

The Whole Dog Journal™



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Incomparable

Accepting and loving our friends' dogs, exactly as they are.

BY NANCY KERNS

My mom met her best friend when she was in high school, and they remained close friends until my mom's death in 2002. They met their husbands-to-be at about the same time, married within a year of each other, had a similar number of kids. They arranged for their two families to spend a lot of time together, and all of us kids became friends, too. As we matured, we grew closer to our moms' best friends than we were to our genetic aunts.

It wasn't until I was a young adult, however, that I noticed an interesting thing about the relationship between my mom and her best friend: As much as the two women took an interest in and genuinely loved each other's kids, they were sometimes rather critical of the other's offspring, and competitive (in a deceptively subtle way) about their own kids' accomplishments. For example, my brother was *wild* in his youth (drugs, booze, motorcycles, trouble in school) – and so was my mother's friend's son. But my mom overlooked the varied hijinks of her own delinquent boy, even as she tsk- tsked her friend's equally errant kid. And her friend was very forthcoming with criticism of my brother, but appeared to be perfectly proud of her own wayward son. It was odd – the only fly in the ointment of their close relationship; their kids were the only thing they ever snarked at each other about, the only thing they had to agree not to discuss at times.

I have my own kid (well, he's an adult now) and my own close friends, and many of them have children, too. Any time I have felt the slightest bit critical of a friend's kid, I've been immediately reminded of the occasional tension and unhappiness between my mom and her friend because of some harsh remark about one of us kids, and I've quite deliberately zipped my lips. What's the point of saying anything? In the long run, my siblings and I turned out fine, and so did my mom's friend's kids. My friends' kids – even the spoiled rotten ones! – are probably going to turn out fine, too.

Given *all* this background, you'd think I would know better than to say *anything* critical about my friends' dogs. But no – I'm an idiot. Albeit a penitent one.

I once greeted a friend I hadn't seen for months with, "Oh my goodness, Carly (her dog) is *FAT!* What happened?!" It took me a few weeks to realize that my friend hadn't been returning my calls or e-mails since that visit. When I called to ask her if anything was wrong, she admitted her feelings had been hurt by my bald comment about Carly's condition. I had to reflect. Why had I felt free to say something like that about her dog? I never would have made a similar remark about *her* weight, or one of her children!

I apologized – and then I did it again. Two summers ago, I helped one of my cousins adopt a Labradoodle from my local shelter. I frequently see photos and videos of the dog on Facebook and in texts, but hadn't seen the dog for a year or so. When I visited that cousin recently, and she answered the door with the dog at her side, I did it *again!* "Oh Bev, she's so *FAT!*" I blurted without thinking.

I won't even mention how I couldn't help but make helpful (but unsolicited) comments about how another friend could train her dog to stop humping every other dog he meets, or how my sister could reduce her dog's yapping at the door. Forehead smack! And apologies!

For penance, I'm reading (and re-reading) Denise Flaim's excellent article in this issue ("My Dog, Myself," page 13), about being a better dog person. I strongly (but tactfully) recommend it. **NK**



Lucy Postins, The Honest Kitchen founder and CEO, developed her products' recipes in order to improve her own dogs' health. She also fought a legal battle for years to earn the right to use the term "human grade ingredients" on THK's product labels.

🐾 NUTRITION 🐾

Dry It, You'll Like It

"Complete and balanced" dehydrated and freeze-dried dog foods are second in quality only to healthy home-prepared diets.

BY NANCY KERNS

We haven't reviewed dehydrated diets for quite some time – long enough that there have been quite a few additions to the pool of companies who make and sell this type of dog food. It's increasingly popular, for a lot of reasons.

For one thing, "raw diets" are increasingly popular, too, and most of the products in this category incorporate raw animal proteins in their formulations. People who believe in the superiority of canine diets that include raw meat (often referred to as biologically appropriate or evolutionary diets) can use a dehydrated or freeze-dried food as a convenient

replacement for their dogs' fresh, home-prepared or commercial frozen raw diet. This is especially helpful when traveling with a raw-fed dog, or when the dog is left with a sitter who doesn't want to deal with raw meat in its wet, bloody form. (One maker of dehydrated diets, ZiwiPeak, describes its products as "raw without the thaw.")

When it's dehydrated or freeze-dried, raw meat doesn't seem so, well, *raw*. Most of us don't think of beef jerky as raw meat, either, but it actually is. The drying process (and, in jerky, the use of salt and nitrates) "cures" the meat, altering its appearance and texture and concentrating its flavor – and, significantly, halting the biological action (decay) in the food – with less damage to the meat's natural enzymes or vitamins than cooking temperatures would cause.

All the ingredients in canned food are cooked in the can. Some ingredients in kibble are actually cooked *twice*; meat "meals," for example, are first subjected to rendering (essentially boiling, drying, and then grinding) and then extrusion (pushed through a tube under high pressure and subjected to a short blast of high-temperature steam) and drying. Plainly, the proteins in the meat ingredients are still nutritious after being extruded, but, raw food proponents allege, not nearly as healthful for canines as they were in their raw form.

Most of the other ingredients in freeze-dried or dehydrated foods are raw, too. Plus, they are *very* lightly processed, in comparison to the ingredients in other types of dog foods.

Raw diets aren't for every dog or

owner. Cooked foods may be safer for immune-compromised individuals. Some dogs digest cooked foods better.

Note: At least one maker of dehydrated foods (NRG USA) uses cooked meats in some of its products.

OTHER BENEFITS

In addition to being raw and lightly processed, dehydrated diets offer a number of other benefits to dogs – and their owners.

- ✓ Very low-moisture foods can be stored longer at room temperature (in unopened packages) without spoiling or rancidity than conventional kibble. Most dehydrated diets contain less moisture than conventional kibble, which generally contains about 10 percent moisture. The less moisture there is in a food, the less biological activity can occur.
- ✓ Dehydrated foods weigh less and are more compact than foods containing more moisture. This makes them especially well suited for travel. It also means they cost less to ship!
- ✓ When rehydrated, these foods are highly palatable to most dogs. It may be due to the concentration of flavor in dehydrated food ingredients or their light processing. Dogs with poor appetites (like very senior or chronically ill dogs) may accept these foods when nothing else appeals.
- ✓ As a generalization, the makers of these products are targeting the top end of the market, and have an extraordinary commitment to sourcing top-quality ingredients; in some cases, “human-quality” (“edible”) ingredients are used (though this claim can be made and verified by only one dehydrated dog food manufacturer: The Honest Kitchen).

VARIETY IN CATEGORY

The dehydrated foods on the market are diverse in content, appearance, and form. Some contain grains and some don't. Some are very high in protein and fat, and some compare in these respects to conventional kibble. Always check the “guaranteed analysis” when switching to a product in this category; they are so nutrient-dense that you may have to significantly reduce the volume of food that you feed your dog.

Most of these products are meant to

be rehydrated with water before serving, although one (ZiwiPeak) contains a higher amount of moisture than kibble, and is fed without rehydration. One (DNA) comes in a cubed form, and reabsorbs a relatively small amount of water. Some are very powdery, which makes them turn into a sort of mush (or gruel, depending on how much water you add) when rehydrated. Some are powdery with large chunks of identifiable dehy-

drated meats, fruit, and/or vegetables – either an advantage (if your dog enjoys the contrast in taste and mouth-feel) or a disadvantage (if your dog seeks out only the chunks or mush and eschews the other). The products that come in dried “burger” or “medallion” form reconstitute in a form that most resembles an actual ground meat patty.

If you read the descriptions of each product, note that some contain “air-

“HUMAN-QUALITY” INGREDIENTS

As we've discussed many times in WDJ, there is only *one* way that a company can legally claim that its dog food contains ingredients that are “human quality” (the legal term is “edible,” though of course regulators mean only “human edible” in this context): If it is made in a manufacturing facility that contains *only* edible ingredients. The presence of a single “inedible” ingredient in a manufacturing facility, by law, would re-classify *every* ingredient and product present at that location as “pet food.” By law, you can take a refrigerated truckload of the world's finest, freshest, cleanest filet mignon to a facility that makes pet food, but the second the truck drives onto the facility's property (or the moment the truck's door is opened, accounts vary), none of that meat can be called edible or human-quality again.

This is frustrating to the pet food makers who genuinely use ingredients of that quality, and to consumers who want proof – a *certain* way to verify – the true quality and provenance of the ingredients in their dog's very expensive food. But unless a food company wants to use only edible ingredients, and have its products made in a facility that uses only edible ingredients, jump through a million bureaucratic hoops to demonstrate completion of these requirements to the regulators in every single state – and price its products accordingly – it can't say it uses “human-quality” ingredients. Only one company that we know of (the Honest Kitchen) can make this legal claim for its products, which are made in a human food manufacturing facility in Illinois (which also makes human soup mixes and other human foods that contain dehydrated human food ingredients).

Pet food makers who do use “edible” meats and other ingredients in their products sometimes resort to using code words to give consumers a hint about their ingredient quality. They have to be subtle, though, because if they are too overt, state feed control officials can hit them with a warning, fine, and/or stop-sale order.

Here's the problem with that approach: Because it's illegal, it's not verifiable! And because it can't be confirmed (say, by checking the manufacturer's registration as a human food manufacturing facility), *any* company can slyly hint about their alleged “human-quality” ingredients, whether they really use them or not.

If ingredient quality is critical to you – if you insist on and are willing to pay for foods that contain *only* “edible” ingredients, your only *sure* options are to home-prepare your dog's food with ingredients you buy from human food sources, or to buy products from The Honest Kitchen.

Alternatively, you can engage in conversation with representatives of pet food companies who make what appear to be (based on their ingredients lists) very high-quality foods, and ask them about the provenance of their ingredients. If they claim (or hint) that some of their ingredients are “human-grade,” “just like the ones you buy in the supermarket,” “USDA,” or some other code-phrase, ask them to discuss this further – and do a gut-check on their reply. It's all you'll really have to go on.

dried” or “dehydrated” (same thing) or freeze-dried ingredients. The difference in *nutritional content* of foods processed in either manner is negligible. However, dehydration alters the cellular structure of meats, fruits, and vegetables much more than dehydrating, more radically altering their appearance and taste than freeze-drying. Rehydrated, freeze-dried ingredients taste remarkably similar to their fresh, moist counterparts. Does

this matter to your dog? You’d have to try different products to find out. Note that the freeze-drying process requires higher-tech, more expensive machines, making the cost of foods that contain freeze-dried ingredients quite a bit higher.




Because the cost of these products is so high, we’d imagine that few people feed them full-time, especially if their dog or dogs are large. I calculated the

cost of feeding some of these products to my 70-pound, active dog at more than \$200 a month – more than what it would cost to feed a home-prepared diet. Personally, I’d most likely use them only for a small dog, or on a short-term basis while traveling, as a special treat, to jump-start a sick dog’s recovery, or to extend the life of a chronically ill dog. 🐾

Nancy Kerns is Editor of WDJ.

COMPANY	DESCRIPTION	HIGHLIGHTED PRODUCT
<p>Addiction Foods Company is based in Singapore. North American base is in Kent, WA (425) 251-0330 addictionfoods.com</p>	<p>Addiction Foods manufactures its raw dehydrated diets in New Zealand (where it also makes its canned and dry foods.) All of Addiction’s dehydrated products are formulated to meet AAFCO’s “nutritional levels” standards. Addiction has added a number of formulas to this line since we last reviewed dehydrated foods; nine varieties are now available, including formulas with novel proteins such as kangaroo, brushtail, and venison, as well as more conventional formulas utilizing beef, chicken, and lamb. One formula (Nutri-RX Allergy-HS) is intended for those rare dogs with who are allergic to all animal protein, and contains only protein from potato and soy. Available direct from the company, in select independent pet supply stores, and from some online retailers.</p>	<p>Addiction’s Country Chicken & Apricot Dinner contains chicken, potatoes, papayas, canola oil, apricots, carrots, spinach, tapioca, and vitamin/mineral sources.</p> <p>21% protein, 15% fat, 4% fiber, 12% moisture 3,920 kcal/kg</p> 
<p>DNA Pet Food, Inc Canyon, TX (888) 367-6636 dnapetfood.com</p> 	<p>DNA (which stands for “dried ‘n alive”) describes its products as being a dry “canned food recipe” and a raw diet. How? The company says, “DNA starts out as a raw food and is made in a cannery. It is mixed and made into large sausages and refrigerated until it sets up into a solid meat loaf. Then it is diced and sent to a low temperature drying room (instead of being sent off to be cooked inside of a can). This drying process helps preserve some of the amino acids and enzymes found in raw food.” The resulting dried and diced food can be fed like a kibble, or may be rehydrated. All of DNA’s dehydrated products are “complete and balanced” as per meet AAFCO’s “nutritional levels” standards. A complete nutrient analysis is available for each product on the company’s website; we love this. Four varieties for dogs are available: beef, chicken, lamb, and a venison & salmon formula. Available in select independent pet supply stores and from some online retailers.</p>	<p>DNA’s Lamb Formula contains lamb, lamb liver, dried eggs, dried peas, natural flavor (essentially lamb broth), olive oil, dried cranberries, dried carrots, dried spinach, pumpkin, sun-cured alfalfa, dried blueberries, yeast, and vitamin/mineral sources.</p> <p>36% protein, 24% fat, 3% fiber, 8% moisture 3,800 kcal/kg</p>
<p>Dr. Harvey’s Keansburg, NJ (866) 362-4123 drharveys.com</p>	<p>Dr. Harvey’s has long offered dog food “pre-mixes” (to which the owner adds meat and oil to make a complete diet); Oracle is the company’s first complete and balanced diet (as per AAFCO nutrient guidelines). Oracle is available in four varieties: beef, grain-free beef, chicken, and grain-free chicken. The varieties that contain grain are slightly less expensive. Available direct from the company, in select independent pet supply stores, and from some online retailers.</p> 	<p>Dr. Harvey’s Oracle Grain-Free Chicken Formula contains freeze-dried chicken, whole egg, sweet potatoes, carrots, calcium citrate, flaxseed meal, green beans, zucchini, broccoli, peas, beets, parsley, dried yeast, lecithin, alfalfa, dried kelp, ground flaxseed, dried ground fenugreek, dried ground fennel, dried ground ginger, dried ground peppermint, and vitamin/mineral sources.</p> <p>41% protein, 12% fat, 5% fiber, 7% moisture 3,800 kcal/kg</p>

COMPANY	DESCRIPTION	HIGHLIGHTED PRODUCT
<p>Grandma Lucy's Irvine, CA (800) 906-5829 grandmalucys.com</p>	<p>Grandma Lucy's Artisan is available in five freeze-dried, grain-free varieties: bison, chicken, lamb, pork, and venison. The Artisan products are powdery, with large chunks of dehydrated meat. These products are all "complete and balanced" canine diets (as per the AAFCO nutrient guidelines). All of these products contain dehydrated potato. Grandma Lucy's has a second line of "complete and balanced" freeze-dried products that do not contain potato, instead utilizing dried chickpeas as a carb source. "PureFormance" is offered in four varieties: chicken, goat, lamb, and rabbit. Available direct from the company and in select independent pet supply stores.</p>	<p>Grandma Lucy's Artisan Chicken Formula contains chicken, potatoes, flax, carrots, celery, apples, blueberries, cranberries, garlic, and vitamin/mineral sources.</p> <p>26% protein, 12% fat, 6% fiber, 7.5% moisture 4,112 kcal/kg 468 kcal/cup</p> 
<p>Nature's Variety Lincoln, NE (888) 519-7387 naturesvariety.com</p> 	<p>The name is the tip-off: Nature's Variety offers a range of types of diets – kibble, canned, raw frozen, and freeze-dried – and recommends that owners rotate between them. Instinct Freeze Dried is available in three varieties: beef, chicken, and lamb. The grain-free, gluten-free diets are available in "medallions" (like a hamburger patty) and "mini-medallion" forms (for smaller dogs). Previously, these products were formulated and labeled for "supplemental or intermittent" feeding only, but the company is introducing "complete and balanced" formulas this month. Available in select independent pet supply stores and from some online retailers.</p>	<p>Nature's Variety Instinct Freeze Dried Chicken Formula contains chicken, turkey, turkey liver, turkey heart, pumpkin seeds, apples, carrots, ground chicken bone, butternut squash, ground flaxseed, montmorillonite clay, broccoli, lettuce, spinach, dried kelp, apple cider vinegar, parsley, honey, salmon oil, olive oil, mixed tocopherols and citric acid, rosemary extract, blueberries, alfalfa sprouts, persimmons, inulin, rosemary, sage, and clove.</p> <p>40% protein, 34% fat, 8% fiber, 4% moisture 3,167 kcal/kg</p>
<p>NRG USA Coupeville, WA (360) 682-5659 nrgdogproducts.com</p>	<p>NRG's dehydrated dog foods are made by the company's owners on the company's farm in Canada; the operation's website has a mom-and-pop feel. Three lines are available: Original; Optimum Large/Active Breed; and Maxim Grain-Free. Each line comes in four single-animal species protein sources: beef, buffalo, chicken, or salmon. Some of NRG's products contain cooked meats. The company claims the products are "complete and balanced" as per the AAFCO nutrient guidelines, even though no vitamin/mineral pre-mixes have been added, and that all the ingredients in all the formulas are sourced from Canada or the United States. Available direct from the company, in select independent pet supply stores, and from some online retailers.</p>	<p>NRG's Original Diet Beef Formula contains cooked dehydrated free-range beef muscle meat, whole hullless oats, carrots, wheat germ, eggs, beef liver, grapefruit, winter squash, broccoli, cranberries, limes, papaya, apples, parsley, garlic, goat milk yogurt, flaxseed, cider vinegar, eggshell, and olive oil.</p> <p>24% protein, 16% fat, 3.5% fiber, 6% moisture 500 kcal/cup</p> 
<p>Stella & Chewy's Milwaukee, WI (888) 477-8977 stellaandchewys.com</p> 	<p>Stella & Chewy's offers seven varieties of freeze-dried, "complete and balanced" (as per the AAFCO nutrient guidelines) diets for dogs, all containing a number of organic vegetables and fruits. Five contain a single animal protein (beef, chicken, lamb, venison, rabbit) and two contain multiple sources of animal protein (duck/turkey; and "Surf & Turf" containing beef, salmon, and turkey). Each variety contains raw, dehydrated meats; every variety has been subjected to a hydrostatic high pressure (HHP) process that kills bacteria, including Salmonella, without the use of heat (which can reduce nutrient levels in the food). Further, Stella & Chewy's tests every batch for bacterial contamination (and the results are posted online) before shipping. The products come in the form of dry patties. Available in select independent pet supply stores and from some online retailers.</p>	<p>Stella & Chewy's Chicken Formula contains chicken ground with bone, chicken liver, chicken gizzard, pumpkin seed, potassium chloride, organic cranberries, organic spinach, organic broccoli, organic beets, sodium phosphate monobasic, organic carrots, organic squash, organic apples, organic blueberries, a variety of beneficial bacteria (such as lactobacillus acidophilus) and vitamin/mineral sources.</p> <p>42% protein, 25% fat, 4% fiber, 5% moisture 4,388 kcal/kg; 60 kcal per patty</p>

COMPANY	DESCRIPTION	HIGHLIGHTED PRODUCT
<p>Sojo's Pet Food Co. Minneapolis, MN (888) 867-6567 sojos.com</p> 	<p>Sojo's (formerly known as Sojourner's Farms) also got its start in the pet food business with a "just add meat" pre-mix but began offering a "complete and balanced" canine diet (as per the AAFCO nutrient guidelines), containing raw, freeze-dried meat a few years ago. Sojo's Complete Dog Food is available in two grain-free and gluten-free varieties: beef and turkey. Complete nutrient analyses of the products are available on the company website – YES! The products come in a powdered form containing chunks of identifiable dehydrated foods. Available direct from the company, in select independent pet supply stores, and from some online retailers.</p>	<p>Sojo's Complete Dog Food Turkey formula contains sweet potato, turkey, whole egg, broccoli, celery, apples, flax meal, pecans, tricalcium phosphate, pumpkin, cranberries, basil, dried alfalfa, ginger root, dried kelp, and vitamin/mineral sources.</p> <p>23% protein, 8% fat, 7.3% fiber, 10% moisture 3,416 kcal/kg; 335 kcal/cup</p>
<p>The Honest Kitchen San Diego, CA (866) 437-9729 thehonestkitchen.com</p> 	<p>The Honest Kitchen is the only company we are aware of that makes all of its dog (and cat) foods in a human food manufacturing location. In order to do this, every ingredient in the formula must be 100% "edible" – legally defined as "human food." The Honest Kitchen offers seven "complete and balanced" dehydrated canine diets (as per the AAFCO nutrient guidelines). Four of the complete diets are grain-free/gluten-free: beef, chicken, fish, and turkey. Three other varieties (beef, chicken, turkey) contain grain and are less expensive. A complete nutrient profile for each product is posted on the company's website. The legal "human grade" status is just a start; the company also requires all of its ingredient suppliers to sign a "vendor pledge" for each ingredient, attesting that the ingredients are non-GMO and contain no chemical preservatives; that a "country of origin" statement is included with each ingredient (and that no ingredients are sourced from China); that the meat ingredients are humanely farmed and harvested; and that sustainability and fair-trade attributes have been used to procure the ingredients. THK also asks for verification of screening for Salmonella, e-Coli, Coliform, lead, arsenic, mercury, and melamine. The products come in a powdered form containing chunks of identifiable dehydrated foods. Available direct from the company, in select independent pet supply stores, and from some online retailers.</p>	<p>The Honest Kitchen's "Love" formula contains beef, sweet potatoes, potatoes, organic flax-seed, organic coconut, parsley, dandelion greens, papaya, cranberries, pumpkin, honey, rosemary extract, and vitamin/mineral sources.</p> <p>31% protein, 18.5% fat, 7% fiber, 7.8% moisture 514 kcal/cup</p>
<p>ZiwiPeak Carmel, CA (877) 464-9494 ziwipeak.com</p>	<p>ZiwiPeak says its "air-dried" "complete and balanced" canine diets (as per the AAFCO nutrient guidelines), contain as much as 90 percent animal protein, including raw muscle meat and organs – awesome. That explains the moist jerky-like appearance of the food. Note that because the moisture content of ZiwiPeak's dried diets is higher than the other foods discussed here (and even higher than the moisture content of conventional kibble), it does not require rehydration. ZiwiPeak is available in three varieties: lamb, venison, and venison/fish. ALL of the fresh venison, lamb, beef, shellfish, and seafood in ZiwiPeak's foods are sourced in New Zealand; the products are made in New Zealand, too. According to ZiwiPeak, the products contain NO sugars, salt, glycerines, antibiotics, hormones, preservatives, colorings, grains, or potatoes. A complete nutrient profile for each product is available on the company's website (this makes us so happy). Available direct from the company and in select independent pet supply stores.</p>	<p>ZiwiPeak's Lamb Formula contains 56% lamb meat (including up to 3% finely ground bone); 34% lamb liver, lung, tripe, heart, and kidney; 3% New Zealand green-lipped mussel, lecithin, chicory inulin, dried kelp, parsley, and vitamin/mineral sources.</p> <p>33% protein, 27% fat, 1.5% fiber, 15% moisture 3,800 kcal/kg</p> 



PHOTOS BY ANN MIYA

ACTION PLAN

Members of the Santa Cruz Dog Training Club work on teaching their dogs to “sit pretty.” Fun tricks such as these keep dogs engaged – and their handlers motivated.

Not Just for Fun

Five ways that teaching your dog to do “tricks” can improve your training.

BY MARDI RICHMOND, MA, CPDT-KA

High-five. Fetch. Jump through a hoop. Spin, twirl, and take a bow. There is no doubt that tricks are fun to train, and even more fun to show off to friends and family. But they are so much more than just a good time! Here are five things tricks can do for you, your dog, and your training.

1 TRICKS BUILD RELATIONSHIPS. When we sit on the floor and teach our pups to chase after a toy and bring it back, we are training a fun and useful trick. Perhaps more importantly, we are also engaging in one of the prime human-dog bonding behaviors—play! When we have fun with our dogs, our bond grows.

Certain tricks can also help you and your dog feel more comfortable with each other. Tricks where dogs interact with our bodies, such as leg weaves, help them learn to watch for our feet (especially good for smaller dogs), and to tolerate things people do to invade dogs’ “space,” such as stepping over them.

2 TEACHING TRICKS LETS THE TRAINER HONE HER SKILLS. Teaching tricks helps people practice important training skills with less stress. It’s easy to forgive errors when you are teaching a just-for-fun trick, such as roll over or

play possum. You can learn from your mistakes, and then apply what you’ve learned to other behaviors that may be more critical in day-to-day life.

Training with tricks also gives you the opportunity to try different techniques. Because it’s easier to teach some tricks through “shaping,” and to teach others with a lure of a treat or toy, and still others with gentle prompts, training tricks can help you experiment with a variety of ways to jump-start behaviors.

3 TRICKS ARE A GREAT WAY TO HELP A DOG LEARN THE TRAINING GAME. Training is essentially a game we play with our dogs. The end result of the game is to help them learn to respond to certain cues. Like any game, training has its own set of rules. Some of those rules are fairly obvious: The dog needs to pay attention; the person needs to keep the dog’s attention; a click or yes means a treat is coming. But some are a little more

subtle: when the handler is “shaping,” the dog gets to try out different things; when the handler plays the lure and reward game, the dog’s nose should follow the treat.

Training tricks can also help a dog to learn an individual handler’s communication style and signals. Since we all have different ways of communicating – we use different tones, words, body language, and expressions – “just for fun” trick training builds the dog’s familiarity with the handler’s nuances. It may also help the handler learn to communicate more clearly with her dog.

4 TRICKS CAN SIGNAL THE DOG THAT IT’S TIME TO RELAX AND HAVE FUN. For dogs, trick training is often enjoyable and even relaxing. Just the act of doing tricks can shift a dog’s emotional state from tense to relaxed. You can use the emotions created by tricks in a variety of situations. For example, if you have a dog who is nervous about vet visits, you can practice tricks while you wait in the reception area and exam room as a way to help your dog remain calm and happy.

Specific tricks can also be a helpful way to encourage a specific mental state. For example, take a dog who is uncomfortable with other dogs. If the dog knows a play bow, you can ask the dog to do that trick in the presence of other dogs, say at a dog class (where everyone is on leash and at a safe distance). Your dog may relax a little more because he is doing a trick. Other dogs may view the play bow as a friendly gesture and may respond accordingly. As the other dogs respond in a friendly manner, your dog may relax even more, similar to how a smile begets a smile in other humans.

5 TRICKS CAN BE USED TO BUILD IMPORTANT SKILLS. Tricks can be the foundation for other behaviors. For example, once your dog knows that hand targeting (bumping his nose into your hand) is fun and earns rewards, you can use that trick to prompt other behaviors

such as return to heel and to stand from a down.

Tricks can also help a dog learn to accept things she is not always happy about. Paw tricks like “shake” can help a dog become accustomed to paw handling. This may help a dog learn to accept checking between toes for foxtails or even nail clipping.

Some tricks have their own very practical applications. For example retrievers

can be channeled into a dog fetching the newspaper in the morning or bringing your slippers in the evening.

Tricks can also be an outlet for exuberant dogs. High energy or over-excited dogs are often required to be calm and contain themselves. Tricks, such as skipping, spinning, and jumping can give active dogs an energy release and a structured way to be a little wild and expressive, without getting into trouble.

Trick training offers both the dog and handler a lot more than just fun. Of course, entertainment value alone is enough for tricks; they really are just a great way to spend time, have fun and play with your dog! 🐾

Mardi Richmond, MA, CPDT-KA, writer, dog enthusiast, and trainer, lives in Santa Cruz, CA, with her partner and a wonderful heeler-mix named Chance.

LOOKING FOR A FUN TRICK TO TEACH TO YOUR DOG? TRY “TAKE A BOW!”

The trick “Take a Bow!” is basically an exaggerated play bow, put on cue. The first part of training any trick is figuring out how to get the dog to do the behavior. A bow is a great example of how different methods can be effective with different dogs. You can teach a bow by capturing, shaping, or luring. My favorite method for this particular trick involves a physical prompt (a tummy tickle) and a lure (to bring the nose to the ground) and shaping (using approximations to get to the final behavior). Here’s how:

- ✓ Start with your dog standing in front of you, his body perpendicular to yours, with his head facing to your right (you can be kneeling or standing, depending on the size of your dog).
- ✓ Gently place your left hand under your dog’s belly for a light tummy tickle (this is just to help your dog keep his rear in the air and not lie down).
- ✓ With a treat in your right hand, lure your dog’s head slightly down and toward his front feet. Click (or use a verbal marker, such as the word “Yes!”) and reward your dog for any body movement that is back and toward the ground, gradually encouraging your dog into the bow. Take this step slowly so you don’t accidentally lure your dog into a down.

- ✓ Once your dog has the general idea, remove your hand from under her belly. When you remove your hand, you may need to go back a step or two and reward the approximations.
- ✓ Gradually fade the treat lure at this stage, moving from a lure to a hand signal or verbal cue.
- ✓ The location where you give your dog the treat is always important in training. For this behavior, try giving your dog the treat slightly up from the position at first (so that you do not draw her into a down while treating). At this stage, it is OK if she does a quick bow, then moves up for her treat.
- ✓ Once she happily offers a quick bow and bounces up for the treat, you can begin pausing a moment before “marking” the behavior (with a click or “Yes!”) so that she learns to stay in the position a moment longer. You can gradually extend the bow to a few seconds or until you offer a release such as “free” or “OK.”

Tip: The bow can be a physically stressful position for some dogs. Practice this trick in short 2 to 3 repetition sessions rather than a prolonged training session. Keep your dog wanting more!



Author Mardi Richmond shows how to start teaching the bow. Richmond uses her left hand to let Chance know she doesn’t want Chance to lie down.



Richmond continues to tickle Chance’s tummy (to keep her hind end standing up!) while luring the dog’s front end backward and downward.



As Chance gains understanding of and confidence in performing the trick, Richmond adds a cue: sweeping a hat off her head in her own bow.

Discussing an Unspeakable Habit

How to deal with a dog who eats poop.

BY VIVIANE ARZOUMANIAN, CPDT-KA, CBCC-KA, PMCT2, CBATI

Most of us find a dog's habit of eating feces to be the most disgusting thing that a dog can do. The clinical name for this behavior is coprophagy (pronounced kä - prä - fey - je), from the Greek words *copro*, which means feces, and *phagy*, which means eat.

The habit is not just revolting to us humans, it's also potentially harmful to the dog's health – although it's less dangerous if the dog eats only his own feces and is parasite-free. A dog can become infected with internal parasites (worms) by eating feces from a dog who is already infected. The highly infectious parvovirus is also shed in feces, posing a risk to a coprophagic dog.

There are many theories to explain why some dogs do this, and at least as many suggested remedies. They range

from the somewhat scientific to the hopeful. A multitude of remedies can be found through veterinarians, dog trainers, and local pet supply stores. Available literature and anecdotal reports suggest many things work for various dogs, and some dogs don't respond completely despite the best efforts of their caregivers.

Even though there are no definitive answers for this seemingly eternal question, don't despair. Keep reading and make as many of the changes suggested below as you reasonably can, and you

may find one or more that work for you and your poop-eating dog.

UNPROVEN THEORIES

There are a number of theories that propose reasons for dogs to engage in coprophagy, including the following:

■ **DISEASE** – Pancreatic insufficiency is one health condition linked to coprophagy, as is severe malnutrition caused by parasitic infestation.

■ **STRESS** – Coprophagy is a behavior that is much more prevalent in shelter dogs (and former shelter dogs) than in the general population and is therefore thought to be related to anxiety and stress. For some dogs, removing sources of stress can help reduce this behavior. On the other hand, it may be that more dogs are surrendered to shelters because their humans can't tolerate feces-eating.

■ **FEAR OF PUNISHMENT** – One theory suggests that dogs punished for defecating inappropriately may begin eating the evidence, in order to avoid owner disapproval.

■ **MOMMA DID IT, TOO** – Mother dogs eat their young puppies' feces in order to keep the puppies (and the puppies' environment) clean and healthy. Some very young puppies may join her in coprophagy (although many grow out of the habit if the feces-eating was motivated solely by a desire to keep the environment clean).

Some dog professionals have developed theories that place the blame for the habit on the dogs' owners. They may propose:

■ **A BIG FUSS** – If the owner makes a huge deal out of the behavior (and it's hard not to!) the possibility exists that poop takes on special importance to the dog. A dog may interpret the owner's



As much as you may want to freak out when you see your dog eating poop – or, worse, smell it on his breath when he greets you! – be advised that an over-the-top response won't help matters, and may actually increase the dog's coprophagia.

A leash is your best friend, if you own a poop-eater. You'll need to manage your dog anywhere there may be feces, to prevent him from practicing (and being rewarded by) this loathesome habit.

response as interest in, or competition for, this high-value item. A simpler explanation may be that poop eating becomes an attention-getting behavior.

■ **VALUABLE ITEM** – Some trainers and behaviorists believe that it's possible to turn poop eating into a resource-guarding behavior, for the above reason (the owner's interest in the feces). This would likely be the case if your dog growls at you over attempts to interrupt feces eating. If this is your situation, it is likely that the assistance of a qualified trainer is in order to help you address this behavior.

PREVENTION STRATEGIES

Whatever the cause of your dog's coprophagy, a solid plan for prevention through management and training is necessary. If he shows any interest in eating poop, do not delay addressing this behavior. Careful management combined with training incompatible behaviors and a bit of counter-conditioning will be invaluable.

Some possible strategies include:

- ✓ **Praising your dog as he poops.** As soon as he's done, offer him some treats, so quickly that he doesn't even think about his deposit. (You must use food rewards that your dog likes more than poop!)
- ✓ **Managing your dog with a leash:** moving him away from the feces as soon as he's done and feeding high-value, super yummy treats as you pick up the pile and move on. This can be accomplished by tossing a handful of treats on the ground (away from the poop), so you can pick up the feces without your pup trying to nose in. Remember to praise your pup all the while for eating the treats and ignoring the poop.
- ✓ **Classically conditioning your dog to associate feces with good stuff from you.** The second you



notice that he has zeroed in on a pile of poop, stick a yummy treat in front of his nose; if you are consistent and use high-value treats, soon your dog will look at you for a treat whenever he notices poop. Be ready to reinforce this behavior at any time!

- ✓ **If you already have a clicker-trained dog, using operant conditioning.** Click or verbally mark your dog for noticing feces and immediately treat. You can do this with deliberate set-ups or during any walk when a pile of poop is spotted.
- ✓ **Teaching your feces-loving dog "leave-it" is a must.** Always reward him handsomely for "leaving" feces. Trained to great fluency, a behavior like "Leave it," will give you great control over your dog in this and many other situations.
- ✓ **Training an incompatible behavior.** For example, teach your dog to sit and look at you for a series of treats immediately after pooping; he cannot do this and eat poop at the same time!
- ✓ **Conditioning your dog to love wearing a muzzle.** This will be of some help, though a determined dog may still dive for feces unless you use some of the other strategies suggested here.

✓ **Using a substance with an unpleasant taste to make coprophagy aversive.** This will only work for dogs who eat other dogs' feces, so that it can be tainted in advance without the dog seeing it done. Otherwise the dog may learn to avoid only the feces that he has seen being sprinkled with icky stuff.

✓ **Managing your dog during elimination even in your yard.** All pooping must be supervised with your dog on leash. The behaviors that dogs practice and enjoy increase; ones they never get a chance to engage in decrease and eventually extinguish. Don't give your dog the opportunity to practice feces-eating. Ever!

✓ **Keeping the yard completely free of feces.** Very scrupulous management will stop the dog from practicing the habit.

✓ **Never using punishment when trying to fix this problem.** Punishment is highly unlikely to work and could, for reasons stated earlier, easily make the problem worse.

DIETARY APPROACH

Some animal care professionals believe that coprophagy may be related to dietary deficiencies. Improving (or just changing) the dog's diet might address

any nutritional deficits that could possibly contribute to this behavior.

- ✓ Switch to a higher-quality commercial food with higher protein and fat content, and lower carbohydrates.
- ✓ Feed high-quality raw or a home-cooked diet.
- ✓ Add nutritional yeast (also called brewer's yeast) to your dog's daily meals to supply necessary B vitamins and thiamine).
- ✓ Add a commercial product to the dog's food that gives the dog's feces an unpleasant taste. This is worth trying if the dog only eats his own feces. These products can be found on-line or at local pet supply stores.
- ✓ Add digestive enzymes, on the theory that undigested matter in poop attracts the dog to eat it. This will be helpful only if the dog eats his own feces. Digestive enzymes can be found in health food stores and pet supply stores.



Here's a variation on a disgusting theme: Poop-ROLLING. Theories abound as to the possible reasons why some dogs roll in any sort of feces they can find. This habit is best addressed in much the same way as coprophagia, chiefly, through assiduous management (i.e., a leash).

BOOKS THAT CAN HELP YOU TRAIN AND TIRE YOUR DOG

- ❖ **PLAYTIME FOR YOUR DOG: KEEP HIM BUSY THROUGHOUT THE DAY** by Christina Sondermann. 2008, Cadmos. 125 pages. \$23.
- ❖ **PLAY TOGETHER, STAY TOGETHER: HAPPY AND HEALTHY PLAY BETWEEN PEOPLE AND DOGS**, by Patricia McConnell and Karen London 2008, McConnell Publishing Ltd. 90 pages. \$13.
- ❖ **PLAY WITH YOUR DOG** by Pat Miller. 2008, Dogwise Publishing. 152 pages. \$15.

- ✓ When feces-eating questions show up on training and dog owner groups on the Internet, supplements like pineapple, papaya, and MSG are often mentioned as possible remedies. Based on my reading on the dog lists, few people actually report success with using these.

LIFESTYLE CHANGES

If your dog's feces-eating is caused by stress, you can make lifestyle changes to reduce the likelihood of coprophagy.

- ✓ Schedule sufficient and appropriate exercise and play for your dog every day; a tired dog is a better-behaved dog. Make sure the activities you choose are age- and health-appropriate, and leave your pup tired and relaxed. An on-leash walk, even a long one, may not be the kind of tiring aerobic exercise that will help. Your dog needs a real romp, such as playing with other dogs at the dog park, an extended game of fetch, jogging or romping in the woods with you, or swimming in a pond or pool.
- ✓ Schedule an in-depth health exam to rule out pancreatic insufficiency or malnutrition (especially in a recently rescued dog).
- ✓ Dogs need to use their brains and their bodies in fun and challenging ways to stay emotionally healthy. If your dog doesn't know basic good manners behaviors, teach these. In particular, focus on teaching your

dog calm behaviors that promote self-control, such as:

- Sit to "Say please"
 - Leave it or Off
 - Drop it
 - Down/stay
- ✓ Be sure to provide your dog with lots of interesting (to the dog!) chew toys, puzzles, and food-dispensing toys.

If none of the activities listed above work for your dog or your lifestyle, there are some excellent books available with ideas for fun ways to play with your dog, both indoors and out. Some of them include training simple tricks, and none require expensive equipment. See the box above for three excellent books on how to encourage and structure play with dogs. If you think your dog doesn't know how to play, these books are definitely for you!

TRY EVERYTHING

Despite the revulsion we bipeds experience at the thought of feces eating, coprophagy is not uncommon in dogs. The good news is that for most dogs it is a modifiable behavior. As with all canine behavior problems, implementing a careful and well crafted treatment plan will likely lead to diminishing or even ending this behavior. Consistency and a long-term approach applied with patience and planning will win the day. 🐾

Viviane Arzoumanian, CPDT-KA, CBCC-KA, PMCT2, CBATI, trains dogs professionally and for various rescue organizations. She lives in Brooklyn, NY. This is her first article for WDJ. For more information about her training services, see "Resources," page 24.

My Dog, Myself

When you become a “dog person,” don’t forget the second part of that phrase.

BY DENISE FLAIM

I don’t know where I picked it up, but it elicits a chuckle each time I repeat it to someone new. “God made dogs,” the joke goes, “and the Devil made dog clubs.”

If you are involved in dogs outside the four walls of your home – competing in performance events like agility or obedience, helping out with a rescue group, going to your local dog park – then, inescapably, you are involved with dog people. And no matter what the context, or how altruistic the goal, any time more than two people gather in the name of something they are passionate about, there are politics – and drama, mama.

It’s fitting (and not a little ironic) that dogs evolved to be our companions around the prehistoric garbage dump, because dealing with our unwanted baggage has become an inevitable part of the relationship.

All this isn’t to say that we shouldn’t band together to celebrate the species that is such an important part of our lives – how unrewarding would that be? But the more you get involved in the “dog world” – whether it’s your local obedience class or doing a star turn on the green carpet at Westminster – at some point you’ll likely find yourself grappling with a variety of emotions and dilemmas, and they are hardly ever brought on by the dogs themselves. Personality conflicts, head games, territorial imperatives, competitiveness so overt it would make

even the steeliest soccer mom cringe – these are part and parcel of being “doggie” in this day and age.

Because the best defense is a good offense, here are some things to keep in mind if your goal is to have a balanced, healthy relationship not just with your dogs, but with the people who share your passion for them.

■ **DON’T BE JUDGMENTAL.** Like any culture, our doggie version has societal norms that are “supposed” to be observed, as well as its share of taboos. We judge people based on all kinds of things – where they acquired their dog, what kind of dog it is, whether they spay or neuter, where their dog sleeps at night,

what training systems they use, even what kind of food they feed.

Take that last one for a minute. I may think feeding raw is the healthiest option for my dog, and that’s okay. But it’s not okay if that leads me to conclude that anyone who feeds kibble is uneducated or uncaring about her dog’s welfare. Enthusiasm over hard-won discoveries about your dog is nothing but natural, but avoid becoming a proselytizer who can’t see the benefit in other people’s choices. Accept that you know what works for you and your dog, but don’t make other people feel bad about making different choices. Who knows? Maybe your friend can’t feed raw because she has an immunocompromised child, or she flat out can’t afford it. You don’t want to be the oblivious Boy Scout who is helping the little old lady cross the street ... with her hitting him over the head with her umbrella all the while, because that’s not the way she was heading.

We’re all not in the same place on this journey, and how boring would it be if we were? Remember how clueless you were when you got your first dog? You may have even embraced certain ideas or beliefs that today you find reprehensible. Does that make you a bad or unworthy person, then or today?

It is a slippery slope: Often, the more we know about our corner of the dog world, the lower our tolerance level. For example, when they encounter those who use punishment as part of their

Try not to make a face when you spot another owner using gear or a training technique you don’t approve of. Be friendly! You’ll have a greater chance to discuss it with the owner if you don’t alienate her first thing.



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training repertoire, there are some “purely positive” trainers who react in a way that can only be termed aversive. There’s a delicious irony there, don’t you think? Better to follow their own training advice: Reward the behaviors you like, and ignore those you don’t.

Years ago I followed a bully breed rescuer for a story I was writing. He basically drove around a gritty neighborhood, cajoling street toughs to give up their fighting and breeding dogs. I asked him, probably with more than a tinge of righteousness, how he screened his homes – his placement process seemed a little, well, slipshod to me.

“It doesn’t have to be a perfect home,” he told me, as we cruised past a pittie living in a sawed-off oil drum. “It just has to be better than what the dog has today.”

It was an imperfect solution for an imperfect world, but it was better than nothing. Especially if you were the dog.

■ **DON'T CUT YOURSELF ON THE COMPETITIVE EDGE.** Dogs are such willing partners with us, it's no wonder



Your dog's value is not determined by how fast he can hurtle through an agility tunnel, or how gorgeous his turn of shoulder or head planes are. He is valuable because he is yours.

that the list of formal activities that we can do with them seems to grow longer every day. Obedience, agility, tracking, flyball, rally, nosework, dock diving, doggie dancing – and those are just some of the “every dog” ones, let alone specialized competitions such as lure-coursing, herding, or field trials.

But if you're not careful, winning can turn you into the equivalent of a coin-stuffer parked in front of a casino slot machine: The wins are so addictive, they impart such a high, that soon you need more and more to maintain that same level of euphoria.

The problem, of course, is that you can't hit a homer every time you're at bat – or in front of the agility start line, or waiting at the white-fence entrance to the show ring. Kids in Little League are taught this, but many of us seem to have forgotten it. If leaving an event with the biggest and best ribbon is your only goal, you are setting yourself up for disappointment. In “sports” we compare ourselves to the competition, but in “sportsmanship,” we take our performance out of that context. Sportsmanship is defined as “an aspiration or ethos that a sport or activity will be enjoyed for its own sake” – without assigning blame, or reacting with negativity or pettiness.

Whenever I find myself heading into a weekend of dog shows, I never make winning my only goal. I aspire to it, of course, but there's nothing more self-defeating than setting a goal that needs to be legitimized from outside. Instead, I make myself the arbiter of my own success, and thus I have complete control over it. I might tell myself, “This weekend, my goal is to have one conversation with someone that leaves me richer in knowledge than when I arrived.” Or: “My goal is to show my dog to her best advantage, with a palpable sense of enthusiasm and pride, so that everyone at ringside can see her quality and value.” Or, better yet: “I am going to have fun with my dog.”

It's easier said than done, but it comes quicker the more you practice.

■ **CHOOSE YOUR PACK CAREFULLY.**

Like dogs, we dog people tend to arrange ourselves in a hierarchy. And it's fine to have a group of like-minded dog friends that you hang out with, who are your support system and with whom you have shared interests. After all, most humans like to categorize and order our world –

Try to remember what it was like to meet more educated or accomplished owners when you were a newbie – and then be nicer and more welcoming to folks who are less experienced than you.

the narrower the pigeonhole, the more comfortable the fit. To that end, terrier people like to hang with terrier people, high-octane agility folk gravitate toward fellow competitors with high-speedsters, rescue folk seek out kindred spirits who know the challenges of the path they have chosen.

But sometimes these different “camps” can be as limiting as high school cliques. It’s a good idea to cast your net as wide as possible, because you never know what you’ll learn next, or who will teach it to you. For example, you probably couldn’t come up with two more opposite groups than purebred dog breeders and mixed-breed animal rescuers, but just imagine what the two could learn from each other if there were open, meaningful, non-confrontational dialogue.

Of course, there are always head cases. There’s one in every crowd, and oftentimes there are two or three. It’s no surprise that some dog people bring their own emotional baggage and unresolved issues with them. And when they do, wherever they are – the dog run, the training class, the rally ring – becomes their personal stage.

The “games people play” are endless – you’d do well to pick up a copy of the classic Eric Berne book of the same title to get a sense of how pervasive and sophisticated they can be. But you don’t need a degree in transactional analysis to navigate them. Instead, just take a cue from the dogs: Approach non-confrontationally, throw lots of calming signals, and avoid getting sucked into the drama.

■ DON’T LIVE THROUGH YOUR DOG.

Your self-worth shouldn’t be tied to what your dog does, or what other people think about it. If your dog flipped out at the training class, or spent the afternoon being a serial-humper at the dog park, or got the zoomies during the off-leash heel at an obedience competition, that doesn’t make you a bad dog person, any more than it makes your dog a bad dog.

Dogs, like people, are not static creatures. They change and grow and evolve just like we do. Whatever your



puppy is like at six months is sure to be very different from what he is at six years – or even at one year, for that matter. Don’t take the ups and downs to heart, because they are ephemeral and don’t matter in the long run. What matters are the memories that you make and the connections you foster.

In some of the highest levels of competition, or in intensely competitive social interactions, people do tend to make value judgments about the dogs around them. But these judgments are based on what is prized in that context. Your dog’s inherent value is not determined by how fast he can hurtle through an agility tunnel, or how gorgeous his turn of shoulder or head planes are, or how neat a sit he can execute, or how many people ogle him at the dog run, though those are understandable sources of pride. He is valuable because he is *yours*.

Whenever you are involved in an activity that takes a lot of emotional, mental, and physical effort – whether it’s rehabilitating a near-feral, neglected Yorkie out of a hoarder’s house, or readying your pit-mix for an advanced obedience title – it can be easy to lose perspective on what’s important. And in the end, what matters most is the relationship between you and your dog.

“Dogs aren’t our whole life, but they make our lives whole,” Roger Caras famously said. Because they offer such unconditional love, and because we can control and, yes, manipulate them so effortlessly, dogs can become an

appealing substitute for human company.

I know plenty of dog people who have missed monumental family occasions because they had “dog stuff” to do. Again, I don’t judge, so maybe that was the right decision for them. But we can become so immersed in our dog life that sometimes we forget to put it in the proper perspective. Your dog doesn’t care if she is running through the weave poles in the backyard or at the highest-profile trial of the year. She just knows that she is running with you, and that is all that matters.

The activities that you and your dog share with the larger dog community can be fun, fulfilling, and rewarding. But they shouldn’t be the only things that provide those adjectives for you. Make sure yours is a balanced life. Cook dinner for friends, dig in your garden, take in a concert, dance in the rain.

■ ABOVE ALL, RECOGNIZE WHEN YOU NEED A BREAK.

Taking time away to recharge might be just what you need to get a clear perspective on things. Clubs, events, rescue, and competition will be there when you get back. But the most important ingredient, the one thing that got you involved in all this to begin with – your dog – will still be at your side. Come to think of it, he never left. 🐾

Denise Flaim of Revodana Ridgebacks in Long Island, New York, shares her home with three Ridgebacks, three 9-year-old children, and a very patient husband.

Potty Time

How to train your dog to reliably potty outside, and let you know when she has to go.

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

House training concerns are probably as old as the roots of our relationship with *canis familiaris*. I suspect prehistoric humans were as unhappy about having those early canids poop and pee in their caves as we are today when we find a pile or puddle in the middle of the living room rug. If you have always had the good fortune to share your home with easy-to-housetrain dogs, it may come as a surprise to you – or even a shock – if your next dog is one of those who doesn't come with a well-installed “clean den” ethic.

The basics of house training are simple: take your dog outside more often than she has to go, and in between trips, supervise her well so she doesn't have the opportunity to go where she should not! Sometimes it is that easy. Sometimes it isn't. Despite the simplicity of the basic housetraining formula, there's much that can go awry.

You can prevent some of the house training missteps by going out with your dog, at least until she is trained. Take her out on-leash to her designated bathroom spot, wait until she has emptied, and then play with her before taking her back inside. This will accomplish some important things:

- ❖ Your pup will learn to potty first, so she can then play. If you let her play first and take her in as soon as she goes, she may learn to hold it as long as possible in order to prolong play. If she has to go first to make play happen, she will develop the habit of eliminating as soon as you take her outdoors. This will serve you well throughout her life, especially when you are in a hurry, or during inclement weather.

It's worth the effort it can take to teach your puppy to potty while on-leash. This skill is critical when you're in a place where it's unsafe to let her loose, such as a highway rest stop.

future clean-up and decreases accidental step-in-poo incidents.

- ❖ By teaching her to go to the bathroom on-leash early in your relationship together, you may prevent the challenge of the dog who will go to the bathroom only when off-leash.

WHAT'S THE FREQUENCY?

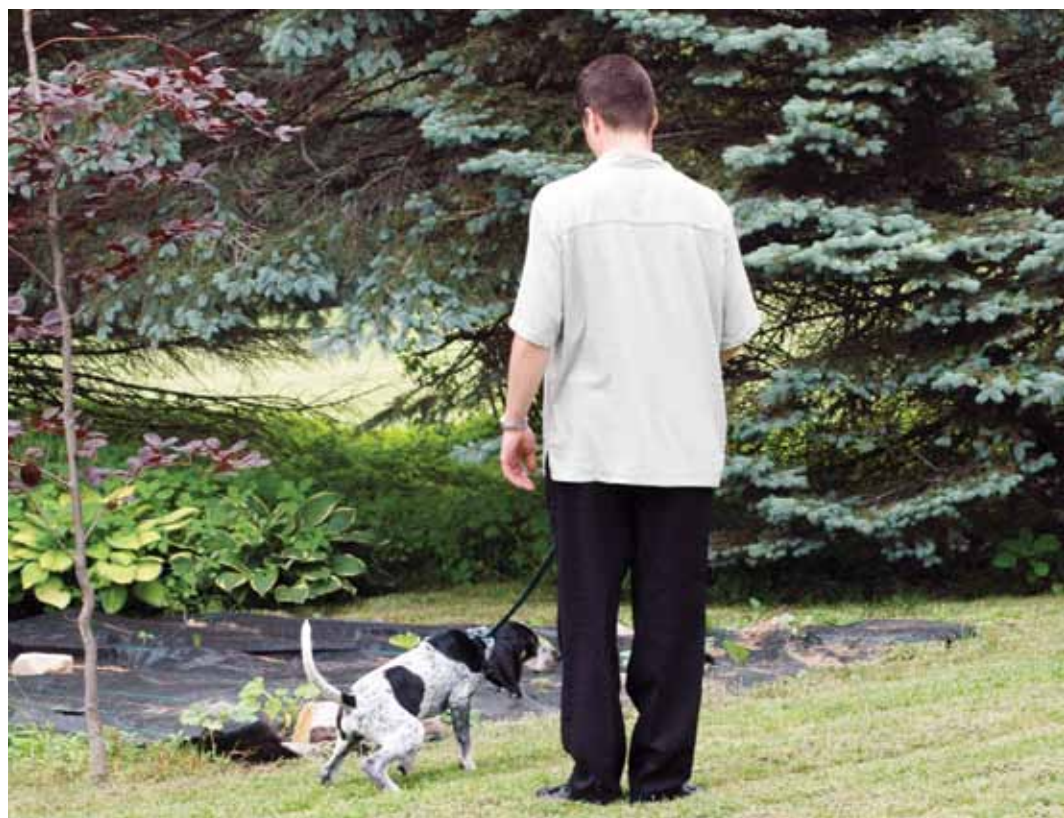
Assuming (for now) that your dog or pup has no medical or behavioral problems, how often does she have to go out? One oft-quoted rule of thumb for puppies is that they can generally hold it for up to one hour longer than their age in months. So a two-month-old pup could/should be able to refrain from eliminating for up to three hours, a three-month-old pup up to four hours, and so on. Unless she just ate, drank water, played, or woke up from a nap, in which case she's likely to have to go any minute. And since pups are almost always eating, drinking, playing, or sleeping, they are almost always ready to “go.”

So the “one-hour-longer” guideline really applies only to enforced inactivity, such as when a pup is crated overnight or while her owner is at work. A better rule for young puppies is “every hour on the hour, and anytime they have just eaten, drunk, played, or awakened from a nap.”

Most *adult* dogs, once trained, are capable of routinely holding it for six to

- ❖ If you go out with her, you will know whether or not she has emptied. If she doesn't go, especially during the training phase, you'll know to bring her back in and either re-crate her or at least keep her under direct supervision, until the next bathroom break.

- ❖ Consistently taking her directly to her designated bathroom spot will not only encourage her to go right away, but also teach her *where* to go, which facilitates



MIDGE, THE PET STORE PUPPY

Midge was a pet store puppy who, unfortunately, languished in her sales cage until the age of five months, when the Parker family took pity on her and purchased her. They knew the risks of buying a pup from a pet store, but they couldn't bear to watch the adorable Midge growing up in a cage.

When they made an appointment to come see me for a private consult, it was for other behavioral issues – primarily the fear-related behaviors that resulted from a now two-year-old Midge's lack of socialization in the puppy mill where she was born, and the pet store where she had grown up. They noted her house-soiling issues in the behavior intake form I asked them to complete, but were less concerned about that than the fear-based behavior that was escalating into biting. Recognizing that house soiling also put her at risk for losing her forever home, I convinced the Parkers that we needed to address both issues.

REVERSE CRATE TRAINING

You can't use a crate in the normal way to house train a dog who has learned to soil her bed. Normally, a dog – even a puppy – will try very hard not to soil the crate, so you confine them to prevent them from

Like many dogs who spent much of their first year in a cage, Midge was fearful of just about everything and everyone.



eight hours. While some dogs can go as long as 10 hours or more between bathroom breaks, they really shouldn't have to. Professional petsitters are a good option for midday breaks if you don't have a neighbor, friend, or family member you can trust to provide a potty opportunity.

Most humans sleep longer than four to five hours overnight, so clearly you can expect at least one oh-dark-hundred wake-up call per night during the first few weeks of your pup's new life with you. Make sure your baby dog is crated near enough to you that you can hear her when she wakes up and cries to go out – and make sure you do get up and take her out – or you risk one of the behavioral problems discussed below.

Nighttime bathroom trips should be all business. On leash, go out, eliminate, come back in, and go to bed. If you include play or cuddling, you may teach

your pup to wake you up for wee-hour fun even when she no longer has to empty her bowels and bladder overnight.

The good news is that many pups beat the rule and can sleep through the night by the time they are four months old – in part because they are not eating, drinking, playing, or waking up. You may get that longed-for night of uninterrupted sleep sooner than you think!

GETTING THROUGH THE EARLY DAYS

These days, a majority of dog owners work outside the home for a full eight hours plus commute. If you are a stay-at-home mom or dad, work from a home office, or have other housemates who work different shifts and can share puppy

eliminating. Not so with Midge – in her mind she was *supposed* to eliminate in her crate. So we did the opposite: the Parkers started putting Midge in her crate only when they knew she had eliminated recently. At first they crated her for a maximum of 10 to 15 minutes, and then gave her supervised house freedom until her next bathroom break. Then she was back in the crate for a short spell. Gradually they lengthened her time in the crate, always removing her before she felt the need to eliminate, so she wouldn't be tempted. If they had to leave her alone they left her in the bathroom, where she had a "legal" potty corner. The goal was to rebuild her natural inhibitions against soiling her bed.

I initially saw Midge some six months ago. It's taking some time to resolve her fear issues, but she's made very happy progress in housetraining. She is now able to be crated for up to four hours

during the day while her humans are away, and is immediately taken to eliminate outside when family or the pet sitter arrives at the home. She can be crated overnight in the Parker's bedroom without a halftime potty break. She has been accident-free for the past four months, and is no longer supervised closely when loose in the house with her owners at home. The Parkers are delighted with her new house-training skills, and continue to work diligently to modify her fearfulness.

training duty, you can skip this next part. If your pup must be left alone for long hours, read on. There aren't many (any?) young pups who can go 6 to 10 hours without eliminating – nor should they have to. If you adopt a puppy and work outside the home you have several options:

- ✓ Take her to work with you. You can only do this, of course, if you have a workplace that allows it, and a workload that can accommodate a puppy's needs.
- ✓ Hire a petsitter to come in as many times as needed during the day to make sure all your pup's waste ends up outdoors where it belongs. For a young pup, this is at least two, perhaps three visits during a workday. Depending on where you live, this could cost anywhere from \$15 to \$40 per visit.

✓ Leave her with someone responsible that you trust to look after her, take her out often, supervise her activities, and reinforce the positive dog-human relationship that you are building with her. (Doggy daycare is not an appropriate place for a young puppy unless they have a completely separate puppies-only group and monitor the interactions very closely to ensure that all puppies are having a happy time.)

✓ Leave her at home indoors in an exercise pen large enough for her to have a designated potty corner and still keep the rest of her bedroom clean. (Lay a tarp on the floor, cover it with newspapers, and put

your puppy pen on top.) Note: You should be aware that this option may make it more challenging to eventually convince her to only eliminate out-of-doors.

✓ Set up a very secure, weather-proof outdoor kennel area where she can stay during the day. (This is my least favorite option. I don't believe dogs should be outdoors all day when their owners aren't home, you risk annoying neighbors with her barking – and possible retribution such as theft or poisoning – and your dog still lacks the opportunity to learn not to soil her living area.)

If you are able to take your dog out

more often than she has to go, your training efforts should pay off in a reasonable time with clean carpets, uninterrupted sleep, and a dog who knows her bathroom is outside. If you are unable to do the above, you need to seriously rethink your dog/puppy-owning plan.

A CANINE LITTER BOX

As a suburban or rural dweller for most of my life, I've always had the luxury of a backyard for my dogs. City dwellers often must alter house-training procedures to accommodate urban living. If you live on the 23rd floor of an apartment, there's no way you'll get your pup down the elevator and out the door before she has to empty her bladder.

If this describes your living situation, consider a litter box for your dog. You can

PUT A RING ON IT! (OR A BUZZER, OR A SQUEAK . . .)

Some owners like to teach their dog to ring a bell as their bathroom signal. You can do this by teaching your dog to target her nose or paw to a bell suspended on a string from the doorknob, or to a button that causes a buzzer to go off.

✓ **Nose:** This one is usually pretty easy, since dogs are likely to sniff a novel object that we present to them. Hold the bell in your hand and offer it to your dog. When she sniffs it (or sniffs near it) click your clicker (or use a verbal marker such as the word "Yes!") and feed her a treat. Repeat until she is eagerly nudging the bell with her nose in order to get you to mark-and-treat. Add your "Want to go out?" cue just before you offer the bell for her to nudge. Now lower the bell an inch on its string, and click and treat for nudging. As you let the string get longer and longer, start only clicking nudges that are hard enough to make the bell jingle.

When she'll consistently make it jingle at full string length, hang it on the doorknob and continue the lessons. When she can easily jingle the hanging bell on cue, start cueing it right before you take her out to potty. Gradually increase the distance you are from the door when you give the cue, and before long she'll be offering the behavior on her own when she needs to go out.



Otto already knows the "touch" behavior, so getting him to touch the bells took just a matter of moments. However, he wasn't crazy about their ringing. Shaping the behavior so that he rings them heartily enough to hear will take a few sessions.

✓ **Paw:** If your dog already knows a cue for "Shake hands," ask her to "Shake" while holding the bell in the palm of your hand. After a few of these, precede the "Shake" cue with your new "potty bell" cue, whatever you want that to be. In short order, she will tap the bell in your hand with her paw on the bathroom cue, and you can drop the "Shake" cue, reserving that for when you really want her to shake. Gradually lengthen the string and follow the directions above to teach her to paw the bell as her bathroom cue to you.

If your dog doesn't already know a cue for "Shake hands," you can prompt her to paw at your hand by holding a treat in your closed fist (click and treat!) until she offers the behavior easily, then transfer it to the bathroom bell. Or you can shape the behavior by clicking her for any paw movement at first, gradually clicking only for paw movements that come closer to ringing the bell, and eventually only for those that ring the bell. (See "The Shape of Things to Come," WDJ March 2006.)

✓ **Squeak:** Dogs who enjoy playing with squeaky toys may take to this alternative to bells. Use the shaping process described above to cue your dog to grab and squeak the toy, and then move the game to the door to your yard. With a zip-tie or string, fasten the squeaky toy to the door handle, at a height where it's easy for your dog to reach and mouth it, but not low enough to make it easy to chew.



Ah, this is far more to Otto's liking; he loves squeaky toys. A new product from the Kong Company, the "Pull & Squeak Cylinder" has rope loops at each end, making it perfect for this application.

use real sod, fake grass (Astro-turf), or even litter box material made for dogs. If you have a balcony, you can put your canine litter box there, and housetrain just as you would if you were taking your dog outside. Absent a balcony, set your litter box up in the chosen room of your apartment and housetrain there just as you would in a backyard. (If you have a male dog, you can put a secure post in your potty-box upon which he can lift his leg and still keep the urine within the confines of the box. Install a splash shield behind the post if necessary.)

SIGNALS

A “gotta go” signal can facilitate housetraining. When your dog knows she can tell you she has to go out, there is less responsibility on you to make sure you take her out more often than she has to go; she will let you know when it’s time. Here are two methods for teaching your dog to communicate her bathroom needs to you.

✓ **Get happy** – This is my preferred method. It’s simple, and dogs learn it almost by osmosis. Every time I take my dog out for a bathroom break I get excited and say, “Want to go out?!” She gets excited and dances around in response to my excitement, and in fairly short order will offer the bathroom dance when she needs to go out. If you want your dog to bark to tell you she needs out, increase the excitement level until she barks, then take her out. I like this method because my dog will come and find me in order to deliver the signal.

✓ **Ring a bell** – Some owners like to teach their dogs to ring a bell hung on the doorknob when they need to go out. To do this, teach your dog to ring a bell on a string by either nose or paw targeting (See “Ring It!” on the facing page), then hang the bell on the preferred doorknob and ask your dog to ring it every time you take her out for a potty break. One downside to this method, especially if you live in a large house, is that you need to be close enough to the potty door to hear the bell when it rings. If your house is too large for this and you



There are a number of commercial litterboxes made for dogs. Some contain real turf; others use artificial grass. Some are made for porches or patios; others are safe for indoor use. They are perfect for many dogs (especially small ones).

want to use this method, you will need to install an electronic bell or buzzer and have speakers installed throughout the house.

COMPLICATIONS

Of course, if housetraining were always as simple as it sounds, we wouldn’t need articles written about it. There are a number of things that can go wrong, even if you do all the things described above. Such as:

■ **MEDICAL ISSUES** – Anything that upsets your dog’s normal patterns of elimination can complicate house training. These might include urinary tract infections, gastrointestinal upset or illness that causes diarrhea, mobility issues that make it difficult for your dog to get outside quickly, dietary or schedule changes, and consumption of some medications (such as prednisone) that cause increased water intake and subsequent increase in urinary output. Any time there is an unexplained house-training lapse in an adult otherwise house-trained dog, consider and explore whether there may be a medical issue.

■ **STRESS** – Anxiety or stress can create an increased need for elimination. Dogs who suffer from separation or isolation stress often urinate and/or defecate during a stress episode. While owners sometimes perceive this dog as being “spiteful,” he is not. *He can’t help it.* He’s stressed.

■ **PRIOR HISTORY** – Some dogs have a prior history of house- or crate-soiling. The worst of these are dogs from puppy mill or hoarder environments, where dogs live for months (or years) in tiny cages and have had no choice but to eliminate where they live (See “Midge, the Puppy Store Puppy,” on page 17). Their inhibitions against soiling their own living quarters are damaged, and it can be very challenging to repair. It sometimes requires a very strong commitment to help these dogs learn new, appropriate bathroom habits.

■ SUBMISSIVE AND/OR EXCITEMENT URINATION –

“Submissive urination” is a social signal. The dog who offers this behavior usually has an appeasing personality, and pees when she is approached, spoken to, or perhaps patted on the head, as her way of saying, “I am not challenging you.”

In contrast, “excitement urination” is more likely a function of a weak bladder sphincter – a dog who gets so excited she just “pees her pants.” You can talk to your vet about this one, but a good remedy for both of these is to 1) not punish for the behavior, as they are both beyond the dog’s deliberate control; and 2) take the dog out to empty her bladder before greeting her (or allowing others to greet her), and/or greeting her outdoors so the pee ends up where it belongs.

DON’T SKIMP ON THIS

There really is no excuse for failing to house-train your dog. Dogs who soil their homes are likely to lose them. The “moving, can’t keep” reason for giving up a dog to a shelter or rescue is often a screen for, “Moving, don’t want the carpets in our new home soiled the way the old ones were.” If you want your dog to go with you on all your future moves, make sure she always knows where the bathrooms are, and how to “hold it” until she gets there. 🐾

Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, CDBC, is WDJ’s Training Editor. She lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center, where she offers dog training classes and courses for trainers. See page 24 for information about Pat’s books and academies for trainers.

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Exercise Your Dog, Not Yourself

Games you can play if you are physically impaired, but your dog is raring to go.

BY SHARI A. MANN

How to exercise yourself at the same time you exercise your dog was the subject of “Fitness Together” in the April 2013 issue of WDJ. But there are many reasons the human half of the equation may not be up for much physical exercise, some permanent and some thankfully temporary. Fear not, there are ways to exercise your dog physically, whether he’s outside at the end of a leash, or inside, playing games that permit him to run around a less-than-active you. Your dog needs exercise; your job is to figure out how to meet that need, even if you can’t join in. A tired dog is a content, well-behaved, relaxed dog, one more likely to choose to snooze while his people are at work.

And choosing snoozing over chewing is more apt to let him remain in his home, allowing him to skip that sad trip to the shelter. Maybe those familiar words shelter workers hear – “I just don’t have enough time for him,” “He needs a place in the country, where he can run,” and all their variants – would be less often heard if only he was happily tucked out, instead of bored to distraction and destruction. It *is* possible to get him tired, without knocking yourself out.

Suppose for a moment you’re like me: a lifelong dog owner now in your 70s, with a young dog, large or small (I have one of each), who revels in exercise. Maybe you’re younger, but you’ve suffered an injury or required surgery. There are any number of reasons you can’t be as active as you might (or should) like to be. Here are a few ways to keep *your* exercise at a minimum, and still tire your dog.

Incorporating some games of tug into your walk can help tire a dog who needs more miles than you can walk. Practice having your dog drop the toy on cue.

TAKE A TUG

I can walk just fine, but not as far as it would take to truly tire my 6-year-old Bull Terrier, Zee. By incorporating some random games of tug into our walks, I can, however, increase her exercise while my own remains the same. You can, too! Most dogs love to tug!

On walks, we play the game on-leash. In many areas, your dog is legally required to be on-leash. Plus, it is often *safer* for your dog to be on-leash.

Fans of agility, flyball, and other high-energy sports often use brief sessions of tug as a reward for a good practice or competition run, and so catalogs (such as cleanrun.com) and pet supply stores that cater to performance sports carry a wide variety of tug toys. There are tug toys for dogs with every type of preference for the part of the toy they grip in their mouths: balls, rope, fleece, leather, rubber, and more.

Sometimes it isn’t convenient to carry a toy for your dog. I’ve added a “toy” to the handle end of my leash, a “regular” solid-color six-foot Mendota leash that attaches to my girl’s collar. My “tug toy extension” is a four-footer with similar colors in a pattern, which I clip to the handle of the six-foot solid-colored leash. So far, every dog I’ve played this game with has been able to perceive the difference between “plain” and “patterned.” Not one has ever mouthed a leash, and yet they’ve been happy to tug on the four-foot patterned extension. It’s easy enough to replace the “tug toy” leash when it becomes frayed and shortened.

My big girl loves this game, and there’s no need to carry a yucky, soggy toy in my pocket. If I’m tired of tugging, I unclip the “toy” part from the “leash” part, stick it in a clean pick-up bag, into my pocket it goes, and the game is over.

Make sure your dog follows the most basic rule of the tug game, however: If he won’t let go on cue, the game ends with an “Oops!” or “Wrong!” As long as he drops the tug toy on cue, he may earn the chance to play again. (See “Please Play Tug,” WDJ September 2008, for more about teaching your dog the rules of the tug game.)



PHOTO BY PAT MILLER

STAIRBALL

If you are blessed with a dog who enjoys retrieving, and you live in a place with stairs to other floors, or stairs to your yard, or a deck, you can play stairball!

I took up stairball many years ago, after I had sprained my ankle and could not walk. I had a puppy under a year old at the time, and she needed a lot more exercise than I could give her on crutches.

I learned that the simplest and safest way to play this game is for you to be at the bottom of the stairs, with your dog at your side. You throw the object to be retrieved *up* the stairs. Your faithful hound races up the stairs to get the toy, and then down again, gleefully dropping the toy at your feet. If your dedicated retriever is *never* clumsy, you can move to the top of the stairs and throw the object down, but there's less chance she'll trip if she's racing *up* to get the toy, rather than down.

A variation is throwing the toy from a second story deck to your fenced yard, and having your (well-coordinated adult) dog run down the stairs to search it out. In the course of potty training, my girl learned that the word "yard" meant she should go there. If your dog doesn't get it right away, employ a helper to call her to the yard, and encourage her find the toy and return it to you for another run.

There's also a chance for some nose work (see "Sniff This, You'll Feel Better," WDJ April 2013), in searching for a toy thrown into the yard; if you throw over a deck rail, it will be hard for the dog to see where the toy landed. You can throw into cover, and she'll have to sniff it out.

Repeat throws until your dog is fully exercised. Some will let you know when they've had enough and others will overdo it. *You* won't be tired, because you aren't moving much – you might even be sitting down with a tall drink at your side! So, be sensitive to signs she may be ready for rest, and stop before she's overheated.

Stairball is good practice for retrieving – informal, but with lots of fun repetitions. The pup I played this game with learned to bring the retrieved object to hand, because if she didn't, I couldn't reach it to throw it again, which she badly wanted me to do.

Stairball can be played indoors or in a long hallway. But please note: Hardwood or other slippery floors are not a good venue for these games; a dog in a rush to retrieve on a slick surface can slip and tear an ACL all too easily.

LOONEYBALL

This is an outdoor game, played mostly on a sandy surfaces, since it involves great leaping and pounding, and that can be hard on the joints. Grass is fine when there's no beach handy.

What a great game for satisfying prey drive! My dogs are never allowed to chase any living thing (well, except another dog, in play); looneyball offers a substitute. "Here's something you *can* chase, and you can kill it if you can catch it."

Equipment is needed, but making it isn't difficult. Take a broom handle or dowel of a similar diameter, and saw off a section about 30 inches long. Smooth the cut end of the handle part with sandpaper if you have any; if not, you can skip this step. Drill a hole large enough that a shoelace will run freely through it. Run your thong through the hole (a leather shoelace works well) and knot it securely.

Now you need a large, heavy-duty balloon on a long rubber band. These balloons, often called "punch balls," are a made of thicker material than ordinary party balloons, and the necessary rubber band is attached to each one. I get mine from Oriental Trading Company (orientaltrading.com) but they are not hard to find elsewhere. They vary in price, about 50 cents each in quantities of a dozen.

Run the rubber band attached to the uninflated balloon through the thong at the end of the broom handle. Then inflate the punch ball. It is less apt to be popped if it is slightly underinflated. I carry a spare uninflated balloon or two, so if one does get popped, the game need not end.

One caveat: it's best not to play this game if you can't readily remove things from your dog's mouth. Swallowing pieces of punctured balloon is best avoided, though unnaturally colorful stool has been picked up a time or two, and no harm done.

Looneyball is a fine game to practice work on your "out" or "drop" command. Dog won't let go? The game ends. Dog releases? The game continues. And the



PHOTO BY CAROL GALLAGHER



PHOTO BY SHARI MANN

You can see the joy on Zebra's face when she's playing her favorite game.

human likely gets to practice taking things from the dog's mouth. That's good practice: It could save his life some day, if he grabs something that will harm him.

Finally, you're ready to play. Your dog can be leashed or not, depending on where you play. If a leash is required, at least 10 feet is best. Zee trails her 10-foot leash easily. Six feet is too short to allow room for a high leap or long jump. If you're playing in your grassy, fenced yard, going leash-free is fine.

Wave the ball around and encourage your dog to *get* it! Wag it from left to right, high to low. Play matador, whisking it skyward when she leaps for it. Drag it sloooowly in front of her; chances are she'll stalk it. Allow her to snap at it, making the ball bounce wildly to the end of its tether. When she appears ready to pounce, change its elevation – the sky's the limit.

Zee would rather play this game than almost any other; it's pretty hard to distract her from it. She has a blast, and I get to remain relatively stationary. Of course you can play this game with your dog and run all over the place, if you want to. It's a lot of fun for both parties, played either way. 🐾

Shari A. Mann lives in San Francisco with her dogs Meg and Zebra. She currently mans the "help desk" at bullterrierrescue.org, enthusiastically supports dog rescue, and pursues a lifelong interest in all things canine.

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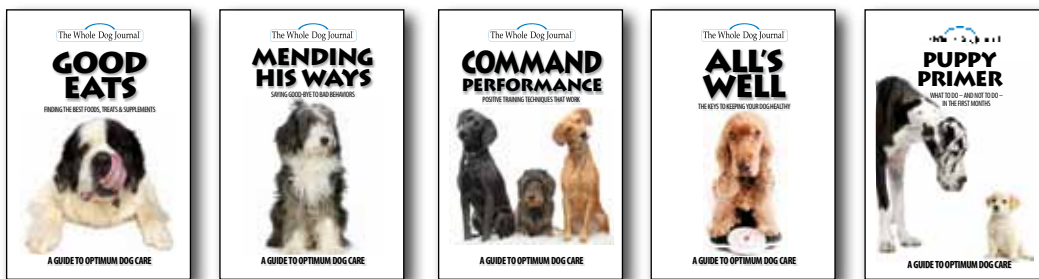
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