort of a middle ground between a MLV vaccine, which replicates a milder form of the disease in the dog, and a killed vaccine, which doesn't cause any disease in the dog but which contains preservatives called adjuvants, thought to trigger adverse reactions in some dogs. A recombinant vaccine does not cause immunosuppression when distemper and canine hepatitis are administered together.

"A recombinant vaccine is as efficacious as a MLV vaccine, and as safe as a killed vaccine," Dr. Schultz says, noting that the Recombitek C3 vaccine contains parvovirus, distemper, and adenovirus. In addition to not causing immunosuppression, Dr. Schultz says the vaccine's distemper component "will immunize at an earlier age than any MLV distemper vaccines."

That said, Dr. Schultz notes that the three-way recombinant vaccine does not immunize for parvovirus quite as early as some of the other MLV vaccines, so it is not suitable for puppies that are at high risk for exposure to that disease.

One option, he says, "is to do a recombinant vaccine at six or eight weeks or whenever you start, then follow up with a traditional MLV combination that contains adenovirus as well as parvovirus." Because distemper immunity will likely be achieved, "that adenovirus is going to replicate alone, so you won't get suppression, and that parvovirus will very likely induce immunity."

Downside: The less effective parvovirus response is a concern for those with dogs from high-risk parvovirus environment such as shelters. Also, many vets do not normally stock the recombinant vaccine.

In the end, there is no perfect solution. "People need to choose the devil that they prefer," Dr. Dodds says. "One hundred times they might be fine – and then one time they might not."

THE GOOD NEWS

If you have never vaccinated your adult dog for canine hepatitis, the first thing is not to panic. The good news is that many dogs, especially those who have been exposed to many other dogs, are probably already immune.

"Once a dog gets out with other dogs, it's not uncommon for CAV-2 to naturally infect and immunize without causing disease," explains Dr. Schultz, referring to the respiratory form of the virus. Because CAV-2 immunity also covers CAV-1, those dogs are naturally protected against both. "There is a great deal of natural immunization that has gone on."

For example, show dogs who are not vaccinated for CAV-1 will very likely become naturally immunized against it when CAV-2 infects them, as respiratory viruses are common in that kind of environment. (Indeed, many consider a case of kennel cough contracted at a show or other doggie event to be the equivalent of the old-fashioned "chicken-pox party" – catch it on purpose and become immune.)

Similarly, if a stray dog comes in contact with canine hepatitis at a shelter, "many of those already came across CAV-2 and are already immune, where they might not be immune to, say, parvovirus," Dr. Schultz explains.

The "best bet," he says, if dogs have not been given a CAV-2 vaccine, is to have them titered to see if they have immunity to CAV-1, and to vaccinate if they do not.

Dr. Schultz points out that while renewed concern about canine hepatitis is important in light of these outbreaks, other diseases still pose an arguably greater threat. "I think I'd like my protection against parvovirus, considering how stable and resistant it is in the environment," he says. "It is in every state in the United States. Some shelters all over the country have parvovirus cases constantly – and the same thing with distemper."

In short, while the recent news about canine hepatitis should be cause for concern, there is no reason to panic. Even with the documented outbreak this summer, Dr. Schultz doesn't think the disease will become prevalent, because of the one-two punch of natural and artificial immunity that is already working in the American dog population – and has been for many, many years.

"We've got a little bit of nature on our side, and a little bit of vaccine on our side," he concludes. And, hopefully, that should keep this scary movie from turning into a multi-sequel blockbuster. 🐾

Denise Flaim of Revodana Ridgebacks in Long Island, New York, shares her home with a trio of Ridgebacks, three 8-year-olds, and a very patient husband.



🐾 TRAINING AND BEHAVIOR 🐾

Going Big

It's incumbent on owners to make sure their large and giant breed dogs are especially well-trained, well-behaved, and well-socialized.

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, CDBC

I have long coveted an Irish Wolfhound. Commanding in appearance, they are known for being easygoing and gentle by nature, with a rakish air, courtesy of the wiry coat and bewhiskered face, for which I am a total sucker. This breed is one of several known as “Giants” – for good reason. Weighing in at 100-plus pounds, standing nearly 36 inches at the shoulder, they are impressively large. Others in this class include the Great Dane, Great Pyrenees, Newfoundland, Leonberger, English Mastiff, Neapolitan Mastiff, and others that exceed 100 pounds.

Many years ago, my love affair with large dogs (I once shared my life with a St. Bernard) fell victim to the realities of space and convenience. When adding a fifth dog to the group, we opted for a Pomeranian. While I still admire the dogs

at the huge end of the size continuum, the largest dog in our current pack of five is our 45-pound Australian Shepherd, Missy. In fact, if you add all five of their weights together you would barely come up with enough poundage for one giant

Big dogs have big needs (for food, large beds, room in your car and home, etc.) but a lot of exercise is not usually one of their requirements. Most of the giant breeds are calmer and more sedentary than their smaller brethren.

dog. Every time I find myself drawn to an extra-large canine, a small voice in the back of my head reminds me of all the challenges that accompany a dog who can look you squarely in the eye while he's standing on all fours.

SIZE MATTERS

What are the challenges of big-dog ownership? For starters, everything about them is big, from their appetites (and by-products thereof) to the crates, collars, and other training equipment that they use, as well as the toys they play with. Pet supply companies offer giant-sized Kongs, tennis balls, tug toys, and just about every other canine accessory you can think of. They know there's a “big” market out there.

Vet bills are bigger, too. Everything from topical flea and tick products to drugs to treat illnesses and modify behavior cost more – because big dogs need bigger doses. Surgeries are more expensive too; most are charged at least in part by the dog's weight because larger dogs

generally need higher doses of anesthesia drugs.

Even finding a place to live can be more of a challenge for big-dog humans. Many landlords and hotels, if they allow dogs at all, accept pets who are 25 pounds or less. The next socially acceptable size-increment seems to be around 70 to 75 pounds. Much bigger than that, and non-dog people tend to think you really are some kind of serious dog-nut, to share your life and home with a dog who outweighs many of the family members. Additionally, much to the distress of big-dog humans, many of the giant breeds are listed on insurance company “do not insure” lists, making it difficult at best, impossible at worst, to find homeowner’s or renter’s insurance.

Finally, sadly, many of the giant breeds tend to have short life spans. A 10-year-old Great Dane is pretty ancient, and many owners prepare their farewells to 7- and 8-year-old Danes. Meanwhile, lots of 10-year-old small dogs are still in the prime of life and their humans look forward to 5 to 10 more years of canine companionship.

The daunting size of these dogs can, without a doubt, present their owners with a host of training and management challenges not encountered by those who share their lives with more moderately sized dogs. It requires a lot of thought and effort for a Beagle to be successful at counter-surfing. A Great Dane merely needs to walk past a food-laden dining room table and temptation is right under his nose. My Dodge Caravan can easily accommodate crates for all five of our dogs, ranging in size from 10 to 45 pounds. It would take a small motor home to accommodate crates for five St. Bernards!

Everything you’ve heard about training and management is massively magnified for your big dog. Don’t even think about putting off training class until your wee one is six months old and is dragging you down the sidewalk. Good manners training is mandatory for these giant canines starting at the age

It’s imperative that these giant dogs are well-behaved on-leash, especially when they are walked together and seriously outweigh their handlers.

of eight weeks. Their forbidding size demands an early course in juvenile good manners; the sooner they are reinforced for appropriate behaviors, the less likely they are to engage in inappropriate ones.

Early socialization is equally vital. These are dogs who, if not well-socialized, have the ability to cause significant injury, even death, to another dog – or human. If they don’t learn to enjoy the company and attentions of others during that critical socialization window, which quickly closes after the young age of 14 weeks, they run a high risk of getting into big trouble. Add the genetically programmed guarding behavior of many of the giant breeds into the mix, and you have a recipe for disaster if your baby big dog doesn’t learn, early on, that the world is a wonderful place.

A poorly socialized, poorly trained large dog is a significant risk to the safety of the community. A well-socialized, well-trained dog will be able to turn on his protective behaviors if needed, but no matter his size, will be safe to have around your friends and family. A poorly socialized small dog makes the same sad statement about pet-owner irresponsibility as an unsocialized large dog, but is less of a risk to the community; a kamikaze Yorkie can do far less damage on his worst day than a scud missile Neapolitan Mastiff on a minor bender.

A TALL TRAINING CHALLENGE

There are a number of good manners behaviors that are particularly important



to teach your large dog while she is still small. Pay special attention to these if you have a big dog.

■ **POLITE GREETING:** Jumping on humans is rude behavior for any canine, and especially intolerable for a large dog. Avoid the temptation to pick her up and cuddle your giant pup. Cuddling teaches her that “up” is a very wonderful place to be, and reinforces her for behavior that you will regret when she reaches her adult size. Instead, designate a spot on the floor as “cuddle space,” and get down on her level to do snuggle time.

Reinforce her “Sit” as a greeting/default behavior so consistently and frequently that it’s the first thing that pops into her brain, even when she’s happy and excited to see you or your visitors. Insist that family members, visitors, and people on the street greet her only when she is sitting, and turn their backs or step away if she jumps up or bashes into them with her head or body.

Additionally, you can practice polite greeting with your pup secured on a tether and/or behind a barrier such as a baby gate or exercise pen, so you can step away from her if she tries to jump up or bulldoze into you. This will prevent her from getting reinforcement by having physical contact with you unless she earns that reward through her self-control.

■ **POLITE LEASH WALKING:** If you do nothing else, you must teach your big dog to walk politely on leash. Without a doubt, she will be big and strong enough at maturity to drag even a large adult human off his feet. If you can’t take her out and about on leash under control, you probably won’t take her out. If you do, the two of you are likely to get into trouble. The keys to teaching good leash walking are: a high rate of reinforcement for being in position next to you (lots of clicks and treats); and very high-value treats, so that it’s more rewarding for your dog to pay attention to you than her surroundings.

Start by simply clicking and treating your dog for sitting by your side. When she will sit next to you for several seconds at a time, take one step, have her sit when you stop; click and treat. Repeat this until she

automatically sits when you stop, then increase to two steps and stop. Gradually increase the number of steps you take, always having her sit by your side when you stop. When you are up to a dozen steps or so, start clicking and treating while you are still in motion. (Remember to always feed the treat to her when she is in position at your side. If you feed in front of you, you will teach her to block your path.)

If you've already missed out on teaching polite leash walking while your pup is small, consider using a front-clip control harness to maintain gentle control of your big dog while you retrain her leash behavior. (See "In Pursuit of a Loose Leash: Proper Use of No-Pull Harnesses," WDJ October 2012.)

■ **SAY PLEASE:** A "say please" program teaches your dog that good things in life come to dogs who sit. This prevents her from learning that she can push people around by virtue of her sheer weight and size. You can initially train and ask for the sit behavior, but your ultimate goal is for your dog to offer sits without being asked.

If she is allowed on the furniture, she sits and waits to be invited, rather than just helping herself to the empty space on the sofa next to your visitor. Want to go outside? "Sit" makes the door open. Ready for dinner? "Sit" makes the dinner bowl descend to the floor. While you needn't go so far as to require her to sit for everything good in her world, "sit" really is a delightful default good manners behavior that keeps your dog out of trouble.

■ **SETTLE:** A big-dog lover myself, I don't understand why some people don't fully appreciate the joy of having a Newfoundland drool in their laps, but some just don't! A big dog is still plenty accessible for the occasional pat on the head if she is lying at your visitor's feet instead of panting in his face.

Teach your dog that "settle" (lying at the feet of humans) is a highly rewarded

While many large dogs are very easy-going and social, some are shy and anxious around humans. If your giant-breed dog is uncomfortable around people (growly, avoidant, or skittish), you need to embark on an intense counter-conditioning program to help teach him that the proximity of people is a good thing.

behavior. Give her attention and treats on a variable schedule (sometimes close together, sometimes with longer pauses in between) when she lies down quietly. Give your guests a container full of treats and instruct them to reward your dog on a random schedule, too. Be sure to ignore any demand behavior, such as whining or barking, so she learns that the only behavior that gets rewarded is a calm "settle."

■ **LEAVE IT:** It's a fact. Giant breeds have easier access to food-bearing surfaces such as tables and kitchen counters. One chance encounter with a roast beef sandwich can turn a dog into a dedicated counter-surfer in an instant. In addition to managing your big dog so she never has the opportunity to learn to counter-surf, a well-installed "leave it" cue, which tells her to back away from whatever she is looking at, can avert disaster when she has that "Mine!" gleam in her eye and is closer to the holiday turkey than you are.

To teach "leave it," show her a sturdy, non-crushable treat such as a cube of freeze-dried liver, say "Leave it!" and place it under your foot. Simply ignore her as she tries to chew or dig it out from under your foot. The instant she removes her attention from the hidden goodie, click and feed her a high-value treat from your hand. As long as she isn't trying to get the cube, click and treat several times in a row.

When she starts to understand the zen of "get a treat by ignoring the treat,"

expose the goodie on the floor by moving your foot slightly to the side. If she dives for it, just cover it back up with your foot and wait for her to ignore it again. Click and treat. Repeat until she makes no effort to obtain the exposed treat on the ground. Eventually your "leave it" cue will cause her to turn her attention away from a coveted object in anticipation of a high value treat from you.

■ **SHARING WITH OTHERS:** Like so many other things, resource-guarding by a large dog can be infinitely more disastrous than the same behavior presented by her smaller counterparts. When your pup is small, teach her that having humans approach her when she is eating or otherwise occupied with a high-value possession makes even more great stuff happen. When she is eating from her food bowl, occasionally approach and drop a few exquisite goodies into it. Before long she will want people to be around when she is eating.

Do not succumb to the temptation to grab her food away from her, just because you can. Forcing her to give up her food can create food-bowl stress. You want to reassure her that your presence at her food bowl is not a threat, but rather an opportunity for more good stuff.

Caution: If you already have a serious resource guarding challenge with your dog, big or small, find a qualified positive reinforcement-based trainer/behavior specialist to help you modify this potentially dangerous behavior.





Not everyone can “read” canine body language and easily determine that your giant dog is being friendly, not menacing, when he approaches. Respect other people’s feelings and keep your dog at a distance unless they invite him to be closer.

■ **GO TO YOUR PLACE:** This behavior is especially helpful if you have guests who don’t appreciate super-sized canines. You can use luring, targeting, or shaping your dog to teach her “go to your spot” (a comfy bed placed a reasonable distance away, but where she can still be part of the social scene). If you use a portable bed or rug to mark her “spot,” you can take it with you – to the dining room during meals, the den for videos, even to the beach for a picnic and your friends’ houses when you and your big dog go visiting.

■ **TRADE:** The last thing you want to do is get into an argument with a big dog over something she has in her mouth. Teach your dog to “Trade” by offering treats when she has a toy.

Most people make the mistake of only taking “forbidden objects” away from their dogs, which can teach the dog to resist, since she learns that she’ll never get it back. If you practice “Trade” as a regular training exercise with a “legal” toy or chew object, you can repeatedly return the object in question after your dog gives it up for a high-value treat. She learns that she gets two rewards – the first for giving up the valuable object, the second when she gets the valuable object back again. Then, if she occasionally has to give up an “illegal” object that you can’t return to her, it won’t outweigh

the positive impact of all the two-reward trades you have done with her.

Remember not to take your dog’s willingness to trade for granted. My dogs will usually give up coveted objects on cue. In order to keep the positive association strong, I still reward them with a treat when I ask them to trade, even when they easily and voluntarily drop the object in question.

■ **BITE INHIBITION:** Dogs bite. It’s a natural canine behavior. Chances are that at some time in your dog’s life, she may feel compelled to bite. If and when that happens, good bite inhibition could make the difference between a dent in the skin and plastic surgery. It could also determine whether your dog lives or dies, since dogs who bite and cause serious injury tend to not live long – especially big dogs who bite.

You can instill good bite inhibition in a pup by gradually diminishing the force of her bite rather than punishing all bites. A puppy naturally learns to control the force of her teeth through playing with her siblings. If she bites softly, without causing undue pain, the other puppies will keep playing with her. If she bites too hard, the pup she’s biting may yelp and run away, refusing to re-engage in play for a time.

You can do the same thing. If your giant puppy bites softly, continue play-

What you can do . . .

- **Be ultra-responsible.** Make sure you are prepared for the added responsibility of a super-sized dog before you bring one home. Don’t be lured by the novelty of owning a giant breed unless you are honest with yourself about what you are getting into.
- **Train and socialize.** Socialization must be done early and then reinforced throughout a dog’s life, especially for dogs who are protective by nature. Training is more than a six-week beginner class; aspire to achieve upper levels of training that will make your big dog an even better canine citizen.
- **Manage.** Big dogs can get into bigger trouble than small dogs. Make a strong commitment to manage your dog’s behavior so he doesn’t get reinforced for undesirable behaviors, especially those that might put others at risk.
- **Respect other people’s feelings.** Not everyone loves large dogs. Some people are terrified of them. Don’t let your dog approach people unless and until you know that they’re comfortable being greeted by a large dog.



ing with her. If she bites hard enough to cause pain, calmly say “Ouch!” or “Oops!” and walk away from her. (Don’t bother trying to imitate a puppy yelp. We usually fail miserably when we attempt to imitate canine vocal communication, and a yelp often arouses an excited puppy even more.) After a short time, begin playing with her again. She will learn to control her bite so that the fun can continue without interruption.

BE POSITIVE

If you think it’s a good idea to force confrontations with your big dog, think again.

Continued on page 22

Dog Care When You're Down

How to manage dog-care tasks while temporarily disabled.

BY NANNETTE MORGAN, CPDT-KA, ACDBC

No one likes to think about having major surgery. The thought of being temporarily disabled is scary enough, but when you factor in caring for your dog or dogs by yourself afterward, the fears multiply. Don't worry! The following tips will help you navigate your recovery with ease while taking care of your canine companions. (The tips can easily be applied to caring for other pets as well.)

All of my suggestions are grounded in real-world experience. I was diagnosed with degenerative joint disease in both hips about three years ago. I was on a daily protocol of palliative measures until it became too much to bear the pain and restricted range of movement caused by this disease. At least I had (and needed)

time to research a place for me and my two Siberian Huskies to stay before and after my surgery.

Fortunately, I have good friends who also have Siberians; they hosted my dogs for the two days I was in the hospital and then all three of us for a few more days, while I recuperated before transitioning

to home. Having these details worked out way in advance allowed me to concentrate on the next vital challenge: preparing my house for our return in such a way that would take into consideration my post-surgery restrictions.

WALK ON

I was lucky; I saved some equipment that my mother used following surgery she had a few years ago. I initially kept the tools because I wanted to use them with clients who were training their dogs to do hospital and nursing home visits. Little did I dream that years down the road I would be using these tools.

The first tool was a walker, which I would need (as my mom did) to move around the house after my surgery. My older dog Binks was used to seeing the walker because "Grandma" would come over with it when she baby-sat her "grand-dog." My young girl Cricket was not used to it; she's almost always a little wary around novel items. The saving grace is that she's also curious.

I got the walker out and used it around the house a few times during the week before my surgery. It didn't take that much time for her to get used to it, though if your dog is very wary or frightened of new things, I would suggest renting or buying a walker at least a couple of weeks before it is needed so that you can desensitize and counter-condition your dog to it.

Start acclimating your dog to the walker by positioning it in a highly trafficked location in your house, and placing super yummy treats near it. The next step is to touch it or lean on it while feeding high value treats to your furry friend. Allow it to creak or rattle in a natural manner, but don't try to purposely frighten your dog with it! As long as your dog seems to accept it, increase your interaction with it until you are actually using the walker to move around the house, dropping tasty treats on the floor behind you while you walk with it. I recommend dropping them behind rather than in front of you; the last thing you need to

With advance preparation, you should be able to manage your dogs – and your own physical rehabilitation – with ease.



have happen is for your dog to block your forward access and cause you to trip and fall. This is especially important if you have very small dogs.

After a few games of Hansel and Gretel (and the trail of breadcrumbs), your dog should associate the funny two-wheeled and tennis ball-covered appendage with good things. Using the walker prior to surgery will also give you the opportunity to see if any dog items such as beds and crates are in the path of your walker and will need to be moved to another location during your recuperation.

Note: If you have a ball-crazy dog, and your walker's legs are covered with tennis balls, you may want to remove them or replace those rear walker legs with some other tip-protectors. Most drugstores sell handicap assistance accessories or you can go online to find them. Physical therapy practices can also give you a list of local medical supply stores where alternatives can be purchased.

WHATEVER GRABS YOU

Grabbing tools may appear to our dogs as an alien arm with a weird opposable thumb or a threatening weapon. But they are very useful for picking up tissues, clothes, and other personal items from floors or lightweight cooking items and supplies from shelves. I found one to be super



helpful for picking up metal dog bowls from the floor, filling them with food, and then replacing them on the floor in my dogs' eating places – especially after I strained my back and could not bend over without spasms overtaking me.

It's very important to get used to using one of these tools a few weeks before your surgery, not only to get your furry friends used to it but also so you can develop the habit of using it. It's so easy to forget your bending restrictions and suddenly lunge over to pick up that food bowl from the floor. If your body gets used to using this tool over a couple of weeks, it will be second nature to you by the time you have to depend on its daily use.

POKER ANYONE?

I'm actually talking about the wrought iron fire poker – not the card game!

While the grabber is a great tool for picking up many things, it doesn't do a great job of lifting anything heavy. I have a two-quart flat-backed water bucket outside for my dogs' additional drinking needs. The grabber can't lift or maneuver anything that heavy. That is when I spied the little hook extension on my fireplace poker. Voila! It worked perfectly to pick up the bucket so I could re-fill it and put it back down outside. If you don't have a fireplace poker, an umbrella with a j-style handle will work well, as will the handle of a cane.

YES I "CAN"

The food bowl scenario was pretty easy to resolve. Picking up my dogs' water bowls to clean and then fill presented another challenge. Their usual water bowl was a four-quart stainless steel bowl with sloped sides. There was no way the grabber was going to pick that up so that I could clean it and refill it. One thing that could help was to substitute their other smaller straight-sided stainless steel kennel bowl for their regular one, which solved the problem.

Now, how to fill it? Enter the garden-variety (literally) watering can with narrow spout. The narrow spout is very important. This allows you to stand up fairly straight and just tip your wrist slightly so that the stream of water goes directly down into the water bowl from a height of about 3 feet. This is by far my favorite use of an ordinary household item to solve my daily dog care challenges.



BELIEVE IN THE EASTER BUNNY

I found that Easter baskets are the perfect shape and size for carrying dog food bowls, grooming items, or supplements from one area of the house to the other. Long, narrow basket handles are perfect for holding onto while you hold onto your walker arms. Plus, you can carry multiple items at once reducing the need to make many trips from one area of the house to the other end.

Those are the major things



I found to be useful when I had my first hip replacement surgery. Before I have my next one, I plan to teach Cricket how to take off compression stockings; none of the dressing tools are really helpful with that!

OTHER PREPARATIONS

In addition to gaining experience with the tools described above, it's invaluable to prepare your home in other ways for your brief (we hope) disability.

For example, make sure you have an adequate supply of your dogs' kibble or canned food, and place it in a location that makes it as easy as possible to retrieve and put in their bowls. If you feed a home-made diet, make sure to prepare (and freeze) enough for several weeks, as you may be tired and not up to extensive food preparation – yours or your dogs'! I feed mostly a dry food so I made sure that the week before my surgery I stocked up with a large enough bag to last a few weeks post-surgery. I also stocked up on treats, as well as my food and sundry items.

You may also want to have your dogs groomed before your big event; you will be in no position to do this for some time afterward.

I have medium-sized dogs so I don't need to pick them up for any reason, but if you have tiny dogs, training them to jump up on a chair or sofa so that you can reach them without bending over can be very helpful.

Another thing to consider before your surgery is your dog's response to common cues and his behavior in general. If he is rusty in responding to your cues to sit, leave it, or down, practice *now* so that he is up to speed well before your disability; this will pay off in spades for your recovery and his ease to acclimating to the temporary disruption of your normal life. If you don't have the time for

this or it's beyond your capabilities, enlist the help of a good positive reinforcement-based trainer to help you polish your dog's rough behavioral edges.

GETTING HELP

If you have very small, senior, or couch-potato dogs, they may be perfectly happy to keep you company in your newly less-active life.

But if your dogs are young and/or highly active, they may be unable to adjust to a suddenly sedentary schedule. Do all of you a favor and find, interview, and get your dogs accustomed to going out with a professional dog walker or enlist the help of trusted dog-savvy friends to help out. Do this far enough in advance of your surgery so you have time to find another person if the first one doesn't work out! And then schedule the person for as many walks as your dogs will need in order to reliably stay calm at home.

If you are unable to allow your dog to potty outside in your fenced yard, your new dog-walker or trusted friends may be able to help by taking your dog out to potty and then cleaning up after her.

STRESS REDUCTION

Doing all of the pre-op preparations above helped to de-stress me before my surgery. I'm very much an independent type of person, so having to rely on others was difficult for me.

Author and trainer Nannette Morgan is shown pre-surgery with her two Siberian Huskies, 6-year-old Cricket (left) and 14-year-old Binks. All three have made it through Nannette's first hip replacement surgery with flying colors.

The only thing that I needed to have help with was someone to walk my dogs. As soon as I was able, I started picking up after my dogs in the yard, using the long-handled pooper scooper set I started using after my back strain. And soon enough, because I hadn't hurt myself by overdoing household and dog-care tasks, I recovered – and improved on! – my previous mobility. It was a relief to be self-sufficient again. 🐾

Nannette Morgan, CPDT-KA, ACDBC, offers private training and behavior consultations in Santa Clara County, California, with her Pawsitive Pals Dog Training (pawsitivepals.net). She credits her furry family, Dr. Binks and Nurse Cricket, for helping with her recovery.



Big Dogs – continued from page 19

First, it's not necessary, and second, the bigger the dog gets, the more likely you are to lose. In old-fashioned force-based training, owners were advised to dominate their dogs, and if the dogs fought back, to increase the level of human aggression until the dogs submitted. Dogs who refused to submit were labeled "vicious" and "incorrigible" and euthanized.

It takes two to fight. If you train with positive methods, you never set the dog up for conflict. Rather you set your dog up to succeed, and teach her to willingly and happily respond to your behavior requests because good things happen when she does.

Remember, dogs naturally growl to communicate that they are stressed by, uncomfortable with, or otherwise feel threatened by the presence of an aversive stimulus. Unfortunately, growling makes some humans feel so threatened that they feel compelled to punish and "dominate" the dog in some sort of misguided "show them who's boss" display. If you respond to a fearful dog's growling with sudden violence or even just a scary display of yelling, the dog learns that when she is frightened, humans become unpredict-

able and threatening, and her discomfort with people will likely escalate.

If your dog growls or seems uneasy, try to identify the source of her discomfort, and increase the distance between her and the aversive stimulus. Then, plan to embark on a formal and thorough counter-conditioning program, to help her form a new and happy association with whatever frightened her. (See "Fear Itself: Reducing Your Dog's Anxieties," WDJ April 2007, "Socializing a Shy Dog" August 2008; and "Eliminating Your Puppy's Fear-Related Behaviors" June 2012.)

Of course, if your dog actually bites you or someone else, or if you are not confident in your ability to work with her growling behavior, immediately seek assistance from a qualified positive dog behavior consultant who is experienced with fearful and aggressive dogs.

BIG BOTHER?

If big dogs are such a challenge, why even bother with them? Some people like the look and feel of a big, solid dog by their sides. Many of these folks don't consider a canine to be a real dog unless they are at least 75 pounds. There is something very comforting about the bulk of an impressively large canine, especially if you

are alone in a remote location, traveling through an unsavory part of town, or taking your dog for a late night walk in Central Park.

There is also much to be said for the big-dog personality. As a general rule, they are calmer than many of their smaller brethren – it's a lot of work to haul around that much bulk! Besides, a St. Bernard-sized dog with a Jack Russell Terrier's energy level probably wouldn't be around long; who could live with that?

So, is there an Irish Wolfhound or some other giant dog in my future, or yours? It's hard to say where life will take us, but if nothing else, I've learned over the years to "Never say never." Who knows? If the right dog comes along, we might be clearing off the coffee table in our living room, and investing in a whole new supply of "economy size" canine paraphernalia. Care to join me? 🐾

Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, CDBC, is WDJ's Training Editor. She lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center, where she offers dog training classes and courses for trainers. Pat is also author of many books on positive training, including her newest, Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First-Class Life. See page 24 for more information.

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- ❖ **Stephanie Colman**, Caninestein Dog Training, Los Angeles, CA. Caninestein Dog Training offers training for basic-advanced obedience, competition dog sports, problem-solving, and much more! Private lessons and group classes. (818) 989-7996; caninesteintraining.com

HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

- ❖ **American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association** (AHVMA). PO Box 630, Abingdon, MD 21009. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a list of holistic veterinarians in your area, or search ahvma.org

BOOKS AND DVDS

- ❖ WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog*; *Positive Perspectives 2: Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog*; *Power of Positive Dog Training*; *Play With Your Dog*; and *Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First Class Life*. Available from dogwise.com or wholedogjournal.com

WHAT'S AHEAD ...

❖ **MUTTY MESS**

Taking another look at DNA tests for mixed-breed dogs.

❖ **SPAY/NEUTER OR NOT?**

The physiological and behavioral risks and benefits of altering/not altering your dog.

❖ **PAYING LESS FOR PRESCRIPTION DRUGS**

How to find your dog’s medications at a lower cost.

❖ **DRY FOOD REVIEW**

How to identify the best food for your dog.

❖ **BEST BEHAVIORS**

The most useful things you can teach your dog to do, and how to teach them.



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