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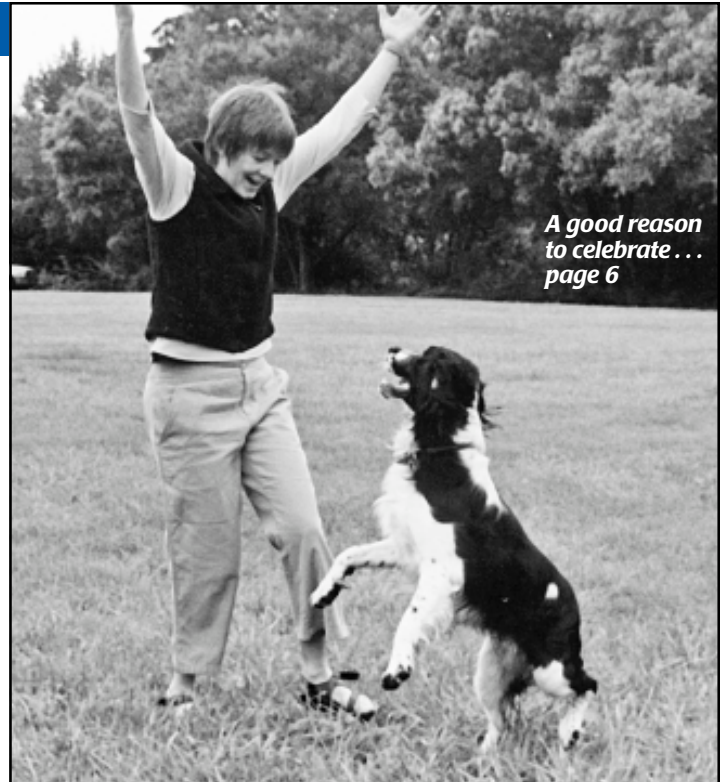
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Always More To Do

So much to say, so little time!

BY NANCY KERNS

The end of the year always seems to come too fast. I'm way behind schedule and have too much to do. I'm lucky in one respect, however. Lately, I've been buried in excellent articles contributed by some of WDJ's most passionate and informed expert/writers. The next year will offer a treasure trove of articles on hot topics, including heartworm prevention and treatment, helping re-homed dogs adjust, alternative treatments for cancer, puppy training, and more.

Unfortunately, I have a ton of "homework" to do! I'm still buried in research for our annual frozen, canned, and dry food reviews, and drowning in terrific products – many of them suggestions from our readers – to introduce in our annual installment of "Gear of the Year." I promise I'll catch up, and all of these articles will appear soon!

This issue is full of fascinating information. Longtime contributor CJ Puotinen, who lives in New York, near the front lines of the canine flu, starts us off with a timely list of practical methods for keeping your dog protected from viral infections. I don't know how she found the time to write this while researching and writing her in-depth series on canine cancer; the second installment, on conventional and cutting-edge medical treatments, is on page 10.

On page 6, Santa Cruz trainer Mardi Richmond explains how to enjoyably teach our dogs a reliable recall. My Chihuahua has a good recall – laboriously cultivated over the first six months I had him – but Mardi's article was a good review. Like many owners, I don't work as consistently as I should to preserve this skill.

Our Training Editor, Maryland resident Pat Miller, offers another illuminating lesson on

canine body language, and a review of her favorite positive training books of all time.

Finally, Shannon Wilkinson writes from Seattle about the controversy over docking tails, cropping ears, and removing dewclaws. I was familiar with the objections to cosmetic surgery on dogs' ears and tails, but the arguments against removing dewclaws were new (and persuasive) to me. (And I speak as someone who recently paid for a visit to the vet after Mokie halfway broke off one of his dewclaws right at its nerve-filled base.) Dewclaws can be a pain, literally, but I'm convinced that on most dogs, they are there for a reason.

THE RABIES CHALLENGE FUND

I'm hoping that WDJ readers will throw their generous support behind the following project:

World-renown vaccine research scientist, W. Jean Dodds, DVM, and pet vaccine disclosure advocate, Kris L. Christine of Maine, have established The Rabies Challenge Fund to raise money to fund a seven-year rabies vaccine challenge study in the United States.

In addition to the challenge study, the fund will finance a study of the adjuvants used in veterinary rabies vaccines and establish a rabies vaccine adverse reaction reporting system.

Researchers believe the rabies vaccine causes the most and worst adverse reactions in animals. The Rabies Challenge Fund has been founded to improve the safety of rabies vaccines and to determine, by challenge, if they confer immunity for five, six, or seven years.

Despite overwhelming *moral* support from pet owners, only a trickle of financial donations has been received.

Let's get this thing funded so the work can start. Could your training club sponsor a dog wash, with the proceeds going to the Fund? Could you ask every one of your dog-owning friends and relatives for a dollar apiece for a great cause? Can you think of better ways to raise money, and send them to me?

Donations can be sent to:
The Rabies Challenge Fund
c/o Hemopet, 11330 Markon Dr.
Garden Grove, CA 92841



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CORRECTION

In "How to Choose a Food," which was published in our July issue, we stated that Science Diet's Nature's Best dog food contains artificial colors. That statement was incorrect; the food is colored with a natural substance. We regret the error.

Fending Off the Flu

It's not necessary to put your dog in solitary because of viral threats.

BY CJ PUOTINEN

The headlines would frighten anyone. “Mysterious Dog Flu Found in Boarded Pets,” said the front page of New York’s Westchester/Rockland County *Journal News* on September 24, 2005. “Virulent Dog Virus Hits Area Kennels,” warned the *New York Times* a day later.

In less than two weeks, the *Times* ran five news stories about the illness. “Dogs Stay In as Rumors Run Free,” its October 7 feature, summed things up. Frightened New Yorkers were keeping their dogs home while buzz about the new disease spread faster than the virus that caused it. Radio stations, TV networks, newspapers, Web sites, and online chat rooms picked up the story.

And it’s a scary tale. In late August and early September, 100 dogs at Best Friends Pet Care Center in Chestnut Ridge, New York, and another 40 dogs at Graceland Kennels across the Hudson River in North Castle, New York, developed what veterinarians at first assumed was kennel cough. Instead, they had a new form of influenza. Several developed pneumonia and had to be hospitalized. One of them died.

By all accounts, the virus developed in

Florida. On August 12, shortly before the New York outbreak, Cynda Crawford, DVM, PhD, an immunologist at the University of Florida’s College of Veterinary Medicine in Gainesville, issued an advisory warning that “outbreaks of canine influenza virus, which causes an acute respiratory infection, have been identified in dogs in shelters, humane societies, boarding facilities, and veterinary clinics in Florida.”

By October 15, cases had been reported in Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Texas, Washington state, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. By the time you read this, the list will be longer.

Viral activity

That’s because canine flu has a very high infection rate. “Dogs have no natural immunity to the virus, so virtually every animal exposed will be infected. About 80 percent of dogs that are infected with the virus will develop symptoms,” says Dr. Crawford.

Although most common where dogs are in close proximity – in kennels, shelters, dog parks, grooming salons, training schools, and dog shows – canine flu can be contracted through the air or through exposure to contaminated surfaces. Anyone and anything that has been in contact with infected dogs can be a vector. Some Florida kennel workers carried the virus home with them and spread it to other dogs.

“Think of this as the canine equivalent of colds and flu that people get,” says Carol Falck, VMD, in Pompano Beach, Florida. “It spreads in just the same way, through direct contact, through the air, and through exposure to whatever the virus touches.”

The symptoms are similar,



WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **Make your dog a poor host to viruses with improved diet and supplements.**
- **Look for boarding kennels and training centers that screen clients and disinfect surfaces.**
- **Protect your dog with immune-boosting products before, during, and after exposure to other dogs.**
- **Watch for symptoms. Contact your vet if your dog develops a runny nose, fever, or cough.**
- **If your dog becomes infected, keep her home – and remember that you, too, can be a vector. Don’t visit puppies or elderly or infirm dogs.**



Many people are avoiding dog parks to prevent exposing their dogs to the canine flu. But the virus is already widespread. Unless your dog is very young, very old, or immune-compromised, a smarter tactic is to bolster his immunity, watch him carefully, and relax.

too, with infected dogs developing a runny nose, fever, and a persistent cough that can last for two to three weeks. But the severity of symptoms varies. “That’s because there are two forms of the illness,” explains Dr. Falck. “The mild form can come and go unnoticed, but the dog will still be a carrier. In fact, you can’t tell anything about a dog’s canine flu status by its appearance, because a dog can look and act perfectly normal and still have an active infection. The more severe form of canine flu has obvious, acute symptoms that can turn into pneumonia.”

According to Debbye Turner, DVM, a consulting veterinarian to CBS TV’s *Early Show*, the canine flu’s signature cough is different from kennel cough. “Kennel cough is a hacking cough, and the dog usually

feels fine otherwise,” she explains. “With canine flu, you’ll see a soft, moist cough. You’re also going to see a high fever in the dog; nasal discharge; rapid, shallow breathing; loss of energy; and loss of appetite.” These last symptoms manifest when the illness progresses to pneumonia. Canine flu does not tend to produce vomiting, diarrhea, or other intestinal problems.

The canine flu virus is not related to human flu or to the avian (bird) flu that has killed people in Asia. No humans have been infected with the canine flu.

New and fatal?

With veterinarians claiming a 100 percent infection rate, canine flu sounds like the human flu pandemic scientists have been warning us about, something that could kill just about any and every dog.

In truth, the canine flu’s mortality rate is very low, with most estimates at around 5 percent. Those at greatest risk of developing complications are older dogs, young puppies, and any dog with a weak immune system.

And yes, it’s new – but not *that* new. According to Edward Dubovi, PhD, director of Cornell University’s Animal Health Diagnostic Center’s virology laboratory, the illness was first identified two years ago.

In January 2004, 22 Greyhounds in a Florida racing kennel came down with an unusual respiratory disease and eight of them died. Dr. Crawford sent tissue samples from the infected dogs to Dr. Dubovi, who isolated the influenza virus. Researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta, Georgia, then typed and sequenced the virus. It was found to belong to the H3N8 virus strain, which causes influenza in horses.

In 2004, 14 Greyhound racetracks in six U.S. states reported outbreaks of respiratory disease, as did 20 tracks in 11 states during the first nine months of 2005. Although researchers did not investigate every outbreak, they found evidence of H3N8 wherever they looked.

Is your dog at risk?

The short answer to this question is yes. Even if canine flu hasn’t infected your neighborhood, it eventually will. When researchers tested dogs in shelters and at veterinary clinics in Florida and New York, they found that up to 97 percent already had antibodies to the H3N8 virus.

“This suggests,” says Dr. Falck, “that it’s far more widespread, at least in affected

areas, than most people realize. If you live near an outbreak area, the odds are very high that your dog has already been exposed or soon will be. Wherever you live, this flu will eventually arrive.”

The virus is airborne and spreads easily. Most dogs who develop symptoms do so within 24 to 72 hours of exposure, although the exact incubation period is unknown. An infected dog will be contagious for at least a few days and possibly weeks. No one knows how long the virus is viable on surfaces, but it probably survives for 24 hours and may live much longer.

The risk of infection is obviously highest where dogs are in close proximity, especially if they are under stress. This is why dogs in shelters, grooming salons, training schools, shows and competitions, and boarding kennels are so vulnerable.

At People Training for Dogs in Nyack, New York, eight miles from the Chestnut Ridge outbreak, trainer Nancy Strouss has been educating clients about canine flu. “I suggest that they not board their dogs in a stressful kennel and consider hiring a housesitter or finding someone who boards dogs in their home,” she says. “I also suggest that if they must go to the vet, that they leave their dog in the car until the vet is ready and then take the dog directly into the exam room instead of sitting in the waiting room with unknown dogs.”

She also screens dogs to help prevent exposure. “I tell clients that if their dogs have even a mild cough, runny nose, or other respiratory symptoms, they should not come to class but contact their veterinarian and me immediately. Dogs who were recently purchased or adopted from shelters must wait at least two weeks before starting class, to be sure they don’t have symptoms.”

An ounce of prevention

Florida veterinarian Mary Foster, DVM, has not yet had to treat canine flu, but she is busy with prevention.

“Everything comes down to the dog’s immune system,” she says. “There is no vaccine for the canine flu, but even if a vaccine were available today, I would advise my clients not to use it. Even conventional veterinary textbooks now recognize that vaccines can suppress certain immune functions, and researchers find that skin conditions, cancers, and other chronic problems are most common in dogs who are frequently vaccinated.

“The other key factor is diet. You can do a lot to improve your dog’s immune sys-

tem just by improving the quality of his food,” she says. Like many holistic veterinarians, Dr. Foster recommends feeding a raw, home-prepared diet that does not include grains.

When it comes to supplements, Dr. Foster avoids synthetic vitamins in favor of whole-food supplements such as those from Standard Process.

“The products I use most for preventing viral infections are Thymex, which is a thymus gland supplement that stimulates an immune response, and Cataplex A-C-P, which is an antioxidant-bioflavonoid blend that increases white blood cells and improves lung-related respiratory diseases.” Dr. Foster adjusts the dose according to the dog’s size.

She also looks for zinc deficiencies because zinc helps protect the body from viruses. “The Standard Process product Trace Minerals B12 contains a little of everything,” she says, “and it helps dogs maintain proper zinc levels without causing any long-term harm.

Dr. Foster says calcium is important, too. “When calcium levels are low, you become more susceptible to infections, whether bacterial or viral. Calcium lactate is more quickly absorbed than calcium carbonate or other calcium supplements. When a dog is stressed, such as when you’re going to a dog show or taking a trip, make sure she has plenty of available calcium. I use Standard Process calcium lactate tablets, anywhere from three to six per day depending on the size of the dog. If the dog does get sick, I’d give two every hour. Calcium works best when given on an empty stomach, an hour before feeding or two hours after.”

Dr. Foster’s other favorite supplement is Pet’s Friend Immu GO, which contains desiccated spleen, thymus, and bone marrow and which she considers a powerful immune system booster.

An herbal classic

Juliette de Bairacli Levy, the famous herbalist whose Natural Rearing philosophy has improved the health of dogs for more than 60 years, is best known for advocating a raw, home-prepared diet. She suggests protecting dogs against viruses with an herbal compound that contains gar-



lic, rue, sage, thyme, eucalyptus, and wormwood – all serious infection fighters – in a base of vegetable charcoal.

According to her *Complete Herbal Handbook for the Dog and Cat*, these stimulate immunity, maintain health, promote healing in infected animals, and prevent infection if used before and after exposure to other dogs.

Coconut oil

Dr. Foster recommends feeding coconut oil to dogs as a flu preventive, and coconut oil expert and book author Bruce Fife, ND, agrees. “Taking coconut oil every day, preferably two or three times per day, is an excellent way to prevent infection,” says Dr. Fife. “The medium-chain fatty acids in coconut oil kill most strains of flu virus and, taken daily, should be effective against the canine flu.”

“What interests me most about coconut oil,” says Dr. Foster, “is that it actually attacks viruses that are lipid-coated. I suspect that because the H3N8 virus is lipid-coated, it is especially susceptible to the medium-chain fatty acids in coconut oil.”

The recommended dose is 1 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight daily, or 1 tablespoon per 30 pounds. It works best in divided doses, and it’s a good idea to start with smaller amounts to let the dog’s body adjust without causing diarrhea. Coconut oil can be added to any meal; most dogs so enjoy the taste that they’ll eat it off the spoon. (For more information, see “Crazy About Coconut Oil,” WDJ October 2005.)

Gastrointestinal support

According to San Diego veterinarian Stephen R. Blake, the most important defense against any infection, whether fungal, viral, or bacterial, is the gastrointestinal system. “Since 70 percent of antibody-producing gamma globulin comes from Peyer patches in the intestinal tract,” he says, “and 90 percent of all toxins, bacteria, viruses, and fungi enter the body through the gut, it only makes sense that we should concentrate our effort on this organ system.”

Dr. Blake considers vaccines inappropriate for acute viral infections that have a high rate of infection and low mortality rate. “Our efforts should be on supporting the immune system through a healthy GI tract, not injecting more toxins into the system, which will stress it even further.”

Dr. Blake’s favorite supplement for immune support is bovine colostrum from

New Zealand from pasture-fed, organically raised cattle. Colostrum is the “first milk” a cow produces after giving birth, and it contains all the immune support a baby calf needs to avoid infection. Cows produce colostrum in far greater quantities than their calves can consume, so the excess is collected and powdered for supplement use.

“I recommend a dose of 500 mg colostrum per 25 pounds of body weight once or twice a day, depending on the dog’s risk factor,” says Dr. Blake.

Other supplements that support the gastrointestinal tract include probiotics, such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and other “friendly” or “beneficial” bacteria, which help make up the body’s first line of defense against viruses and other pathogens. (Interestingly, this year scientists at Seoul National University in Korea isolated nine strains of *Lactobacillus* bacteria in kimchi, that country’s famous spicy sauerkraut. One strain proved so successful at preventing and treating avian flu that it is being tested as a commercial feed supplement.)

Acidophilus supplements are especially important for dogs who have been treated with antibiotics, as antibiotics destroy these beneficial microbes. Several probiotic supplements have been developed for dogs and are sold in pet supply stores or veterinary clinics.

Aromatherapy to the rescue

The use of essential oils and hydrosols derived from the leaves, roots, bark, and blossoms of aromatic plants is becoming increasingly popular among holistic veterinarians (as described in “Smell This, You’ll Feel Better,” December 2004, and “Essential Information,” January 2005).

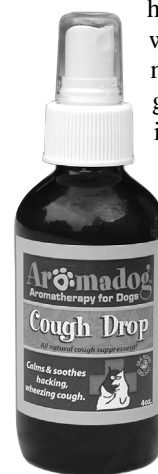
For example, Dr. Foster applies 1 drop or less of lavender essential oil to the paw pads of dogs who are under stress to help them relax and to help prevent infection. Like many essential oils, lavender has antiviral properties.

Dr. Blake combines essential oils to protect dogs at risk of infection. “I mix 10 drops of frankincense, 2 drops of lemon essential oil, and 1 ounce (2 tablespoons) of water,” he says. “Massage this blend into the paw pads and around the head and neck, keeping it away from the dog’s eyes. You can repeat this process throughout the day, depending on the risk and how the dog responds. Frankincense and lemon are both bactericidal and viricidal. Keep a vegetable oil handy in case any essential oil accidentally gets in the eyes. Essential oils are not

water-soluble, so you can’t rinse them off with water.”

Dr. Falck relies on blends from Aromadog, which makes a variety of therapeutic and grooming products. Her favorite for canine flu prevention and treatment is Cough Drop!, which her clinic has been testing for several weeks.

“We’ve used it for a variety of respiratory conditions, possibly including canine flu, and the results have been phenomenal,” she reports. “We spray it around dogs so they can breathe the mist. Cough Drop! is



handy because you can take it with you and use it whenever needed. You can take it to the groomer, or if your pet’s being boarded, you can ask the kennel to use it as a preventive. It helps prevent and treat kennel cough, too.”

To create Cough Drop!, Aromadog founder Faith Thanas blended ravensara, *Eucalyptus radiata*, spike lavender, and African sage essential oils, all of which have significant antiviral properties.

“It’s important to shake this blend vigorously to remix and reactivate it,” she says, “then thoroughly mist the air around your dog from a distance of two to three feet, including over the dog’s head. Repeat every two to three hours, and spray doorknobs, walls, and infected surfaces, too. One of the greatest advantages of this blend is its quick response time. Breathing passages open up, and this is so soothing for the chest. It brings immediate relief.”

Don’t panic

As the canine flu virus spreads across North America and the world, it will continue to generate confusion and distress. “Headlines and rumors always paint a worst-case scenario,” says Dr. Falck, “but they don’t have to apply to your dog. With a little help, your dog’s immune system can respond efficiently to any contagious disease, including canine flu.” 🐾

To buy supplements or contact experts in this article, see “Resources,” page 24.

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.

Come to Me, Run to Me

To teach your dog perfect recalls, use praise, practice, and more practice!

BY MARDI RICHMOND

When it comes to learning to come when called, not all dogs are created equal. Some dogs learn the “recall” very easily. They seem to know instinctively that coming when called is to their advantage. Others will come when called most of the time, perhaps more reluctantly.

For some dogs, however, coming when called is the most challenging behavior they will ever learn – especially when faced with choosing between complying with the request and distractions like squirrels, cats, balls, or other dogs.

But if your dog is having trouble learning to come, don’t despair. Teaching a dog to come when called (also known as the “recall”) is not as difficult as you may think. It takes time, enthusiasm, and lots of practice, but even the most reluctant dog can a reliable recall in most situations.

Getting started

In brief, for your dog to have a reliable recall, you will need to follow these steps:



Make sure you make it enjoyable for your dog to come to you when you call him. If, more often than not, coming to you equals unenjoyable consequences, he’ll quite sensibly decide that coming when called is not very high on his list of priorities.

- Teach your dog the initial behaviors (coming when called is really a series, or chain, of behaviors).

- Make your dog think coming when called is the best thing that happens in life.

- Practice, practice, practice.

- Increase distractions gradually, so that your dog learns that coming to you is always more rewarding than anything else.

- Continue reinforcing (with variable rewards) *for life*.

Begin your recall training by thinking about what you would like the behavior to look like. Have a clear picture in mind so that you know what you will be working toward.

My picture is this: When I say, “Jesse, come!” I want my dog to immediately disengage from the activity she is doing, race toward me at full speed, and plop herself



WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- Always follow a recall with one of your dog’s favorite things – food, Frisbee, or playing with another dog.

- When your dog is distracted, time your “come” cue for the moment the dog can most easily disengage from his other activity, for example, when he turns away from the other dog he just greeted.

- Avoid repeatedly calling your dog when you know he won’t or can’t come. Go get him instead.

- While you are teaching him to come, never end your dog’s play or fun by calling him to you.

- Always be enthusiastic and upbeat when your dog comes to you, no matter what he was doing before he came.

into the sit position in front of me. I want her to stay sitting *until* I snap on the leash, give her another behavior to do, or release her back to play.

Most trainers recommend that your dog’s recall is followed by a sit or a collar touch, to help keep him from immediately racing away after coming.

Once you have the chain of behaviors in mind, pick the word or hand signal you’d like to use. “Come” is a good choice, but you could use any word. If you have unsuccessfully tried to teach a recall before, use a different cue word this time around. “Here” and “front” are good alternatives.

While this article focuses on an everyday “Come,” most people expect several variations of the behavior from their dogs. For example, some people have a casual behavior like, “C’mon, let’s go!” and a formal obedience “Come,” too. If you train each of these with its own cue, you can help your dog know exactly what is expected.

Chain, chain, chain

Because coming when called is actually a chain of behaviors, it works best to teach each part of the chain separately first.

Please note: Always use the highest value rewards when teaching “Come.” Try chicken, liver, cheese, sardines, and other smelly, yummy, soft treats. From the start, make recall practice the highlight of your dog’s day.

■ **Charge up the cue.** This simple step will give you a head start on the rest of the training. Go into a low stimulation environment where you and the dog can be alone (like the bathroom or bedroom). Say the word you have chosen for your cue (in these examples, we’ll use the word, “Come!”) and then give your dog a treat. Repeat this 10 to 20 times. Do this exercise several times over two or three days. You are essentially supercharging the cue.

■ **Teach your dog the beginning behavior by capturing it, using a food lure, or both.** To “capture” the behavior, simply set your dog up for success. When your dog is about to come to you anyway (what trainers call “offering” the behavior), say “Come!” just before he gets to you, then use your reward marker (in most cases, a click! of a clicker or the word “Yes!,”) and give your dog a reward.

For example, you can say “Come!” when your dog is on his way to you to get his dinner, when you are about to go for a walk, or when you are getting ready to toss his favorite ball.

If you want to use a treat lure to get started, simply put the treat in front of your dog’s nose, as he sniffs it, take several steps backward. When he follows the treat toward you, click or say “Yes!” and give him the treat. Repeat this several times.

Once your dog will easily follow the treat, add the cue “Come!” It’s important to quickly “fade” or eliminate the treat lure, going to a click and treat as soon as possible. Practice in your living room, bedroom, backyard, and other low-stimulation environments.



You should *never* admonish your dog when he has come to you. Doing so is the quickest way to ensure he will *stop* coming. It *can* be very difficult to resist, especially when you’re angry with your dog for doing something naughty. But coming back to you was *good*, so make sure you greet him warmly and reward him.

■ **Practice the “quick turn” and “sit on (leashed) walks.** Surprise your dog on your walks by suddenly calling him and taking several steps back. When he turns to follow, click or say “Yes!” and give him a treat. Tell him what a great dog he is!

After a couple of practices, add in the sit and/or a collar touch. For example, say, “Jesse, come, sit!” With a few dozen repetitions most dogs will begin automatically sitting.

■ **Increase the distance and speed.** If you have practiced a recall only across the length of your living room, don’t expect your dog to be able to come from a distance of the length of a park or field. You’ll need to practice with gradually increasing distances first.

Start by just calling him a few feet, then a few more until you can call him through your house and across your backyard. Practice away from home in fenced areas, or in an open area using a long line for safety.

How can you get your dog to run to you? Practice calling during ball games or tug games, using the continuation of the game as the reward. Try running in the opposite direction when you call (he’ll race after you to catch up), or calling him back and forth between two people.

■ **Teach your dog to pay attention when you ask, separately from teaching Come.** It is difficult to get a dog to come when you can’t get his attention! There are many different ways to teach your dog to pay attention to you, but I like to simply work

attention games into everyday life. For the next 10 days or so, every time your dog looks your way (even just a quick glance to “check in” with you), reward her with praise, affection, a favorite game, or a click and treat. Do this throughout the day whether you are at home or out in the world.

At first your dog may check in more at home than in other places. That’s okay. Just keep rewarding at home, and your dog will begin to look at you more when you are out in the world as well. After a couple of days of rewarding the natural check in, start occasionally saying your dog’s name and rewarding her when she looks your way.

■ **Put it all together.** When your dog has learned all the individual pieces, you can start putting the behaviors together. This is the time to practice the recall as the whole chain of behaviors – responding to your request for attention, coming to you quickly, sitting or accepting a collar touch, waiting for the release.

Practice at various times during the day in low distraction environments. It is critical at this stage to set up your dog for success; only use your cue for the recall when you are 99 percent certain he will come. Don’t bother calling him when it’s very unlikely that he will comply, for example, right after you enter the dog park and take off his leash, or right as one of his family members or best friends enters your front gate.

Also, keep your practice sessions light and fun! If you turn your training sessions

into a big bore, with too many repetitions and not enough fun, he will decide to quit “playing” with you.

Praise only

When you first teach your dog to come, try to avoid four very common human errors that can set back your training. First, be careful not to put your dog into a situation where he or she will learn that *not* coming is rewarding! For example, if you ask your dog to come, and he runs the other way (and has fun doing it!), then he has just been rewarded for not coming. At this stage in training the recall, it is essential to use good

management! Let your dog off-leash only when it is very safe and when you will be able to go and get him when you need to.

Second, do not use “Come” to end a play session or other fun times, or to call your dog to you to perform a distasteful task (like pulling off burrs or clipping nails). This teaches your dog that coming to you could be a bad thing.

Third, be careful not to fall into the “bribe” trap. Let’s say you blew it (we all do!) and called your dog at a time when he wouldn’t come. At that point, don’t show him a treat or a ball to get him to come. This teaches your dog to come only when

you have an obvious reward. Instead, go and get him, make it easier (say, by asking him to come to you on-leash), and try again.

Finally, *never* scold your dog when he comes to you, no matter what terrible thing he was doing just before he came to you. He *stopped* doing what he was doing and came to you! That’s great! So be sincere and enthusiastic. Your body posture, tone of voice, and energy will all make a difference. A sensitive dog will often circle or sniff (rather than come) if you bend over at the waist, or call with a stern voice. If your dog is starting to come, but hesitates, encourage her with happy praise.

Using Premack’s Principle

Most dogs can be difficult to call away from something or other. Behavior psychologist David Premack observed that a high-probability behavior can be used to reward a low-probability behavior. This is a variation on the old dinnertime rule: If you eat your veggies, you can have dessert.

To use “Premack’s Principle,” you use a high-probability behavior (something your dog is highly motivated to do, such as playing with other dogs) as a reward for a low-probability behavior (something your dog doesn’t particularly want to do, such as coming to you when another dog is present).

If you can successfully call your dog to you and then use the opportunity to play with other dogs as a reward, your dog will be much more likely to come to you in the presence of other dogs in the future! This can also work when your dog has trouble coming to you when he is busy playing with other dogs, playing with a toy, or even squirrel-chasing.

For the best results, find a quiet, safely enclosed space in

which to work. Recruit a couple of friends or family members to help you with this exercise. (Or find two other dog owners who also want to work on recall skills with *their* dogs, and take turns with each dog!)

Two people will function as “callers,” taking turns calling the dog from one to the other. Each will have some nice, tasty treats to give the dog when he comes when called.

The third person, however, has the most *amazing* treats, such as bits of sardine, succulent roast beef, or canned cat food. Alternately, if a tennis ball or tug toy is a huge reward for your dog, the third person will have that. This third person will be positioned between the two callers, a bit off to the side of a direct line between the two callers. Allow the dog to see that the third person has the best goodies, but make sure the third person can prevent the dog from getting the treats or toy until you want him to. (Using the lid to a large pot can work well to cover a treat or tennis ball.)



PHOTO 1: Sandi (on the right) has just released the dog, and Leanne (on the left) is calling him. Between them, Maureen has some sardines. She holds the lid to a pot, ready to cover the smelly fish if the dog gets close (PHOTO 2). The idea is to make sure the dog is not reinforced for ignoring the person who has called him. But if he manages to resist the distraction and go to the caller, he gets a Yes!, praise, a garden-variety treat (PHOTO 3), and is led or lured over to the sardines and allowed to partake.



PHOTO 4: If you recruit other dog owners to help, you can take turns working with each person’s dog.



PHOTO 5: The dog learns that in order to earn the thing he *most* wants, he must delay his gratification and resist the temptation. Then he’ll win even greater rewards.

Party time!

This can't be said too much: *Make recall training the highlight of your dog's day. Use the best treats and toys as rewards. Vary the rewards. And most importantly, always keep it fun!*

Make a list of your dog's top rewards. Along with treats, use natural events in your dog's life as possible rewards, such as playing with other dogs, walks, dinnertime, and playing fetch. Consider anything your dog loves to do as a reward! Mix them up.

For example, if your dog loves chicken, playing with other dogs, and tug games, reward the recall sometimes with chicken, sometimes with a surprise tug game, and other times with a release to play with dog friends.

Make recall training part of other fun activities, like walks and ball play, too. Use games as a part of your teaching strategy. Using games teaches your dog to listen to the Come cue even when he is in the middle of something fun. Let's face it, the most important time to have our dogs come reliably is often when they are having the most fun, like chasing a squirrel, playing with another dog, or about to roll in cat poop or a dead animal! Some games include:

■ **Come for tug.** In the midst of a game of tug, pause and ask your dog to drop the toy. Then back up and use your cue for "Come." When your dog comes and sits in front of you, touch his collar, and then use your reward marker (such as a click or "Yes!"), and reward him with the continuation of the tug game.

■ **Back and forth recall game.** Call your dog between you and another family member. Each time your dog comes, give a great big happy reward (silly play, jumping up and down, great food treat, play ball, etc.).

■ **Hide and seek.** Have your dog stay in one spot. Go into another room and hide. Ask your dog to "COME find me" (emphasize the come). When your dog finds you, give a great big happy reward like two to three minutes of fun play. Once your dog knows this game, you can play it unexpectedly. For example: On a hike, step behind a rock or tree and call, "Come find me." When your dog finds you, get crazy-happy and love him up.

■ **Dinnertime recalls.** Have your dog sit or down and stay while you prepare his dinner. Continue to have your dog stay while

you take the dinner into another room. Call your dog to you; dinner is the reward.

■ **"You're the most wonderful dog" recall.** Call your dog to you. When your dog comes, get down on the ground and play, play, play for at least three solid minutes.

■ **Come and go play.** When there are real life distractions (or rewards), call your dog to you and release him to investigate or play. For example, when you are in an off-leash play area, call your dog (on-leash), and snap off the leash and send her to play when she comes to you. Getting to go play is the reward.

Practice and distractions

Of course your dog will come to you when it's all about fun and games. But what about when it really counts: in the face of serious distractions or in a life-or-death situation? How do you make sure your dog will turn away from something really interesting to come to you?

The key is to train with *systematically and increasingly difficult* distractions. This is possibly the most important step for teaching your dog to come reliably in almost all situations.

But what does it mean? It means, quite simply, that you have to practice, practice, and practice some more. It means that those practice sessions must be full of heavily rewarded recalls. And it means that you must practice – with distractions – and with distractions that are at a level your dog can handle. Increase the difficulty of those distractions only when he can successfully handle it. This takes time, effort, and some planning, but it will pay off big time when you really need your dog to come!

In order to train with increasing distractions, you will need to have thought through the things your dog finds distracting. Because this varies from dog to dog, try writing down what distracts *your* dog. A puppy might be engaged by a leaf blowing across a lawn. Some dogs are enthralled with balls. Others lose concentration when they see other dogs playing or a neighborhood cat. Write down everything your dog finds distracting, then rank them according to how big a distraction it is for your dog. Pick at least 10 different locations you can practice in. New places are distracting, too.

Set up a training plan, to remind yourself to stick to a regular practice schedule. Then, keep track of your practice sessions and your dog's progress; these notes can

help you decide when to go to the next level of distractions.

Increase the distractions when your dog is enthusiastically coming at least 9 out of 10 times at your current level. What if your dog is making a lot of mistakes? If you have two mistakes in a row, make the exercise easier for your dog; help him be successful.

Train for life

Please keep in mind that there is no such thing as a 100 percent reliable recall. Dogs will always be dogs! What that means is that they are living, thinking, decision-making beings who will always make their own choices. No matter how much you train or practice, and no matter how well your dog responds, you will always need to use good judgment when your dog is off-leash.

Recognize the types of situations that will make it difficult for your dog to come reliably. Is it chasing birds, visiting with other dogs, or the scary sounds of thunder that make it most difficult for your dog to respond? Know and respect your dog. Don't expect her to be someone she is not!

But when you take the time to really train your dog's recall, you may be surprised and even impressed with just how reliably she will come. While teaching your dog to come can be done over the course of several weeks or several months, keeping your dog's recall strong will mean continuing to train and reward it throughout her lifetime.

For a young dog (or a dog for whom coming is particularly challenging) continue practicing a couple of times a week at various locations and with various distraction levels for months after your dog has the basics down. For all dogs, integrate your recall practice into your daily life. Play with it on off-leash walks. Call your dog to you several times on your walk, then send him back off to play.

Keep rewarding your dog for great recalls, but use varied rewards, such as treats, toys, praise, or freedom. 🐾

Thanks to Sandi Thompson and Leanne Neufeld of Sirius Puppy Training, Berkeley, CA, for their help demonstrating Premack exercises. See siriuspup.com for contact information.

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Conventional Cancer Care

Many well-known and new treatments are helping canine cancer patients.

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Your nagging feeling was right – there really is something wrong with your dog. And it’s not just a pulled muscle or a torn toenail. It’s cancer.

As you struggle to wrap your mind around that diagnosis, the veterinarian describes your options: surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy, alone or in combination. Or your dog might be eligible to participate in a clinical trial testing a new drug, or you may want to consult an oncology specialist or consider a promising new state-of-the-art treatment. There are no guarantees that any of these treatments will work, and if the prognosis is especially grim, you may want to say goodbye now. Please decide within 24 hours. This is a medical emergency.

No wonder a Morris Animal Foundation survey found that the number-one fear of American pet owners is cancer.

You struggle to comprehend median survival times, treatment plans, treatment side effects, quality of life issues, and the demands that different protocols will make on your schedule – not to mention your checkbook.

Meanwhile, your faithful companion stares at you with trusting eyes.

“A cancer diagnosis is an incredibly emotional experience,” says Gerald Post, DVM, ACVIM, who has specialized in pet cancer care for 15 years. “There’s so much to consider, and there is a huge element of uncertainty. Even when you use the most accurate statistics for a particular group of animals with a particular type of cancer that is treated in a specific way, there is no way to know how your particular dog, who’s in the treatment room right now, will respond. When it comes to dogs and cancer, there are still many unknowns.”



When Comet, a seven-year-old Golden Retriever, was diagnosed with lymphoma, his treatments (which included a splenectomy and chemotherapy) made him so ill that his vets stopped treatment. An experimental bone-marrow stem-cell donation from a related dog stopped the cancer in its tracks, and 18 months later, he’s still fine.



WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **Become familiar with cancers that tend to occur in your dog’s breed and immediate family.**
- **Consider ahead of time what you might do if your dog is diagnosed with cancer.**
- **Look into pet health insurance, or put money aside for your dog’s medical care.**

So how can one make informed decisions?

“You have to consider all the factors,” he says. “At our clinic, we start with the diagnosis and then discuss what the cancer’s biological behavior is, what tests are needed, and what can be done. To answer this last question, we look at conventional therapies that are already widely used and experimental therapies that are ongoing. We include what our experience has taught us about probable outcomes, what the owners want, and how the dog is feeling. All of this information helps narrow the choices so that the owner can consider the most promising options.”

Survival rates

When it comes to cancer, some types are better than others – better meaning that they have a higher survival rate and are easier to treat than other cancers.

“The ideal patient in any oncology practice is one that doesn’t have cancer,” says Dr. Post. “That’s the best situation of all. But among cancer patients, I’d be happy if all of mine were otherwise healthy middle-aged dogs, each with a small (less than 3 centimeters) mast cell tumor on his or her

body. These dogs can handle surgery very well, and they are likely to make a full and complete recovery.”

At the opposite end of the spectrum are patients with worst-prognosis cancers. “Whenever a young dog comes in with acute leukemia, or a middle-aged Golden Retriever has just been diagnosed with a ruptured splenic hemangiosarcoma, you can’t help but feel heartsick. These are difficult, difficult cases.”

Dr. Post says that osteosarcoma used to be in that category, “but we’re making progress there. It’s still a horrible disease, and sometimes we do have to amputate a leg, but with chemotherapy, we can increase survival time to a year or sometimes longer. A year is a fairly long time in veterinary oncology, and those 12 months are very precious to the dog’s human family.”

In human medicine, cancer patients are considered cured if they go for five years without the disease. While veterinary medicine doesn’t formally define the term, Dr. Post considers any dog who goes for more than two years without a malignancy to be cured.

Conventional treatments

In conventional medicine, **surgery** remains the most widely used and most effective treatment for cancers that cause solid tumors. It can be used by itself to remove a tumor, or it can be used in combination with chemotherapy, radiation therapy, or other treatments to enhance their effectiveness.

In many cases, tumors are removed along with a margin of tissue surrounding the tumor. Radical surgery, such as amputation, has a longer recovery time and more potential complications than minor surgery. However, improvements in anesthesia and innovations such as laser surgery, in which a laser beam replaces scalpels for maximum precision, are making all surgeries safer and more effective.

Radiation therapy damages and then kills rapidly dividing cancer cells. In veterinary oncology, high-energy units similar to X-ray machines deliver radiation as a primary therapy or to clear surgical margins of cancer cells.

Radiation is usually recommended in the treatment of mast cell tumors, soft-tissue sarcomas, squamous cell carcinomas, oral melanomas, brain tumors, nasal tumors, and tumors that have not spread to other parts of the body.

Radiation is delivered in small doses and given several times, often daily, over a pe-

riod lasting three to four weeks. Small doses decrease this therapy’s most common side effect, which is damage to normal tissue. According to oncologists, this damage, which can be uncomfortable for the patient, is not usually life-threatening and usually disappears after the conclusion of treatment.

A few veterinary clinics implant radioactive beads in difficult-to-treat tumors in a radiation treatment called brachytherapy. Another new technique is tomotherapy, which rotates the beam source around the patient, targeting the tumor from different angles. And some clinics replace radiation with photodynamic or drug-laser therapy, in which an injected drug is activated by laser light.

Chemotherapy is the use of drugs that damage and kill cancer cells when administered intravenously or orally in frequent doses alone or in combination with surgery and/or radiation therapy. Chemotherapy is usually recommended for cancers that have spread or metastasized to other parts of the body and for tumors that cannot be surgically removed.

Chemotherapy drugs have different mechanisms, such as damaging a cell’s DNA (genetic material) or interfering with cell growth and division. Their side effects vary, though most experts say that dogs have fewer adverse reactions to these drugs than human patients do.

Nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea are the most common reactions, but in dogs, they tend to be of shorter duration and of a milder nature than the side effects experienced by humans taking chemotherapy. Some chemotherapy drugs can cause kidney damage or bone marrow suppression. Bone marrow produces red and white blood cells. Low white blood levels can make the dog more susceptible to infection. Anemia, a low red blood cell count, is less common in dogs undergoing chemotherapy.

Chemotherapy seldom causes hair loss in dogs, but some breeds (Poodles, Terriers, Bearded Collies, Old English Sheepdogs, and others) seem to be more prone to this side effect. If experienced, canine hair loss is most apparent on the face and tail, especially in Terriers and Poodles.

For some canine patients, chemotherapy is an ongoing, permanent protocol; they receive it for as long as they live. For others, treatments are eventually discontinued for as long as the cancer stays in remission.

The problem with cancer is that no matter which of these treatment plans you adopt, it can – and usually does – come back.

Worse, when it returns, it usually spreads or metastasizes, moving from the original site to other parts of the body.

Surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy are not only used to treat cancer in hopes of achieving a cure, but also used alone or in combination to relieve pain or discomfort, slow tumor growth, or otherwise improve the patient’s quality of life. Palliative treatments are those that reduce the symptoms of a disease without addressing the disease itself. In humans as well as canines, surgery, radiation, and chemotherapy are often palliative rather than curative.

New treatments

Experimental, high-tech therapies touted as breakthroughs in human cancer care are being adapted for use with dogs. One is the **stem-cell transplant**.

In January 2004, Seattle residents Darrell and Nina Hallett learned that their Golden Retriever, Comet, had lymphoma. They took him to Bellingham Veterinary & Critical Care in Bellingham, Washington, where his spleen was removed and he was put on chemotherapy. Comet did not respond well and within a few weeks was so ill that his treatments were stopped.

Comet’s veterinarians, Edmund Sullivan, DVM, and Theresa Westfall, DVM, conferred with scientists at the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center in Seattle. Dr. Sullivan and Dr. Westfall were aware that hundreds of experimental bone-marrow and stem-cell transplants had been conducted on dogs at the Fred Hutchinson Center as researchers perfected techniques now used in human cancer treatment.

In addition, there were reports of the treatments being used with great success outside the Center. Several years ago, a stem-cell transplant was successfully performed at the University of Massachusetts on a dog with lymphoma; in the 1980s, a Virginia veterinarian did bone-marrow transplants (which include stem cells) on a dozen dogs, three of whom survived for at least three years.

With help from Comet’s breeder, 40 of his relatives in five U.S. states and four countries were tested, and three were found to be perfect matches. The largest, a dog in Florida, was chosen because larger dogs yield more stem cells.

The June 2004 transplant was conducted at the Hutchinson Center, where a special machine separated stem cells from the donor’s blood. Comet was given total body radiation to suppress his immune system and

allow engraftment of the donor stem cells. His donor's stem cells were then delivered intravenously.

Dr. Sullivan brought Comet from the Center to his Bellingham clinic for two weeks of protective isolation, and his owners had a glass window installed so Comet could see the rest of the clinic. Two weeks after that, the stem cells began to reject their host, causing sores on Comet's muzzle. After an anti-rejection drug cleared that condition, Comet had no further problems.

Today, two years after Comet's initial diagnosis and 18 months after his stem-cell transplant, he is thriving. Dr. Sullivan looks forward to performing stem-cell transplants as appropriate patients and donors appear.

Another Golden Retriever, an 18-month-old female pup named Navy, made medical history when her owner, Marion Haber, treated Navy's cancer with **anti-angiogenic therapy**, a medical strategy that is still new to humans. Haber had worked as a research fellow at the Angiogenesis Foundation, a nonprofit organization in Massachusetts that promotes research on angiogenesis and its control.

"Angiogenesis" is the growth of new blood vessels that tumors (and other tissues) create to supply the oxygen and nutrients that will allow them to grow and spread. Anti-angiogenic therapy starves tumors and prevents their growth by cutting off this blood supply with drugs.

The study of angiogenesis has produced a new diagnostic tool as well, for if a blood test reveals elevated angiogenic growth factors, the cause is likely to be a tumor.

In September 2000, Haber, then a student at the Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine in Boston (she is now a veterinarian), discovered a tumor in Navy's chest while practicing examinations on the dog. A surgeon removed the tumor, extra tissue, and five ribs, which were replaced with three prosthetics.

A few weeks later, a tumor appeared on Navy's leg. Knowing her pup's situation was desperate, Haber rejected amputation and radiation therapy and turned instead to angiogenesis.

Navy's treatment, now known as the "Navy protocol," combined three

drugs already approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration – Celebrex, tamoxifen (sold as Nolvadex), and doxycycline – with a goal of inhibiting blood vessel cell proliferation and invasion. Navy received her first multi-targeted drug cocktail on Christmas Day 2000. By early March 2001, her veterinary oncologist could find no trace of cancer, and Navy experienced no adverse side effects. As angiogenesis pioneer Judah Folkman told reporters at the time, "That's a remarkable achievement."

While Navy's recovery was dramatic, it may not have been representative. When anti-angiogenic drug trials for human cancer patients were conducted in the 1990s, everyone wanted the new "miracle drugs," and their popularity (in clinical trials at least) soared. News reports inflated the public's expectations, leading to disappointment. Instead of being touted as a cure, anti-angiogenic drugs are now described as a treatment option that helps stabilize cancer as a chronic manageable disease.

According to the Angiogenesis Foundation, anti-angiogenic drugs show promise in the treatment of canine brain, lung, mammary gland, mast cell, oral, bone, prostate, soft tissue, and lymph system cancers. The Foundation works with veterinarians and zoo managers to treat dogs and other animals. Anti-angiogenic drugs are used alone or in combination with conventional chemotherapy or radiation therapy. While other dogs have received the Navy Protocol, Navy remains its most dramatic success story.

Clinical trials

Just as human cancer patients participate in clinical trials that test new protocols, so do dogs with cancer.



Navy is still alive, well, and cancer-free today, five and a half years after her experimental cancer treatment. MAY 2005 PHOTO COURTESY DR. MARION HABER

Dr. Post is chairman and founder of the Animal Cancer Foundation, a resource for veterinary oncologists. "I'm encouraged by the continuing progress being made in conventional therapies," he says, "but I'm always on the lookout for novel therapies that are being developed by biotechnology firms. If you're a mouse or a rat and you get cancer, we can cure you, but if you're a person, it's a different story. The model in which tumors are induced in laboratory rats and mice just doesn't apply to human health."

"Dogs and people develop cancer spontaneously, they share the same environmental risk factors, and they are more closely related to each other than to rats and mice. It makes sense to use their tumors to test novel therapies that can help our animals and at the same time reveal something about how experimental therapies are likely to work in people."

According to the National Cancer Institute's Center for Cancer Research (CCR) Comparative Oncology Program (COP), another organization that promotes clinical trials that test experimental therapies in dogs with cancer, the types of canine cancer that could produce results for humans include osteosarcoma, breast and prostate cancer, melanoma, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, head and neck carcinoma, and soft-tissue sarcoma.

Clinical trials recruit and enroll carefully defined patients, such as "dogs with suspected or confirmed transitional cell carcinoma of the bladder with measurable disease" or "dogs with suspected or confirmed appendicular osteosarcoma with no prior treatment with radiation therapy, systemic chemotherapy, or bisphosphonates, no complicating disease(s) that would limit survival, no pathologic fracture of affected limb or advanced metastatic disease, and informed client consent."

The trials are usually paid for by pharmaceutical companies or other sponsors and conducted at veterinary teaching hospitals or research centers.

Cancer's high cost

Any illness can be expensive, but cancer has to be the most costly disease that affects our dogs. Some owners have maxed out their credit cards, bor-

rowed from friends and family, and taken second mortgages just to pay the vet bills.

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, Americans spent \$7 billion on veterinary care in 1991 and an estimated \$19 billion in 2001. Increasingly sophisticated equipment is one reason for the increasing cost. Some veterinary clinics have their own linear accelerators, which reduce radiation therapy side effects by pinpointing tumor sites precisely, along with spiral computed tomography (CT) scanners for diagnostic imaging, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) devices, and other technologies formerly available only to human patients.

Canine cancer treatments range from a few hundred dollars for the simplest procedures to \$20,000 or more for cases that involve long-term therapy and multiple protocols. In most clinics, chemotherapy costs, which vary according to the patient's size, range from \$500 and up for palliative care to more than \$5,000 for three to six months of treatment.

Because most clinical trials are funded by their sponsors, the owners of participating dogs are charged only a minimal fee, such as an initial evaluation. But not everyone is eligible or wants to participate in a fully funded clinical trial, and that leaves most owners who choose to pursue conventional care facing painful financial decisions.

Comet's stem-cell transplant cost his owners \$45,000. Spending the money on Comet, they told the *Seattle Times* last year, was "infinitely better" than using it for the kitchen remodel they had planned.

Navy's treatment cost her owner \$2,000, part of which was paid for by donations from fellow classmates at Tufts.

Fund-raising efforts are one way to pay the vet bills if you're on a budget. Another is pet health insurance, which was once considered a novelty but is catching on. According to an American Animal Hospital Association survey, 1 percent of pet owners now carry pet health insurance, with the average premium costing slightly less than \$150 per year.

Like their counterparts in human medicine, though, pet policies vary. Some companies provide only accident coverage, while others offer options such as minimum coverage, vaccination, and routine care coverage, or more expensive coverage that covers office visits, surgeries, hospitalization, prescriptions, diagnostic tests, X-rays, lab fees, teeth cleanings, and checkups.

Cancer Treatment Resources

Angiogenesis Foundation. angio.org

Animal Cancer Foundation, (347) 693-6882; acfoundation.org

Edmund Sullivan, DVM, Bellingham Veterinary & Critical Care, Bellingham, WA (360) 734-0720; bvcc720@yahoo.com

Canine Cancer Awareness, online information. caninecancerawareness.org

Gulf Coast Veterinary Specialists, "Caring for Pets with Cancer." gcvs.com

National Cancer Institute's Center for Cancer Research Comparative Oncology Program, <http://ccr.cancer.gov/resources/cop>

Perseus Foundation. Information, an excellent free online book, *Diagnosis: Cancer – A Resource Guide for Pet Owners*. (301) 417-2721; perseusfoundation.org

Gerald Post, DVM, Veterinary Oncology & Hematology Center, Norwalk, CT (203) 838-6696; oncovet.com

Cancer "riders," if available, can extend the animal's treatment for that illness. Most policies – again, like their human counterparts – are more likely to cover conventional treatments than holistic or alternative ones.

Insurance companies usually exclude previously existing conditions, and some exclude congenital problems and hereditary defects. Some plans require policyholders to use only veterinarians in their system. Most plans have a maximum age limit for new patients, some charge more for certain breeds, and at least one company adds a surcharge for coverage in New York City.

A growing number of veterinary clinics offer their own wellness packages, which include discounted prices for routine care, or they may be linked to a specific insurance company or plan.

In general, pet insurance policy buyers should expect to deal with co-payments, deductibles, reimbursement benefit schedules, documentation, forms that have to be signed by the veterinarian, forms that bounce back, fine print, payout limits that may not be clearly explained, and other frustrations. Compare policies, talk to people who already have coverage, and ask your vet's office to help you weigh your dog's health risks. If you decide to buy health insurance, be sure the company is licensed in your state.

Quality of life

A treatment may extend a dog's life, but if that life is defined by loss of mobility, anxi-

ety, depression, pain, and suffering, is the treatment worth pursuing? At what point do quantity of life and quality of life fall irrevocably out of balance?

To help vets and pet owners answer these questions, the Animal Medical Center in New York City developed a "performance scale" that assesses quality of life. It considers alertness/mental status, appetite, weight/body condition, activity/exercise tolerance, and elimination. As one would expect, dogs who score close to normal in all five categories tolerate treatments well and do better overall than low-scoring dogs.

Some veterinary oncologists ask owners to define, before treatment begins, their hopes, goals, and expectations as a way to begin the discussion about what will work, what won't, and whether the client's expectations are realistic. This is an excellent exercise – one you can begin today.

If your dog had cancer, what side effects would be worth working through and which would not? As you learn more about cancer treatments, you will undoubtedly see some that you might consider and some that you definitely wouldn't. But the more you understand about this illness and its treatment, the more prepared you will be to make decisions on your companion's behalf. 🐾

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.

Can We All Just Get Along?

A lot of normal dog “play” behavior looks scary to people.

BY PAT MILLER

You may have noticed a theme in the photos we provided last month for the exercise in body language translation. In each picture there were body language expressions that to a novice observer might have indicated pending serious aggression: tails stiffly raised, mouths agape with teeth bared, tension in body posture . . .

In each case, however, the moment frozen in time precedes the onset or continuation of clear and appropriate social behavior rather than agonistic (aggressive) expression.

It’s not uncommon for humans to misread perfectly normal play



ANALYSIS FROM LAST MONTH’S PHOTO

Dog #1 – German Shepherd on the left: Ears are back, eyes are rolled sideways, lips are pulled back, mouth is open but relaxed with teeth covered, tail is relaxed at medium carriage, and although he’s stretched out running, at this moment his body posture is lowered, slightly behind vertical.

Dog #2 – Bully-type, right: Ears are back, eyes are squinting, lips are forward, mouth is open wide with teeth bared, tail is high but appears still. Again, although he’s running, at this moment his body posture is tall and ahead of vertical.

CONCLUSIONS

The Bully-type dog appears the more assertive of the two – his body expressions are more intense and aroused, with his raised tail and bared teeth. Still, the interaction is clearly play – the Shepherd is not intimidated by the Bully’s display – he’s offering deference behaviors but having a rousing good time; his facial expression is high good humor. The Bully’s squinty eyes and flattened ears speak “friendly” and belie the pseudo-aggressiveness of his teeth and tail. If his ears were pricked sharply forward and he was giving the Shepherd direct eye contact with a hard stare, I’d be concerned – and likely so would the other dog!

behavior and interrupt/separate dogs who are having a rousing good time together. At the end of Week 2 of my group good manners classes – and every week thereafter – we have play sessions where the dogs get to play with their canine classmates. In each new class there is at least one owner, often more, who is very tense about her dog’s play behavior. I narrate body language descriptions and explanations as the dogs play, and watch owner stress levels diminish as they come to understand what their dogs are really saying to each other.

A good technique to use when looking at body language is to analyze first, draw conclusions second. Let’s do that with last month’s photos (below left and on right). Then, try your hand at next month’s assignment, below. It involves interaction between a dog and a person. Do your analysis, draw your conclusions, and compare them to our comments in the next issue. 🐾

PLEASE NOTE:

Many of the photos for this article were taken in dog parks. Some of the dogs are wearing collars and harnesses that we don’t like. **More important, dogs should not wear any gear when playing in groups.** We’ve heard of far too many dog fatalities (death by choking, usually, or a broken neck) and injuries caused by one dog getting his jaw caught in another dog’s collar or harness.

Homework for Next Month . . .





ANALYSIS FROM LAST MONTH'S PHOTO

Dog #1 – Pharaoh Hound on the left: Ears are back slightly, can't see the eyes, mouth is open slightly with lips forward and teeth bared, tail is high and waving, body posture is hard to tell but appears tall and vertical.

Dog #2 – Shepherd mix on the right: Ears are back slightly, eyes are fully open but slightly averted, mouth is slightly open and relaxed, tail is high and waving, body posture is tall and slightly behind vertical.

CONCLUSION

There is a little more mutual tension in this encounter than in photo #1, but still not alarmingly so. Both tails are high but appear to be gently waving, and while both dogs are standing up fairly straight, ears are not pricked forward and there's no direct eye contact. While the Pharaoh Hound is offering more assertive behaviors they are not excessively so, and the Shepherd is clearly more deferent, avoiding any potential conflict. This is far more social than agonistic expression. I would watch these two closely, but expect to see something occur any second to relieve the tension, as confirmed by the next shot.



FOLLOW-UP

The Shepherd has backed into a play bow, flattened his ears even further, and averted eyes still more. The Hound's ears are forward in play arousal, and she's looking directly at the other dog, but it's not a hard stare. Her body is relaxed, upright but not tall, and her lips are lowering to cover her teeth. The slight tension from the previous photo has been defused. These two look like very compatible playmates.



ANALYSIS FROM LAST MONTH'S PHOTO

Dog #1 – Lab on the left: Ears are somewhat back but a little raised, eyes are direct but soft, mouth is closed with lips pulled forward, tail is high but not stiff, body is clearly behind vertical.

Dog #2 – German Shorthair Pointer on the right: Ears are raised (that's "pricked" for a drop-eared dog), making strong direct eye contact, mouth is closed with lips forward, can't see the tail, body posture is tall and slightly forward.

CONCLUSION

This is the most worrisome of the three photos. While the Lab is the more deferent of the two with his behind-vertical posture, he may not be deferent enough for the Pointer, who could take offense to his direct eye contact, forward commisure (corner of the lips), and raised tail. Her expressions are more serious than playful, and the outcome of this encounter likely depends a lot on whether the Lab backs off...



FOLLOW-UP

... which fortunately for him, he does. In this shot he's dropped into a play bow, his ears are back, his lips are pulled back, and he's sending very clear "No offense, Ma'am!" messages. The appeasement messages are received: the Pointer, while still not convinced she wants to romp and roll with this upstart, has softened her expressions in return – her ears are also back, her gaze is now over his head instead of directly into his eyes, and she has rocked back slightly behind the vertical. Phew!

Positively the Best

WDJ's all-time favorite books on positive dog training.

BY PAT MILLER

Books are akin to gold for me. I've been an avid reader since I was a small child and learned how to "sneak read" by the glow of the hall light outside my bedroom door after lights-out time. Whenever my husband and I have moved – five times in the last 10 years – the cartons of books we've collected over the years have inarguably made up the bulk of our possessions.

Of course, the vast majority of our books are animal-related, and a preponderance of those are dog training and behavior books. When Nancy Kerns suggested an article highlighting WDJ's "all-time favorites" book list, I seized the opportunity to review our collection, visit with old and new literary friends, and share with you the ones that will still inhabit my shelves when I have to pare down my collection to go live in a retirement home. If your library is missing some of these, put them on your holiday wish list, and maybe you'll get lucky!



Don't Shoot the Dog
by Karen Pryor
Bantam Books, 1999 (revised edition), softcover, 202 pgs; \$13

Originally published in 1985, *Don't Shoot the Dog* is generally regarded as the book that launched the paradigm shift from old-fashioned force-based methods to the now widely accepted positive training/clicker methods that are fast becoming the norm in the dog training industry. Ironically, it was written not as a dog-training book, but as a book on the science of behavior and learning, primarily to help people understand human behavior, secondarily dog behavior.

Pryor provides at least as many examples of using the principles to modify *Homo sapien* behavior as *Canis familiaris* applications. The cover quote by noted behavior scientist B.F. Skinner on the original edition ignores any relevance to dog train-

ing: "Karen Pryor has been a pioneer... Anyone who wants to be more effective in rearing children, teaching, or managing his or her own behavior will find her book very useful."

Fortunately, the dog training community also discovered and embraced Pryor's book. I am just one of a legion of positive dog trainers who owes a huge debt of gratitude to her for opening our eyes to the "why" behind the "what" of dog training, and turned our hands and leashes toward a kinder path. This is an important book to read for historical purposes, but it provides a ton of invaluable training and behavior information as well.

The Other End of the Leash

by Patricia B. McConnell, Ph.D.
Ballantine Publishing Group,
2002, softcover, 240 pgs; \$14
(also available in hardcover)



I was on only the second page of the Introduction when I fell in love with this book. I read this line: "All dogs are brilliant at perceiving the slightest movement that we make, and they assume that each tiny motion has meaning."

Of course! Yes, we all know that dogs are body-language communicators, but this one phrase brought so much into focus for me – why some of my dog owner clients have so much difficulty communicating with their dogs (their body language is "all over the place") while others are just naturals and immediately seem to get it. Not coincidentally, so do their dogs.

The Other End of the Leash is a book about us – the human primate – and how we behave with our dogs. McConnell explains the differences between innate primate behavior (us) and canine behavior, and why so many of the things we do so naturally, like patting dogs on the head, hugging them, and kissing them on the nose, are so aver-



WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- Buy the books listed here at DogWise (dogwise.com or 800-776-2665).
- Read at least one! Any one of them will improve your understanding of your dog – and your ability to train him.
- Buy one for a friend, before she brings her planned-for puppy home.

sive to many dogs. With gentle humor and intriguing insights, she helps the reader to a far better understanding of the canine psyche, and enables us to improve and strengthen our relationships with our canine companions.

McConnell is a gifted writer – her talent lies in taking things that you may already know in your head and helping you see it in your heart. Her books are entertaining and highly readable and always contain multiple pearls of wisdom. While *The Other End of the Leash* is my favorite McConnell book, anything she's written is worthy of space on your shelves.

The Culture Clash

by Jean Donaldson
James & Kenneth Publishing, 2005
(2nd ed), softcover, 203 pgs; \$18



Originally published in 1996, *The Culture Clash* is a delightful reality sandwich for dog lovers. I remember sitting down with this book, and time and again leaping from my chair shouting, "Yes!

Yes!” as I read Donaldson’s sometimes biting commentary as she describes, in no uncertain terms, why dogs are sometimes so misunderstood – and badly behaved as a result – and how to help them be better.

The Culture Clash opens by debunking the myth of the Walt Disney Dog. Donaldson makes it clear that it’s unfair to expect dogs to be perfect, much less to understand or subscribe to a human moral code. In fact, in order to make our dogs behave more appropriately in our alien (to them) human culture, the author insists we have to understand them, accept them for who they are, and make greater accommodations to meet *their* needs while we expect them to meet ours.

Donaldson’s sharp wit keeps this an entertaining read to the last page. If some of her arrows sting a little, it may be time for some gentle self-examination. I wouldn’t expect too many arrows to hit close to home for educated WDJ readers!

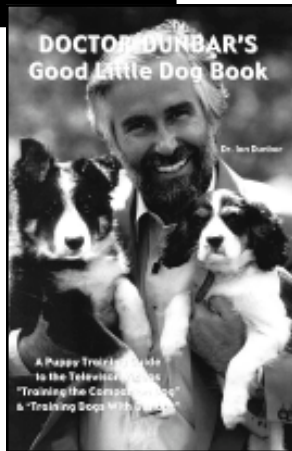
Dr. Dunbar’s Good Little Dog Book

by Dr. Ian Dunbar
James & Kenneth Publishing, 2003 (3rd ed),
softcover, 139 pgs; \$18

Dr. Dunbar is the catalyst for the growth of positive puppy training in this country over the past 15 years, as well as the founder of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, which now boasts more than 4,000 members. He’s also a prolific and entertaining writer.

Although any of Dunbar’s books offer loads of useful information, this one, originally published in 1992, is particularly engaging, thanks to the profusion of quality color photos that illustrate the accompanying exercise descriptions. While the book was designed to accompany two of his training videos, it does perfectly well all on its own as a guide to training the companion dog.

In addition to basic good manners exercises, *Dr. Dunbar’s Good Little Dog Book* offers valuable information on socialization, bite inhibition, and general household etiquette. It’s an inviting, easy-to-read, easy-to-follow book that makes a perfect gift for your first-time dog-owning friends.



Click for Joy!
by Melissa C. Alexander
Sunshine Books, Inc., 2003, softcover
208 pgs; \$25



Click for Joy! is a delightful book for dog owners and trainers who are taking their first leap into clicker training,

as well as those who are ready to move beyond basic clicking. It’s presented in a question and answer format, and comprised of a comprehensive collection of questions Alexander answered on her online “Clicker Solutions” discussion list. These range from the very simple (“What is clicker training?”) to the more advanced (“What is a keep-going signal,” and “What is ‘fluent’ and how do I get there?”).

From good manners training and solving behavior problems to the scientific principles behind the clicker, if you have a question about clicking, chances are good the answer is in *Click for Joy!* What a great resource!

How Dogs Learn
by Mary R. Burch, PhD, and
Jon S. Bailey, PhD
Howell Book House, 1999, hardcover,
188 pgs; \$20

Once upon a time, the scientific principles of behavior and learning were presented in daunting volumes fraught with jargon and page after page of incomprehensible formulas of strange-looking letters, using examples of rats in Skinner boxes. Burch and Bailey’s book changed all that by offering the

information in understandable, everyday language, with training examples that actually use dogs.

How Dogs Learn is an excellent read – a perfect choice for dog owners who want to understand the “hows” and “whys” as well as the “whats” of dog training.

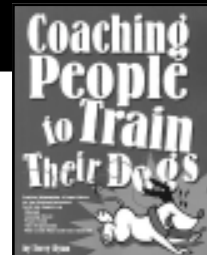
We especially love the authors’ positive lean in a scientifically based book. Many Ph.D. behaviorists appear unwilling to take a strong stand against the use of positive punishment. While Burch and Bailey stop short of saying they



would *never* use a shock collar, they make it refreshingly clear that their very strong preference is for the use of non-coercive methods that encourage a relationship of trust between dog and human.

Coaching People to Train Their Dogs

by Terry Ryan
Legacy Canine, 2005,
softcover, 404 pgs; \$65



Terry Ryan, long a leader in positive training, has provided a number of excellent books on the subject, but she has outdone herself with this one. Intended to help trainers offer top quality training classes, this outstanding volume also has much to offer the dedicated dog owner.

The large volume is set up to mirror the topics covered by the Pet Dog Trainer Certification exam, including an overview of the current state of the dog training industry, a comprehensive section on dog behavior, another on the science of learning, business and people skills, and class organization and teaching, closing with an excellent chapter on solving behavior problems that reprises her book, *Toolbox for Remodeling Problem Dogs*.

I often receive pleas from dog owners who can’t find a good trainer near them, and are looking for a self-help guide to training their dogs using positive methods. Ryan’s book is a great resource for this, especially the sections on teaching classes. Ryan offers several options with clear instructions for training each of the exercises, as well as fun games, homework assignments, and other activities that a teacherless dog owner could apply in a home training program. It’s a pricey book, but it contains a wealth of information.

Pet Behavior Protocols

by Suzanne Hetts, PhD
American Animal Hospital Association, 1999
(2nd ed), softcover, 322 pgs; \$82

Hetts’ book aims at a more professional audience than most of the previous books on our list. It is written specifically for the pet behavior consultant, and provides excellent information to guide the consultant in the creation and implementation of step-by-step behavior modification protocols for a wide range of problem behaviors. The protocols can also be useful for the dog

owner who is having difficulty locating a qualified behavior professional in their community.

There are a growing number of behavior consultants in the country and while some are certified by the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants, many are not, and vary in their experience, skills, and capabilities. There are even fewer Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists (veterinarians or Ph.D. behaviorists) – about 40 in the entire country, and not all of them actively practice. This book can help fill the gap.

Pet Behavior Protocols is an excellent resource for knowledgeable owners working through behavior problems on their own, behavior consultants wishing to bolster their knowledge and protocols, and owners who need more information to help them gauge the knowledge and abilities of the behavior professional they're considering engaging to help them with their dogs.



Clinical Behavioral Medicine for Small Animals

by Karen Overall, MA, VMD, PhD
Mosby – Year Book, Inc., 1997, softcover
544 pgs; \$70

I owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Santa Cruz veterinarian friend who introduced me to this book. It's an incredibly valuable re-



source, presenting behavior problem analysis and modification in a scientific, unemotional yet very readable style. Written for veterinarians who wish to be more knowledgeable about behavior in their daily clinical practices, it's also a terrific tool for non-veterinary behavior consultants as well as the dog owner who wishes to be better educated than the average human about dog behavior and behavior modification.

This book is not for light bedtime reading – it's dense with information. Overall is a brilliant veterinary behaviorist, and one of the few I know who is willing to stand up in public, as she did at the 2003 APDT conference, and state that in her opinion there is no need, ever, to use a shock collar on a dog in the name of training. She has been promising a next book for the past few years; we're eagerly awaiting its arrival.

Handbook of Applied Dog Behavior and Training (Volumes 1-3)

by Stephen R. Lindsay

Volume 1: Adaptation and Learning (Iowa State University Press, 2000, hardcover, 410 pgs; \$80)

Volume 2: Etiology and Assessment of Behavior Problems (Iowa State University Press, 2001, hardcover, 328 pgs; \$60)

Volume 3: Procedures and Protocols (Blackwell Publishing, 2005, hardcover, 795 pgs; \$100)



If I were stranded on a desert island, along with Patricia McConnell's *The Other End of the Leash*, I would want Lindsay's three-volume set of works by my side. Of course, I'm a dog behavior and training fanatic – but I'll bet a lot of you are, too!

These books are college textbook-dense and serious, containing absolutely everything you could ever possibly want to know about dog behavior and training – and then some. Not for the faint of heart, Lindsay's works are written for the serious student of dog behavior and learning, and as such are an invaluable resource. They are thoroughly indexed, making it a reasonably simple matter to research the topic of the moment without having to page through volumes of unrelated material.

If you'd like to have an encyclopedic-type reference for your dog-training library, head for Lindsay. It may take you years to wade through them, but you'll be amazed at the depth of information he offers. 🐾

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.

Editor's Choice

Pat Miller didn't recommend her own fantastic books – so I will!

The Power of Positive Dog Training (Howell Book House, 2001, softcover, 230 pgs; \$19) simplifies dog-friendly training and inspires owners to try it. Miller's next book, *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog* (DogWise, 2004, softcover, 262 pgs; \$20) reprises many of her articles for WDJ on training and smart canine care and management. Both are enjoyable to read, and appropriate for beginning or experienced dog owners. – N.K.



Pat's Personal Favorites

I pleaded for the chance to include these three of my (non-training) favorites:

BEAUTIFUL JOE, BY MARSHALL (MARGARET) SAUNDERS

I have several editions of this book, including a first edition from 1893. I adored *Beautiful Joe* as a child, and suspect it helped guide my career path. The *Black Beauty* for dog lovers, it's about an abused dog who is rescued by a young woman whose life work is to advocate for better treatment of animals. You can find many different editions from time to time on ebay.com.

CIRCLES OF COMPASSION, COMPILED BY ELAINE SICHEL

A true work of the heart, compiled by a former shelter worker, this book consists of short stories and poems from animal protection workers all over the country, telling of shelter experiences and emotions. It will open your eyes to the lives and feelings of people with one of the most difficult – and rewarding – professions.

SHAPER, BY JESSIE HAAS

A delightful fiction book written for teens, featuring a 14-year-old whose beloved dog was killed in an accident, the family's *new* dog (whom the boy has not taken to), and a neighbor who is writing a book about clicker training. Accurate in its descriptions of clicker training as well as a great story. A great gift idea for young readers!

To Crop and Dock? Or Not?

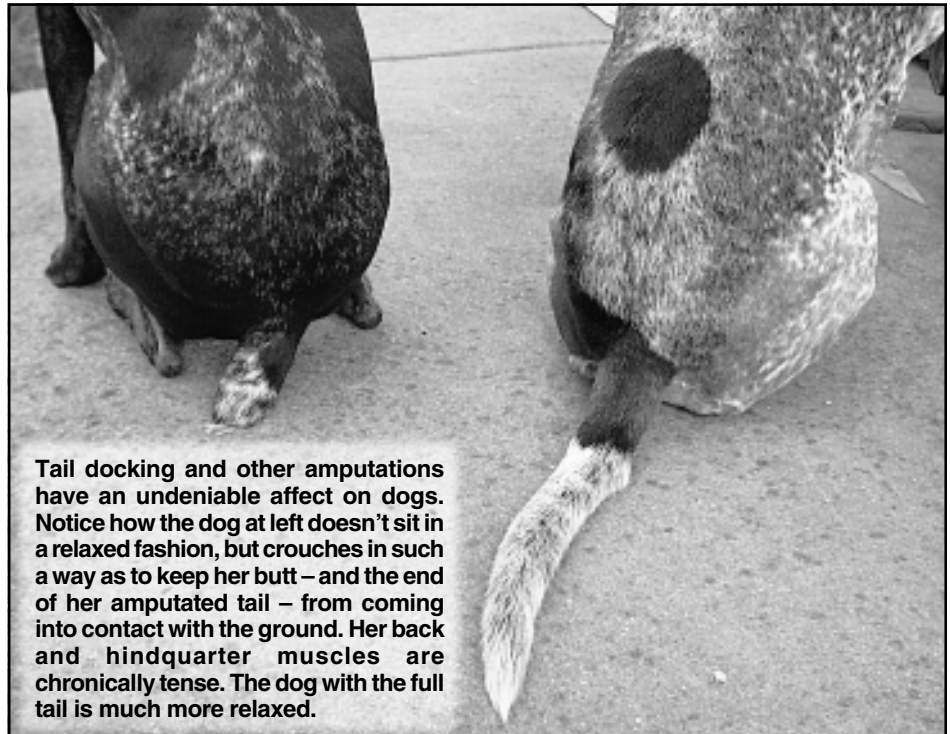
Some canine physical therapists say that dogs suffer from amputations.

BY SHANNON WILKINSON

Cosmetic surgery for dogs, including docking tails and cropping ears, is increasingly controversial. Even the usually conservative American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) has stated that the procedures are “not medically indicated nor of benefit to the patient. These procedures cause pain and distress, and, as with all surgical procedures, are accompanied by inherent risks of anesthesia, blood loss, and infection.”

It is estimated that more than 130,000 puppies in the United States undergo these procedures each year, procedures that have been illegal in other countries for years. In fact, England has banned ear cropping for more than 100 years. Yet the history of removing parts of tails and ears dates back hundreds of years. The historic reasons for the amputations are often attributed to attempts at preventing injury in fighting or hunting dogs, reducing taxes based on a dog’s tail length, or even preventing rabies.

Despite the arguably ill-founded history of the practices, they have evolved over the years and become part of many breed stan-



Tail docking and other amputations have an undeniable affect on dogs. Notice how the dog at left doesn't sit in a relaxed fashion, but crouches in such a way as to keep her butt – and the end of her amputated tail – from coming into contact with the ground. Her back and hindquarter muscles are chronically tense. The dog with the full tail is much more relaxed.

dards, particularly in the United States. The American Kennel Club supports these practices, stating its position that, “The American Kennel Club recognizes that ear cropping, tail docking, and dewclaw removal, as described in certain breed standards, are acceptable practices integral to defining and preserving breed character and/or enhancing good health. Appropriate veterinary care should be provided.”

Cropping and docking are so prevalent, in fact, that dogs of some breeds are difficult to recognize and identify when they are intact. Imagine a Doberman Pinscher or Boxer with floppy ears and a long tail. Because of aesthetics, these breeds and others routinely lose body parts so that they’ll look like what we expect them to look like.

Most arguments against docking and cropping focus on the pain endured by the puppy during and after the procedure, as well as the simple fact that amputations are cosmetic in nature and therefore unneces-

sary. However, there are additional issues and potential problems that should be considered before removing dog parts for the sake of looks.

The procedures

About 70 different breeds are subject to **tail docking**. Puppies usually undergo tail amputation when they are between two and five days of age. The popular belief is that puppies have immature neurological systems and therefore don’t feel the pain at that age. The tails are removed without anesthesia or pain medication by being clamped and then cut off at the prescribed length. Alternatively, a special rubber band may be put around the tail to cut off its blood supply, which eventually kills all of the tissue below the rubber band. The end of the tail will then fall off after several days.

Various breed standards call for tails to be docked at varying lengths. In some breeds, the standard calls for a tail of a spe-

The Whole  Dog Journal™

WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **Don't dock or crop! Insist that your breeder leave your puppy *au naturel*.**
- **Try different touch therapy or training techniques to increase your docked or dewclaw-less dog's balance.**
- **Let the AKC and breed clubs know if you'd like to see changes in breed standards so dogs with their natural parts aren't penalized in the show ring.**

cific length; in others, a range is suggested, or the ideal tail is described as being in balance with the dog's body. In some breeds, an uncropped tail is accepted; in others it is "severely penalized" by judges.

Dewclaw removal is generally done at about the same age as tail docking – again, usually without benefit of anesthesia or pain medication. In some breeds, the standards require that the dewclaws are removed; in other breeds they are tolerated by judges. (Curiously, dogs of at least one breed, the Briard, are disqualified by conformation judges if they do not have the breed's characteristic double-dewclaws on the rear legs.)

Dewclaws are not just "claws," but actually a fifth toe. Not all breeds have them, and some breeds have them on just their front paws. On the back paws, dewclaws are vestigial – an evolutionary remnant of ancestors of the dog who had (and used) five toes. These dewclaws have no muscular control; some do not even contain bony tissue or ligaments.



Sometimes front dewclaws are difficult to remove surgically, leaving major scars.

On the front paws, in contrast, some dogs have dewclaws that are capable of muscular control. Unlike the loose and floppy rear dewclaws, the forepaw's first toe contains bones, muscles, and nerves. Removal of these digits requires (sometimes difficult) surgery by a vet.

Ear cropping is done under anesthesia when pups are older, usually between 9 and 14 weeks of age. Often, postsurgical pain medication isn't used. Depending on the desired appearance of the cropped ear and the shape of the natural ear, as much as half of the floppy part may be surgically removed. Afterward, the ears are splinted and taped into an erect position for weeks to months, so they will eventually stand on their own.



Standards for some breeds, such as the Rottweiler, call for extremely close-cropped tails, with just one or two tail (caudal) vertebrae remaining.

and docking is unnecessary and potentially harmful. She has a Bachelor of Science degree in Physical Therapy, is certified in canine rehabilitation therapy, and has certification from the Acupuncture Foundation of Canada Institute. In her practice at The Canine Fitness Centre in Calgary, she regularly works with dogs who suffer from hypersensitivity and other problems potentially related to their amputated tails, and often theorizes that the problems are related to this scar tissue.

"The contraction or shrinking of the scar may effect a pull on the nerves and hence the dura that surrounds the spinal cord and brain," she says. The dura is a tough membrane, part of the meninges, which encases and protects the brain and spinal cord.

Edge-Hughes once worked with a Rottweiler who routinely chewed at her stump of a tail. The owners were concerned about the cause of the obsessive behavior and worried that she would hurt herself. When Edge-Hughes sees repeated licking or chewing, or a sudden attacking of a body part, she first investigates neurological pain as a potential source of the problem. This pain can be compared to the pins-and-needles feeling when your hand or foot "falls asleep."

Edge-Hughes taught the Rottweiler's owners to apply traction to the tail, through gentle pulling, to stretch out the dura. Theoretically, this process could alleviate any compression caused by scar tissue, thereby eliminating the irritation or pain; in actual fact, the traction stopped the dog's self-destructive behavior.



Uncropped ears are not penalized in Great Danes, but most are cropped anyway.

In addition to the pain related to the actual amputation and resulting scar tissue, there's a real possibility that dogs experience phantom pain – a phenomenon well-documented with humans who have lost a body part.

Pain factor

The World Small Animal Veterinary Association cites the possible formation of painful scar tissue, or neuromas, as one reason that tail docking should be made illegal, except for professionally diagnosed therapeutic reasons.

Laurie Edge-Hughes, a physical therapist and instructor in canine rehabilitation, feels that cropping

"I work with so many dogs that have significant behavioral changes after TTouch on their missing parts," says Debby Potts, Tellington TTouch Instructor and co-owner of The Integrated Animal, located in Portland, Oregon. "I can only imagine that they're experiencing some kind of phantom pain or discomfort. And this can cause seemingly unrelated problems, including behavioral issues."

Animals hold tension like people do, says Potts. "If you have a stiff neck or pain in a part of your body, does it make you cranky?" Animals are no different from us, she says. In her work on thousands of animals over many years, Potts has found that while lots of dogs may have tension patterns, you're more likely to see them in dogs who have been docked or cropped.

For example, a Giant Schnauzer was brought to Potts because she was constantly and obsessively whining. Her owners, a husband and wife, could neither find the cause of the problem nor stop the whining. It had become so troublesome that the husband insisted that the dog be re-homed. When Potts started to work on the dog, she found a significant amount of tension around the dog's cropped ears.

After one session, which included a significant amount of physical work on the head and ears, the Schnauzer's ears actually appeared longer (due to their unusually relaxed state) – so much so that a person very familiar with the dog didn't recognize her immediately after the session. More importantly, the whining stopped. Potts suspects that the dog was having the equivalent of tension headaches from all of the tightness around her ears. "That day I think I saved a dog and a marriage, too," laughs Potts.

Tails improve balance

Walk along a curb or balance beam with your arms crossed in front of you. Now do it with your arms free at your sides and using them for balance. Wasn't that easier? Dogs use their tails in much the same way, to provide balance and stability when moving over difficult or rough terrain.

When dogs don't have tails to provide a counterbalance and rudder for movement, something has to give.

"If you take away the ability to shift weight or compensate for balance displacement by use of the tail mechanism, then the forces that would otherwise be absorbed or counteracted through the tail need to be shifted elsewhere," says Edge-Hughes. She

speculates that the stress or pressure could then fall on the cruciate ligament or patella, hip, or hock joints, or even travel up the chain into the sacroiliac joints or spine, potentially causing or contributing to seemingly unrelated orthopedic injuries.

Cruciate disease and other orthopedic problems can have many contributing factors, and can occur in dogs both with tails and without tails. Yet, for dogs, who evolved to have tails, having them removed may add another cause of injury.

Edge-Hughes is also concerned about docked dogs who are unable to use tail wagging (with a tail of normal length and without scar tissue) to stretch and flex the dura, keeping it pliable. This could be a particular problem when a dog has a slow, progressive disc lesion, such as a bulging disc, which slowly compresses the dura and spinal cord over time. "The dura might become inflamed more easily if it is not as pliable. This may lead to a faster onset of neurological signs and symptoms that accompany disc lesions," she explains.

Veterinarian Robert Wansborough, in a paper published in 1996 in the *Australian Veterinary Journal*, describes how the tail is interconnected with the physiological

structure of the entire hind end of the dog. He speculates that removing the tail may change the muscle tone and contribute to perineal hernias and incontinence.

Dewclaws may contribute to improved balance, too

Dewclaws are another frequently amputated dog part that are often thought to be useless, but in fact, the front dewclaws *do* have a purpose says Chris Zink, DVM, PhD. "The function of front dewclaws is to prevent torque on the leg," she says. "There are five tendons attaching the dewclaw to five muscle bundles, supporting this functionality. When a dog is running, the dewclaw comes into contact with the ground. If the dog needs to turn, the dewclaw digs into the ground to support the lower leg and prevent torque."

"The rear dewclaws are vestigial in most breeds; that is not true for the front dewclaws, which should be more correctly called digits or thumbs," says Dr. Zink. She works exclusively with performance dogs and has found that if a dog doesn't have dewclaws, the leg will twist when turning, which applies significant pressure on the leg, to the toes, carpus, elbow, and shoul-

ders. The repeated twisting and pressure can ultimately cause chronic painful conditions, especially carpal arthritis. "Of the over 30 dogs I have seen with carpal arthritis, only one has had dewclaws. All the others had them removed," says Dr. Zink.

Out of balance

Beyond the physical balance and movement aids provided by tails and dewclaws, removing these parts, and ears too, may cause a different type of imbalance. The removal of parts as a result of docking and cropping may interfere with well-being and health from a Chinese medicine perspective. Scars or the absence of body parts that are normally part of a meridian or specific acupuncture points may adversely affect the organ systems associated with the meridian or energy channel.

An acupuncture map of the ear will show points that correspond with the entire body. In fact, there are over 200 acupuncture points on the ear – it is often described as "the meeting place of all the channels of the body." In addition, the ear is part of the kidney meridian. When a dog's ear is partially amputated, as with cropping, these points are removed, and scar tissue is cre-

The Legal Picture

A number of countries – including South Africa, Greece, Germany, Switzerland, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Israel, the Virgin Islands, and parts of Australia – have made docking and cropping illegal, with only rare allowable exceptions for hunting dogs or for a therapeutic necessity.

A number of these countries have even made it illegal to import or show docked or cropped dogs, so that breeders couldn't get around the law by having the dogs docked or cropped in another country and then imported for showing purposes.

It is expected that all members of the European Union will eventually pass laws against cropping and docking because of the provisions made by the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals. The convention prohibits "surgical operations for the purpose of modifying the appearance of a pet animal or for other non-curative purposes, including tail docking and ear cropping.

In the United States, however, there is no federal legislation. Legal challenges surrounding the issue are usually brought about in relationship to state anti-cruelty laws. Dog owners have found themselves on both sides of the law.

A number of individuals have been found guilty of animal cruelty for performing at-home cropping and docking. During 1988 a man in Texas was found guilty and sentenced to six months in jail for cropping the ears of his dog at home. A defendant in Indiana was found guilty of animal cruelty and practicing veterinary medicine without a license after an amateur ear-

cropping procedure. In Michigan, two separate cases found individuals guilty for botched tail docking using the banding method.

Several years ago, New York resident Jon Hammer approached the issue from a different perspective. He brought a discrimination suit against the American Kennel Club. Hammer has an undocked Brittany Spaniel, and because of the AKC's breed standard, the Spaniel was effectively knocked out of competition due to the length of his tail. Hammer's case argued that the AKC was forcing him to violate New York's anti-cruelty law by requiring docking. Hammer did not prevail in the case, but it did bring the topic to the spotlight.

Some states and cities are legislating against cosmetic surgery, including docking and cropping. In most cases, the laws fall under anti-cruelty statutes. Some states have laws against these procedures, although they are rarely enforced. Maine prohibits ear cropping, deeming it to be unlawful mutilation. Other states require the procedures to be performed only by licensed veterinarians.

West Hollywood, California, recently expanded previous legislation that banned de-clawing in cats, to include tail docking, ear cropping, and other cosmetic surgeries. The Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights sponsored a bill in the California legislature this year to ban ear cropping. The bill was suspended in May, and may be revived during the next legislative session.



A beautiful sight: an athletic dog with the tail, toes, and ears that he was born with, moving swiftly, comfortably, and in perfect balance.

ated on the new edge of the ear. The removal of dewclaws creates a scar that may affect the Large Intestine meridian, while the Governing Vessel meridian ends on the tail.

Abbreviated communication

Dogs use both their tails and ears extensively for communication, with each other and with humans. Norwegian trainer Turid Rugaas describes many different positions for tails and ears in her work on “calming signals” of the dog, and how dogs use these parts to communicate.

Think for a moment about all of the positions floppy ears can take. The ears can be forward and the base held upright, or they can be soft and low against the head, even pinned back, tight to the head. Each subtly different position communicates something different, from aggression to fear, contentment to appeasement.

The tail, too, acts as a key communication device for dogs. Different types of tail wagging and carriage may indicate happiness, stress, anxiety, fear, or other emotions. Dogs without tails are limited in this type of communication, and have to rely on other signals, which may be more difficult for humans and other dogs to interpret.

With all of the probable and possible problems associated with cropping and docking, how important is it to keep certain breeds of dogs looking a particular way? 🐾

Shannon Wilkinson is a TTouch practitioner, life coach, and freelance writer who has enjoyed living with a floppy-eared Great Dane and Boxer in Portland, Oregon.

RESOURCES

Laurie Edge-Hughes, BScPT, CAFCI, CCRT, The Canine Fitness Center, Calgary, Alberta, Canada caninefitness.com; (403) 204-0823



Debby Potts, TTouch Instructor/Practitioner, Licensed Veterinary Technician, The Integrated

Animal, Portland, Oregon
integratedanimal.com;
(503) 704-7499

Dr. Chris Zink, DVM, PhD
Canine Sports Productions
caninesports.com;
mczink@jhmi.edu

Case Study: A Dog With a Phantom Limb

Toby was a young, enthusiastic dog. He had a hard time focusing and was reactive to all kinds of things, including other dogs, and unresponsive to training. His owners were frustrated. When Debby Potts first met Toby, she made note of the fact that his tail had been docked.

She began working on him, using different TTouch techniques. When she started to work on his “phantom tail” – the space where his tail used to be – he turned around to look at her as if he were curious about what she was doing. Potts did TTouches on the existing stump of the tail, and then continued beyond the physical tail into the air where the tail would be had it not been amputated.

“It’s amazing how many dogs with docked tails really clamp it to their body,” says Potts. She recommends *gently* working with all docked tails, even if there is just one vertebra, to ease the tension. Over and over she has seen noticeable changes in dogs, in their bodies, movement, and demeanor after working with their existing and phantom tails.

After Toby’s session, he was more focused, able to stand in balance, and less likely to pull on his leash. “It’s not uncommon for a dog to act more balanced after this kind of work,” says Potts. She does add that she hasn’t ever just worked on the tail or other amputated part of an animal, but regularly sees a clear reaction from dogs when working on their phantom parts, such as how Toby responded by looking at what she was doing.

This can look a little odd, Potts admits. “When I teach people how to work on their dog’s phantom parts, I usually suggest they do it in the privacy of their own homes!” She adds that it’s important to believe that you’re really doing it and can “see” the tail as if it were there. Just moving the hand and fingers around the area doesn’t have the same impact, she says.

A Word to Our Readers: Whole Dog Journal’s Mailing List Policy

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RESOURCES

BOOKS

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

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

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

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

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

Shannon Wilkinson, life coach and certified Tellington TTouch Practitioner, Portland, OR. Learn gentle methods to positively influence your dog's behavior, health, and performance. Private sessions, group lessons, demonstrations, full- and half-day workshops. Shannon@shannonwilkinson.com or (503) 234-6361

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

PROTECTION FROM VIRUSES

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

Carol Falck, VMD, Pompano Beach, FL
friendshipvet.com

Bruce Fife, ND, piccadillybooks.com

Mary Foster, DVM, Gainesville, FL
(352) 258-4447

Aromadog, Leicester, MA
Source of aromatherapeutic essential oils
(508) 892-9330; aromadog.com

Natural Rearing Products, Jacksonville, OR
Retail source for N.R. Herbal Compound, an herbal compound that helps dogs fight off infection
(541) 899-2080; naturalrearing.com

Here's to Health, Dunnellon, FL
Retail source for Pet's Friend Immu G.O., an immune system booster
craftycreatures.com/herestohealth/

Standard Process, Inc., Palmyra, WI
Note: SP supplements are sold through veterinarians and other licensed health care professionals. For more information, see standardprocess.com

CORRECTION

In October, "Digest These Benefits," we ran an incorrect number for Dr. Beverly Cappel, in Chestnut Ridge, NY. The correct number is (845) 356-3838. However, do not call Dr. Cappel only to buy Wobenzyme. We would suggest calling the resource listed in our article, buywobenzyme.com or 800-588-8139.

WHAT'S AHEAD

Targeted Goal

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

What's New in "Wet" Food

Here's one hint: It's not always in a can anymore.

Gear of the Year

Some of the best pet care and training products we – and you – have seen all year.

The Aging Dog

The Tour of the Dog visits the old dog's home.

Alternative and Complementary Treatments for Canine Cancer

All of the alternatives work some times; none, of course, work all the time. Learn which methods offer the best results most of the time.

Still to Come:

- *Commercial frozen raw diets*
- *The best leashes*
- *Holistic heartworm prevention and treatment*
- *Gear of the Year*
- *Tour of the Dog: The central nervous system*