

VOLUME 9  
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# The Whole



# Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

August 2006

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# Newsbriefs

*Plenty to do at the start of a hot, busy summer.*

BY NANCY KERNS

Writing this column is always the last thing I do before sending an issue of WDJ to press. At this moment, I'm 24 hours away from taking my desk apart and loading it and my computer – the very last things in my former home and home-based office – into my car for the trip north to my new home-based office. With my attention (and family!) scattered all over the state, please forgive the news-dispatch style of this installment.

You may start to see products on pet store shelves boasting a new label that looks like this: Companies whose products we have tested and/or reviewed favorably have long lobbied for a way to publicize those good reviews – and to distinguish themselves from companies who tell consumers, falsely, that something is WDJ-approved. We've developed an official "seal of approval" that recipients of our positive reviews can use to promote their products. Only this seal is the real deal; if it doesn't look like this, check your back issues.



We love you, Chicago! For the third year in a row, the *Chicago Tribune* has named WDJ to its list of Top 50 Magazines. "In ranking the magazines every year, we consider whether they're interesting, whether they have great journalism, but most importantly, whether they are successful in fulfilling their mission and accomplish what they set out to do," said Tim Bannon, editor of *Chicago Tribune's* Tempo section. We're so pleased to be counted among publications that meet that description.

Check out the *New York Times* article "Modern Love: What Shamu Taught Me About a Happy Marriage," published on June 25 (and available online at nytimes.com). It's an excerpt from author Amy Sutherland's new book, *Kicked, Bitten and Scratched: Life and Lessons at the Premier School for Exotic Animal Trainers*. In it, Sutherland discusses training her husband with modern behavior-altering techniques such as ignoring unwanted behavior and rewarding desired behavior – something, ahem! – that WDJ has been talking about for more than nine years. Glad to see the rest of the world catching up!

There are some terrific articles in this issue. In our recent interview with Dr. Susan Wynn ("Building Credibility," June 2006), the holistic veterinarian mentioned that she was very excited about recent studies touting the benefits of probiotics for dogs. Beginning on page 3, CJ Puotinen offers a detailed guide to the uses and types of probiotics for dogs. Two articles on varying treatments for treating wounds and surgical incisions may come in handy this summer for many active dogs and their concerned owners. Pat Miller teaches us how men and women can work together best to train the family dog. And Dr. Randy Kidd offers compelling reasons to do what you already know you need to do: get out there and walk your dog more frequently and longer. Enjoy!



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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# Probing Probiotics

*These health-boosters are not expensive and easy to find and feed.*

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Who hasn't heard of "friendly" or "beneficial" bacteria? Even acidophilus, once a confusing tongue-twister, has become as familiar as yogurt, in which it's the active ingredient.

One reason beneficial bacteria have worked their way into the public's consciousness is the excellent press they have received for helping repair damage done by antibiotics. Broad-spectrum antibiotics target not one but all strains of bacteria, leaving us thoroughly disinfected.

But no antibiotic kills 100 percent of the body's bacteria. A few always survive, some harmful and some essential to good health. Often the harmful organisms thrive and reproduce, overwhelming the beneficial strains that normally keep them in check, resulting in a host of new health problems. According to the Royal Society of Medicine of Great Britain, fully 90 percent of chronic diseases are caused by an unhealthy intestinal system.

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- Give probiotics to any dog under chronic or acute stress, or who receives antibiotics.
- For dogs with allergies or digestive problems, use a variety of probiotics with several strains of beneficial bacteria.
- When buying food sources of probiotics, look for the freshest products possible. The live cultures in products such as yogurt and kefir lose potency as they sit on shelves.



**Any health food store or independent pet supply store will carry several, if not dozens, of health-promoting probiotics. Although single-strain products have been the most-studied, many experts recommend products with multiple strains of beneficial bacteria.**

This helps explain why antibiotic drugs have long-term as well as short-term side effects. Their long-term side effects include impaired digestion, gastrointestinal discomfort, diarrhea, chronic or systemic yeast or fungal infections, lowered immunity, and the creation of drug-resistant or "super germ" bacteria that worry public health officials around the world.

## Homeostasis, the body's balancing act

Homeostasis is a Greek word meaning stable and balanced. When the body's systems are in homeostasis, they maintain a stable body temperature, a constant blood pH, balanced blood sugar, normal blood pressure, and a healthy population of microorganisms. For the last to occur, the body needs more beneficial than harmful bacteria. In fact, most experts estimate that for optimum health, the body should contain 80 percent beneficial bacteria and no more than 20 percent harmful bacteria.

Even those who haven't taken antibiot-

ics may lack beneficial bacteria because of poor diet, stress, illness, prescription drugs, travel, or environmental factors. Anything that interferes with the growth and reproduction of beneficial bacteria interferes with good health.

Just as our dogs share many human health problems, they are adversely affected by the antibiotics they routinely receive from veterinarians as well as by environmental toxins and diet. Many pet foods contain ingredients that nourish harmful bacteria, such as sugars and starches, along with ingredients that damage good bacteria, such as chemical preservatives.

In both species, healthy intestinal bacteria typically consist of dozens or hundreds of different species. These bacteria produce enzymes; improve digestion; lower the risk of colitis, irritable bowel syndrome, and similar disorders; prevent diarrhea; synthesize vitamins; detoxify the body; and protect against toxins. In dogs, conditions that coincide with bacterial imbalances include digestive disorders, flatulence, constipa-

tion, diarrhea, urinary tract infections, allergies, diabetes, arthritis, vitamin B deficiencies, chronic ear infections, skin and coat problems, susceptibility to bacterial or viral infections, bad breath, poor immune response, and, in some cases, confusion or behavioral problems.

## Keeping bad bacteria in check

Healthy intestinal bacteria inhibit the growth of pathogens such as viruses, fungi, parasites, and harmful bacteria.

*Escherichia coli*, or *E. coli*, is usually a harmless inhabitant of human and animal intestines, but the strain *E. coli* O157:H7 produces a powerful toxin that can cause severe illness. It was first identified during a 1982 outbreak of bloody diarrhea that was traced to contaminated hamburger.

Investigative journalist Jo Robinson has documented many benefits of feeding cattle on grass instead of in commercial feedlots. Among other things, a natural grass diet provides ideal conditions for the growth of beneficial bacteria in the gut of the cattle. Recent research at Cornell University shows that grass-fed cattle have less than 1 percent of the *E. coli* bacteria found in feedlot cattle, while other studies show that grass-fed chickens carry significantly lower amounts of *E. coli* than chickens raised indoors on factory farms.

Robinson explains that because a grain diet increases the acidity of bovine digestive tracts, the *E. coli* that grows in feedlot cattle is less affected by hydrochloric acid in the human stomach, which would otherwise destroy it. Beneficial bacteria in the digestive tracts of dogs and people help prevent acid-resistant *E. coli* from proliferating when they eat beef from feedlot cattle.

The *Salmonella* family includes more than 2,300 types of one-celled organisms, two of which, *Salmonella enteritidis* and *Salmonella typhimurium*, are the most common. *Salmonella* can contaminate meat, poultry, dairy products, eggs, seafood, and some fruits and vegetables, but it is especially associated with chickens and eggs from factory farms. Beneficial bacteria help keep *Salmonella* bacteria in check.

*Clostridium difficile* is a rod-shaped bacteria that produces two toxins that interact to cause a serious, potentially fatal disease that produces diarrhea, abdominal cramping, inflammation of the colon, and meningitis-like symptoms. In June 2006, the Centers for Disease Control alarmed therapy dog organizations by publishing a report from researchers at the University of Guelph

in Ontario, Canada, in which a therapy dog was shown to carry a human epidemic strain of *C. difficile*.

The study's lead author, Sandra L. Lefebvre, explained, "One particular strain of *C. difficile* has been implicated in outbreaks of *Clostridium difficile*-associated disease (CDAD) in hospitals in North America and Europe and appears to be spreading internationally at an alarming rate. We report this toxin-variant strain of *C. difficile* in a healthy four-year-old Toy Poodle that visits persons in hospitals and long-term care facilities in Ontario weekly. *C. difficile* was isolated from a fecal sample collected in the summer of 2004 as part of a cross-sectional study evaluating pathogen carriage by visitation dogs . . . CDAD cases were occurring at increased frequency in the facility around the time the dog's fecal specimen was collected."

While this is the first documented case of the human epidemic strain of *C. difficile* in a dog, the study does not prove that interspecies transmission of *C. difficile* occurs. "However," it states, "that possibility exists, as is becoming apparent with other pathogens, such as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. The recurrent exposure of this dog to human healthcare settings suggests that the animal acquired this strain during visits to the hospital or long-term care facility, either from the healthcare environment or contaminated hands of human contacts. We recommend that future studies evaluating the dissemination of this strain and investigations of the movement of *C. difficile* into the community consider the role of animals."

According to Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine professor Kelly Dowhower Karpa, PhD, in her book *Bacteria for Breakfast: Probiotics for Good Health*, numerous studies show that the beneficial bacteria *Saccharomyces boulardii* has cleared *C. difficile* in an encouraging number of cases.

In other studies, Dr. Karpa writes, one strain of *Lactobacillus* given at high doses (10 billion live bacteria daily) for as little as 7 to 10 days following conventional antibiotic therapy has cured patients experiencing relapsing *C. difficile* diarrhea.

Because beneficial bacteria are the body's first line of defense against pathogens, maintaining a large and vigorous population of these friendly microbes can help prevent all types of infection as well as their transmission from people to animals and vice versa.

## Replacements to the rescue

Thanks to the growing popularity of beneficial bacteria, it isn't difficult to increase their population for improved health and immunity.

Several strains are grown in laboratories for use in supplements, including the familiar *Lactobacillus acidophilus*. Other popular bacteria include *L. bulgaricus*, *L. rhamnosus*, *L. casei*, *L. plantarum*, *Streptococcus faecium*, *S. thermophilus*, and *Bifidobacterium bifidum*, formerly known as *L. bifidus*. *L. acidophilus*, which resides mostly in the small intestine, is the strain most associated with animals, while *B. bifidum*, which resides mostly in the large intestine and colon, is most associated with humans.

Many yogurt producers have recently changed their formulas in response to consumer demand for probiotics. Stonyfield Farm, a leading maker of yogurt and organic dairy products on the East Coast, now adds six live cultures to every product: *L. bulgaricus*, *S. thermophilus*, *L. acidophilus*, *bifidus*, *L. casei*, and *L. reuteri*. As the company's website explains, "Probiotics protect us from pathogens such as *Salmonella* and others by preventing their attachment to the intestinal lining. They interfere by blanketing all available surfaces, thus limiting the growth of microscopic invaders like *Giardia*, *Candida* yeast, and bacteria such as *E. coli*."

"Studies have shown that probiotic cultures benefit health in several ways – by suppressing pathogenic bacteria, helping control antibiotic-associated diarrhea, helping prevent traveler's diarrhea and leaky gut syndrome, improving lactose tolerance, producing some vitamins and enzymes, decreasing toxins and mutagenic reactions, improving carbohydrate and protein usage, strengthening innate immunity, creating a barrier effect in the intestinal tract, and reducing infant food allergies and eczema."

Beneficial bacteria have an ancient history, for people have been using them to culture and preserve foods for millennia. They are ingredients in traditionally fermented foods like sourdough bread, yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, tempeh, miso, and amazake.

## Probiotics for your dog

The word probiotic literally means "for life," as opposed to antibiotic, which means "against life." Probiotics are strains of beneficial bacteria sold as supplements for human or pet use. All health food stores and



many pet supply stores carry several brands of *L. acidophilus* and other strains that can help improve your dog's digestion and immune function.

Probiotic supplements are especially beneficial for newborn puppies, to increase the number of desirable organisms in their digestive tract. They are also well-suited to help dogs of all ages cope with stress – travel, intensive training, competition, and boarding. It's smart to use them to boost the immune system following surgery, parvovirus infections (which affect the small intestine), chronic diarrhea, and whelping. They should also be a standard prescription during and after the use of any antibiotic.

Buying a probiotic supplement and following label directions is the simplest way to introduce a new supply of live beneficial bacteria to your dog's digestive tract. Some brands require refrigeration; others have a long shelf life at room temperature. The supplement may be sold as a powder, liquid, or in tablets or capsules, some of which

are enteric-coated to survive stomach acid and break apart in the small intestine. Depending on the brand, label instructions may recommend feeding the product on an empty stomach between meals, with food, or immediately before or after eating.

Some products contain a single strain of beneficial bacteria, such as *L. acidophilus*, while others contain multiple strains. Experts disagree as to which approach is better. Single-strain products tend to be backed by more clinical research, but some advocates favor multiple strains because that's what the body contains.

The newest probiotics on the market are not bacteria; they are homeostatic soil organisms, or HSOs, which literally come from dirt. Soil contains so many different microorganisms that science has defined less than 1 percent of the estimated total. One gram of soil (about a teaspoon) can contain as many as 10,000 microbe species.

Until recently, dogs, cats, and people all over the world ingested a constant supply

of HSOs. That no longer happens in the U.S., where indoor lifestyles and cleanliness keep HSOs out of our mouths and food supply. Now medical researchers are linking asthma, allergies, and other common health problems to a lack of exposure to everyday dirt, germs, and HSOs, especially during early childhood. Some vets make the same connection to puppies and kittens.

The manufacturers of HSO supplements grow organisms discovered in pristine parts of the world where the number of beneficial microbes in soil is unusually high. These microbes are chosen for their ability to destroy molds, yeasts, fungi, viruses, and harmful bacteria, and are usually combined with several strains of beneficial bacteria.

## Time to heal

How long does it take to repair the body with probiotics if your dog has taken antibiotics? Estimates from researchers and veterinarians range from several weeks or months to a year or several years.

## Further Information About Probiotics

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*Bacteria for Breakfast: Probiotics for Good Health*, by Kelly Dowhower Karpha, PhD, RPh. Trafford Publishing, 2003.

*Cultivate Health from Within: Dr. Shahani's Guide to Probiotics* by Khem Shahani, PhD. Vital Health Publishing, 2005.

"Epidemic *Clostridium difficile* Strain in Hospital Visitation Dog," by SL Lefebvre, LG Arroyo, and JS Weese. *Emerging Infectious Diseases*, Centers for Disease Control, Vol 12, No 5, June 2006.

*Pasture Perfect: The Far-Reaching Benefits of Choosing Meat, Eggs, and Dairy Products from Grass-Fed Animals*, by Jo Robinson. Vashon Island Press, 2004. Additional information at eatwild.com

*Patient Heal Thyself*, by Jordan S. Rubin, NMD, PhD. Freedom Press, 2004.

"The Use of Probiotics in the Diet of Dogs," by Vincent Biourge, et al. *Journal of Nutrition*, Vol 128, No 12, December 1998, 2730S-2732S.

### RESOURCES

**Acidophilus + Digestive Supplement for Dogs.** Pet Authority, petauthority.com. Retail distribution includes Drs Foster & Smith, drsfostersmith.com

**Animal Essentials Plant Enzymes & Probiotics.** Animal Essentials, animalessentials.com or (888) 463-7748

**Bene-Bac Pet Gel.** Pet Ag. Retail distribution includes Valley Vet, valleyvet.com

**Fastrack Canine Gel** for puppies, **Fastrack Canine Microbial Supplement** for puppies or dogs. Retail distribution includes Moore Agri-Sales, mooreagrisales.com/dogs/dogs.html or (866) 263-2818

**iFlora4Pets.** Sedona Labs, (888) 816-8804 or sedonalabs.com

**Pet-Bac Oral Gel.** Kaeco. Retail distribution includes Valley Vet Supply, valleyvet.com

**Pet Inoculant.** Wysong, (800) 748-0188 or wysong.net

**Primal Defense.** Garden of Life, gardenoflife.com. HSO probiotic powder and capsules. Retail distribution includes Vitamin Shoppe, (800) 223-1216 or vitaminshoppe.com

**Probios Dispersible Powder for Dogs.** Retail distribution includes PBS Animal Health, pbsanimalhealth.com

**Saccharomyces boulardii** manufactured by Jarrow Formulas. Retail distribution, including VitaCost, (800) 793-2601 or vitacost.com

**Stonyfield Farm Yogurt,** in many stores; stonyfield.com

**Wilderness Family Naturals.** Yogurt makers, yogurt culture starter, kefir culture starter, vegetable culture starter. (866) 936-6457 or wildernessfamilynaturals.com

The fastest recoveries are experienced by dogs who have a good supply of surviving native bacteria – that is, beneficial bacteria that they obtained from their mothers' milk or from supplements within hours of birth – which are supported by a diet that feeds them instead of one that feeds their harmful competitors.

Another way to recover quickly is to be a good host for the beneficial bacteria introduced in supplements, so that the dog's system provides what these bacteria need in order to reproduce and colonize.

Not all beneficial bacteria colonize or continue to multiply after the patient stops receiving probiotic supplements, but some will if given the right growing conditions, and even beneficial bacteria that don't colonize can improve the digestive tract for as long as they are taken.

### Feeding beneficial bacteria

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria. Prebiotics are the foods that feed them. In addition to supporting beneficial bacteria that are added to the system by probiotic supplements, prebiotics nourish whatever native bacteria survive antibiotic treatment.

In his book *Cultivate Health from Within*, Khem Shahani, PhD, one of the world's leading research authorities on the role of *Lactobacilli* and gastrointestinal bacteria, explains the conditions for a food to be an effective prebiotic:

- It must pass through the upper gastrointestinal tract without being absorbed or hydrolyzed;
- It must be selectively fermented by a limited number of potentially beneficial bacteria in the colon;
- It must improve the composition of intestinal bacteria in favor of beneficial strains; and
- It should improve the host's health.

Dr. Shahani lists several foods and food ingredients that satisfy these criteria and which belong to a special class of carbohydrates called oligosaccharides. Garlic, bananas, chicory, and milk are examples. Several oligosaccharides, including FOS (fructooligosaccharides) and GOS (galactooligosaccharides) are sometimes used as ingredients in yogurt, cultured dairy products, and other foods as well as in probiotic supplements. FOS and GOS ingredients are



**Store-bought yogurt and kefir are easy to find, and if you check the dates to buy the freshest possible products, are also effective (and obviously enjoyable!).**

most popular in Europe and Japan, where they are used in more than 500 foods and nutritional supplements.

Another popular FOS prebiotic is the Jerusalem artichoke or sunchoke (it's a member of the sunflower family), which contains inulin, a favorite food of lactobacteria. Jerusalem artichoke flour, for use in cooking, is widely sold in Japan.

Sweet whey, the part of milk that is separated out in the cheese-making process, is high in lactose, making it an ideal food for intestinal bacteria.

"In theory, prebiotics consumed alone might be able to deliver benefits, provided that the beneficial bacteria are indeed present in the GI tract in sufficient numbers," says Dr. Shahani. "Today many probiotic supplements available in the marketplace (where probiotics and prebiotics are combined) are called synbiotics. This approach may provide an efficient mechanism for introducing and then enriching health-promoting probiotic bacterial."

Prebiotics such as sweet whey and FOS should be introduced gradually, however, because they ferment in the large intestine, producing gassiness, abdominal discomfort, belching, bloating, and flatulence until the body adjusts.

Foods such as sauerkraut and other lactofermented vegetables contain and feed beneficial microbes, making them both probiotics and prebiotics. Lacto-fermentation breaks down and releases gases before these foods are consumed, making them far less likely to cause adverse reactions. In fact, dogs receive far more nutrition from lactofermented vegetables than from the same untreated vegetables, even if they are pureed or juiced. This is because lactofermentation breaks down,

tenderizes, and predigests vegetables, increasing their vitamin content. Many natural food markets sell raw, unpasteurized sauerkraut, kimchi (Korea's traditional sauerkraut), and other lactofermented fare. But these foods are easy to make at home, with or without special equipment. (For details, see "It's All in How You Make It," March 2001.)

Another easy addition to your dog's diet is homemade yogurt. Goat milk is often recommended for dogs because it's easier to digest than cow's milk, and when its lactose is broken down through fermentation, it's far less likely to cause digestive problems than other dairy products.

Commercially produced yogurt, including "live culture" brands, lose potency as they sit in stores, even on refrigerated shelves. Making your own in an electric yogurt maker is the easiest way to insure that your dog receives the maximum number of live cultures possible. If you let yogurt ferment undisturbed for 24 hours, beneficial bacteria will break down 100 percent of its lactose for maximum digestibility.

Kefir, another fermented dairy product, is even easier to make because it doesn't require heat. Kefir's vigorous beneficial bacteria, which easily colonize in the digestive tract, include *Lactococcus spp.*, *Leuconostoc mesenteroides*, *Lactobacillus kefyri*, *Kluyveromyces marxianus*, and *Saccharomyces unisporus*.

Don't underestimate the health benefits of lactofermented foods. In 2005, researchers at Seoul National University in Korea announced that a culture fluid of *Leuconostoc kimchii*, a beneficial bacteria in kimchi, showed clear remedial effects for chickens suffering from bird flu, Newcastle disease, and bronchitis. Previous research showed that *Pediococcus pentosaceus*, another lactic ferment from kimchi, successfully prevented infection from harmful bacilli, including *Helicobacter*, which causes gastritis, and *Listeria* and *Shigella sonnei*, which cause food poisoning. Some research suggests that traditional European sauerkraut may help protect dogs and people from cancer.

Beneficial bacteria may be tiny microbes, but they're big supporters of your dog's immune system. Yours, too! 🐾

*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.*



# Mom and Pop Training

*How to get on the same dog-training page as your partner.*

BY PAT MILLER

Science and common observation tells us that male and female brains are different. That's no surprise to anyone who has noticed the gender-related differences that often occur in relationships between men, women, and their canine companions. Some of the differences can be beneficial, while others may be detrimental to domestic tranquility as it relates to life with the family dog.

The question is, which differences should be nurtured and encouraged? Which ones need to be addressed to prevent the dog from being confused and creating behavior problems? And how can that be accomplished?

In general, men tend to be more physical with their dogs, and more assertive, enjoying rough-and-tumble wrestling games and expecting the dog to understand and obey. Women tend to be softer, more into cuddling than wrestling, and take more interest in teaching the dog to understand the



**Women and men often train and relate to their dogs with very different styles. This can confuse the dog, and the resulting inconsistencies can even lead to behavior problems as he fails to learn what is expected of him. With awareness and cooperation, however, couples develop training techniques that promote the dog's learning.**

complex world of primate (human) communication. Of course, these are generalizations; there are certainly men who like to cuddle their dogs and women who are into canine wrestling matches!

## A time to be physical

The same physical behavior may be appropriate with one dog and inappropriate with another. My own husband enjoys more physical interaction with our dogs than I do. This works out fine with Tucker, our 70-pound Cattle Dog-mix, who gets a wild-eyed look and a huge grin on his face when Paul starts pushing and grabbing at him, or teases him by slapping at his paws. With excellent bite inhibition, Tucker enjoys the interactions with open mouth and fierce growls, but in 13 years of rough play has *never* put a tooth on human skin.

For Tucker, Paul's physical games are appropriate and acceptable. Just last week, however, I had to remind my beloved that paw-slapping is *not* appropriate play for Lucy, our two-year-old Cardigan Corgi. This is *especially* true when she's chewing

a bone, because she has mild resource-guarding behaviors that could easily be exacerbated by confrontational games, and has always tended toward being mouthy.

When a family member insists on physical interactions with a dog like Lucy, the solution is to agree on physical games that *don't* reinforce inappropriate behaviors. My favorite for this is Tug of War – with rules. (See "Tug: Play It by the Rules," October 2004.) The dog's teeth are directed to an acceptable tug object rather than human skin, and dog and human can be as rough as they like as long as it's mutually enjoyable to both parties, and both can play by the rules. A valuable side effect to Tug is that, properly played, it reinforces a healthy hierarchy between dog and human, as the human most often ends up in possession of the tug prize. A good leader controls the good stuff.

On the gentler side of Tug, the game can be used to elevate status for a dog like our Bonnie Wee Lass, a Scottie/something mix who, at the age of one year, is finally outgrowing her submissive urination behavior.

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **Show this article to your partner and agree to follow a plan that will use gender-based training differences to your dog's best advantage.**
- **Be aware of how your own gender-related behaviors affect your dog. Make a commitment to modify behaviors that are detrimental to good training and relationship.**
- **Be positive and supportive of your partner's efforts to modify his/her behavior.**

Because I play more softly than Paul, I'm a better Tug partner for Bonnie, deliberately avoiding rough play that might intimidate her, and letting her win the game far more often than I let her assertive packmate, Lucy, end up with the prize.

Other more physical interactions that may appeal to the "Men Being Men" dog-owning set include high-arousal canine activities like agility. Even men who aren't into canine competition (which seems to be more popular with women, perhaps because of the precision and discipline required) can romp with their dogs just for fun over agility and natural obstacles. Many men revel in their dogs' athletic ability as they leap over jumps and navigate teeters and fallen logs. Dock diving, where dogs leap long distances off docks and splash-land in water to retrieve objects, also tends to appeal to many men.

It's important to recognize and acknowledge the value of physical games. They can be great exercise when done appropriately. They're also great relationship builders. A rousing game of Tug can be a great stress and exercise reliever for a high-energy canine suffering from cabin fever due to inclement weather. Don't grudgingly tell your partner, "All right, if you *must* rough-house with the dog, go ahead, as long as you do it *the right way* . . ." Instead, let him know how much you appreciate him playing with and exercising the dog. Help him understand why game rules are important, and reinforce him for playing by the rules.

Humans respond well to positive reinforcement, too!

## Presence

The male voice is more intimidating to most dogs than softer, higher-pitched female tones. Without even thinking about it, men can "command" obedience from dogs, eliciting appeasement behaviors with their naturally deeper, louder voices, larger physical form, and generally more assertive presence.

Of course, men can overdo intimidation, causing dogs, especially those with soft personalities, to shut down, withdraw, even become fearful in response to the male presence. In fact, if the male partner overdoes the intimidation thing, constantly using a stern voice to get the dog to comply with "commands," it can interfere with a female partner's ability to succeed with a gentler training approach.

Women are often magically adept at helping a soft or shy dog build confidence and getting dogs to happily buy into a training program. Their softer body image, higher pitched voices, and greater willingness to be silly can result in dogs who offer uninhibited, joyful behaviors in training and relationship. On the other hand, some women can overdo "soft and silly," to the point the dog may have difficulty taking them seriously.

It's vital to recognize the value in both the male and female style of interacting with dogs. Each gender can benefit by deliber-

ately learning to use tools of the other and to dampen their own gender-related behaviors when appropriate to enhance their communications skills with their dogs. Dogs can benefit if partners have discussions about how their personal styles and relationships with their dogs differ, which parts benefit the training program, and which of their own human behaviors they might strive to modify to achieve the greatest success.

## Tips for mom 'n pop training:

If you and your partner don't yet have a dog, talk about gender-related differences and how closely you each fit your gender stereotype or not. Be sure to look for a dog who can accommodate your styles. If either partner is very loud and assertive, avoid very soft canine personalities. If either partner is very soft and non-assertive, avoid very strong, pushy dogs. It's not fair to get a dog who's poorly suited to one human style or the other and expect the partner to change overnight to be able to cope with the dog's training needs.

If you already have your dog, you can:

- Acknowledge that there are good and not-so-good things about both gender training styles and agree to work on them together. Sit down with your partner and discuss how your training and relationship styles and preferred activities differ.
- Make a list of interactions that each partner has with the dog, and agree on which



Men often excel at taking responsibility for exercising the dog, an important job. Let men know how much you appreciate them keeping the dog physically fit.



Women frequently enjoy comforting and giving the dog affection. They may need to self-evaluate whether they reinforce the dog for negative behaviors, such as attention-seeking jumping up.



are beneficial and which are detrimental. A sample list might look something like this:

**Man** – Can get the dog to sit or come reliably and consistently using a deep, calm voice (beneficial); encourages the dog to jump up (detrimental); plays Tug with the dog (beneficial) but doesn't always play by the rules (detrimental); usually feeds dog (beneficial) but is too casual about feeding, setting the bowl onto floor as dog dances around and jumps up (detrimental); always requires the dog to sit calmly to attach leash to go for walk (beneficial) but yells at the dog if he doesn't sit promptly (detrimental); and takes the dog for long hikes (beneficial).

**Woman** – Takes dog to training classes and practices daily (beneficial), but often "chatters" to the dog during training, to the point that the dog tunes her out (detrimental); is consistent about using treat rewards and other reinforcers for desirable behav-

iors (beneficial), but sometimes reinforces inappropriate behaviors because they're "cute" (detrimental); routinely grooms the dog, using positive reinforcement and desensitization to help dog enjoy the grooming experience (beneficial); has the dog sit at the door to go outside (beneficial), but sometimes lets the dog out anyway if she can't get him to sit (detrimental); chases the dog when he grabs something he's not supposed to have (detrimental).

■ Agree to acknowledge (reinforce) each other for all the good stuff on the lists. The partners might agree to put a quarter (or a dollar!) in a rewards jar every time they see the other perform one of the beneficial activities. When the tally in the jar reaches a pre-determined amount, the partners can use it to pay for a fun date together (a weekend at a dog-friendly B&B?), or to buy something they both want.

■ Agree to work on self-awareness corrections for detrimental behaviors. Whenever one partner realizes that s/he did one of the detrimental activities a quarter (dollar) goes in the corrections jar. Partners should avoid correcting each other; nothing goes in the jar for correcting your partner! Partners can use the money in the jar to buy agreed-upon toys, treats, and training equipment for the dog.

■ Agree in advance to do it all in good humor, always remembering that it's in the best interests of the dog, and of family harmony. Viva la difference! 🐾

*Pat Miller, CPDT, is WDJ's Training Editor. Miller lives in Hagerstown, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. For book purchasing or contact information, see "Resources," page 24.*

# Observable Differences

*Trainers note that men and women often bring different skills – and different strengths – to the task of dog training.*

BY PAT MILLER

**M**en are from Mars. Women are from Venus. Dogs are from Neptune. A well-known trainer recently made a public comment about men's inability to act silly with their dogs, to the detriment of their ability to use positive training methods effectively.

Are we really three alien species, destined to live forever in a world of miscommunication and misinterpretation? Is one gender truly better suited to bridge the communication gap between the human and canine species? We fervently hope the answer to the first question is "No!" – and strive to offer Whole Dog Journal readers new information and resources every month to help cross the species barrier. If the 38 trainers who responded to our casual survey on this topic are right, the answer to the second question may be, "Not better, just different!"

For starters, it appears that women are significantly overrepresented, at least in the positive dog-training community, which is where we posed our questions (see "Survey Methodology," page 12.) In a survey of its members a few years ago, the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, then about 3,000 strong, found that approximately 80 percent of its membership was female. Respondents to our recent questionnaire were 95 percent female (36 of 38). Here are some of their thoughts on the subject of men versus women in the pet-dog training world.

**Q:** Among your clients, what approximate percentage are male and what percentage are female?

**A:** Women appear to be overrepresented on the client side of the equation as well as the professional side, although not as overwhelmingly

– about 2 to 1 instead of close to 20 to 1. One trainer responded that her clientele was 50/50 male and female. The rest were heavy on the side of female clients, ranging from 60 to 98 percent women. The average of all the answers was 68.8 percent female, 31.2 percent male.

**Q:** Are there generalizations you would make about the differences between the training styles of men and women?

**A:** The general consensus was that women are less likely to use force, are more verbal, more patient, better at listening to instruction, more willing to follow instruction, better at paying attention to and reading dog body language, more supportive of the concept of force-free training – and less likely to be consistent and structured in their training. Trainers



**Instructors report that women tend to outnumber men in taking advantage of organized dog training classes.**

noted that men are more likely to want fast results, more apt to use physical strength, more likely to participate in discussions, more interested in “how” than “why” – and less willing to use animated body language and “happy voice.”

### Trainer comments

**Kathie Compton, mARFa Dog Training, Marfa, TX:** “Generally, men tend to be more reluctant to give enthusiastic praise and are less animated with their dogs. Men and women take to positive training about equally, but women seem to have an innate understanding of the concept – perhaps because they value the importance of communication in a relationship and tend to be primary caretakers.”

**Maggie Blutreish, CPDT, Bravo! Force-Free Training, Wingate, NC:** “Women seem more flexible and patient, able to assess many options before arriving at an action or conclusion. Some men seem less able to reward successive approximations – waiting for or even insisting on the entire behavior to manifest before marking and rewarding. Also, men can be quicker to physically react.”

**Susan Shaulis, Cedarwater Dog Training, Germantown, MD:** “I think it’s more that men and women have a different way of going about things. Men have an easier

time becoming the pack leader and disciplining, and women have an easier time praising and relaxing the dog.”

**Ritsa Larkin, CPDT, Happy Hounds Dog Training, Selden, NY:** “I need to encourage men more to find their ‘inner happy voice’ and not be so monotone when communicating with their dogs. I sometimes need to remind women not to use so many words – they can have conversations with their dogs all day (I know I do) – but in training, simple and concise is best.”

**Q:** Do you tend to teach men differently from women? If so, what are the differences?

**A:** Answers to this question varied, but the majority of the trainers who responded emphasized that they try to use teaching styles based on individual needs rather than gender assumptions. This speaks well for the pet-dog training profession, and is a pronounced change from old-fashioned training methods, where there was usually one way to do things and you were expected to do them that way, *regardless* of your own (or your dog’s) learning style and personality, or relationship with your dog.

**Felicia Monteforte, MVP Dog Training, Sayreville, NJ:** “I don’t look at gender when training, I look at personality and go from there. If there are differences, it would generally be to have men try to loosen up a bit, and teach the women how to click with long nails.”

**Susan Brumbelow, CPDT, Douglasville, GA:** “I’m not aware of differences in my training methods based on gender. But I do vary my methods based on an individual’s skill, coordination, and patience.”

**Ann Dupuis, Your Dream Dog, Randolph, MA:** “I try to tailor my teaching style to each individual. Some people want to see something demonstrated multiple times before they try it; others like to jump right in and try it out. Some really appreciate learning the why’s and how’s behind what I’m teaching; others just want to see it work. I haven’t noticed any quantifiable differences based on gender.”

**Marni Fowler, CPDT, Class Act for Dogs, Gainesville, FL:** “I may be a little more touchy-feely with my comments and praise

when it comes to women. I may tend to make more comments on how cute the dog is, whereas with a man I may comment more on the dog’s cleverness or physical fitness. But it really depends on the individuals as to what I think would work better for them.”

**Mary Elizabeth Van Everbroeck, Pet Guardian Education and Animal Advocacy Services, Inc., Warminster, PA:** “Yes, men are results-oriented and tend to become bored more quickly than women. I tailor my instruction to accommodate this difference between the sexes. Men are generally more apt to be ‘focused’ while women are more ‘contextual.’ Effective instruction requires an appreciation for both skills in order to help pet owners and their dogs.”

**Peg Dawson Harrington, The Happy Hound, Nashville, TN:** “I’m not really conscious of teaching differently; the physical stuff is the same. I do use different analogies when speaking to men; I’ll liken clicker training to ‘just another video game.’ And then there’s the ‘spit the treats into the dog’s mouth’ thing that doesn’t go over as well with my women clients, but the guys – for the most part – seem to like it.”

**Q:** Do you find that it’s easier for men or women to learn clicker skills, or about the same?

**A:** Trainers were all over the map on this one. Many found gender-linked clicker skills to be about the same. Others found distinct differences. This supports the concept that training skills are less about gender and more about individual personality and ability.

**Jo Jacques, WiggleBums! Dog-Friendly Training & Behavior Counseling, Salem, MA:** “About the same, but I find women tend to stick with it longer.”

**Mary Lou Carroll, Puppy-Luvs Dog Training, Elizabeth City, NC:** “Women generally seem to pick up on the timing more quickly. Perhaps their observational skills tend to be a little better, on average? Men seem to fumble more with all the ‘stuff’ – clicker, gear, treats, etc.”

**Jim Barry, Rhode Island Dog Guy, Middletown, RI:** “This seems not particularly related to gender but rather to manual dexterity, which is gender-neutral. I do find that probably a higher percentage of women



are open to carrying a clicker around, and young men in particular seem to find it a little ‘dorky.’”

**Sabine Hentrich, Four Positive Paws LLC, Greenbelt, MD:** “For whatever reason, in my experience men tend to be better at learning clicker skills. They can be faster, have better timing in general, and are good at observing their dogs. They also tend to be less inhibited about making mistakes and can laugh at their own blunders more easily than their female partners. The clients I have the most trouble with are elderly female clients, and I frequently encourage them to use a verbal marker instead.”

**Pam Parrish, Pamadona Weimaraners/Weimaraner Rescue of the South, Huntsville, AL:** “Men seem to be intimidated by the clicker. I suggest they use a voice marker instead, and they seem to like that better.”

**Q:** If you use a marker other than the clicker, do you find that it’s easier for men or women to learn the marker skills, or about the same?

**A:** With verbal marker skills, there seemed to be more of a consensus among trainers that gender doesn’t seem to matter.

**Frances Dauster, CPDT, P’s and Q’s Dog Training! LLC, Grand Bay, AL:** “About the same. It seems like the men work harder at good timing, whereas the women more often have it naturally.”

**Elaine Berg, Golden Rule Dog Training, Keller, TX:** “I have found women will *try* harder to remember the verbal marker than men – at least in front of me. I don’t know what happens when they are doing their homework.”

**Ann King, Canine King, Yonkers, NY:** “I truly believe this one is dependent on the individual. Although, I often wonder though if I changed my marker word from ‘Yes!’ to ‘Score!’ if it would be a breeze for men to mark the behavior...”

**Margaret A. Johnson, CPDT, CC-SF SPCA, The Humaner Trainer, Austin, TX:** “I think people are all over the map on this one. Doesn’t seem to matter if they are men, women, engineers, artists... It’s who has the best observational skills and timing. The best person I’ve had was a deaf student –



**In group classes, men may participate more in class discussions, but fail to give the dog enthusiastic praise. Women often pay better attention to the dog, but are less likely to be consistent and structured in their training.**

probably because she reads a lot of body language when interpreting the world. Next best are kids.”

**Q:** Is there anything else you’d like to say on the topic of Men v. Women in dog training?

**A:** **Silvia Golz, CPDT, Best Friends Companion Dog Training, Appleton, WI:** “I think that the women clients take a woman trainer more seriously than they would a male, and vice versa for the men. My male clients tend to be the “Yes, but . . .” clients more so than the women.”

**Bea Pludow, CPDT, Canine Behavior Specialist, El Cajon, CA:** “Women generally appear less dangerous to dogs. Men generally appear more dangerous, in my experience, because there are fewer of them involved in the training and socialization process, and they are bigger and stronger-sounding and -smelling than females. Although I have met some ‘really dangerous’ women trainers!”

**Ali Brown, CPDT, Great Companions, Slatington, PA:** “I only wish I saw more men in the rally ring, the agility ring, and in my classes.”

**Lisa Giesick, CPDT, Ohana Pet, Marina, CA:** “I think it would be wonderful to have more men as positive trainers. If more men

embraced positive training, I think it would get rid of the thinking that positive trainers are ‘foo foo’ trainers who are just afraid to show their dog who is boss!”

**Joan Hunter-Mayer, CTC, The Inquisitive Canine LLC, Ventura, CA:** “As long as there is a constant increase in positive reinforcement methods and a decrease in aversive techniques, I don’t care about the gender of the trainer, human client, or poochie client.”

## Supported by science

So there you have it: an industry-insider look at the differences between the sexes as we relate to our canine companions. Is there any scientific basis to our perceived differences? One list reader sent us this quote from *Mind Wide Open*, a book about the physiological differences between male and female brains:

“It is inevitable that natural selection would craft slightly different toolboxes for each sex. Viewed with modern imaging technologies, men’s and women’s brains are nearly as distinct from each other as their bodies are. They have reliably different amounts of neurons and gray matter; some areas linked with sexuality and aggression are larger in men than in women; the left and right hemispheres are more tightly integrated in women than in men. And of course, those brains – and the bodies they are attached to – are partially shaped by the two different kinds of hormones, the androgens and estrogens, which play a key role both in development and adult life experiences.”

Modern, positive trainers strive to base their training programs on scientific data rather than anecdotal evidence alone. The information provided by imaging technologies affirms and supports professional intuition regarding gender-related differences in training.

The trainers we surveyed were aware of and receptive to the idea of sex-based differences in training; dog training is clearly as much about people as it is about dogs. Trainers who are aware of gender tendencies can watch for them and use them to everyone’s advantage when working with human clients. Even better are trainers, such as those we surveyed, who can use gender tendencies to best advantage while also working with the learning styles and skills of each dog owner as an individual, not as a stereotype. The best of both worlds! 🐾

## Our Survey Respondents

We posted our questions on several trainer lists that leaned toward but were not exclusively positive in training philosophy.

Our respondents hailed from 19 different states, with a combined total of more than 300 years of professional dog training experience. The average respondent time in professional training was 8.6 years.

More than half (21) of the trainers who responded are Certified Pet Dog Trainers (CPDT), and 9 claimed some other type of credential as well. Thirty-six of the 38 (95 percent) were female, and 31 of the 38 (81.6 percent) regularly use clickers in their training.

Here they are – maybe there's one near you!

Elaine Allison, CPDT, NADOI; Canine's Best Behavior  
Los Angeles, CA; [www.caninesbest.com](http://www.caninesbest.com)

Sarah Althen; Both Ends of the Leash, Inc.  
Manchester, CT; [www.TrainingBothEndsOfTheLeash.com](http://www.TrainingBothEndsOfTheLeash.com)

Jim Barry, CPDT, CDBC; R.I. Dog Guy  
Middletown, RI; [www.ridoggy.com](http://www.ridoggy.com)

Elaine Berg; Golden Rule Dog Training  
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Susan Brumbelow, M.Ed., CPDT; K9U  
Douglasville, GA; [www.k9utraining.com](http://www.k9utraining.com)

Jane Brydon, MSED., Med; Dog Training Coach LLC  
Clifton Heights, PA; [www.mydogtrainingcoach.com](http://www.mydogtrainingcoach.com)

Mary Lou Carroll; Puppy-Luvs Dog Training  
Elizabeth City, NC. [www.puppyluvsdogs.com](http://www.puppyluvsdogs.com)

Kathie Compton, BA, CDBC, CPDT; mARFa Dog Training  
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Slingerlands, NY; [hemlock@nycap.rr.com](mailto:hemlock@nycap.rr.com)

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Grand Bay, AL; [www.sunpaws.com](http://www.sunpaws.com)

Ann Dupuis; Your Dream Dog  
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Sabine Hentrich; Four Positive Paws LLC  
Greenbelt, MD; [www.fourpositivepaws.com](http://www.fourpositivepaws.com)

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Ventura, CA; [www.theinquisitivecanine.com](http://www.theinquisitivecanine.com)

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Animal Advocacy Services, Inc.,  
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# Accelerated Wound Healing

Help your dog heal quickly and cleanly with these gentle, natural methods.

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Your dog just had surgery, stepped on broken glass, caught her tail in a door, has a puncture wound, got bit or scratched, tangled with barbed wire, or has an abrasion that came from who knows where. You want the wound to heal quickly without bleeding, pain, or infection. The following strategies help achieve that result.

## Healing from the outside in

Any wound can be cleaned and encouraged to mend with a strongly brewed herbal tea, which can be applied as a spray, rinse, wash, or compress.

Herbs known for their skin-healing properties include comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*) leaf and root, St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) blossoms, calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) blossoms, broad- or narrow-leaved plantain (*Plantago*

*spp.*) leaves, and lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*) leaves and blossoms. Most herbal supply companies and natural foods markets sell dried herbs that can be used for wound treatment, or you can plant your own. Comfrey and lavender are easy-to-grow perennials, calendula is a self-seeding annual, and plantain and St. John's wort grow wild in much of the U.S.

Comfrey is important to wound-healing because it contains allantoin, a cell growth stimulant. The plant used to be called "knit bone" because it helps heal broken bones when applied topically. Comfrey works so quickly that it should *not* be applied to sutures that will have to be removed or to puncture wounds in which bacteria might be trapped by rapidly healing skin, but it is highly effective on scrapes, burns, cuts, insect or spider bites, and other injuries.

Teas containing soothing anti-inflammatory herbs like German chamomile, *Matricaria recutita*, Roman chamomile, *Anthemis nobilis*, or lavender help reduce itching and discomfort when sprayed or applied topically.

To brew an herbal tea for wound cleansing or treatment, use 2 teaspoons dried herb or 2 tablespoons fresh herb per cup of boiling water. Cover and let the tea steep until cool. Strain, refrigerate, and apply as needed, up to several times per day.

## Vinegar rinse

Apple cider vinegar has long been used for first aid. Applied to cuts, wounds, dull fur, skin infections, calluses, and itchy areas, vinegar soothes skin, improves the coat, aids healing, and helps repel fleas and ticks.

For an old-fashioned skin tonic, try this simple blend of herbs in vinegar. Combine fresh or dried rosemary leaves, calendula



Surgical incisions, such as this abdominal incision, heal more quickly when treated from the inside (with herbs and supplements) and topically from the outside.

blossoms, rose petals, juniper berries, lavender stalks or flowers, lemon peel, orange peel, sage, cinnamon, cloves, and/or chamomile blossoms, in any combination. Arrange herbs loosely in a glass jar (fill only one-third full with dried herbs) and cover with raw (unpasteurized) organic cider vinegar. Seal tightly and leave the jar in a warm place, in or out of the sun, for a month or longer.

Strain, transfer to storage bottles, and keep in a cool, dark place. Shake well before using to improve coat condition, rinse wounds, heal sores, repel insects, and soothe irritated skin. For dogs with white or very light coats, substitute plain white vinegar.

## Willard water

Described in the June 2006 issue of WDJ, Willard water concentrate can be added to water, herbal tea, or hydrosols at the rate of 1 teaspoon per quart to help the liquid penetrate and speed the healing of burns, cuts, wounds, and other injuries.

## Unrefined sea salt

Mineral-rich unrefined sea salt can be added to any tea that will be used to treat wounds.

Lightly salted and strained chamomile tea makes an excellent eye wash. Add 1/8 teaspoon salt per cup of tea.

The Whole Dog Journal™



## WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- Clean cuts, abrasions, or wounds with skin-soothing herbal teas or an herb-vinegar rinse.
- Spray or apply skin-healing hydrosols, essential oil blends, salves, or other topical products that stimulate cell growth, fight infection, and speed repair.
- Give your dog enzymes and other supplements that help heal wounds from the inside.
- Keep natural first-aid products on hand to treat bites, cuts, scrapes, and other wounds as soon as they occur.

To make an effective spray for any skin disorder, cut, or wound, combine 4 cups of any herbal tea, such as those described above, with ¾ cup aloe vera juice or gel and ½ cup unrefined sea salt.

Even plain salt water is a wound-healing treatment. Years ago in my dog's obedience class, a female German Shepherd Dog suffered from a sore that wouldn't heal despite repeated trips to the veterinarian over several months. When her owner applied a solution of 2 tablespoons unrefined sea salt in ½ cup water, the sore improved the same day and healed within a week.

## Aromatherapy

Hydrosols are the "flower waters" produced along with essential oils during steam distillation. As explained in "Canines in a Mist" (April 2005), hydrosols contain trace amounts of essential oil as well as all of the distilled plant's water-soluble components. As a result, hydrosols are like a strong herbal tea combined with very dilute essential oils, making them safe for topical application even on young puppies and weak or elderly dogs.

Hydrosols are less expensive than essential oils, but they have a shorter shelf life. For best results, buy hydrosols from a reliable distributor (see Resources, page 16) and keep them refrigerated.

Leading hydrosols for wound care include the previously mentioned lavender plus helichrysum, also known as immortelle or everlasting (*Helichrysum italicum*); tea tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*); oregano (*Origanum vulgare*); and witch hazel (*Hamamelis virginiana*).

Essential oils have significant healing properties, but most essential oils – even those of the highest therapeutic quality – are so concentrated that they can overwhelm a dog's sensitive olfactory system, causing discomfort, or have a harsh effect on the wound itself. Because they're so powerful, essential oils can be greatly diluted without losing their effectiveness. Kristen Leigh Bell, author of *Holistic Aromatherapy for Animals*, recommends approximately 10 drops of essential oil per tablespoon of base oil for canine use. Diluting therapeutic-quality essential oils makes

them both gentler and more affordable.

Ten drops of essential oil, such as those from plants listed above, in a tablespoon of base oil is an effective blend for cuts, wounds, scrapes, irritations, burns, bruises, and post-operative incisions.

An even more effective combination would be to use calophyllum or tamanu oil (*Calophyllum inophyllum*), which is pressed from the fruit and seed of the tamanu tree of India and Polynesia, as the base oil. Calophyllum oil is one of the most prized oils for healing wounds, burns, rashes, insect bites, broken capillaries, skin cracks, eczema, psoriasis, and other skin conditions. This oil can be used full-strength or diluted with equal parts jojoba, olive oil, or other base oil.

Any herbal oil can be turned into a salve by adding beeswax or other thickeners, as described in "Savvy Salves" (August 2005).

## Coconut oil

Coconut oil's medium-chain fatty acids fight harmful bacteria, viruses, yeasts, fungi, and parasites, making it a perfect salve or dressing for cuts and wounds of every description. The only down side to coconut oil is that in temperatures below 75°F, it's solid. Keep some in a small jar or bottle for easy warming in hot water.

Coconut oil is an excellent carrier oil for essential oils, as described in "Crazy About Coconut Oil" (October 2005). Oh, yes, there's another down side – most dogs love the flavor and will quickly lick it off. If the wound is where your dog can't reach, keeping it moist with coconut oil is an excellent idea.

## EMT Gel

Many products are sometimes marketed as a first-aid kit in a tube, jar, or bottle, but EMT Gel truly is. Its key ingredient, collagen, is a fibrous protein found in connective tissue, muscles, ligaments, skin, bone, and cartilage.

EMT Gel's specially processed bovine collagen acts as a tissue adhesive, providing a matrix for new cell growth while sealing and protecting wounds and significantly reducing pain, bleeding, scarring, wound weeping, and the risk of infection.

One of EMT Gel's success stories comes from Shannon Rogers-Peisert of Liberty,

Missouri, whose black Labrador Retriever, Cody, severed an artery while jumping a fence. "There was blood everywhere," she says. "I had a sample of EMT Gel and thought to use it before taking Cody to the emergency clinic. The vet said it kept Cody from bleeding to death."

In New Mexico in 2002, Troy Sparks and a friend spent quail season's opening day hunting with Lucy, his Llewellyn Setter. When they returned to the truck, he noticed a blood clot on Lucy's neck, and as he began to clean it, blood poured down her neck. Sparks applied EMT Gel, gauze, and vet wrap to hold it in place, then drove straight to Lucy's veterinarian two hours away. When the vet removed the dressing, Sparks says, a six-inch stream of blood shot out. After getting stitches, Lucy recovered quickly.

Once applied, EMT Gel can be left undisturbed, which simplifies dressing changes. The collagen forms a plug that stops bleeding by encouraging clotting, and its occlusion of nerve endings reduces pain. Veterinarians in research universities and clinical practice recommend EMT Gel for abrasions, lacerations, skin ulcers, gunshot wounds, bites, first- and second-degree burns, electrical injuries, frostbite, post-surgical incisions, suture and IV sites, skin graft sites, and other wounds.

Sample sizes are no longer available. EMT Gel is sold in 1-ounce tubes and has a two-year shelf life.

The company also makes an EMT Gel Spray for the treatment of scrapes, scratches, and other minor skin injuries. In addition to wound-healing collagen, the nontoxic spray contains an extremely bitter taste that deters dogs from licking it off.

## Tree resin, pitch, and PAV ointment

Tree resin or pitch contains powerful antibacterial, antiviral, and antifungal ingredients. In fact, pitch from America's coniferous trees has been a folk remedy for centuries to treat skin infections, black widow and brown recluse spider bites, flea and tick bites, wasp and bee stings, gum infections, poison oak and ivy rashes, ringworm, staph infections, burns, scalds, surgical incisions, and other injuries.

The medicinal use of pitch had all but died out when it was resurrected in the 1970s by Forrest Smith, a retired logger from Northern California. Now his NATR (North American Tree Resin) company is the leading source of resin from the pitch



of Pacific coast Douglas fir, yellow pine, and other coniferous trees.

Smith became interested in the healing properties of pitch when a medical missionary took some to South America. The physician spent years in remote areas, where he routinely performed surgery without sterile equipment or antibiotics. Before closing every incision, he covered the area with pitch and applied more before bandaging the wound. He was a steady customer for over 15 years because none of his patients developed an infection and all experienced rapid healing.

Smith recounts a friend's experience years ago when he tried to help a dog that had been hit by a car. The dog was everyone's friend, so the man did his best to patch him up even though his entrails were covered with sand as he lay by the side of the road. "My friend had some pitch with him," says Smith, "and he poured it over the sandy intestines and shoved them back into the abdominal cavity. Then he covered the wound with more pitch and tied the dog together, no stitches, with rags wrapped around his body. That dog healed completely and lived in good health for several more years."

More recently, a customer called to say that when her small dog was bit on the foot by a copperhead snake, the foot swelled quickly. "Not knowing what to do," she said, "I found your resin bottle and covered the dog's foot with it and wrapped it up. Soon he quit complaining and the next day he was running around as if nothing was wrong."

Smith does not prescribe tree resin for snake bites or any other medical condition, but pitch has a long record of use for venomous bites and stings.

Pitch can be used full-strength or added to herbal salves and oils in any proportion. Mixing pitch with olive oil or another carrier helps it spread and reduces its stickiness. NATR's products include full-strength pitch, pitch diluted with olive oil, a Hot Spot Pet/Livestock formula, and the company's most popular product, PAV salve, which stands for Pitch and Vaseline petroleum jelly. All are safe for pet use. Avoid eyes and mucous membranes, and keep flammable pitch away from fire or flame.

## Healing from the inside out

Several vitamins and minerals are known to have healing properties, but zinc is especially important for wound healing. Supplementing the diet with a product like Standard Process Dermal Support, which

contains zinc and other skin-healing ingredients from whole-food sources, provides the body with easily assimilated nutrients that help repair damaged tissue.

Zinc and other trace minerals are found in unrefined sea salt. Salt's electrolytes and the enzymes they help produce are important to healthy immune function, rapid wound healing, adrenal health, and the regulation of bodily fluids. Add up to  $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon unrefined sea salt per 25 pounds of body weight per day to food.

## Seacure

High-quality protein is essential for wound healing and for the repair of damaged fur and skin. Seacure, the deep-sea fermented whitefish powder described in April 2003 ("Securing Seacure"), is predigested so that its amino acids and peptides, the building blocks of skin and hair, are immediately absorbed and utilized. The product is available in chewable dog-treat tabs and as a powder as well as in 500-mg capsules.

To help dogs recover from surgery, cuts, wounds, broken bones, or other trauma injuries, give at least twice the label's recommended maintenance dose of 1 capsule, 1 tablet, or  $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon powder per 10 pounds of body weight.

"There is no maximum dose," says Dee Eckert, the manufacturer's director of operations. "Several years ago my Basset Hound, Ferguson, was attacked by another dog and suffered a severe puncture wound to his snout. I immediately took him to the vet, who said he would have a scar and that the hair on his nose would never grow back. Since he is allergic to many medications, surgery was not an option.

"After the vet thoroughly cleaned the wound, I took him home and gave him 3 tablespoons of Seacure daily. Within 48 hours, the wound closed and scabbed over. By the following week, it had completely healed and the hair was growing back. Ferguson's case was not unusual, for many pet owners, breeders, and vets have sent reports about how quickly wounds heal when Seacure for Pets is added to the animal's diet."

## Colostrum

Colostrum, the "first milk" produced by mammals after giving birth, has become a popular supplement because of its immune-boosting properties. Some holistic vets, like Stephen Blake, DVM, of San Diego, feed colostrum to injured animals and also apply it to their cuts and wounds.

"I have found colostrum to be the best topical agent for healing any possible wound," he says. "It works twice as fast as any other products I have used in the past 33 years. Colostrum contains EgF (epithelial growth factors) and IgF (insulin-like growth factor). Without adequate growth factors, the body cannot repair damaged cells, no matter how well the patient is being fed."

Because research has shown that salivary amylase and hydrochloric acid in the stomach improve the activity of colostrum's growth factors, Dr. Blake recommends offering the powder by itself on an empty stomach half an hour or more before a meal. "I give it once per day, first thing in the morning," he says. "I haven't yet met a dog who doesn't like it that way, but if one exists, I would add it to food."

To help injured dogs heal quickly, Dr. Blake recommends giving twice to three times the recommended maintenance dose of one 500-mg capsule or  $\frac{1}{3}$  teaspoon powder per 25 pounds of body weight per day. For an injured 50-pound dog, this would be 4 to 6 capsules or between 1 and 2 teaspoons powder per day.

For topical application, Dr. Blake mixes colostrum powder with enough water, herbal tea, or hydrosol to create a thin paste, which can be applied directly to wounds. "Your dog will want to lick it off," he warns, "so keep him busy for five minutes while it gets absorbed, then let him do what he likes. Leave the wound open to breathe and apply colostrum twice a day until healing is well under way."

## Wobenzym

Articles from January 2001 ("Banking on Enzymes") and October 2005 ("Digest These Benefits") examine Wobenzym, a German enzyme product that is taken between meals on an empty stomach. Just as it's given to human accident victims and surgical patients in large doses to speed healing and prevent swelling, tenderness, and bruising, it can be given to dogs immediately after injury or surgery.

Corneal ulcers, bruises, cuts, trauma injuries, and surgical incisions respond quickly to Wobenzym, which prevents swelling, breaks down inflammation, and speeds healing. Most dogs respond well to 1 tablet per 10 pounds of body weight (up to a maximum of 5 tablets at a time) given every 1 or 2 hours until improvement is seen. That dose is continued for several days or as needed. Once recovery is under way,



a typical maintenance dose is up to 5 tablets twice or three times per day. See the October article for detailed instructions.

Wobenzym thins the blood and is not recommended for dogs with bleeding or platelet disorders, and caregivers should watch for small blood spots on the gums, pale gums, bloodshot eyes, or any abnormal bleeding. Reduce or discontinue the product if these unusual side effects occur.

## Arnica tincture

An important first-aid item, arnica tincture is best known for its dramatic effect on bruises and trauma injuries – and for its “external use only” labels. European physicians have long prescribed arnica tea or tincture as a cardiac agent, but it is such a powerful heart stimulant that most American herbalists believe arnica should never be taken internally or used on open wounds.

By taking such a cautious approach, say some experts, users deprive themselves of arnica’s most important potential. In small doses, arnica can stop internal bleeding and stimulate healing, especially after trauma injuries. For emergency use, give 1 drop of arnica tincture directly on the tongue or diluted in water per 15 pounds of body weight two to four times daily.

This simple therapy saved the life of

Rosie, a cat whose encounter with a taxi resulted in a broken sacrum and broken tail. Because they believed she would never urinate or defecate normally, Rosie’s vets recommended putting her to sleep. But after a week of taking Herb Pharm’s arnica extract twice per day, Rosie was eliminating normally and made a rapid recovery.

Ed Smith, the founder of Herb Pharm, told me that Rosie’s story is typical and that arnica treats injury-caused incontinence and other problems in people as well as pets. A highly regarded herbalist and researcher, Smith finds no justification for the warning labels on arnica products. In addition to its internal use, he recommends applying arnica tincture to bleeding wounds and other injuries to reduce swelling, pain, and bruising. The sooner it is used after injury, he says, the better it works.

## Barefoot outdoors

Mother Nature’s healing aids include unfiltered natural light, which all of us need for optimum health, and direct (barefoot) exposure to earth or grass. Insufficient natural

light can disrupt endocrine function and slow healing. Most dogs seek natural light, just as they seek contact with the bare earth or grass.

According to San Diego health researcher Dale Teplitz, “Clinical research suggests that standing on the earth can decrease inflammation and increase circulation to accelerate healing in dogs and people. When we are wounded, the immune system springs into action sending scavengers to the site to break down damaged tissues for re-



**Dogs benefit from frequently having their feet on clean dirt.**

moval from the body. Earth contact provides an unlimited supply of free electrons to neutralize excess free radicals that cause inflammation.” 🐾

*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.*

## Wound-Healing Resources

**Arnica Essence**, Weleda Products, Palisades, NY; (800) 241-1030; usaweleda.com. **Arnica Liquid Extract**, Herb Pharm, Williams, OR; (800) 348-4372; herb-pharm.com

Stephen Blake, DVM, San Diego, CA; thepetwhisperer.com

**Colostrum from New Zealand pasture-fed cattle**: Sedona Labs, Cottonwood, AZ; (888) 816-8804; sedonalabs.com.

**Colostrum from Colorado pasture-fed cattle**: Symbiotics, Inc., Sedona, AZ; (800) 784-4355; symbiotics.com

**EMT Gel**, Trophy Animal Health Care, Pensacola, FL; (800) 336-7087; emtgel.com

**Herbs for wound healing**: Jean’s Greens Herbal Tea Works, Castleton, NY; (518) 479-0471; jeansgreens.com

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

**Hydrosols and essential oils**: Acqua Vita, Toronto, Canada; (866) 405-8855; acqua-vita.com. Nature’s Gift, Madison, TN, (615) 612-4270; naturesgift.com

**PAV Salve** and other pitch products, NATR, Eureka, CA; (800) 422-4716; natrhealth.com

**Seacure**® Proper Nutrition, Reading, PA; (800) 555-8868; propernutrition.com. Mention WDJ and receive a 10 percent discount and free ground shipping.

**Eden Salt from Portugal**: Eden Foods, Clinton, MI; (888) 424-3336; edenfoods.com. **Celtic Salt from France**: Grain & Salt Society, Asheville, NC; (800) 867-7258; celticseasalt.com



**Canine supplements** sold through licensed health-care practitioners. Standard Process, Palmyra, WI; standardprocess.com

**Willard Water**, Nutrition Coalition, Fargo, ND; (800) 447-4793 or (218) 236-9783; willardswater.com. Free samples available; mention WDJ.

**Wobenzym**, Mr. Green Genes, Las Vegas, NV. (800) 588-8139; buywobenzym.com. Imported by Naturally Vitamins, Phoenix, AZ; (888) 766-4406; naturallyvitamins.com

# Post-Op Acupressure

*Use your hands to help your dog recover more quickly from surgery.*

BY AMY SNOW AND NANCY ZIDONIS

**D**uring the past decade, conventional veterinary surgery has made great strides in helping dogs lead more comfortable and fuller lives. But an ancient therapy – acupressure – nicely augments the more modern medical practice and increases its benefits.

Oak, a Golden Retriever puppy, is a good example of how one of the newer surgical procedures benefited and extended his life, and how acupressure improved the surgery's effectiveness.

As in many service dog breeding programs, Oak was bred for one particular trait: his temperament. In this case, Oak and his Golden Retriever littermates were bred to be calm, easygoing, highly social, and trainable. When breeding for a single trait, often the health of an animal is compromised in other ways. Unfortunately, every puppy in the litter had orthopedic problems and none were able to fulfill their intended mission of being a service dog.

By the time Oak was 10 months old, it was clear that he had severe hip dysplasia. Radiographs confirmed that there was literally no hip socket on his right side.

After consulting with three veterinary surgeons, it was decided that the best course of action was a triple pelvic osteotomy (TPO), where the hip is reformed to create a socket. This procedure was considered experimental 10 years ago when Oak was much in need of it. Today, it is a common surgery for hip dysplasia.

## Traditional Chinese Medicine

Immediately following the surgical procedure, Oak received an acupressure session specifically for post-operative issues to support him in his recovery. Acupressure, like acupuncture, is based on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). The intent of Oak's acupressure sessions was to bring more *chi* (pronounced "chee" and also seen as *Qi* or *Ki*), the life-promoting energy that the ancient Chinese saw as essential for all life; and increase "Blood" flow, to optimize the



**Oak, now 11 years old and still sound and active, made an amazingly fast and complete recovery from TPO surgery, thanks in part to acupressure.**

healing process while maintaining the body's energetic balance.

In TCM, "Blood" is not only the nutrient-rich, red fluid that flows through our veins; it is more broadly defined as fluids that nourish and moisten the body's organs, bones, and other tissues.

According to TCM, there are energetic pathways (called *meridians*) where *chi* and Blood flow through the canine body. Along these meridians there are specific points, or acupoints, where we can apply pressure and actually influence the flow of *chi*, Blood, and other body fluids. When there is an interruption or blockage of *chi* along the meridian, acupoints are used to restore the natural harmonious flow of *chi* and Blood so that the body can heal itself.

From a Chinese Medicine perspective, any surgical procedure represents an insult or injury to the body that disrupts the flow of *chi* and Blood. To support the animal's healing process, we select acupoints that can:

- Help with pain management;
- Clear the effects of anesthesia;
- Minimize the building of scar tissue;
- Reduce swelling and collection of body fluids; and,

- Enhance the circulation of *chi* and Blood to ensure the removal of toxins and provide nourishment to the injured area.

## Oak's recovery

Oak's acupressure sessions began within an hour after surgery, while he was still under the influence of the anesthesia. For the first four days, he received a session every 24 hours. For the following two weeks he had an acupressure session every third day.

A week after his extensive TPO surgery, Oak went back to the surgeon for a check-up. As he walked down the hall and into the examination room, the surgeon, while watching him walk asked, "Is Oak here for his *month* check? He is walking very well."

Within a week, Oak had gone from being in extreme pain and almost completely immobilized to being able to walk comfortably and evenly on both flat terrain and up and down stairs. Thanks to his basic good health and acupressure sessions, Oak's rapid recovery took the surgeon by surprise.

Because of the advancements in conventional medicine and the powerful healing capacity of TCM, Oak, now 10 years old, is still able to jump into the back of an SUV, run up and down hills, play with buddies, and swim in ponds.

## Acupressure session

Start by finding a comfortable location for both you and your dog. Take a few even breaths in and out while thinking about how you want to help your dog.

Rest one hand on the dog's shoulder. Using the heel of your other hand, place it at the top of his head and gently stroke down his neck, just off the midline. (For smaller dogs, use your index and second fingers to stroke down the dog's neck.) Staying just to the side of the dog's spine, continue to trace the path of the Bladder Meridian (see illustration, next page), going toward his tail and over his rump, then down the outside of his hind leg to the tip of his outside toe.

Repeat this intentional stroking proce-

sure three times on each side of the dog following the Bladder Meridian. In the illustration (right), note that the meridian is located on both sides of the spine, so you should work on both sides of the dog.

Begin working on the points by resting one hand on your dog wherever it feels comfortable; this is your anchor hand. You can move it whenever you need to for comfort. You can use either the thumb or two-finger technique to perform the point work, depending on which is more comfortable for you and your dog.

■ **Thumb technique:** Place the fleshy tip of your thumb directly on the acupressure point at a 90-degree angle and hold the point gently but with intent. Count to 30 before moving to the next acupoint.

■ **Two-finger technique:** Put your middle finger on top of your index finger and then place your index finger at approximately a 90-degree angle to the point. Gently, but with intentional firmness, apply pressure directly on the acupoint and count to 30; then move to the next acupoint. The two-finger technique tends to work best for smaller animals and in places where it is difficult to reach.

Once you have finished stimulating the acupressure points on one side of your dog, be sure to hold the points on the other side. Doing both sides will ensure a balanced and more complete treatment.

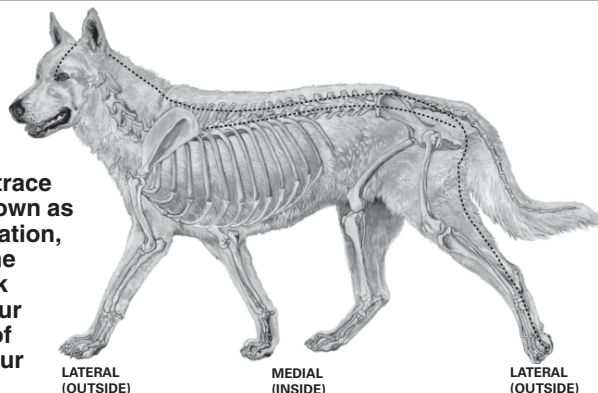
Observe your dog's reaction to the work on the points. "Energy releases" mean your session is working. Healthy energy releases include yawning, deep breathing, muscle twitches, release of air, deeper relaxation, licking, and softening of the eye. If your dog is overly reactive to a particular point or exhibits a pain reaction, skip it, and try that point again at a later session.

Complete your acupressure session by resting your hand comfortably on your dog's shoulder just the way you did when starting the treatment. Place the heel of your other hand, or index and middle fingers, just off the midline of the top of his head and stroke down the Bladder Meridian: down his neck, over his back to his hindquarters, keeping your hand to the side of his spine, and down the outside of his leg to his outer toe. Your opposite hand can lightly trail along the same path as the working hand.

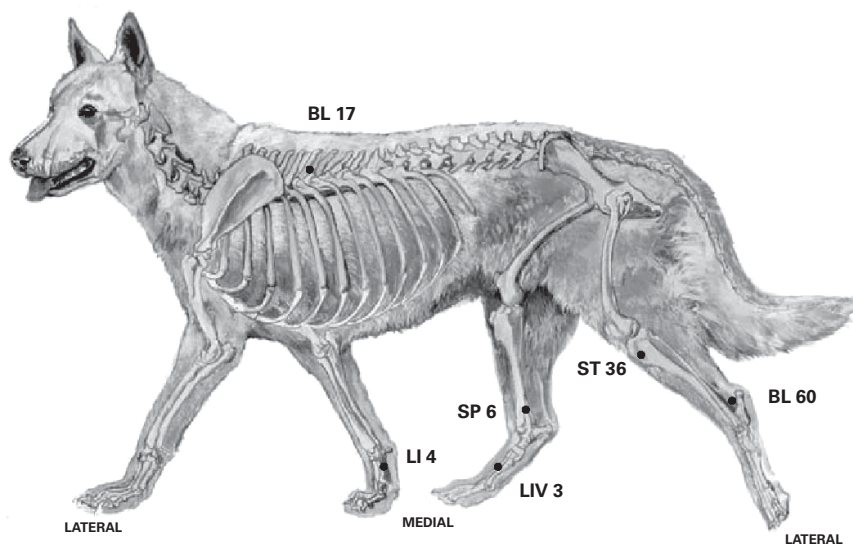
Repeat this procedure three times on each side of your dog. It can take 24 hours for the effects of an acupressure treatment to be fully experienced. 🐾

## Bladder Meridian

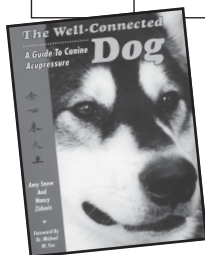
To perform the introduction to an acupressure treatment, trace the Bladder Meridian (shown as the dark line in this illustration, running from the top of the dog's head down his back legs) using the heel of your hand, starting at the top of neck and gliding down your dog's body.



## Points for Post-Surgical Healing



POINT	FUNCTION AND LOCATION
BL 17	Improves Blood and <i>chi</i> circulation. Lateral to the caudal border of the spinous process of the 7th thoracic vertebrae.
BL 60	"Aspirin Point" relieves pain in the body. Located at the thinnest part of the hock, lateral aspect.
LI 4	Relieves pain, promotes circulation of protective <i>chi</i> and Blood. Benefits the immune system. Located at webbing of dewclaw.
ST 36	Promotes <i>chi</i> and Blood flow and benefits the immune system. Located just lateral to the tibial crest.
SP 6	Promotes Blood and <i>chi</i> circulation. Located about three inches above the tip of the medial malleolus.
LIV 3	Helps remove toxins, regulates and tonifies Liver Blood. Found between the 1st and 2nd metatarsal bones.



Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis are the authors of *The Well-Connected Dog: A Guide to Canine Acupressure*, *Acu-Cat: A Guide to Feline Acupressure*, and *Equine Acupressure: A Working Manual*. They founded Tallgrass Animal Acupressure Institute, which offers a practitioner certificate program and training programs worldwide, plus books, meridian charts, and videos. Contact them or purchase these products at (888) 841-7211 or [animalacupressure.com](http://animalacupressure.com).



# Too Much Love?

*Show your affection by helping your fat dog lose weight and gain health.*

BY RANDY KIDD, DVM, PHD

**T**his has become a nation of fat people – and fat dogs. Once again our dogs are mirroring us, no matter how bad that picture looks. It has been estimated that (depending on the survey and the way “obese” and “overweight” are defined) from about 25 percent to more than half of dogs seen by veterinarians are overweight or obese, and many practitioners feel that even these numbers grossly underestimate the true extent of the problem.

For more perspective we can refer to numbers from a medical database maintained by Banfield, The Pet Hospital (a chain of 500-plus veterinary hospitals). Its data indicate that of the 3.5 million animals seen in the chain’s hospitals each year, almost 83 percent are categorized as exceeding their recommended weights. More worrisome, the obesity trend seems to be accelerating in recent years, much as it has in humans. The percentage of heavy dogs seen at Banfield increased from 49

percent to 83 percent from 1999 to 2004.

The problem of defining obesity in dogs stems in part from the wide variance that exists in “normal” weights for different breeds. Most fat experts define an “overweight” dog as being 10 to 15 percent above the ideal weight for the breed; an animal is obese when he weighs 15 to 25 percent or more than the breed’s ideal weight.

Another way to look at obesity is to look at it structurally rather than limit its definition to a set weight standard. Under this guideline, obesity can be defined as an increase in body weight beyond the limitation of its skeletal and physical requirements, resulting from an accumulation of excess body fat.

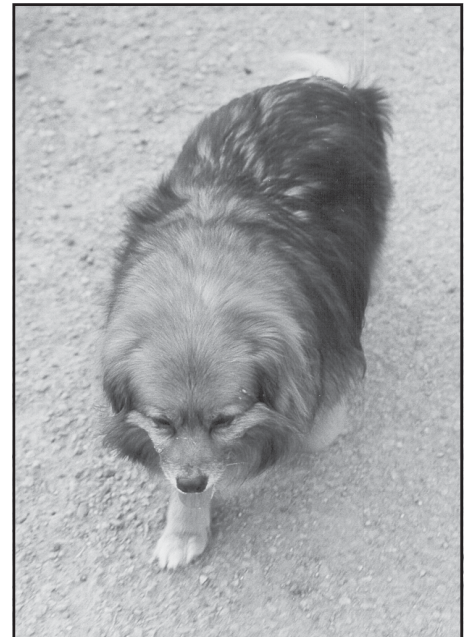
Whatever the definition and true statistics are for overweight and obese dogs, obesity is the most common nutritional disorder in dogs, and many practitioners feel it is today’s number one health danger for dogs. According to existing statistical evidence, the increased incidence of obesity (in both dogs and humans) has dramatically risen only over the past 10 years or so.

Obesity is a, well, growing problem without an end in sight. And for fat people and fat dogs, this is not a good sign. It is interesting to note that it is not just dogs and their people that are overweight; overweight and obese cats are also a concern, and the Banfield survey mentioned above found that many exotic pets – birds, ferrets, and rabbits – are overweight too, again with the percentages of overweight animals increasing over the past few years.

## Being fat is not healthy

Obesity in dogs may be associated with the following diseases: hypothyroidism, hyperadrenocorticism, diabetes mellitus, non-allergic skin conditions, arthritis, and lameness.

Increased weight puts added stress on bones and the ligaments and tendons of joints, making them more susceptible to traumatic injury. Fat dogs don’t ambulate



**Overweight dogs have a more difficult time getting around, so they move around less, compounding the problem.**

as well; they become couch potatoes, resulting in “stuck” joints that cause the dog to want to lie about even more – a cycle that ultimately leads to a painfully immobile animal.

The immune system is compromised when an animal is overweight, making him more susceptible to infections and autoimmune diseases. Being overweight adversely affects the intricate balance of many, if not all, the body’s hormonal systems, resulting in any number of hormonally related diseases. Being overweight also adversely affects the skin; overweight animals typically have dull, lusterless skin that is in turn more susceptible to disease processes.

No matter how you look at it, the obese animal has a poorer quality of life than his trimmer counterpart. He also actually has a *shorter* life. Purina Pet Institute’s 14-year study showed that dogs who ate 25 percent less food than their well-fed counterparts in the study lived longer – on average 13.5

The Whole  Dog Journal™

### WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **Keep your overweight dog moving! The less he exercises, the less he’ll be able to exercise.**
- **Measure your dog’s daily ration, and dole it out to him in several meals of smaller portions.**
- **Increase your overweight dog’s exercise slowly but surely. Walk with your dog a minimum of 150 minutes a week.**
- **Remember, overweight dogs don’t live as long as fit dogs, and suffer a reduced quality of life, too.**

years, compared to the average age of death of 12.2 years for their chubbier trial mates. In addition, the less-stuffed dogs had fewer signs of aging (grey muzzles, etc.) and a much lower incidence of hip dysplasia than did the overfed dogs.

## My dog, fat?!

Determining this may take more than a good long look at the dog. In the first place, folks who are overweight tend not to see the fat in front of their eyes. Many studies have shown that most overweight folks don't realize they are carrying excess baggage, and other studies indicate that folks who are overweight also tend to have overweight pets – and they don't recognize the added pounds in either themselves or their pets. Another problem is that dog breeds have so many distinct body types it is often difficult to see through the normal body type into the fat of the matter.

There is help, however, and it comes in two forms: a body condition score, developed by Purina, and the availability of an unbiased opinion. The body condition score (BCS) is a chart that provides a numerical ranking from 1/emaciated to 5/obese for dogs and cats. (1 = emaciated; 2 = thin; 3 = moderate; 4 = stout; 5 = obese.) The chart is easily accessible on the Internet, and it comes complete with examples of how the typical animal within each ranking would appear. Most veterinary clinics also have a copy of the chart for easy viewing.

The best way to use the chart is to first compare your dog to the chart and then use your hands to feel for body condition. A fit dog should have an indented waist and the waist line should tuck-up slightly behind the ribs. (Remember that some breed standards may vary somewhat from this ideal.)

Dogs tend to put on fat over their shoulders, ribs, and hips and around the tail head. You should be able to feel individual ribs and the space between each rib, and the shoulder blades, hips, and tail head should be readily palpable.

Since folks tend not to notice just how fat they or their animals are, it's probably a good idea to get an unbiased opinion – check with your vet, and ask for an honest fat appraisal. One caveat here: It may be best to have a thin and fit vet do the evaluating; out-of-shape vets might also tend to overlook fatness in their patients, and they will almost certainly minimize the importance of exercise for overall health.

There are also several newer ways to evaluate the fatness of your dog that may

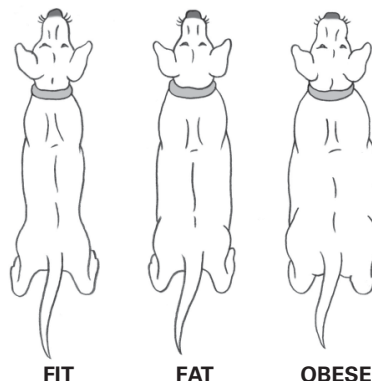
prove to be more valid than the more subjective BCS. Leptin is a peptide hormone synthesized and secreted primarily by fatty tissue. Increased plasma levels of leptin correlates with body fat, probably better than either body weight or the BCS. There is now a simple blood assay for leptin that may prove useful for quantitative obesity assessment in small animals.

Other methods of assessing body fat that are more hi-tech (and usually more expensive) include ultrasonography, bioelectric impedance (determines the amount of various body fluids as well as measuring leanness); DEXA scan (Dual Energy X-ray Absortimetry – determines bone mineral content and density, muscle mass, and percent of body fat), and the D2O dilution method (deuterium oxide dilution – determines total body water, a measurement of body fat).

## How obesity happens

In dogs (and their people) obesity has become a health problem of epidemic proportions. The solution to the problem of fat dogs can actually be reduced to a simple equation (more exercise; fewer calories). But there are many instigating factors associated with obesity. A truly holistic approach to keeping your dog's weight within its ideal range will consider these, along with an exercise program and a diet that provides the requisite number of calories for the amount of "work" the dog does.

Specialists in bariatric medicine – the study of overweight, its causes, prevention, and treatment – feel that obesity may have numerous causes that can loosely be categorized into: environmental, behavioral, available foods, and biological components. So far, bariatric medicine is primarily a human specialty (one could predict that the specialty will soon develop in veterinary medicine), but many of its methods can, by



extension, be applied to animals. In fact, some of the work that is used to help define and treat human obesity was originally done on laboratory animals, including dogs.

There are at least two potential obesity-causing components of the environmental factors to consider: the dog's **social environment** and his **physical environment**.

The number one cause of obesity in our dogs is humans.

"Over-love" is an important part of why our dogs are overeating; we want to make them happy! They beg, and we reinforce the behavior (making it more likely to happen again) by feeding them. The more they beg, the more we feed them, the more they beg – and the weight goes on. Giving our dogs treats – often as we wolf down a fatty, carb-loaded, nutritionally empty treat ourselves – has become an American way of life.

There's another social aspect to overeating: often, in multiple dog families, the presence of other dogs encourages some of them to overeat. Apparently the social aspect of being in a "pack" of dogs creates the competitive desire to wolf down the available food before the other dogs can get their fair share.

A dog's social environment is also an important consideration for how much he will weigh as an adult. Every practitioner will tell you that the fat dog often has a fat person at the other end of the leash.

The way we humans have adapted our **physical environment** is also involved in our pet's propensity to be fat. In a few short decades we have moved from a mostly rural population to a society where most of us live in cities or suburbs. Back when I started veterinary practice, the greatest majority of the dogs who visited my practice could be considered "free range" dogs – they were country dogs with several acres to roam over, or they had an in-town backyard to play in that would be considered huge by today's standards.

Today's dogs are often enormous dogs, kept in small apartments, and their backyard "playground" is the size of a postage stamp. Further, the art of walking and chatting with the neighbors has been lost – and along with it, the evening walkabout that once upon a time gave the family dog some time to stretch out, run around, and rub noses with the other neighborhood dogs.

Our own sedentary lifestyle and the way we have sardined ourselves into a living environment surrounded by concrete has made it difficult for us to help our dogs get the amount of daily exercise they need.



Recent surveys show that even when folks know full well that they are overweight, that their dogs are overweight, and that exercise is the answer to the problem, they still will not take the time to walk their dogs the 150 minutes per week that is considered the minimal time necessary for maintaining body condition.

There's more: One theory says that **pollutants in the air** may be partly responsible for obesity. Organochlorines are fat-soluble chemicals that are almost ubiquitous in today's environment – they are a continuing contaminant in our air, coming from a variety of sources including the outgassing of plastics (such as polychlorinated biphenyls, PCBs) and pesticides such as chlordane, aldrin, endrin, dioxin, dieldrin, and DDT/DDE. Their presence may be related to a biochemical process that results in weight gain in animals.

The organochlorine (OC) theory basically works like this: Obese animals have higher concentrations of OCs in their bodies. With weight loss, the blood concentration of OC increases as they are released from fatty tissue. An increased blood OC level has been associated with reduced fat oxidation, reduced resting metabolic rate, and reduced skeletal muscle oxidative capacity (reduction in the muscle's ability to work and use up calories) – all these effects may be due to a decreased effectiveness of the thyroid gland.

The end result is that as the animal loses weight, he releases OCs from fat reserves into the blood, which decreases his ability to metabolize carbohydrates effectively . . . which ultimately allows the weight that he has lost to return as weight gain.

All this spells yet another reason to avoid pesticides whenever possible, and to avoid plastics if possible – for example, use glass or stainless steel feeding and watering bowls instead of plastic ones.

## Lots of contributors

For eons the canine species roamed the forests and fields, hunting and scavenging for whatever morsel of food they could find. Being a carnivore is hard work, sometimes exciting in the extreme, and it takes a certain amount of skill to fill one's belly with any regularity. For our pets, all that is gone now; the only effort and skill required is the ability to find the food dish. And the food dish is mostly filled with processed carbohydrates, not the meaty proteins a dog's digestive system is adapted for.

And so, our obese dogs have reason to

blame **the foods they eat** for some of their problems.

Many commercial pet foods, over the years, have increased dietary fat levels and improved the palatability of their foods. Most commercial foods simply contain too little meat-derived protein, too many grain-based carbohydrates, and too much fat. Fat adds to a food's palatability and, in the case of kibble, is sprayed onto the extruded food so the dog will eat it.

Just as their human counterparts, dogs vary widely in their **level of physical activity** and in the amount of food they want to eat each day. Since these behaviors are innate, the best we can do is to notice them and then offer compensatory actions to counteract their tendency to create an overweight dog.

For instance, most Border Collies will probably not need to be encouraged to exercise more; they tend to be hyperactive enough. A pooch who wants to sleep all day, however, may need a little encouragement to get into his daily walk. You may be able to appease the dog who is a perpetual beggar by feeding him very small amounts of food several times a day, being sure that the total amount of food stays within the recommended amount of calories for the dog's ideal weight.

Again, like their human counterparts, dogs have a wide range of **resting metabolic rates**. Those with a high metabolic rate can seemingly eat anything and everything and never get fat; the animal saddled with a low metabolic rate can literally look at food and get fat. The key is to recognize these differences and to compensate for the dog with the low metabolic rate by limiting his daily food intake and being certain he is getting enough exercise.

**Spaying and neutering:** Both of these two operations have an effect on the animal's potential for future weight gain.

Information (from Ohio State University) indicates that when an animal is spayed or neutered, his or her energy needs decrease by about 25 percent. Other factors that add to a spayed or neutered animal's propensity for weight gain include: a) lack of roaming – males, especially, don't roam as much after neutering; b) no expenditure of energy for reproduction, gestation, and lactation; and c) perhaps the most important, an owner who has demonstrated his

devotion to the dog by having him or her neutered or spayed; owners who care may also be the type who simply must feed a begging dog treats throughout the day.

The bottom line here is that spayed or neutered animals will not get fat just because they lack their gonads. True, they will likely need fewer calories, after the surgery – but so long as they are fed foods that provide them with some caloric reduction, and so long as they continue to exercise adequately, they will not gain weight.

**The genetic hypothesis:** Some breeds of dogs, including Labradors, Golden Retrievers, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Cairn Terriers, Basset Hounds, Shetland Sheepdogs, Dachshunds, and Beagles tend to be more prone to obesity.

While the genetic hypothesis has merit, not all dogs with genetic susceptibility to obesity become overweight, and any individual of *any* breed of dog or mutt *will* become obese if he is fed too much for the energy he expends.

It should also be noted that in humans



**Encourage every dog to exercise gently to the best of her abilities. Keep the intensity level appropriate for her age and degree of overweight; fat dogs are prone to overheating and injury.**

there have been several gene-loci identified as associated with obesity, and each of these loci has in turn several additional, associated genes that have been identified as contributing to the overall propensity for the individual to be obese. In other words, genes may be important, but trying to find the one that is *the* contributor to obesity is like searching for one particular flake of Parmesan in the spaghetti sauce.

**Age:** As an animal ages, his metabolism slows, and often creaky joints and the simple lack of a burning desire to chase all things interesting can lead to a diminished expenditure of calories. The result can be a gradual increase in weight – unless we watch the calories and decrease them as the animal ages.

**Stress:** Chronic stress can have a huge impact on a dog's weight. Stress causes the

adrenals to secrete excess amounts of glucocorticoids that alter glucose metabolism, which (via a complex of enzymatic and hormonal reactions) ultimately leads to an accumulation of body fat. In addition, stress can lead to alterations in the homeostatic systems of the body to the extent that other diseases occur.



**A brisk walk with your dog, daily, for at least 20 and preferable 30 minutes, is a terrific weight-loss prescription for both of you.**

**Diseases:** It's been estimated that diseases account for less than five percent of the total number of cases of obesity in humans, and a like percentage probably occurs in dogs. In reality, it is often impossible to determine which comes first: the disease causing the obesity, or the obesity precipitating the disease.

Diseases that may be associated with obesity in dogs include: hypothyroidism, Cushing's (hyperadrenocorticism), diabetes, insulinoma (tumor of the insulin-secreting cells of the pancreas), and diseases of the pituitary.

## The "cure"

As you'd expect whenever you have a disease process that counts so many patients, there are a plethora of "cures" for obesity on the market. Seemingly, humans will try anything – from crazy diet plans, to stapling their stomachs, to filling themselves with non-nutrients to create a sense of satiety. Drugs abound: drugs to increase metabolism (amphetamines and others); drugs to stop the absorption of fats; drugs to fool the brain into thinking the belly is full or into thinking its caloric needs have been met, and on and on.

None of these high-tech solutions to obesity have worked long-term in humans or animals – unless the intervention is coupled with long-term social and behavioral modification *and most importantly* unless an adequate amount of weekly exer-

cise (approximately 150 minutes per week) is included in the program.

There are several **diet foods** available in today's marketplace, and these often combine a lowered amount of carbohydrate, low fat (5 to 8 percent dry matter basis), and a food source with increased levels of fiber (10 to 25 percent dry matter basis).

A reducing diet should begin with a goal that recognizes the animal's ideal weight compared to the standard for its breed or type. A program of gradual weight reduction – somewhere between 3 to 5 percent of body weight per week initially and about 1 percent of body weight per week as the dog nears ideal weight. The amount of weekly weight loss to shoot for will depend on the current weight of the animal, his age, and general health.

To achieve this weight reduction, the diet should provide enough food to meet about 50 to 70 percent of the requirements for the animal's ideal or normal weight. Instead of one or two daily meals, small meals may be fed frequently during the day, and snacks and table foods should be eliminated entirely. The burden of resisting a constantly begging dog can be lessened by feeding small amounts (1 tablespoon or so) several times a day and carefully monitoring future food allotments once the desired body weight is attained.

It may be best to have a veterinarian monitor the animal's progress on a monthly basis – again because folks are often too close to their animals to see that they are overweight, and it can be difficult for many of us to create an environment of tough love. One study, for example, showed that caretakers who were allowed to institute a diet program on their own were unsuccessful (probably too many treats given to the begging dogs on the side); whereas the same diet, monitored by a veterinarian, produced the expected weight loss during the time frame of the trial.

There is evidence that **acupuncture** may be effective for helping to reduce weight. Acupuncture is evidently extensively used to aid weight reduction in China; it operates by enhancing the digestive system, thus making nutrients more bioavailable and quenching the desire to overeat. Remember, too, that acupuncture and chiropractic will help keep your dog's joints "oiled," and thus make it easier for him to get out and about every day.

Some **herbs** have also shown some

promise for helping an animal reduce its weight – when they are combined with a long-term program of behavioral modification and exercise. Due to the recent interest in an easy-fix for fatness, the list of weight-reducing herbs has become endless, but some of the following may be helpful: aloe vera, astragalus, chickweed, dandelion, fenel, fenugreek, green tea, plantain or psyllium, red pepper, and Siberian ginseng. Check with an experienced herbalist for dosages and methods of use for these herbs.

One of the more promising of the weight-loss supplements for dogs appears to be DHEA (dehydroepiandrosterone), although its popularity for weight reduction in dogs has come as the result of one study only. Animals in this study were fed a high-fiber, low fat diet, with half of them receiving high doses of DHEA. All dogs on the study lost weight, but the dogs fed DHEA lost almost twice as much – 10 percent vs 5.5 percent.

Several years ago DHEA was a popular human supplement, used as the cure-all for aging, among other things, but it went out of favor when it was discovered it also had some adverse side effects. So, to my way of thinking, the jury's not yet out on DHEA for dogs; check with your holistic vet.

## Simple, if you can do it

Today's sophisticated science often overwhelms common sense and rational thinking, and thus we have come up with a variety of reasons to explain why our dogs (and ourselves) are getting progressively fatter. While some of these explanations can be used to help prevent obesity in predisposed animals, most don't offer us much more than an excuse for feeding our dogs unhealthy foods or for not exercising adequately.

The real answer to the problem is to feed fewer calories, especially empty calories, and to exercise more. Couple this with an environment that values fitness and a lifestyle that enhances playful interaction with other critters (four-legged and two-legged) and you have all the prescription you and your dog need for staying fit and trim. 🐾

*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).*



# Parasites Within Parasites

*Important new information regarding treatment of heartworm.*

BY MARY STRAUS

For some time, biologists have been aware of and studied an organism called *Wolbachia* that lives symbiotically inside heartworms. But recently, study of this microscopic creature has given researchers new ideas about how to combat its host (the heartworm) to benefit *its* host, the dog.

*Wolbachia* is a genus of rickettsial organisms, a microorganism positioned somewhere between viruses and true bacteria. Like viruses, they grow only in living cells, but like bacteria, they are vulnerable to antibiotics. Bacteria in the *Rickettsia* genus are carried as intracellular parasites inside a number of what we have always thought of as tiny parasites (such as ticks, fleas, and lice). Rocky Mountain spotted fever is a disease caused by a rickettsial organism carried inside ticks.

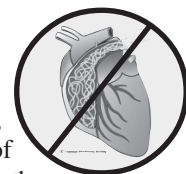
Recent studies indicate some of the adverse effects of both heartworm infection and heartworm treatment, including inflammation, embolism, and allergic reaction, may actually be due to the presence of

*Wolbachia* inside the heartworms, in addition to the heartworms themselves. Researchers have learned that treating a heartworm-infected dog with doxycycline for 30 days to kill the *Wolbachia* parasite weakens the heartworms and makes them unable to reproduce, and greatly reduces the chance of adverse reaction during heartworm treatment.

The takeaway message? Any dog that is currently infected with heartworms should be treated with doxycycline for 30 days. If the infected dog will be treated with Immiticide (fast-kill method), it is best to give the doxycycline prior to beginning Immiticide treatment. This should make the treatment much safer, by greatly reducing the potential for embolism and allergic reaction to the death of the worms. There may also be benefit in continuing to give doxycycline during treatment.

Doxycycline should also be given to dogs that are being treated with monthly Heartgard (slow-kill method) or any type of alternative heartworm treatment method,

as it will weaken the heartworms, prevent them from reproducing, and reduce the chance of adverse effects caused by the heartworm infection itself, and by the worms dying.



It appears unlikely that the *Wolbachia* parasite persists in the body after the heartworms have been cleared, though researchers do not know for certain at this time. To be safe, it may be best to give doxycycline for 30 days to any dogs that have completed heartworm treatment in the past, to clear any possible remaining *Wolbachia*.

Because *Wolbachia* is a rickettsial organism, similar to those that cause tick disease, it may be advisable to use the higher dose of doxycycline that is recommended for treatment of tick disease, which is 10 mg/kg, twice a day.

Veterinarians may contact Merial, the manufacturer of Immiticide, for more information on this topic. For updates, see [www.dogaware.com/heartworm.html](http://www.dogaware.com/heartworm.html). 🐾

## LETTERS

Thanks for including “Safe Pain Relief” in your May 2006 issue, about our study on arthritic dogs being treated with DGP (Dog-Gone Pain).

As American BioSciences’ DGP product manager, I have personally spoken to many of your subscribers since the article appeared and am amazed, but not surprised, at how knowledgeable they are.

I would like the opportunity to respond to some of the letters you published in the June 2006 issue. I certainly appreciate caution when choosing a product that has a proprietary blend of ingredients. However, it can be very difficult for natural health product manufacturers to protect their formulations from “copycat” products. We use the designation “proprietary blend” on our label to keep our formulation confidential.

We realize the importance for veterinarians to have complete knowledge of the ingredients, therefore all DGP ingredients are, and always have been, divulged to licensed vets or healthcare professionals who agree to maintain confidentiality.

Further, while there is substantial evidence (including results reported in the May issue) that DGP is safe and effective, American BioSciences has always prided itself on the science behind its products. With that said we are in the process of designing a much larger study to be conducted in a university setting. When this study is complete, you and your readers will be the first to know the results.

Stephanie Johnson,  
American BioSciences  
Blauvelt, NY

I have been a subscriber to WDJ for more years than I can remember and have anticipated every issue. Your information and advice support my conviction that conventional medicines are in general unsafe and to be used only over the short term when there is no alternative.

My Lab-mix companion, Rebecca, almost 12 years old, has had ligament and joint problems. We endured two TPLOs on her hind legs and the subsequent removal of the plate in one. Though she is a happy dog and doing well, I often wonder just how much discomfort she is really in due to her slowed activity patterns and resulting limp when she overextends her enthusiasm with people and other dogs. Consequently your article on DGP immediately caught my at-

*Continued on back cover*



## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

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

*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

*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.

### Letters continued from previous page

tention. The glucosamine, MSM, Omega 3, and tumeric, in addition to other supplements that she has taken for many years, have helped but not totally alleviated her discomfort.

I placed an order for DGP through The Harmony Company. On the same day the product arrived I saw the follow-up letters you printed in the June issue. I usually eschew canine products for the reasons outlined – questionable research, lack of precise ingredients, failure to adjust formulas in light of new information.

I immediately called American BioSciences and spoke to the product manager for DGP, Stephanie Johnson. I was impressed by her enthusiasm and the substance of her support. The thought of someone suggesting that DGP could work because it contains an undisclosed NSAID – when in fact so much care went into the quality and production of the product – without the

### 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

### 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. Call (800) 738-3647 or see apdt.com.

opportunity of counterargument in the same issue was quite disturbing. It would have been nice to hear her argument before pushing my panic button. We wondered how many people will not use DGP – when it could help – without calling her as I did.

We spent a lot of time on the phone, and went over all the other supplements that I give Rebecca. On Johnson's advice I am going to discontinue, for the time being, glucosamine, MSM, and vitamin C because of the anticoagulant compounding of these supplements with DGP. Johnson's concern speaks volumes.

One thing more. Evidence-based medicine is often a chimera tainted with ego, politics, and economic concerns. I'll take homegrown anytime. I hope you are not in your room too long.

Rita Gold  
Tucson, AZ 🐾

## WHAT'S AHEAD

### Calendula Can-Do!

*This pretty herb has many applications for your dog's health.*

### Dog Park Etiquette

*How our dogs and we should behave at the park – and why good playground manners are so important to cultivate.*

### Everything You've Wanted to Know About Dog Poo ...

*but were afraid to ask. Too soft? Too hard? Too much? We'll give you the straight scoop on how to fix your dog's problem poo.*

### Putting Out Hot Spots

*Dozens of cures for even the most stubborn, healing-resistant sores.*

### A Real Treat

*How to identify and select healthy and irresistible treats.*

### The First Few Weeks at Home

*How to get your new puppy off on the right foot in your home.*

### Product Reviews in the Works:

*Tick removers  
Electric toothbrushes  
Nail clippers  
Leashes  
Small-dog car seats*