

VOLUME 9  
NUMBER 1

# The Whole



# Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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# Please Keep Talking

... and thinking, with an open mind.

BY NANCY KERNS

Would you want to read a magazine that contained only information that you already knew and agreed with? Would it be worth the price of the subscription? For me, the answer is no – and, yes, I really do subscribe to and buy a number of magazines that publish articles or display an editorial slant with which I frequently strongly differ. (For that matter, the editorials in my own hometown newspaper frequently make me mad enough to spit!) But some people, it seems, have no tolerance for exposure to information or opinions with which they disagree.

I've been thinking about this since the publication of our last issue, which contained an article about a controversial topic: cosmetic surgery for dogs.

I'm being purposely provocative for using the phrase "cosmetic surgery" as a catchall phrase for the topics discussed in the article: tail docking, ear cropping, and dewclaw removal. (The author of the article, Shannon Wilkinson, was also deliberately provocative by referring to these practices as "amputations." At the risk of starting a dictionary war, let me say that we understand that some define that word as "the removal of a limb or portion of a limb," but others define it as "the removal of part or all of a body part that is enclosed in skin." So its use was accurate, if startling.)

The word "amputation" is dramatic; people usually think of amputations as being unplanned and shocking, which, of course, cropping and docking surgeries are generally *not*. But the purpose of its use in our article was *not* to pass judgement on those who dock or crop; we did not *once* describe the practices as

"cruel" or anything equally inflammatory. We did, however, want to get our readers' attention, to cause them to look at some common dog-care practices in a new light, and perhaps get them to reconsider the importance of those practices, or at a minimum, weigh them against their potential – some would call them "alleged" – adverse effects.

So, while I admit I knew the topic was controversial, and it was our stated goal to be thought-provoking, I was (as I always am in these situations) surprised when I received several calls and letters from people who wanted to cancel their subscriptions to WDJ to express their dissent with the article.

We have never purported to hold an exclusive contract on what's "right." But our stated goal – expressed in the mission statement that appears below – is to offer useful, dog-friendly information that helps owners help their dogs. Our *unstated* mission (one that should be apparent due to our intentional lack of advertising) is to provide reliable information on topics you can't find in mainstream publications, where, in consideration of conventional, commercial interests (which contribute the vast majority of advertising dollars), hardly anything appears that runs counter to conventional practice.



Anyway, I'm happy to report that at least a few people saw fit to extend, rather than cut off, a "conversation" with us about cosmetic surgeries. Some of their letters will appear in the next issue. *NK*

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

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# A Super (But Secret) Industry

*We're fans of wet pet food, but that hasn't (yet) gotten us into a factory!*

BY NANCY KERNS

**T**he making of laws and sausage, goes the old saying, is better unseen. Apparently, the pet food industry feels the same way about “wet” food for dogs and cats. We haven’t yet managed to get into a cannery to see how the product is made (but we’re not giving up!). There are a few reasons for this.

The first has to do with the fact that there are very few wet food canneries in the U.S., relative to facilities that manufacture dry food. (As a matter of fact, the entire canning industry – of pet food *and* human food – has seen enormous consolidation in the last decade. Many facilities have been acquired by foreign firms and then shuttered, with their operations being offshored.) The pet food industry giants – Purina, Hills, and

the like – maintain their own private manufacturing facilities. (Representatives of both companies have told us that tours of their facilities are out of the question, although we know any number of veterinarians who were able to tour the plants when they were in vet school.) The vast majority of the companies that make the types of food *we* like, however, use independent, “contract” manufacturers, and there are only about half a dozen of these in the U.S. left. The result is, there is a relatively small pool of wet pet food makers we can ask for a tour.

The largest of these, Menu Foods, is the leading North American contract manufacturer of wet pet food products sold by supermarket retailers, mass merchandisers, pet specialty retailers and other retail and wholesale outlets; they make a great many of the foods on our “Top Approved Wet Dog Foods” list. By all accounts, they do a good

job; they are trusted by many of the pet food companies *we* trust. But in many cases, not even the executives of these companies can get a tour of a Menu Foods canned food plant. And if they *do* get a tour, it’s on a night when the equipment is not operating.

We were told by a Menu Foods representative that the reason for this secrecy has to do with maintaining the confidentiality of Menu’s clients. If they allowed a tour of the plant, a rep of one pet food company could conceivably sleuth information about the proprietary formula for a competitor’s product or ingredients. Simply seeing a competitor’s labels on a pallet can confirm the competitor’s contract with Menu – something that is supposedly confidential.

We find this incredibly annoying, since in our experience, *all* the pet food executives already know *exactly* where their

The Whole  Dog Journal™

## WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- Buy wet dog foods that list a whole meat product **first** on the ingredients panel.
- Look for products that contain whole meats, vegetables, and grains (if any).
- Remember that the more ingredients there are listed on the label (barring the lengthy list of added vitamins and minerals), the less of each ingredient the food actually contains!
- Expect to pay dearly for quality.
- Buy foods that suit **your** dog. If one of our favorite foods make your dog break out in hives, stop feeding it to him!



“Wet” pet foods come in a range of forms, from a “loaf” to a “stew.” Their moisture content ranges from a whopping 88 percent (in the most liquid product on the market, Spot’s Stew) to a meatloafy 69 percent (in Entrée for Dogs, made by Three Dog Bakery). Most wet dog foods come in cans, but pouches and trays are increasingly used.

competitors' products are made.

We haven't yet asked the smaller contract manufacturers who make top-quality foods – Merrick Pet Foods in Texas, for example, or Evanger's Dog & Cat Food Company in Illinois – for a tour of their facilities. They've been very forthcoming in the past, however, and the next time we're in Texas or Illinois, we suspect, we'll be able to fulfill our wish and see wet pet food get made.

## Types of wet food

There are several types of wet dog food, and, as you may have gathered by our frequent use of the phrase “wet dog food,” increasingly, wet food is *not* canned but contained in pouches or trays.

The latter containers, especially in tiny serving sizes, are most popular with cat owners, since cats tend to be fussier about the freshness of their food. Plus, until recently, the only dog foods that are available in pouches and trays tend to be what we consider to be very low-quality products. The pouched products made by Kansas City's Three Dog Bakery are a welcome and astonishing exception; the ingredients are of extraordinary quality.

No matter what package is used, all wet pet foods are heat-sterilized after the container is sealed. This process “cooks” the food, kills any pathogens, coagulates the proteins, and gelatinizes the starches, increasing their digestibility.

Pet food manufacturers divide wet food products into categories based on the food's final form.

The most expensive to produce are the products described as “meat in jelly” or “meat in gravy.” These are comprised of chunks of “real” animal material in a sauce that has been thickened with either a gelling product (such as locust bean gum and carrageenan) or xanthan or similar gums; products whose matrix more closely resembles a gravy are generally thickened with guar gum or modified starches.

The not-very-yummy-sounding “meat analog” products are very similar to the products described above, with the difference being that the “meat” has been finely ground and restructured into chunks of the desired shape and size.

These chunks can be made out of animal products alone, or made with a combination of meat and cereal. Generally some sort of binder is required to help the manufactured chunks hold together – soy isolates or glutens are frequently used in this

capacity; however, in some products, blood plasma and/or wheat flour are included to help bind the chunks, helping them retain a discrete shape. We were recently surprised to see a company whose products we used to like using blood plasma as a binder. Yuck!

“Loaf” products, which generally contain significant amounts of grain (for a wet product) are the least expensive to produce, grain being less expensive than animal products. Sometimes the loaf contains chunks of meat.

## Recent innovations

Two very uncommon types of wet food appear on WDJ's “Top Approved Wet Dog Food” list. One is Spot's Stew, made by Halo, Purely for Pets. As the name suggests, this product most closely resembles a “chunk in gravy” product but it's much more liquid, and there are a lot of vegetable chunks in it, too; it really is a stew.

The other unusual food type contains *large* chunks of poultry or fish, including their bones. These products were introduced to the market by Active Life Pet Products and have been more successfully copied in some formulas by Merrick and Evanger's. Dog owners who are unaccustomed to the practice of feeding fresh, raw, meaty bones to dogs often panic when they detect the chicken leg bones in some of these formulas. However, the canning process softens the bones to a readily digestible texture that you can easily smush between your fingers.

The inclusion of vegetables, herbs, and even fruit has gained popularity, no doubt because the more of these ingredients there are listed on the label, the more it may appeal to the person who buys it for their dog. Undoubtedly the incorporation of these ingredients has presented pet food makers with manufacturing challenges; not only do they want the batter to be uniformly mixed, they have to worry about delivering at least *some* recognizable vegetable matter, too!

## WDJ's selection criteria

Here's how *we* determine whether a wet food is truly “premium.”

- We eliminate all foods containing artificial colors, flavors, or added preservatives. Canned food should be high in animal proteins, and as such, plenty palatable without any added flavors. It also needn't contain *any* preservatives, given its sterilized and sealed containment.

- We reject foods containing fat or protein not identified by species. “Animal fat”

and “meat proteins” are euphemisms for low-quality, low-priced mixed ingredients of uncertain origin.

- We reject any food containing meat by-products or poultry by-products. There is a wide variation in the quality of the by-products that are available to dog food producers. And there is no way for the average dog owner (or anyone else) to find out, beyond a shadow of a doubt, whether the by-products used are carefully handled, chilled, and used fresh within a day or two of slaughter (as some companies have told us), or the cheapest, lowest-quality material found on the market.

There is some, but *much* less variation in the quality of whole-meat products; they are too expensive to be handled carelessly.

- We eliminate any food containing sugar or other sweetener. Again, a food containing quality meats shouldn't need additional palatants to entice dogs.

- We look for foods with whole meat, fish, or poultry as the *first* ingredient (and perhaps the second and third ingredients, too!) on the label. (Just as with food for humans, ingredients are listed on the label by the total weight they contribute to the product.)

- We like it when a nutritious meat, poultry, or fish broth is used in place of the water that may be necessary for processing. Broth is obtained by cooking meat, fish, or poultry bones, parts, and/or muscle tissue.

- If grains or vegetables are used, we look for the use of *whole* grains and vegetables, rather than a series of reconstituted parts, i.e., “rice,” rather than “rice flour, rice bran, brewer's rice,” etc.

- Speaking of grain . . . We've discussed this many times, but there is nothing that says a canned food has to contain *any* grain or carbohydrate source.

Grains originally found their way into pet food because they were less expensive than animal proteins; of course, their amino acid profiles are much less complete than those offered by animal-sourced proteins, so we're not crazy about the use of any grain or grain fragment as a protein source.

And, unlike humans, dogs do *not* need carbohydrates to live; they can do fine with a diet that contains no carbs whatsoever. We strongly prefer dog foods that contain small amounts of grain or no grain at all.

## Go forth and compare

On the following pages, we've listed a number of canned dog foods that meet our selection criteria. It's vitally important that you understand the following points regarding these foods:

- *The foods on our list are not the only good foods on the market.*
- *Any food that you find that meets our selection criteria, outlined above, is just as good as any of the foods on our list.*

■ *We have presented the foods on our list alphabetically. We do not "rank order" foods. We don't attempt to identify which ones are "best," because what's "best" for every dog is different.*

■ *The proof is in the pudding. If your dog does not thrive on the food, with a glossy coat, itch-free skin, bright eyes, clear ears, and a happy, alert demeanor, it doesn't matter whether we like it or not.*

Using the selection criteria we have outlined

above, and perhaps taking into account some of the "extra credit" criteria listed on page 8, go analyze the food you are currently feeding your dog. If it doesn't measure up, we encourage you to choose a new food based on quality, as well as what works best for you and your dog in terms of types of ingredients, levels of protein and fat, and local availability and price.

Our list of Approved "Top Wet Dog Foods" on the next two pages is offered as a starting place, and for its value as a comparison to other products you may find.

## You Can Do This!

Although we list a number of foods that meet our selection criteria for a "top quality" dog food, you don't need us to tell you which foods deserve a "premium" classification, and which are posers! Just look at the list of ingredients, which (by law) are listed in order of their inclusion (by weight) in the formula.

### Avoid by-products, like these in Ol' Roy

INGREDIENTS: WATER SUFFICIENT FOR PROCESSING, CHICKEN BY-PRODUCTS, SOYBEAN MEAL, GROUND CORN, BEEF, DICALCIUM PHOSPHATE, CALCIUM CARBONATE, SALT, CHOLINE CHLORIDE, ZINC SULFATE, IRON OXIDE, GARLIC POWDER, IRON SULFATE, VITAMIN E SUPPLEMENT, COPPER SULFATE, VITAMIN B12 SUPPLEMENT, MANGANESE SULFATE, CALCIUM PANTOTHENATE, NIACIN SUPPLEMENT, VITAMIN A SUPPLEMENT, BIOTIN, THIAMINE MONONITRATE, POTASSIUM IODIDE, RIBOFLAVIN SUPPLEMENT, VITAMIN D3 SUPPLEMENT, PYRIDOXINE HYDROCHLORIDE, FOLIC ACID, SODIUM SELENITE.

**TWO types of by-products!**  
More of a low-quality ingredient does not make it better

When using a wet food that contains grains, look for whole grains, and avoid fragments such as brewers rice, here in an lambs food

Ingredients: Beef Broth, Beef, Beef By-Products, Chicken By-Products, Chicken, Brewers Rice, Fish Meal (source of fish oil), Dried Beet Pulp (sugar removed), Dried Egg Product, Calcium Carbonate, Potassium Chloride, Salt, Choline Chloride, Ferrous Sulfate, DL-Methionine, Vitamin E Supplement, Zinc Oxide, Ascorbic Acid, Manganese Sulfate, Thiamine Mononitrate (source of vitamin B1), Copper Sulfate, Manganous Oxide, Vitamin A Acetate, Calcium Pantothenate, Biotin, Vitamin B12 Supplement, Niacin, Riboflavin Supplement (source of vitamin B2), Inositol, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride (source of vitamin B6), Vitamin D3 Supplement, Potassium Iodide, Folic Acid, Cobalt Carbonate.

### Hallmarks of Quality:

Whole meat is first; instead of water, broth is used

Whole grains

Whole veggies

Moisture.....Max. 74%

INGREDIENTS: Turkey, Turkey Broth, Oats, Brown Rice, Peas, Carrots, Kelp, Flax Seed, Barley, Calcium Phosphate, Potassium Chloride, Salt, Zinc Amino Acid Complex, Choline Chloride, Vitamin E Supplement, Iron Amino Acid Complex, Ascorbic Acid, Vitamin B-12 Supplement, Manganese Amino Acid Complex, Copper Amino Acid Complex, Cobalt Protein, Vitamin A Acetate, Riboflavin Supplement, Niacin, Biotin, Thiamine Mononitrate, Vitamin D-3 Supplement, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride, Menadione Dimethylpyrimidinol (source of Vitamin K), Calcium Pantothenate, Sodium Selenite, Folic Acid.

FEEDING INSTRUCTIONS: Feed 1 can per 25 lbs. body weight

There are really only nine basic ingredients in this food, plus a vitamin/mineral premix. All the ingredients that appear after barley on this label are vitamin or mineral sources; we don't think you need to worry about them. It's far more important to focus on the macronutrients

The "USDA Organic" symbol indicates a product that is at least 95 percent organic; this company is not taking it for granted that the consumer appreciate that fact!



The more nutrients listed in the guaranteed analysis, the better

GUARANTEED ANALYSIS  
CRUDE PROTEIN (MIN.) 9.0%  
CRUDE FAT (MIN.) 7.0%  
CRUDE FIBER (MAX.) 3.0%  
MOISTURE (MAX.) 75.0%  
CALCIUM (MIN.) 0.25%  
PHOSPHORUS (MIN.) 0.20%  
VITAMIN E (MIN.) 25 IU/KG  
\*ASCORBIC ACID (VITAMIN C) (MIN.) 30 MG/KG  
\*OMEGA-6 FATTY ACIDS (MIN.) 1.00%  
\*OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS (MIN.) 0.20%

We especially appreciate it when the amounts of potentially therapeutic nutrients are listed and guaranteed – otherwise, how would you know if they are included in the food in a therapeutic dose?

Once you are able to identify the hallmarks of a better-quality food, you can consider *your* dog's needs. Does his bulging waistline dictate a move to a lower-fat food? Is he intolerant of corn or wheat? Does chicken make him break out in hives? Keep a written record of what you feed your dog, what it contains, and how he looked and felt under the influence of each food. Only then can you make informed, rational choices about "what's best" for him.

# WDJ'S TOP APPROVED WET DOG FOODS

MAKER, CONTACT INFO	VARIETY, FIRST 5 INGREDIENTS, % PROTEIN, FAT, FIBER, MOISTURE. NOTES
<b>ADVANCED PET DIETS</b> Breeder's Choice Pet Foods Irwindale, CA (800) 255-4AVO breeders-choice.com	<b>"APD Maintenance"</b> : Chicken, chicken broth, rice, chicken liver, lamb . . .  8.0%; 4.0%; 1.5%; 78%  Breeder's choice is a family-owned company with several lines of superior foods, and some lower-cost products. We like this line.

<b>ARTEMIS</b> Artemis Pet Foods Canoga Park, CA (800) 282-5876 artemispetfood.com	<b>"Beef Formula"</b> : Beef, beef broth, liver, ocean fish, oat bran . . .  9.0%; 5.0%; 1.5%; 78%  Also available in chicken and lamb formulas. (Each variety contains ocean fish.)
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<b>AVO-DERM</b> Breeder's Choice Pet Foods Irwindale, CA (800) 255-4AVO breeders-choice.com	<b>"Chicken and Rice Adult"</b> : Chicken, chicken broth, rice, chicken liver, ocean fish. . .  8.0%; 7.0%; 1.5%; 78%  Another line of good products from Breeder's Choice.
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<b>AZMIRA</b> Azmira Holistic Animal Care Tucson, AZ (800) 497-5665 azmira.com	<b>"Beef and Chicken"</b> : Beef, beef broth, chicken, chicken liver, kidney . . .  10.0%; 5.0%; 1.0%; 78%  Azmira says the product is made in a (human) kosher fish cannery. It also says its diets are among the highest in essential fatty acids.
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<b>CALIFORNIA NATURAL</b> Natura Pet Products Santa Clara, CA (800) 532-7261 naturapet.com	<b>"Lamb and Rice"</b> : Lamb, water, brown rice, rice, sunflower oil . . .  9.0%; 6.0%; 1.5%; 74%  Very simple, clean ingredients list. Also available in a chicken and brown rice variety.
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<b>CANIDAE</b> Canidae Corporation San Luis Obispo, CA (800) 398-1600 canidae.com	<b>"Chicken, Lamb, and Fish"</b> : Chicken, chicken broth, lamb, chicken liver, ocean fish . . .  9.0%; 6.0%; 1.5%; 78%  Omega 6 and Omega 3 levels also on its Guaranteed Analysis (GA).
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<b>CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE PET LOVER'S SOUL</b> Diamond Pet Products (a division of Schell & Kampeter) Meta, MO (800) 442-0402 chickensoupforthepet-loverssoul.com	Chicken, turkey, chicken broth, duck, salmon . . .  8.0%; 4.0%; 1.0%; 78%  Good product, silly name notwithstanding. Typing in the Web site address is arduous!
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<b>DRS. FOSTER &amp; SMITH</b> Drs. Foster & Smith Rhinelander, WI (800) 826-7206 drsfostersmith.com	<b>"Lamb and Brown Rice"</b> : Lamb, lamb liver, lamb broth, brown rice, herring . . .  9.0%; 7.0%; 1.0%; 78%  Also available in a chicken and brown rice and a fish and potato variety.
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MAKER, CONTACT INFO	VARIETY, FIRST 5 INGREDIENTS, % PROTEIN, FAT, FIBER, MOISTURE. NOTES
<b>EAGLE PACK HOLISTIC SELECT</b> Eagle Pet Products, Inc. Mishawaka, IN (800) 255-5959 eaglepack.com	<b>"Chicken"</b> : Chicken, chicken broth, chicken liver, ocean fish, oat bran . . .  9.0%; 5.0%; 1.5%; 78%  This line boasts seven varieties, including duck & oatmeal, a puppy food, a beef formula, a lamb variety, a fish-based food, and a liver-based food.

<b>ENTRÉE FOR DOGS</b> Three Dog Bakery Kansas City, MO (800) 4-TREATS threedog.com  <i>New to our List!</i>	<b>"Chicken, Vegetables, &amp; Rice"</b> : Chicken, broccoli, carrots, cooked rice, flax seed . . .  10.0%; 7.0%; 1.0%; 69%  Four outstanding varieties available in pouches; Three Dog says the food is made in a human food factory, with all "human-grade" ingredients. Company reps have been known to eat the food to demo its quality. There is nothing we don't like about it.
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<b>EVANGER'S FOR DOGS</b> Evanger's Dog and Cat Food Co., Inc. Wheeling, IL (800) 288-6796 evangersdogfood.com	<b>"Duck and Sweet Potato Dinner"</b> : Duck, water, sweet potatoes, vitamin A acetate, vitamin D3 . . .  9.0%; 4%; 1.5%; 78%  At last count, Evanger's had 19 varieties in three major lines: "hand-packed specialties," "Super Premium Gold Dinners," and "Game Meats," with novel proteins.
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<b>EVOLVE</b> Triumph Pet Industries, Inc. Warwick, NY (800) 331-5144 evolvepet.com	<b>"Turkey"</b> : Turkey, turkey broth, chicken liver, lamb, brown rice . . .  8.0%; 6.0%; 1.0%; 78%  Only three varieties currently available: turkey, chicken, and lamb.
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<b>INNOVA</b> Natura Pet Products Santa Clara, CA (800) 532-7261 naturapet.com	 Turkey, chicken, water, potatoes, brown rice . . .  9.0%; 8.5%; 1.5%; 74%  Available in a senior variety. Fatty acids and vitamin E are listed on its Guaranteed Analysis (GA).
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<b>LAMADERM</b> Natural Life Pet Products Girard, KS (800) 367-2391 nlpp.com	Lamb broth, lamb, lamb liver, brown rice, rice . . .  9.0%; 5.0%; 1.5%; 78%  Note that the water ingredient is first, and two types of rice are listed. This does not contain as much meat as some of the other products here.
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<b>MERRICK</b> Merrick Pet Care Hereford, TX (800) 664-7387 merrickpetcare.com	<b>"Thanksgiving Day Dinner"</b> : Turkey, turkey broth, turkey liver, sweet potatoes, carrots . . .  9.0%; 4.0%; 1.0%; 81%  Merrick offers a large line of innovative and appealing formulas.
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<b>NATURAL BALANCE</b> Dick Van Patten's Natural Balance Pacoima, CA (800) 829-4493 naturalbalanceinc.com	<b>"Liver Formula"</b> : Beef liver, beef broth, beef, carrots, oat groats . . .  9.0%; 5.0%; 1.5%; 78%  Seven varieties are available.
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MAKER, CONTACT INFO	VARIETY, FIRST 5 INGREDIENTS, % PROTEIN, FAT, FIBER, MOISTURE. NOTES
<b>NATURAL LIFE</b> Natural Life Pet Products Girard, KS (800) 367-2391 nlpp.com	<b>"Adult"</b> : Chicken, chicken broth, chicken liver, brown rice, pearled barley . . .  8.0%; 4.0%; 1.5%; 78%  Available in five varieties, including adult, senior, puppy, "condition performance," and vegetarian.

<b>NEURA MEATS</b> Old Mother Hubbard Lowell, MA (800) 225-0904 oldmotherhubbard.com	<b>"95% Beef"</b> : Beef, beef broth, brown rice, guar and carrageenan gums (thickeners), ground flaxseed . . .  9.0%; 5.0%; 1.0%; 78%  We really appreciate this line (a whopping 13 varieties) of simple, meat-rich formulas.
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<b>NEWMAN'S OWN ORGANICS</b> Newman's Own Organics Aptos, CA (800) 865-2866 newmansownorganics.com	<b>"Chicken"</b> : Organic chicken, water, salmon, ocean whitefish, brown rice . . .  9.0%; 6.0%; 1.0%; 78%  Five varieties available, all with either organic chicken or organic turkey.
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<b>NUTRO NATURAL CHOICE ULTRA</b> Nutro Products Inc. City of Industry, CA (800) 833-5330 nutroproducts.com	<b>"Adult"</b> : Chicken broth, chicken, chicken liver, wheat gluten, rice . . .  8.5%; 6.0%; 1.5%; 78%  Five varieties available, including puppy, adult, senior, large breed adult, and weight management.
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<b>PERFORMATRIN ULTRA</b> Peton Distributors, Inc. Markham, Ontario (800) PET-VALU performatrinultra.com  <i>New to our list!</i>	<b>"Chicken and Wild Rice Stew"</b> : Chicken broth, chicken, chicken liver, potatoes, wild rice . . .  8.0%; 4.0%; 1.0%; 82%  A new food, made in Canada and so far, only sold in Pet-Valu stores. Also available in a lamb variety.
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<b>PETGUARD ORGANIC</b> PetGuard Green Cove Springs, FL (800) 874-3221 petguard.com	<b>"Organic Chicken and Vegetable Entree"</b> : Organic chicken, chicken broth, organic brown rice, organic oats, organic carrots . . .  8.0%; 7.0%; 1.0%; 78%  Terrific food with many organic ingredients. Petguard makes 10 other varieties, though no others with this much organic content.
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<b>PET PROMISE</b> Natural Pet Nutrition Westminster, CO (800) 874-3221 petpromiseinc.com  <i>New to our list!</i>	<b>"Chicken &amp; Brown Rice"</b> : Chicken, chicken broth, chicken liver, brown rice, potatoes . . .  9.0%; 4.0%; 1.5%; 78%  Available in chicken and beef varieties. Company claims products contain no added growth hormones, antibiotic-fed protein, or rendered meats or fat, and that the animal sources are free-range. . . but it's not certified organic.
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<b>PINNACLE</b> Breeder's Choice Pet Foods Irwindale, CA (800) 255-4286 breeders-choice.com	<b>"Trout and Sweet Potato"</b> : Trout, fish broth, herring, oatmeal, oat bran . . .  8.5%; 7.5%; 3.0%; 74%  Also available in a chicken and vegetable formula and a new duck and potato variety.
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MAKER, CONTACT INFO	VARIETY, FIRST 5 INGREDIENTS, % PROTEIN, FAT, FIBER, MOISTURE. NOTES
<b>PRAIRIE</b> Nature's Variety Lincoln, NE (888) 519-7387 naturesvariety.com	<b>"Beef"</b> : Beef, beef broth, beef liver, carrots, peas . . .  9.0%; 7.0%; 3.0%; 75%  Six varieties available, with three based on novel ingredients – rabbit, duck, and venison. Company Web site lists <i>complete</i> nutritional content for all vitamins and minerals. Awesome.

<b>PRECISE PLUS</b> Precise Pet Products Nacogdoches, TX (888) 4precise precisepet.com	<b>"Foundation Formula Adult"</b> : Chicken, chicken broth, chicken liver, ocean fish, carrots . . .  7.0%; 4.0%; 2.0%; 78%  Seven varieties available, including puppy, growth, foundation, senior, "Sensicare," chicken meal & rice, and "light."
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<b>SENSIBLE CHOICE</b> Royal Canin USA, Inc. St. Peters, MO (800) 592-6687 (US); (800) 527-2673 (Can) sensiblechoice.com	<b>"Turkey and Rice Adult"</b> : Turkey, water, turkey liver, brewer's rice, guar gum . . .  8.0%; 5.0%; 2.0%; 76%  Three varieties available: turkey, lamb, and chicken.
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<b>SOLID GOLD</b> Solid Gold Health Products for Pets, Inc. El Cajon, CA (800) 364-4863 solidgoldhealth.com	<b>"Turkey, Ocean Fish, Sweet Potatoes, and Carrots"</b> : Turkey, turkey broth, turkey liver, ocean fish, carrots . . .  9.0%; 5.0%; 1.5%; 78%  Three varieties available: turkey, lamb and barley, and chicken and chicken liver.
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<b>SPOT'S STEW</b> Halo, Purely for Pets Palm Harbor, FL (800) 426-4256 halopets.com	Water, chicken, carrots, celery, yellow squash . . .  3.5%; 1.5%; 1.5%; 88%  Most of the other products here are "loaf" type foods; this one, as the name implies, really is a stew or soup.
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<b>TRIUMPH</b> Triumph Pet Industries, Inc. Warwick, NY (800) 331-5144 triumphpet.com	<b>"Chicken, Rice 'n Vegetable"</b> : Chicken, chicken liver, water, brown rice, carrots . . .  9.0%; 6.0%; 1.0%; 78%  Seven decent varieties available in this line, but avoid Triumph's "Gourmet Cuts" line, which contain by-products and even sweeteners!
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<b>VERUS</b> VerUS Pet Foods, Inc. Abingdon, MD (888) 828-3787 veruspetfoods.com	<b>"Chicken and Rice"</b> : Chicken, chicken broth, brown rice, barley, calcium phosphate . . .  8.0%; 5.0%; 2.0%; 74%  Elegant, simple list of good ingredients in seven varieties.
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<b>WELLNESS</b> Old Mother Hubbard Lowell, MA (800) 225-0904 oldmotherhubbard.com	<b>"Chicken and Sweet Potato"</b> : Chicken, chicken broth, chicken liver, ocean whitefish, barley . . .  8.0%; 5.0%; 1.0%; 78%  Another terrific line (eight products) with nice ingredients.
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## Further Attributes of Top-Quality Dog Food

In our opinion, the following features are highly desirable characteristics in a pet food. We don't require these traits in order to put a product on our "Top Approved Wet Dog Food" list. But the more of these attributes a food has, the better!

- **A date-code or production code is easy to find, read, and interpret.** These make it possible for the manufacturer to backward-trace any problematic product. If they are coded in a transparent way, a consumer could use them to identify fresher products on the shelf and determine that the product is not past its expiration date.

- **More than just the minimum number of nutrients listed on a product label's "guaranteed analysis" (GA).** Federal and state laws require the following on pet food labels: the minimum level of crude protein, the minimum level of crude fat, the maximum level of crude fiber, and the maximum level of moisture. Anything that is stated under the GA is subject to testing and enforcement, so it shows the manufacturer's confidence in its manufacturing ability to reliably hit those targets.

- **The caloric content of the food listed on the label.** Comparing foods' caloric content, along with the protein and fat content, helps educated owners select foods that are right for their dogs.

- **All of the food maker's contact information listed on its product labels (and their product literature and Web sites).** The law requires pet food labels to state the location of the company whose name is on the food's label. But it sure makes it easier for consumers to get information about a pet food if its label lists a toll-free number, a Web site, an e-mail address, and a mailing address.

- **A statement that a food (or one of its close "family members") has passed an AAFCO feeding trial.** A food may list

one of two statements on its label: an indication that the food "is formulated to meet the nutritional levels" established by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO), or that "animal feeding trials using AAFCO procedures substantiate that (the food) provides complete and balanced nutrition."

Feeding trials help confirm that a food is palatable and actually performs in the manner for which it was – to help puppies grow, for example, or to help obese dogs lose weight, or to maintain the health of an adult dog. AAFCO-approved trials are wildly expensive, however, so many of the smaller pet food companies forego them in favor of informal palatability trials, conducted in-house (sometimes on staff pets!) or in shelters. (For more information on feeding trials, see "On Trial," April 2005.)

- **Certified organic ingredients.** Dogs are exposed to far more chemicals than is healthy, so cutting out chemical pesticides or fertilizers in *any* portion of their diet is a brilliant idea – and better for the planet, too. In addition, in order to list their organic

ingredients on their labels, their manufacturing facilities have to undergo additional inspections and meet organic manufacturing standards.

Interestingly, several pet food makers have told us that there is far more demand for organic ingredients than there is a

reliable supply, making the idea of committing to the manufacture of organic products more expensive and less attractive. Expect to pay a premium for products that contain organic ingredients.

### Optimum Nutrition From A Variety Of Fresh Organic Ingredients

**INGREDIENTS:** Organic Chicken, Chicken Broth, Organic Brown Rice, Organic Oats, Organic Carrots, Organic Potatoes, Chicken Liver, Tricalcium Phosphate, Organic Apples, Organic Cranberries, Guar Gum, Potassium Chloride, Organic Olive Oil, Yucca Schidigera Extract, Sea Salt, Vitamin A Acetate, Alpha Tocopherols (source Of Vitamin E), Calciferol (source Of Vitamin D2), Thiamine Mononitrate (Vitamin B1), Vitamin B12 Supplement, Riboflavin Supplement (Vitamin B2), Choline Chloride, Inositol, Niacin, Calcium Pantothenate, Biotin, Pyridoxine Hydrochloride (Vitamin B6), Zinc Amino Acid Chelate, Calcium Amino Acid Chelate, Folic Acid, Manganese

## Compare the Nutrient Levels in Wet Foods to Those of Dry Foods

The "guaranteed analysis" on a pet food label is expressed on an "as fed" basis. However, you have to do a little math to find out the actual, or "dry matter" amounts. To do so, you have to get the moisture out of your calculations, because water contains no nutrients. This gives you the most accurate measurement of the nutrients, and allows you to directly compare the levels in dry and canned foods. The "as fed" nutrient levels in canned foods – which have an average moisture content of about 78 percent – would otherwise seem improbably low.

GUARANTEED ANALYSIS:	
Crude Protein.....	min. 8%
Crude Fat.....	min. 5%
Crude Fiber.....	max. 2%
Moisture.....	max. 74%

Turkey, Turkey Broth, Oats, Brown Rice, Peas, Carrots,   
dry Calcium Phosphate, Potassium Chloride, Salt

To determine a food's "dry matter" protein content, for example, start out by subtracting the moisture content from 100; the remainder is the total dry matter. Then, divide the protein percentage listed on the dog food label by the dry matter percentage; the answer is the actual protein content.

Say the food contains 74 percent moisture; that leaves 26 percent dry matter. The guaranteed analysis listed on the label says the food contains a minimum of 8 percent protein, so the actual or "dry matter" protein content is 8 divided by 26 or 30.76 percent.



# Language Barrier

Learn how to avoid “saying” the wrong thing to a dog.

BY PAT MILLER

**H**uman-dog interactions can be more difficult than dog-dog ones, since our native languages are so different. Our series of three photos this month depicts a classic conflict between a canine and a human; the two are strangers and neither really understands what the other is communicating. Similar interactions are played out every day in communities across

the country, in which well-intentioned humans do all the wrong things in their efforts to be friendly with dogs. Far too often, the failure of dog and human to understand each other and respond appropriately results in a bite – or several.

Last month, we ran photos of an interaction between a human and a dog. Did you spot signs of their mutual misunderstanding?



## PHOTO #1 ANALYSIS

**Man** – The man is bent over from the waist, directly facing the strange dog, making direct eye contact. He has observed the dog growling and barking at him, and he’s probably saying something like, “Here, boy!”

**Dog** – Tail is stiffly erect, ears appear pricked forward, commissure (corner of lips) looks forward, body posture is tall and forward, and the dog is also making direct eye contact.

## CONCLUSION

The man would like to meet and greet the dog, and is using appropriate *primate* body language to do so.

Bending at the waist is a human invitation to come closer. In our culture, a face-front greeting that includes direct eye contact indicates honesty, friendliness, and sincerity. The man is doing his best to entice the dog to come see him.

However, in the canine world, a full-front, bent-forward posture with direct eye contact is a strongly assertive threat, and the dog is reacting accordingly with defensive aggression. He may not be sure what the man is up to, but he’s sure he wants no part of it!

*Pat Miller, CPDT, is WDJ’s Training Editor. Miller lives in Hagerstown, MD.*



## PHOTO #2 ANALYSIS

**Man** – Our human has straightened to full height and is stepping forward, still maintaining direct eye contact with the dog.

**Dog** – Has moved off to the side, still carrying his tail high and maintaining direct eye contact with the man. His ears are pricked and his mouth appears puckered forward. It’s hard to tell for certain because of the angle, but his body posture still appears tall and forward.

## CONCLUSION

The man has recognized that the dog is rejecting his advances, and is choosing to walk on. He has properly interpreted the dog’s aggressive posturing and has wisely given up making friends. While the human’s upright posture is less of a threat to the dog than his bent-over position in Photo #1, he is still making direct eye contact. The stick in his right hand is raised slightly. I’m curious as to whether he’s aware he did this – if he made this defensive gesture consciously, or if it was an automatic self-protection response.

The dog is still clearly aroused – keeping his eye on the man and his defenses up to see if the dangerous human poses any further threat.



## PHOTO #3 ANALYSIS

**Man** – Has ceased interaction with the dog; walks forward, stick still slightly raised.

**Dog** – In contrast, the dog continues to engage. He has circled behind the man and continues to show tension in his markedly forward posture, intense stare, and sharply pricked ears.

## CONCLUSION

While the man appears to have dismissed the unfriendly dog and moved on, the dog isn’t yet done with this once-threatening human. Actually, the man is probably at the greatest risk at this moment in the interaction; defensively aggressive dogs are most likely to bite from behind or if cornered, and this dog looks likely to run up behind the man for a stealth attack. Something about the man’s posture suggests he may be more aware of the potentially threatening dog than it seems at first glance. Perhaps he belatedly realized that his eye contact was exacerbating the dog’s aggression.

Fortunately, this interaction ended without a bite. The man’s decision to break eye contact and move on worked. If he’s ever in a similar situation again, it might be wiser to stand still, turning slowly if necessary to keep his eye on the dog without making strong direct eye contact, until the dog relaxes and leaves or relaxes enough that the man can leave more safely. 🐾

# Don't Despair; Just Care

*Holistic care and home support are effective for treating canine cancer.*

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Cancer always sounds like a death sentence, no matter how the diagnosis is delivered. When patients are cured, they're the exception rather than the rule – especially when they are very young or very old or when their cancers are well established.

"It's true that some cancers have a high survival rate," says Carol Falck, VMD, a holistic veterinarian in Pompano Beach, Florida, "but cancer is never good news, even if it's easy to treat or detected early. Cancer is a chronic disease, an aberration of the immune system. Whenever and however it appears, it indicates that the body has been out of balance for a long time."

Unlike conventional veterinary medicine (see "Conventional Cancer Care," December 2005), which identifies dozens of specific cancers and treats each as a unique illness, holistic medicine takes a "whole body" approach.

"Holistic medicine does not specifically treat cancer," says Dr. Falck. "Instead, it helps patients eliminate factors that allowed their cancers to develop in the first place. In holistic medicine, there are no specific protocols for different cancer diagnoses the

way there are in conventional medicine. Rather, cancer is considered an imbalance that should be corrected so that the body can repair itself."

Because cancer is such a frightening disease, it's easy to panic and feel overwhelmed as you try to make sense of diagnoses and treatment options. "But you don't have to decide everything that same day," says Dr. Falck. "You have time to consult a holistic veterinarian or get a second opinion. And you don't have to decide on a 100 percent conventional protocol or a 100 percent natural protocol. Integrative or complementary medicine combines the best of both worlds. In addition, there's a lot you can do at home with holistic therapies to help your dog heal."

## Complementary medicine

Although the terms alternative, natural, complementary, integrative, and holistic are often used interchangeably, they have slightly different meanings.

"Alternative" is a catch-all phrase that describes any treatment that has not been endorsed by conventional medicine. "Natural" therapies are based on centuries-old



### WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- Consult a holistic veterinarian about natural cancer therapies and integrative/complementary treatments.
- Improve the quality of your dog's diet, and add supplements or foods that improve digestion and assimilation.
- Explore at-home support therapies to improve your dog's quality of life.
- Avoid pesticides and products that interfere with immune function.
- Focus on positive thoughts and use holistic therapies to help your dog do the same



Laurie Kaplan wrote a book about her experiences with helping her Siberian Husky, Bullet, fight lymphoma. *Help Your Dog Fight Cancer: An Overview of Home Care Options* is a useful text for anyone whose dog has any type of cancer.

botanical, nutritional, and physical treatments, most of which are gentle as well as effective, though they work more slowly than conventional treatments. "Complementary" and "integrative" describe the combination of natural and conventional therapies. "Holistic" applies to any treatment plan that considers all of the factors in a patient's life, not just his lab test results.

In contrast, conventional or orthodox medicine trains its practitioners to identify specific diseases and treat them by attacking their symptoms. This approach is also called "allopathic," which literally means "symptom-suppressing." The downside of conventional medicine is that it seldom addresses an illness's underlying causes, so it does not correct or eliminate the illness at

its source. Treated illnesses often continue to progress, even while their symptoms subside temporarily. This is why recurring cancers are so common and so serious. Another problem with conventional medicine is that its treatments can cause side effects more painful and incapacitating than the illness itself.

“In addition,” says Dr. Falck, “conventional medicine usually ignores the emotional aspects of disease. I think holistic medicine does an excellent job of incorporating physical and emotional aspects into a treatment plan.”

Specific treatments that fall under the holistic/alternative umbrella include diet, nutritional supplements, homeopathy, herbal medicine, aromatherapy, flower essences, chiropractic, acupuncture, acupressure, massage, and several others. In complementary or integrative cancer care, these treatments are used to improve the results of conventional therapy and counteract its adverse side effects.

For example, acupuncture and medicinal herbs help alleviate the nausea caused by chemotherapy, while nutritional supplements help restore lost hair. Aromatherapy and herbs speed the healing of surgical wounds and help prevent skin damage caused by radiation treatments. Herbs, aromatherapy, and flower remedies alleviate stress and help bring emotions into balance. And an improved diet supports all cancer therapies.

## Diet

The cornerstone of every holistic cancer therapy is diet – but which diet remains a subject of controversy.

Most conventional veterinarians prescribe commercial pet foods for dogs with cancer, or they encourage owners to feed the patient whatever he or she will eat. In contrast, holistic veterinarians often recommend a home-prepared or raw diet that does not include grains. Cancer cells metabolize carbohydrates quickly, so grains and other carbohydrates are problem ingredients. However, cancer cells do not metabolize fats, so fats are “safe” ingredients, although hydrogenated, partially hydrogenated, highly refined, and rancid fats should be avoided.

The list of recommended fats includes all animal fats, including fish oil, as well as coconut oil, which has its own cancer-fighting ingredients (see “Crazy about Coconut Oil,” October 2005).

As described in “Feed the Dog, Starve

## She Wrote the Book

In her book *Help Your Dog Fight Cancer: An Overview of Home Care Options*, Laurie Kaplan describes her Siberian Husky, Bullet, and his cancer treatment, providing important information for anyone who would like to prevent cancer or whose dog has the disease.

On July 17, 2000, Bullet, then nine years old, was diagnosed with lymphoma. He began chemotherapy the next day. His second treatment with the drug Doxorubicin caused such a severe reaction that he didn’t eat for nearly two weeks, and his weight dropped from 85 to 70 pounds. “He was ‘flat out’ 24/7, sometimes crying quietly,” Kaplan recalls. “He needed my help to go outside to pee. There was blood in his stool and he was vomiting. I wondered if I was being unkind by keeping him alive.”

Fortunately, Bullet recovered from each bout of side effects and after 18 months of chemotherapy, was considered “cured.” But the following year he developed a serious heart condition. Despite these setbacks and other side effects, Bullet and Kaplan enjoyed four and a half active years from the time of his diagnosis. His journey ended when he succumbed to severe kidney failure in November 2004 at nearly 14 years old.

In addition to feeding Bullet a raw home-prepared diet of meat, bones, fish, eggs, vegetables, garlic, fish oil, and organic flax seed oil, Kaplan gave him vitamins, minerals, herbs, colostrum, amino acids, antioxidants, and immune-enhancing supplements.

Just as important as what she added to Bullet’s regimen were the things she removed, such as ingredients that were not organically produced, tap water (because of its chlorine, fluoride, and impurities), annual vaccinations, systemic flea and tick pesticides, and heartworm medication. Because of Lyme disease and heartworm risks, Kaplan alternated between giving Bullet reduced doses of preventives and avoiding them altogether.

“You can help prevent cancer by keeping pets away from exposure to lawn treatment chemicals,” says Dr. Falck, “and by using natural flea and tick preventives instead of systemic pesticides, minimizing vaccinations, and using natural treatments instead of symptom-suppressing drugs like cortisone. These strategies are even more important for dogs who are already diagnosed with cancer because anything that weakens or disrupts the immune system interferes with the body’s ability to heal itself.”

the Cancer” (November 2003), cancer researcher Greg Ogilvie, DVM, Dip. ACVIM, and colleagues at Colorado State University’s College of Veterinary Medicine and Biomedical Sciences recommend a diet of less than 25 percent carbohydrates, 35 to 48 percent protein, and 27 to 35 percent fat, with more than 5 percent of the total food comprised of omega-3 fatty acids and more than 2 percent arginine (dry weight measurements).

Protein is a crucial ingredient in any canine diet, for dogs, like their wolf ancestors, are best adapted to protein foods. Meat, eggs, poultry, and fish that are organically raised, pasture-fed, or caught in the wild are best for cancer patients. Meat and eggs from factory farms and fish from fish farms are far more likely to contain harmful bacteria, prescription drug residues, or contaminants that interfere with immune function. (See

“Upgrading to Pasture-Fed,” July 2003.)

Supplements that improve the assimilation of food, such as digestive enzymes, can be an important addition to any dog’s diet. Powders such as Prozyme can be sprinkled on food before serving, or digestive enzyme capsules or tablets can be given with meals.

Patients undergoing chemotherapy may lose their appetite, making any nutrition challenging. Freezing the dog’s food can reduce its odor, which seems to improve some dogs’ appetites. Toward the end of Bullet’s two-week fast (see sidebar, above), Kaplan bought a package of frozen smelt, and after she coaxed one of the fish into Bullet’s mouth, he began to chew. She later discovered that massaging inside his ears after placing his food bowl within reach triggered a reflexive eating response.

Seacure, the fermented deep sea whitefish powder described in “Securing

Seacure” (April 2003), is an excellent supplement for cancer patients because it speeds tissue repair, helps alleviate the side effects of conventional treatment, and is immediately assimilated. Seacure powder can be added to food or simply mixed with water, and Seacure wafers can be fed at any time. Store this extremely fishy product in the freezer to reduce its odor.

Getting cancer patients to drink sufficient water can be as difficult as persuading them to eat. Filtered water added to food or squirted into the dog’s mouth, meat-flavored broth frozen in ice cube trays for easy dispensing, or meat-flavored gelatin can all increase a dog’s hydration.

Whether vegetables belong in a dog’s diet is another hotly debated topic, but when it comes to treating cancer, certain vegetables have been shown to fight the disease. In Germany, lactic acid fermented vegetables like sauerkraut are an integral part of some cancer therapies because these foods are “hostile” to cancer cells.

It’s easy to puree carrots with fresh ginger and other vegetables, add some powdered acidophilus and a sprinkling of unrefined sea salt, and press everything under a weight overnight or until the vegetables’ juices separate and they develop a piquant flavor. (See “It’s All in How You Make It,” March 2001, for directions.)

In addition to increasing their vitamin content and assimilation, lacto-fermented vegetables support beneficial bacteria in the digestive tract. Replacing the vegetables in any canine recipe with pureed lacto-fermented vegetables is easy and sensible.

## Supplements

In *The Healthy Pet Manual: A Guide to the Prevention and Treatment of Cancer* (another recommended resource), Deborah Straw describes several supplements that are appropriate for canine cancer patients.

First on the list is vitamin C, which may be the most-researched cancer supplement. As Straw explains, “Vitamin C may protect against cancer because it acts as a cellular antioxidant. It enhances the immune system by detoxifying certain carcinogens and by blocking the formation of various carcinogenic compounds created when certain foods are digested.”

The suggested dose varies by expert, with many recommending dosing to “bowel tolerance,” as loose stools result when the body has ingested more vitamin C than it can utilize. However, proponents of whole-food supplements argue that megadoses aren’t needed if the vitamin comes directly from food, as does the vitamin C in Cataplex C from Standard Process and Food C from Wysong. Or you can simply provide foods that are rich in vitamin C, such as small amounts of lacto-fermented vegetables.

Other key vitamins are B-complex, E, A, D, and K, all of which are important for overall health. Vitamins from whole-food sources are well tolerated, easily assimilated, and provide an entire complex of nutrients.

Bones provide minerals such as calcium and magnesium. For those who don’t feel comfortable feeding raw bones, look for supplements from companies, such as Standard Process, that make supplements from

pasture-fed organic bones. Or, ask a local butcher who carries organic meats to grind fresh bones after he removes the meat for your dog’s meals.

Selenium, another important mineral, has been shown in human population studies to significantly protect against cancer.

Discuss appropriate dosages of these and other mineral or vitamin supplements with your holistic veterinarian.

Don’t neglect your dog’s beneficial bacteria. Probiotic supplements such as acidophilus, freshly prepared yogurt, and other beneficial bacteria improve digestion and bolster the gastrointestinal tract.

L-glutamine is also a very important supplement for dogs in chemotherapy. It helps the intestines and minimizes treatment side effects.

## Herbal support

One of the most famous herbal remedies associated with cancer is Essiac, a tea developed by Renee Caisse, a Canadian nurse. A blend of burdock root, sheep sorrel, slippery elm bark, and turkey rhubarb root, Essiac tea can be added to food or drinking water or squirted directly into the mouth.

Essiac is said to be most effective if given on an empty stomach. The recommended dose is about 1 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight or 1 tablespoon per 30 pounds.

Beverly Cappel, DVM, recommends Essiac tea as a support therapy for cancer. “I give it to every animal I treat because it’s not going to hurt and it flushes them out,” she says. “Some reports say that it kills cancer. It does not kill cancer; it just cleans the body out. We’ve had success with animals that have melanomas, suspicious-looking basal cell tumors, or even mast cell tumors of the skin. We put them on Essiac once or twice a day and the tumors shrivel up within a couple of weeks.”

Aloe vera is another popular support remedy for cancer patients. Aloe vera juice or gel can be given internally with food and applied externally to growths and tumors. In his book *Cancer Therapy: The Independent Consumer’s Guide to Non-Toxic Treatment and Prevention*, Ralph Moss, PhD, reports that both aloe and its cousin garlic are widely used as adjuvants, or helpers, with other therapies.

Taken internally and applied topically, aloe may help prevent infections, increase the effectiveness of chemotherapy, protect against radiation therapy skin injury, and support the liver during detoxification.

## Silke’s Story

Dr. Falck’s favorite cancer patient is Silke (pronounced Silka), an 11-year-old spayed German Shepherd Dog who had frequent urinary tract infections. “In June 2004, we did an ultrasound,” she says, “and we saw a large inoperable bladder mass. Silke had excellent care and was on a raw diet. However, she overweight which is a risk factor for bladder cancer. In addition, she had been treated with a variety of chemicals for tick control, which probably contributed to weakening her immune system.”

For a short time, Silke received Piroxicam, a conventional medication for bladder cancer, but that was discontinued because of its side effects. Dr. Falck, who

studied Traditional Chinese Veterinary Medicine at the Chi Institute, put Silke on a regimen of Chinese herbs, nutritional supplements, immune-boosting products, and antioxidants, all of which Silke’s owner delivered in her favorite food, liverwurst.

“Seven months later we repeated the ultrasound,” says Dr. Falck, “and the mass was almost completely invisible. Silke is now 12 years old and doing very well.”



# Cancer Treatment Resources

## RECOMMENDED READING

*Bach Flower Remedies for Animals* by Helen Graham and Gregory Vlamis. Findhorn Press, 1999

*Cancer Therapy: The Independent Consumer's Guide to Non-Toxic Treatment and Prevention* by Ralph Moss. Equinox Press, 1992

*The Healthy Pet Manual: A Guide to the Prevention and Treatment of Cancer* by Deborah Straw. Healing Arts Press, 2005.

*Help Your Dog Fight Cancer: An Overview of Home Care Options, Featuring Bullet's Survival Story* by Laurie Kaplan. JanGen Press, 2004. Visit [themagicbulletfund.org](http://themagicbulletfund.org) for information about a fund established in Bullet's honor to help other dogs survive cancer.

*Holistic Aromatherapy for Animals: A Comprehensive Guide to the Use of Essential Oils and Hydrosols with Animals* by Kristen Leigh Bell. Findhorn Press, 2002

## HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

Carol Falck, VMD, Pompano Beach, FL. [friendshipvet.com](http://friendshipvet.com)

Beverly Cappel, DVM, Chestnut Ridge, NY. (845) 356-3838; [vetatthebarn.com](http://vetatthebarn.com)

American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association, Bel Air, MD. [ahvma.org](http://ahvma.org)

Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy, Wilmington, DE. [theavh.org](http://theavh.org)

American Veterinary Chiropractic Association, Bluejacket, OK. [animalchiropractic.org](http://animalchiropractic.org)

American Academy of Veterinary Acupuncture, Middletown, CT. [aava.org](http://aava.org)

Chi Institute of Chinese Medicine, Reddick, FL. (800) 891-1986; [tcvm.com](http://tcvm.com)

International Veterinary Acupuncture Society, Ft. Collins, CO. [ivas.org](http://ivas.org)

Veterinary Botanical Medicine Association, Woodstock, GA. [vbma.org](http://vbma.org)

Veterinary Institute of Integrative Medicine, Arvada, CO. (303) 277-8227; [viim.org](http://viim.org)

## PRODUCTS MENTIONED IN THIS ARTICLE

**Cataplex C** and other whole-food supplements are made by Standard Process and distributed by licensed health care professionals. [standardprocess.com](http://standardprocess.com)

Information and resources for **Essiac Tea** from [essiac-info.org](http://essiac-info.org). Various Essiac products may be available in health food stores, but before you buy, read the discussions on the Web site above regarding product quality and prices.

**Food C** is made and sold by Wysong. For information call (989) 631-0009; for orders call (800) 748-0188; or see [wysong.net](http://wysong.net)

**Prozyme** digestive enzymes made and sold by Prozyme Products. (800) 522-5537; [prozymeproducts.com](http://prozymeproducts.com)

**Rescue Remedy**, a Bach Flower Remedy blend of five flower essences, is sold in health food stores and by many online retailers. The same formula is called Five Flower Remedy and Calming Essence by other manufacturers.

**Seacure** fermented deep sea whitefish is made and sold by Proper Nutrition, Inc. For information, call (800) 555-8868; for orders call (800) 247-5656; or see [propernutrition.com](http://propernutrition.com)

## Emotions

Anyone who thinks that dogs don't have feelings just isn't paying attention. These creatures are emotional sponges.

"It's so important to keep our own emotions under control," says Dr. Falck. "If you panic, your dog is going to feel your stress and anxiety, and those emotions are not helpful. My suggestion to owners who are dealing with cancer is to focus on things that you can do, things that are helpful and positive, not on things that leave you depressed or worried.

"For example, if your dog has a good appetite, here's a chance to upgrade her diet. You can do research and learn about her illness and things you can do at home to support her or make her more comfortable. You can also keep a journal in which you record everything your dog is experiencing, from symptoms to supplements to special events or activities. This is an excellent way to document her progress. Instead of just worrying, you can channel your energy into something constructive."

Dr. Falck recommends turning your at-

tention away from the dog's present symptoms by focusing on memories of her healthy past. "Keep her favorite activities in your mind as a mental image," she says, "and let those thoughts carry you to thoughts about the best possible outcome."

Flower essences or flower remedies, including the famous Bach Rescue Remedy, can help canine patients and their human companions cope with emotional stress. "Rescue Remedy is the all-purpose formula," she says, "but you can refer to books or symptom charts to select other essences that address specific emotions."

Prepare a flower essence dosage bottle by mixing 2 to 4 drops of Rescue Remedy (or 2 drops each of up to 5 individual remedies) with 1 fluid ounce (2 tablespoons) filtered or spring water in a small glass bottle equipped with an eyedropper or spray top. The standard dose is 4 drops of the diluted remedy, which can be added to drinking water, dropped directly onto the nose or into the mouth, massaged into the ears, applied to paw pads, applied to bare skin on the abdomen, or sprayed in the air or directly

on the patient. The secret to success with flower remedies is frequent application, so do this as often as possible, several times per day. And dose yourself, too. Anything you do to bring your own energy into balance will help your dog.

Calming essential oils and hydrosols (see "Smell This, You'll Feel Better," December 2004, and "Essential Information," January 2005) are a boon to cancer patients and their families. For an excellent guide to this subject, see *Holistic Aromatherapy for Animals* by Kristen Leigh Bell.

Whatever protocol you choose for your dog, holistic support therapies can make a world of difference. These gentle, nontoxic, whole-body treatments invite the participation of everyone in the family and promise your dog a more comfortable, happy, active life. 🐾

*A long-time contributor to WDJ and author of The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care, Natural Remedies for Dogs & Cats, and other books, CJ Puotinen lives in New York with her husband, a Lab, and a tabby cat.*

# Adoption Advice

*Here's how to make your new dog's adoption work for life.*

BY MARDI RICHMOND

**A**dopting a new dog is exciting, wonderful, and a happy time. But bringing a new dog home is also an uncertain time. What will your dog be like? Will he be a good match for your family? Will he be everything you hoped for?

Bringing a new dog into the home can also, quite frankly, be a rather shocking time for you and your family. Suddenly your life will be compounded by the energy and needs of the new family member. *Everyone* will go through an adjustment – dogs and people alike. What can you do to ensure that you and your new dog will settle into a long happy life together?

## Expectations count

“Have realistic expectations,” says Joan DeNeffe. “And be prepared!” DeNeffe has done volunteer work in animal rescue for over 25 years, and is one of the leaders of a monthly coaching group designed to help people with shelter and other rescue dogs start off on the right paw. According to DeNeffe, expecting an adjustment period can be key.

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### WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **Take your time. Don't be in a rush to get a dog; wait for just the right one.**
- **Then, don't overeagerly drag your new dog all over town and to the dog park. Let him settle in at your home for a few weeks, so you get to know each other.**
- **If possible, maintain a low level of stress and activity in your home for the first few weeks.**



**As tempting as it may be to take your newly adopted dog to the dog park in the first few days following his arrival in your home, DON'T! He needs a few weeks of quiet walks with you, to learn what you expect and to develop a bond and trust with you.**

“If a dog is going to be returned following an adoption, it is often in the first three weeks – usually because behavior issues come up that people aren't prepared for and don't know how to deal with,” says DeNeffe. But having realistic expectations can help you get through the adjustment period – when behavior issues often peak – with the least stress and the most success.

What will the adjustment period be like? How long will it last? The answer to these questions is simply: It depends – on the dog, on you, and on your environment.

“Every dog is different! Every black Lab and Golden Retriever is different,” says DeNeffe. Helping a dog adjust to a new home is a process that can take weeks or months, but the outcome of having a dog who is comfortable and happy is definitely worth the effort.

Truthfully, some dogs come home from the shelter or other rescue situation and settle in with few problems; their adjustment

period is brief and unremarkable. Many dogs are even on their best behavior – a honeymoon period – for several days or weeks. They may experience stress, but they deal with it by being cautious and responsive. But other dogs may deal with the uncertainty of being in a new home with other, more obvious stress responses. Some of those may include:

- Pacing and other overactive behavior;
- Attaching to one person in the family, but being very shy of others;
- Mouthing people, jumping up on them, barking, and chewing; and
- Trying to escape or hiding.

Don't panic if your new dog behaves in a less than desirable manner. In spite of the initial stress response, over the course of a

few weeks or months, most dogs settle in and become wonderful companions. What happens in the first few days or weeks is *not* necessarily indicative of what life with the dog will be like longterm. But how you handle the stress response can certainly affect the long-term outcome.

Equally important to remember is that while there may be a significant adjustment period, it is usually much shorter than the several years it takes to raise a puppy! And there is a whole lot you can do to make the transition easier. By being aware, modifying and redirecting any unwanted actions from the start, you can help your new dog become a good citizen.

## Plan and prepare

Just like when you bring a new puppy home, when you bring home an older or rescue dog, being prepared is key.

Make sure you have basic supplies – like food, bowls, collar and leash, bed, and toys. (See “Pre-Puppy Preparation,” September 2005, for details on supplies and equipment.)

In addition, you will want to decide on and set up a confinement area, a place your dog will stay when you cannot provide su-

per vision. It is important to recognize that the dog will be new to your environment and giving him too much freedom too soon can set him up to make behavior mistakes (such as having an accident in the house or chewing the wrong thing). By giving the dog a safe, confined place to be when he is not being supervised, he will be able to make a gradual and successful transition.

Make the confinement area the place where your dog gets his meals and his favorite toys. Make it a safe place he can call his own. Ideally, the confinement area will be in the same part of the home that you spend time together. A crate works well, but you can also use baby gates or an exercise pen to section off a small safe section of your home.

Get the whole family involved in deciding what the rules and routines will be for your dog and help him learn those rules from the first day home. Will he be allowed on the furniture? Where will he sleep (ideally in the same room with you)? Providing structure helps a dog learn the house rules and helps him feel safe.

“These rules will be a goal,” says DeNeffe, emphasizing that it will take time for the dog to learn what is expected.

Start a houstraining routine right away, too. It is safest to assume your dog is not houstrained. Even if he was houstrained in his last home, time in a shelter or simply being in a new environment can mean that he will not understand when and where he is to go now.

Just as you would with a puppy, set up a routine, confine your dog when you cannot supervise, take him out on a regular schedule, and praise or reward him for going in the right place. Adult dogs will often houstrain faster and easier than puppies because their bladders are mature and they can “hold it” longer.

## De-stress!

In general, keep stress to a minimum for the first few days or weeks. How long depends on the dog’s personality. Keep in mind that just the act of moving into a new home is stressful for most dogs – not to mention the stress he may have experienced before coming into your home. It can take several days or longer for the dog’s stress hormones to return to normal levels once he feels safe and calm.

Take your time in introducing your new dog to friends, friend’s dogs, and the local

## How Adopting a Dog Can Trump Getting a Pup

Should you get a puppy or rescue an adult dog? There is no right or wrong answer to this question; each of us has different needs when it comes to a new dog in our life.

That said, dog experts, books, and even articles in this magazine promote the importance of a young puppy’s early socialization and a good start in life to such an extent that it is hard to imagine why someone would choose to “risk” adopting an older puppy or an adult dog.

Still, many of us do. Why do we choose rescue dogs? Aside from the obvious reason – that you may be saving a life – there are a lot of advantages. Here are just a few:

■ **What you see is what you get.** Size, conformation, coat color and texture are all developed.

■ **Most rescue dogs are really nice dogs!** And while puppy experts may have an idea of how a dog’s personality will develop, most of us will have a better shot at picking a good match with an older dog than with a young puppy.

■ **The energy level and exercise needs**

**of an adult dog will be more obvious.** All puppies are energetic, but will they settle into a quiet house dog or become excellent candidates for agility? Even when you take breeds or mixes into account, there are no guarantees with a puppy.

■ **You will probably sleep better.** Young puppies usually need to get up one or more times in the night.

■ **In most cases, houstraining an adult dog will be faster.**

A puppy’s bladder just isn’t as developed as an adult dog.

■ **You won’t have to go through the puppy crazies.** It’s normal for puppies to chew on things and people, jump up, and exhibit general rowdiness, but it’s not always easy to deal with.

■ **Adult dogs tend to settle quicker.** While your adjustment period with an adult dog will likely be weeks or months, it often takes several years for puppies to settle.

■ **It’s a risk either way.** Starting with a puppy doesn’t guarantee a healthy or well-behaved adult dog.



Many adult dogs at the shelter come with lots of features pre-installed; they may already be houstrained, and know basic good manners and tricks.

dog park. Remember that you will have this dog for the rest of his life; there is no rush! Give him time and space to settle in and bond with you before he is exposed to the world. Have him play and exercise in your yard and take him for walks in a quiet low stress area for the first few days or weeks.

### Timing is everything

If at all possible, allow extra time in your schedule to help your dog adjust. At minimum, bring your dog home before a weekend so you can spend extra time helping him settle in. Ideally take a few extra days or a week or two off from work.

But that doesn't mean spend every minute with your dog (even though you'll want to!). In fact, it is best to get your dog used to *short* absences within a few hours of bringing him home. Soon after you bring

your dog home, take him for a short walk or bathroom break. Then introduce him to his confinement area. You can give him a great chew bone or a stuffed Kong and leave him in his crate or exercise pen for a few minutes.

Throughout the first few days, leave your dog alone in his confinement area for several minutes at a time. Vary the time you leave him from 30 seconds to 20 minutes. Start by leaving him in the confinement area for a few minutes while you are home, and gradually build up to leaving him for 10 to 20 minutes or so while you leave the house. By keeping your absences short, matter of fact, and pleasant, your dog will learn that being alone in the new home is safe.

You can also make your departure a good thing for your dog by giving him a food-filled Kong each time you leave him.

### Train for confidence

Basic training – sit, down, stay, come, and walking on a leash – can begin the day you bring your dog home. Use positive training methods such as clicker training. You can get started by referring to a book or video. Beginning training right away can help dogs understand that you will be taking care of them, and that they are safe. It will also help build confidence. For many dogs, training games will help them de-stress and settle in quicker.

Some dogs, however, will be “shut down” at first and may have a hard time learning a new behavior or even doing something they already know. Don't worry if your dog is not as responsive at first as you might like. If your dog seems reluctant, just make training games *very* easy, fun, and rewarding.

## Bringing Sunshine Home: Blueprint of a Successful Adoption Story

Clare Chatfield knew that bringing a dog home was going to be an adjustment.

“Because we have two young children, and one of us works full-time and the other half-time, we knew we didn't have the time and energy to deal with a puppy,” says Chatfield. So Clare and her husband, Tim, decided that adopting an older dog would be best.

Chatfield admits that they wanted a dog that was housetrained and had calmed down, but she emphasized that their number one criterion was finding a dog that was really good with children. They took their time and spent almost nine months looking before they found Sunshine, a six-year-old Golden Retriever. Sunshine was being re-homed because of allergies in her former family, and she had a proven track record of loving children.

Before bringing Sunshine home, Chatfield spoke with a trainer so that she and her husband would have an idea about how to best make the transition from one home to another. They planned on a flexible schedule for the first few weeks just to be

sure Sunshine would settle nicely. And they decided to bring Sunshine home when they would have a long weekend to help her adjust.

Right away Chatfield and her family began a simple “sit for treats, food, and petting” program to help Sunshine understand that they were her new family and would now take care of her.

They also began home-alone training. Sunshine would need to adjust to being home while the family was at work and school. At first, the family left Sunshine for only a few minutes and with a fresh chew bone for comfort. They gradually increased the time they left her until they felt she could comfortably stay home for the four or five hours needed on work days.

Chatfield says that they did make a few small mistakes during the transition. In fact, Chatfield confesses, they took Sunshine off-leash in the park way too soon – after she had been with them only about three weeks. Sunshine, who had not yet bonded with Chatfield, didn't come when called and they had trouble catching her.

“After that, we waited until she was more connected,” says Chatfield. It was difficult to keep her on leash, says Chatfield – they wanted to let her run more – but they waited for about two months, until they felt sure she would be responsive, before trying again.

In retrospect, Chatfield says that she can see now that Sunshine was stressed, even though the dog was generally well behaved.

“She was a little too perfect at first,” Chatfield says. Now that Sunshine has been with them for almost five months, they have all relaxed and Sunshine is much more like a normal dog. They have had to deal with a few issues – such as Sunshine digging up the garden and chasing the neighbor cats. But overall Sunshine has settled well and Chatfield can't say enough about how wonderful she is or how great she is with the kids.

“I am so glad we didn't get a puppy,” says Chatfield. “It would have been so hard – especially on Tim and me.”



**The Chatfields looked for a “perfect family dog” for nine months before they found everything they wanted in six-year-old Sunshine, who was being re-homed due to a family member's allergies.**



Try working with one simple behavior, like sit, and practice that until he seems ready to experiment with other behaviors. Or, if that seems too much, you can begin by simply hand feeding a portion of your dog's meals to help him learn to trust you.

While training right away is beneficial, wait a few weeks before taking your dog into a class if he is stressed at all. For some dogs, you may even want to wait a little longer as training classes can also be very stressful. DeNeffe notes that for her dog Barkley, a month and a half was way too soon after re-homing to start a training class. "He needed to relax into his world first," says DeNeffe.

If you need help right away, consider having a trainer come to your home instead of starting a class. Waiting to start a class until your dog has settled a little, and you have had time to bond can help you both get the most from the experience.

With most dogs, bonding takes time. While a dog may form an attachment to a person quickly, he or she may not be bonded to the point of trusting that person to provide safety for several weeks.

## Make no assumptions about socialization

Most dogs that are adopted through rescue groups, shelters, or private re-homing have had at least some socialization. With some exceptions (for example, puppy mill breeding dogs), many rescue dogs have lived in homes and have had exposure to people, daily activities, and common noises. But each dog's experiences are different.

One of my dogs, for example, originally came from a ranch. She had wonderful socialization around animals, people, and children. But because she had lived in an outside run in a quiet country setting, city noises (like cars) and even common household sounds (like the phone ringing), were initially very frightening when she came to live with us. Conversely, for a dog used to the city, a country home – sheep, cows, and tractors – might seem foreign and scary.

It is nearly impossible for a dog to be socialized to all experiences. If you start off with the assumption that your dog is not socialized, you can expose him gently and gradually to new things. As you get to know your dog better, you will learn where and with whom he is comfortable, and where you will need to provide more socialization to help him settle into his new life with you.



**Don't be shocked if your new dog does some "naughty" things in his first few weeks or months in your home. Help him out by limiting his opportunities to do the wrong thing. For example, keep your counters free of food!**

## Watch for issues

According to the National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy, the top several reasons dogs are given up to shelters are because of moving, landlord problems, cost, and lack of time, not because of behavior problems.

That being said, all dogs have behavior quirks or issues. With a puppy, you learn about their issues gradually, as they grow and develop. This gives you time to adjust, accept, and/or train to resolve the problems. When you get an adult dog, you may *suddenly* be facing an unexpected behavior quirk or issue. This can understandably feel more overwhelming than the gradual process of discovering behavior issues in puppy hood.

By being alert to any issues your new dog may have, you will also be able to address them as soon as they arise, before they become a habit. Dogs can be very impressionable in a new environment, especially the first time they try a behavior. Setting your dog up for success, rewarding the behaviors you want and redirecting those you don't want from the first day home, can make a huge difference in the long run.

Learning about a new dog's behavior issues and quirks often triggers a common emotional response, "But he's not like (in-

sert other dog's or past dog's name here)."

It is human nature to compare your new dog to other dogs you have had, to the dog you had as a child, or to your neighbor's dog. In some cases, a new dog will bring up feelings of grief and loss of a dog that has died. It is normal to have these feelings.

If you find yourself comparing your new dog to another dog, try to keep some perspective, especially if the new dog isn't measuring up. With time, you can (and will) develop a deep and meaningful relationship with your new dog, too. In fact, over time, he will probably become the dog that you later say, "But he's not like . . ."

## Be patient

Give your newly re-homed dog more time than you think they need to adjust. Wait until their stress hormones return to normal before taking them to places that may produce even more stress. Keep them on leash in open environments until they are trained and you are sure they will stay with you. Use your confinement area longer than you think necessary. Then slowly and carefully give your dog more freedom as he can handle it.

"Try to think from the dog's perspective," says DeNeffe, talking about looking at the re-homing process from the dog's point of view. While we can never really know what goes on inside a dog's head, it can be helpful to imagine what their experiences may have been.

Imagine what your emotional state might be like if you were suddenly plucked from your current life (leaving everything you know and love behind), put into a shelter environment where you were forced to live with noise and uncertainty, then suddenly placed in a new family where you not only don't know anyone, but you don't know the rules or speak the language.

Be patient with your new dog. Give him the best start possible in his new home. And remember, with time and patience, everyone will settle in. 🐾

*Mardi Richmond, MA, CPDT, is a writer and trainer living in Santa Cruz, California. She is part of an ongoing training panel, helping people with shelter or rescue dogs start off on the right paw. She is also the coauthor of Ruffing It: The Complete Guide to Camping with Dogs and the author of numerous articles on training and behavior.*

# Aged to Perfection

*Older dogs benefit from developments in veterinary geriatric medicine.*

BY RANDY KIDD, DVM, PHD

**A**ging is a natural process of all animals, and of all cells, tissues, and organs within the animal. Every individual animal ages at a different rate, and each type of tissue or organ system has its normal rate of proceeding through the aging process.

Geriatrics is the branch of medicine that treats all problems peculiar to old age and aging, including the clinical problems of senescence (the process or condition of growing old, especially the conditions resulting from the transitions and accumulations of the deleterious effects of the aging process) and senility (the physical and mental deterioration associated with old age).

Death, dying, mortality, and immortality are prime fodder for philosophers, poets, musicians, and spiritual gurus. In our Western culture we tend to want to keep it that way. Until recently, most scientists and health professionals have been loath to dis-



**Today, we know a lot more about the conditions that beset older dogs, and how to prevent or at least reduce their effects. Start looking for signs of the most common old-age conditions when the dog is middle-aged; early treatment is the most effective.**

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **Have an idea as to the average life expectancy of your dog's breed (if known). Then you can start looking for signs of age-related disease while your dog is still middle-aged.**
- **Twice-yearly veterinary exams are a minimum for the senior dog. Blood tests should be used at least annually. Increase these if you see, feel, or sense something amiss with your senior dog.**
- **Reduce the stress in your older dog's life whenever possible.**

cuss death or dying, leaving these subjects to mystics and philosophers.

Recent years, however, have produced a spate of interest in aging and anti-aging medicines. Geriatrics as a specialty is only 20 or 25 years old, and research interest in aging goes back only another 15 years before that. This newfound interest has created fertile field for anti-aging innovations – as well as the perfect weed bed for charlatans who will try to convince you they can lead you and your pets to the fountain of youth.

## How and when dogs die

Not too many years ago, the two main reasons for the death of pet dogs were trauma and infections. Better hygiene, an understanding of proper nutrition, and better healthcare in general have all worked together to lessen the impact of infectious diseases, and leash laws and better training methods have helped to keep traumatic causes of death to a minimum.

Today our primary concern for the ag-

ing animal is chronic disease, but while chronic diseases do have their impact on lifespan, we also need to consider that many of these diseases and life itself simply wear out the cells of the body, and eventually the body itself.

In addition, we need to remember that the number one killer of dogs in this country is euthanasia – most often due to behavioral problems that the dog's caretaker couldn't or wouldn't take care of. Every year millions of dogs are killed before they could reach old age because it was felt they did not fit into our society. This is an unfortunate fact of life in this country.

Finally, another fact of life is that we can never know exactly when our best buddies are going to die, nor when we will die. For some folks this is sheer misery; for others it is reassuring – and it is this very fact of life that makes some of us two-leggeds want to live every day the way our pets who don't know about mortality do: fully, with joy and unreserved passion.

## The natural process of aging

Common diseases of the geriatric dog (i.e., diseases that seem more prevalent in the aged dog than in younger critters) include diabetes mellitus, prostatic disease, obesity, cardiovascular disease, cataracts, dental disease, keratoconjunctivitis sicca, hypothyroidism, urolithiasis, hyperadrenocorticism, anemia, urinary incontinence, hepatopathies (liver conditions), chronic renal disease, and a long list of chronic degenerative diseases.

While this list may seem daunting, a closer look reveals that almost all the “diseases” are caused by diminished function of one or more organ systems – the inevitable and natural consequence of aging. Further, almost all these diseases can be slowed in their progress, and in all cases there are certainly ways to ease your dog through the disease and help provide a decent quality of life.

Some “geriatric” symptoms include:

- Weakness, lethargy
- Coughing, difficulty breathing, or exercise intolerance; seems winded after walking or playing
- Increased thirst and/or increased urination; has frequent accidents or urinates in his bed while sleeping
- Stiff, has difficulty getting up or down, or is sore after running and playing
- Seizures
- Poor haircoat – dry and brittle skin and/or haircoat, flaky skin
- Eating habits have changed – perhaps due to a poor sense of smell and/or taste
- Sudden weight loss or gain
- Bad smelling breath and/or red and irritated gums
- Sometimes seems disoriented or is slow to respond
- Crotchety attitude in a normally pleasant dog; doesn’t want to be bothered, and lets you know it
- Just isn’t acting like him/herself

Part of the problem with trying to define old age is that each organ system has

## The Definition of Geriatric

The adage, “You are only as old as you feel,” applies as well to our dogs as it does to us. Every individual animal – human or otherwise – has his or her own tempo for aging. There appear to be, however, some limits on how long any individual within a species can live, and this maxim holds true for dogs.

As a general rule, the smaller breeds live longer; the larger breeds typically have a shorter lifespan. But within breeds and sizes of breeds there is tremendous individual variation. Interestingly, mutts tend to live a bit longer than purebred dogs.

There have been many attempts to define the geriatric dog and to compare a dog’s age to ours. Below are two models for comparison.

Dog Type (based on optimum weight)	“Senior”	“Geriatric”
<b>Small dogs</b> (less than 20 lbs.)	9 to 13 years	older than 13 years
<b>Medium dogs</b> (21 to 50 lbs.)	9 to 11½ years	older than 11½ years
<b>Large dogs</b> (51 to 90 lbs.)	7½ to 10½ years	older than 10½ years
<b>Giant breeds</b> (more than 90 lbs.)	6 to 9 years	older than 9 years

SOURCE: J.D. HOSKINS, DVM, PHD, DIP. ACVIM; DVM NEWSMAGAZINE, DEC 1998

Dog’s Age	Human Equivalent 0 - to 20-lb dog	Human Equivalent 21- to 50-lb dog	Human Equivalent 51- to 90-lb dog	Human Equivalent >90-lb dog	
<b>1 year</b>	7	7	8	9	
<b>2 years</b>	13	14	16	18	YOUNG
<b>3 years</b>	20	21	24	26	
<b>4 years</b>	26	27	31	34	ADULT
<b>5 years</b>	33	34	38	41	
<b>6 years</b>	40	42	45	49	
<b>7 years</b>	44	47	50	56	
<b>8 years</b>	48	51	55	64	SENIOR
<b>9 years</b>	52	56	61	71	
<b>10 years</b>	56	60	66	78	
<b>11 years</b>	60	65	72	86	
<b>12 years</b>	64	69	77	93	
<b>13 years</b>	68	74	82	101	
<b>14 years</b>	72	78	88	108	GERIATRIC
<b>15 years</b>	76	83	93	115	
<b>16 years</b>	80	87	99	123	
<b>17 years</b>	84	92	104	131	
<b>18 years</b>	88	96	109	139	
<b>19 years</b>	92	101	115	–	
<b>20 years</b>	96	105	120	–	

SOURCE: FRED METZGER, DVM, DABVP  
METZGER ANIMAL HOSPITAL, STATE COLLEGE, PA

For purposes of simplicity, I personally consider any dog that is seven years old as approaching the geriatric stage of life. I think this is a good age to begin to monitor all body systems so we can catch any early outstanding signs of aging. Using this information, we can then develop a holistic protocol that can help any specific organ system maintain its normal function for as long as possible.



its own timeline for aging, and each will exhibit its own way to show it is growing old. Following are some examples of how specific organ systems tend to age.

■ **Skin:** As the skin ages, it becomes less pliable or elastic. The human face demonstrates this “hardening” of the skin with the appearance of wrinkles. The surface of the dog’s skin also tends to dry out, and the hair begins to gray, usually beginning at the dog’s muzzle and eyes. These changes make the skin more susceptible to outside irritants, and minor skin irritations are more likely to create a population of skin cells (keratinocytes) that grow into tumor cells.

■ **Eyes:** Many older dogs develop a cloudiness of the eyes (senile cataract) that is the result of a disruption of the normal arrangement of the tissue fibers in the lens. This creates a loss of transparency and reduction of vision. This cloudiness varies in intensity, and the lens opacity may eventually proceed to the point where the dog is blind, although most dogs, even when almost totally blind, seem to deal with their diminished sight with little or no problem.

■ **Ears:** Presbycusis is the fancy name for

the decline in hearing associated with various types of auditory system dysfunction that accompany aging. It is common in geriatric dogs, and it is a progressive disorder.

■ **Nose:** As dogs age, they begin to lose their acute sense of smell. A dog’s scenting ability is his entryway into his surrounding world; dogs especially rely on their sense of smell to find (and enjoy) food. As a result of the naturally diminishing ability to smell, older dogs may grow increasingly less venturesome and more cautious, and they are likely to lose interest in eating, especially bland foods.

■ **Hormones:** As hormonal systems tend to wane in their strength of output, this ebb of ability affects other systems. One of the most noticeable of these systems is the skin, and older dogs may develop any number of hormonally related skin conditions.

The thyroid, pancreas (especially as related to insulin production for glucose metabolism), and adrenal glands are of particular concern with aging, and they should be routinely monitored in the geriatric dog.

The dramatic decrease in estrogen that is seen in menopausal women oftentimes creates bone thinning as a result of reab-

sorption of bone calcium. Although we might expect a similar condition to develop in our spayed dogs (or in elderly intact bitches with decreased production of estrogen), it has not been reported as a problem.

■ **Joints:** Older joints are less well oiled, and this lack of lubrication can be painful when the animal moves. In addition, wear and tear of the joints’ surfaces begins to take its toll, and inflammatory changes and/or bony growths may occur.

■ **Brain:** Nerve cells are not especially good at reproducing themselves, and as an animal ages, its amount of brain tissue shrinks. Along with this shrinkage of cellular mass comes a shrinking of cognitive abilities. The aging brain may also develop sclerotic plaques, and the neurons may, as they do with Alzheimer’s, tangle into a web of dead neurons.

Diminished brain function (cognitive dysfunction) may lead to apparent memory loss or disorientation, sleep disturbances (either waking at the wrong time or sleeping unusually deeply), and loss of interest in social activities with the family. (In one study, 32 percent of dogs 11 years old were affected by this syndrome and 100 percent

## Dealing with Dying and Death

Talking about death and dying is not politically correct in this country. Our culture is well-known for trying to avoid using either of the “D” words, but it is important to understand that we will all, you and I and all our pets, inevitably die.

Perhaps intellectually we all know this, but in our culture we have come to believe in the impossible, to believe that we as a people are, or can become, invincible, and that, if only we could develop the technology, we and our favorite pets would be able to live forever.

However, death is an important part of all cells and all cell lines. An opposite direction from death is uncontrolled cellular growth, and this is what occurs with malignant cancers – certainly not a desirable outcome. If our only goal is to prolong life, we run the risk of doing so at the cost of making the end of our best buddies’ lives rather unpleasant.

There is a warning that comes from all this: Since our culture is so obsessed with aging (i.e., obsessed with anti-aging) and death (i.e., with trying to remain immortal), be advised that anti-aging hucksters abound. And it’s not just the anti-aging hucksters we need to worry about. It seems that commercial pet-product manufacturers and veterinarians of all ilk have just recently discovered that animals are living longer than ever before, and that these old age ani-

mals can be a tremendous source of added income for the practitioner. Recent veterinary journals and popular magazines have literally teemed with ads for anti-aging products for pets, and veterinarians are being taught how to create new “Profit Centers” based on treating the geriatric patient.

What this means is that you can rest assured that any product that *seems* to have worked in any one animal (or any product that seems to work in the test tube or in rats, fruit flies, or mutant worms) will be touted as the magic elixir for life. It seems



**Avoid products or practitioners that promise to extend your dog’s life. Improving your dog’s quality of life is a better goal.**

we have not lost our belief in the fountain of youth, and it has become very profitable for those who want to help us seek its waters.

We and our pets are better served if we work with the assumption that prolonging life at all costs is not always the best solution; enhancing the *quality of life* as a dog ages is a reasonable and very obtainable objective.

of dogs 16 years of age or older were affected.)

■ **Urinary System:** Age-related dysfunction of the urinary system can cause or contribute to incontinence or inappropriate urination. The underlying cause of the dysfunction may be one of several sources. These include increased volume or frequency (as a result of diminished renal function, the dog may drink more, resulting in increased urinary frequency); discomfort during urination; or decreased control (due to faulty innervation to the bladder or sphincter muscles of the bladder).

Decreased functional capacity of the kidneys themselves can be monitored via periodic urinalysis and blood chemistries. Keep in mind that most of the older tests detected damage only after both kidneys had lost about 60 percent of their functional capacity; newer tests are much more sensitive. Check with your vet.

■ **Cardiovascular:** While decreased functionality of the cardiovascular system occurs with some frequency in dogs, it is not typically associated with the atherosclerotic plaques seen in the human animal. Most severe problems related to the aging heart can be detected via an annual (or semi-annual) physical that includes listening to the heart with a stethoscope.

■ **Lungs:** Lung tissues tend to become less elastic as an animal ages, resulting in a diminished functional capacity – and a dog that would rather not exercise to extremes. The lungs are also a common site for the



**While some older dogs enjoy and seem enlivened by the company of younger dogs or puppies, the relentless and energetic attention can induce an unhealthy amount of stress for other old dogs. Make sure your senior citizen is able to escape to his own quiet, comfortable place as frequently as he wishes to.**

occurrence of tumors that have spread from other areas of the body. Any time your dog is reluctant to exercise or has difficulty breathing or walking long distances, have your vet listen to the lung sounds, and a follow-up chest radiograph may be indicated.

■ **Liver:** The liver is the primary organ of detoxification, and even though a healthy liver has tremendous regenerative powers, a liver that has been exposed to an overload of toxins over the years will eventually wear out. A decline in liver function can be

subtle; an annual blood chemistry will help detect early problems.

■ **Behavior:** There are several behavior problems that are prevalent in the geriatric animal, and many of these can be attributed to the diminished ability of other organ systems. With all their senses dulled, many older dogs become “crotchety,” and they would often prefer to be left alone. The disorientation and memory loss associated with cognitive dysfunction may make them seem “spacey” at times, and their sleep irregu-

## Dr. Kidd's Physical for Geriatric Dogs

I've been recommending geriatric physicals for dozens of years, long before they became popular as a source of additional income for veterinarians. Way back in the early 1970s, I had the wild idea that I could correlate information gleaned from a good physical exam along with CBCs, blood chemistries, and urinalysis, and use that info to develop a program to help the animal create a better quality of life for its final years. This was long before I knew anything about “holistic” medicine, but it made sense to me then – and the positive results I saw were often dramatic.

If, for example, several blood chemistry results pointed to the liver as an organ system with poor functional capacity, we could easily add liver-sparing nutrients to the diet. Choline, inositol, and B vitamins were my mainstay back then; today I'll add some additional herbal liver helpers, perhaps liver-supportive acupuncture. I'll also look for potential liver toxins in the pet's

diet and/or environment – food preservatives, pesticides, and herbicides, as possible examples. In today's world of specialists, I usually recommend routine X-rays every few years or so, and if I detect any abnormality when listening to the heart, I might also consider an EKG.

Whenever I recommend *any* test, I want to be sure the dog's caretaker and I are on the same page, to wit:

■ Will our protocol of action change, depending on what we find with the test results? If our plan of action will remain the same no matter what the test results show us, why do them?

■ In a similar vein, if test results indicate that a change in diet, life style, or additional medications are indicated, will the dog's caretaker be willing and able to carry out the changes? If not, there's no need for the tests.

larities may affect the whole family. In addition, body thermoregulatory mechanisms seem to deteriorate in many dogs, and older animals will not be able to tolerate the same extremes of heat or cold they once could.

## Anti-aging basics

Fortunately, there are many things we can do to make older dogs more comfortable and healthy in their senior years.

■ **Avoid stress.** Extremes of heat and cold, hordes of visitors (especially rambunctious kids), changes in routine, or even a new pup may be too stressful for some aged dogs.

■ **Provide a top-quality diet** – preferably a home prepared diet, but certainly one that is highly palatable, contains a high quality and readily digestible protein, and meets the increased needs of the aging animal. You may need to tempt your dog's appetite with frequent diet changes and/or a top-dressing of herbal spices, which are also an excellent source of antioxidants.

■ **Supplements** may be helpful, especially any of the antioxidant supplements such as vitamins A, C, and E; herbal antioxidants; omega-3 fatty acids; etc. Specific supplements to treat for such problems as cognitive dysfunction, cataracts, arthritis, and inappropriate elimination are available; check with your holistic vet.

■ **Alternative medicines** may be helpful, especially for particular conditions.

For example, I've found nothing better for treating arthritic joints than a combination of acupuncture and chiropractic, perhaps with glucosamine, MSM, and Omega-3 fatty acids added to the diet. In my experience, kidney problems seem to respond well to acupuncture, and the herb ginkgo has been shown to help both memory loss and some of the causes of deafness.

Herbal remedies often are high in antioxidants, and can be selected to target organ systems that are shown to be at risk in the individual. Homeopathic medicines can often be helpful, and they have much less risk of adversely affecting organ systems with age-related diminished capacity.

■ **Avoid toxins** – environmental, dietary, or those related to drugs and vaccines. The older dog's diminished capacity in many organ systems does not allow for adequate detoxification or elimination of substances that he readily dealt with in his youth.

■ **Target organs at risk.** Use prevalent symptoms and a complete veterinary work-up, including blood chemistries, to diagnose the organ systems that are not functioning properly. Then . . .

■ **Treat the organ systems holistically.** Look at the big picture: the quality of life during the last period of the individual's lifetime. This "big picture" look may or may not require any intervention, and it certainly requires a long and hard look at any potential intervention that may adversely affect the individual.

■ **Moderate exercise** is a mandatory "medicine" for any and all critters, and for each and every organ system of the body.

■ **Exercise the mind.** Don't believe the old saw, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." In fact, the more we stimulate a dog's brain – with new teachings, new places to see and smell, new things to do – the better chance we have to help him maintain normal cognitive function.

■ **Keep your hands on your dog.** A daily massage is magical medicine for the aged animal.

■ **Stay positive.** Maintain a positive outlook on your dog's prospects and life in general; your dog will pick up your positive vibes. But . . .

■ **Remain skeptical.** No one yet has found the fountain of youth, nor have they come up with a magic anti-aging bullet. Suspect anyone who tries to tell you otherwise.

We are beginning to understand some of the ways the body goes through the process of aging, and come up with ways to enhance the quality of life during old age. While death will eventually catch up to us all, we can help ease the process of getting there, and help aging be a more pleasant reality for our best buddies. 🐾

*See page 24 for resources for the aging dog.*

*Dr. Randy Kidd earned his DVM degree from Ohio State University and his PhD in Pathology/Clinical Pathology from Kansas State University. A past president of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association, he's author of Dr. Kidd's Guide to Herbal Dog Care and Dr. Kidd's Guide to Herbal Cat Care (see page 24).*

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## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of two books: *The Power of Positive Dog Training* and the brand-new *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog*. Both books are available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com

*The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care* and *Natural Remedies for Dogs and Cats*, by WDJ contributor CJ Puotinen, are available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com. Puotinen is also author of several books about human health including *Natural Relief from Aches and Pains*, available from your favorite bookseller

*Dr. Kidd's Guide to Herbal Dog Care* and *Dr. Kidd's Guide to Herbal Cat Care* are published by Storey Books, (800) 441-5700 or storeybooks.com

### TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

Pat Miller, CPDT, Peaceable Paws Dog and Puppy Training, Hagerstown, MD. Train with modern, dog-friendly positive methods. Group and private training, Rally, behavior modification, workshops, intern and apprentice programs. Call her at (301) 582-9420 or see peaceablepaws.com

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) has references to member trainers in your area. Write to 150 Executive Center Drive, Box 35, Greenville, SC 29615, or call (800) 738-3647. The APDT database of member trainers can be seen at apdt.com

### HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association (AHVMA), 2214 Old Emmorton Road, Bel Air, MD 21015. (410) 569-0795. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a list of holistic veterinarians in your area, or search ahvma.org

### CARING FOR SENIOR DOGS

*Complete Care for Your Aging Dog*, by Amy Shojai. 2003, New American Library. 277 pages

*Senior Dogs for Dummies*, by Susan McCullough. 2004, Wiley Publishing. 268 pages

*Effective Pet Massage for Older Dogs*, by Jonathan Rudinger. 1998 video, Effective Pet Massage. 58 minutes

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### Targeted Goal

"Targeting" is more than just a cute trick; you can use it to teach your dog many vital skills (and lots of other cute tricks!)

### Brains of the Operation

*The Tour of the Dog* looks at the central nervous system.

### Annual Dry Dog Food Review

*What's in the bag* (and how you can tell whether it will be good for your dog).

### Preventing Canine Cancer

*The least-considered tool in the fight against canine cancer.*

### Training with a ZAP!

*Shock collars are marketed as effective, simple, and humane training tools. We agree with only one of those words: marketed.*

### Still to Come:

- Commercial frozen raw diets
- The best leashes
- Holistic heartworm prevention and treatment
- Gear of the Year