

# The Whole Dog Journal™



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*A monthly guide to natural dog care and training*

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF – Nancy Kerns  
TRAINING EDITOR – Pat Miller  
PUBLISHER – Timothy H. Cole  
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR – Greg King

#### EDITORIAL OFFICE

E-MAIL: [WDJEditor@gmail.com](mailto:WDJEditor@gmail.com)  
ADDRESS: 1655 Robinson Street  
Oroville, CA 95965

#### SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

PHONE: (800) 829-9165  
INTERNET: [whole-dog-journal.com/cs](http://whole-dog-journal.com/cs)  
U.S. MAIL: PO Box 8535  
Big Sandy, TX 75755-8535  
CANADA: Box 7820 STN Main  
London, Ontario N5Y 5W1

#### REPRINTS

For price quote, contact  
Jennifer Jimolka at (203) 857-3144.  
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#### NEWSSTAND

Jocelyn Donnellon, (203) 857-3100

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# Dogs Talk...

*It's incumbent on you to learn what your dog "says" in every situation.*

BY NANCY KERNS

**T**oday's viral video was of a news anchor who was bitten in the face by a dog on live television. If you own a dog, you probably either saw the video, read an article about the incident, or heard other dog owners discussing it. But dogs bite people every day; why was this incident so riveting?

Well, for one thing, the dog was on TV because he had been rescued from near death (in an ice-covered pond) only the day prior. There was gripping video footage of the rescue – a handsome young firefighter went into the icy water and hauled the 85-pound dog to safety. The firefighter and the dog's owner were available and willing to be interviewed about the rescue on the local news show the next morning. That's all very compelling.

The dog himself was telegenic – a powerful "Argentine Mastiff" with an expressive face. The attractive news anchor was clearly moved by the story of the dog's rescue, and it appeared that she really loves dogs; she moved from her chair to a spot on the floor right next to the dog, and she repeatedly caressed the dog as she spoke. As she told the story of the dog's rescue, the camera repeatedly zoomed in on the dog's large face. He kept panting with his mouth wide open and licking his lips; he seemed to be smiling!

The last thing I wrote: *it's wrong*. The dog wasn't smiling at all. But the news anchor must have thought it looked like a smile, and I'll bet lots of other people watching the news that morning did, too – that is, just before the lady leaned toward the dog to kiss him, and the dog bit her in the face with one quick snap. The footage was simply shocking.

There is a difference between shock and surprise, though. Educated dog trainers and owners watching the clip weren't surprised at the bite; they could identify a number of behaviors displayed by the dog that clearly expressed his discomfort. He kept shifting his weight around, and trying to move away from both his owner and the anchor. He panted.

He licked his lips. His ears were flattened and back. His lips were pulled back (but not in a smile). He turned his head sharply away and back toward the anchor several times. He also froze a couple of times, for a fraction of a second.

To students of canine body language, these behaviors were the equivalent of the dog saying loudly, "I am kind of freaking out about all this and need some space!" But neither the anchor nor the dog's owner interpreted the dog's body language correctly. They didn't hear so much as a *whisper* of what the dog was trying to tell them. So he "said" it louder; he snapped. (And the anchor was rushed off to a local hospital for plastic surgery.)

We love our dogs so much that sometimes it's hard to remember that they are another *species*! They don't think like we do, they don't perceive our shared experiences in the same way that we do, and they can't communicate the way we do; they can only speak their own language and hope we catch on. We've brought them into our homes; the least we can do is try to learn a little of their language (and respect what they say).

Some good resources for canine body-language study: Sarah Kalnajs' DVD set, "The Language of Dogs," and Brenda Aloff's *Canine Body Language: A Photographic Guide*. Both are available from Dogwise.com; (800) 776-2665. We've had a number of articles in WDJ on canine body language; the most recent was in the August 2011 issue. It contained lots of information about what a stressed dog looks like. We'll take this incident as our cue to bring you more articles on the topic, soon.

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# Shark Attack?

*No punching the shark (er, puppy) on the nose. Here are five things to do when your pup bites.*

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

**C**ontained in every puppy's mouth is a set of amazingly sharp little daggers known as "teeth." Puppies explore the world with those mouths. Since you are part of your pup's world, it is inevitable that those sharp little teeth will at some point come in contact with your tender skin during a behavior known as "puppy biting." It hurts. So what should you do when your puppy bites you, or other family members (including children)?

**1 KEEP IT FRIENDLY.** Use negative punishment – your pup's behavior (biting) makes a good thing (you) go away. Say "Oops!" in a calm, cheerful tone of voice, stand up and turn your back on your pup for several seconds. Then interact with him again. Repeat as often as necessary. (Remember, dogs learn through repetition.) Appropriate play keeps the fun going, inappropriate biting makes the fun stop. Since your pup is all about fun, he'll learn to inhibit his biting in order to keep you playing.

Ignore old-fashioned suggestions you might hear about holding his mouth closed, pushing his cheek into his mouth so he bites himself, or showing your fingers down his throat. He's not challenging your leadership when he bites you. If you respond with violence you risk damaging your relationship and making him become violent. He's just playing, and doesn't know his own tooth-power. By the way, yelping like another puppy in pain to communicate in "his" language causes many puppies to get more excited and bite more, not less. I don't recommend it. Stick with a cheerful "Oops" to get your message across.

**2 TOLERATE LESS-PAINFUL MOUTHING.** Since puppies put their mouths on everything it may be necessary to tolerate less-painful mouthing and only do your "Oops!" routine for bites that actually hurt. Over time you can shape

for softer and softer bites, and finally for no mouthing at all.

**3 LET THE KIDS PLAY WITH THE PUPPY DURING HIS QUIET TIMES.** All pups develop a daily routine – times of day when they are more aroused and bitey, and times when they are less mouthy. Identify the less-mouthy times of your pup's cycle and have that be the kids' puppy playtime. For extra insurance, be sure your baby dog has been well exercised before turning him loose on the children. Supervise all child/puppy play so you can intervene if things get out of hand, and make sure to teach your children how to respond properly if your puppy bites them.

**4 DIRECT YOUR PUP'S MOUTH TO APPROPRIATE BITE OBJECTS.** In a strategic spot in every room, keep a stash of plush toys your pup can sink his teeth into – in place of your arm. Keep a supply of stuffed Kongs in the freezer to occupy his puppy daggers. Try to anticipate his mouthy behavior and offer him a toy before he grabs your sleeve (or your flesh), but don't hesitate to offer a toy as an alternative even after he's latched onto you.

A flirt pole is a great toy for you or

**In every room, keep a stash of dog toys that you can offer your pup at a moment's notice, as an alternative to biting you!**

your children to safely play with your bitey puppy. This is a long, sturdy stick with a rope fastened to the end, and a toy tied to the rope. By moving the toy around you invite the puppy's interest (and teeth) to engage a safe distance from your body parts. If necessary, you can stash your child safely behind a baby gate, in a playpen or inside a low exercise pen, flirt pole in hand, to keep her safe from wandering puppy teeth. (A good source for this training toy: [bestdogkennel.com/product/TR-FP](http://bestdogkennel.com/product/TR-FP). Note: Ignore this website's instructions for teaching "Give." Just trade the toy for a treat.)

**5 TEACH "FIND IT!"** This one is perfect for the pup who grabs your bathrobe, pant legs, or ankles as you're walking. Rule #1: Always have treats in your pockets/on your person. Corollary to Rule #1: Have plastic containers filled with small but tasty dog treats in every room of the house (but out of pup's reach) so you can reload when you're running low.

As you walk, keep an eye out for puppy ambushes. When your pup approaches you with that "Gotta grab something!" gleam in his eye, toss a treat on the ground a few feet away from you and say "Find it!" Keep tossing "Find it!" treats until you can gain access to a soft toy or other chew object to offer him. Or keep playing "Find it" until he's too tired to grab you. Mission accomplished.

Remember: It gets better after your pup is six months old and has all his adult teeth. He may still occasionally put his teeth on you, but at least it won't hurt as much! 🐾



# Going Holistic?

## *10 things I learned after I made the leap to holistic dog care and feeding.*

BY DENISE FLAIM

**G**oing holistic . . . It sounds so trendy, so green, so Whole Foods. But it's not as cut and dried as it sounds: You don't just add bottled water and get Andrew Weil. Developing a holistic approach to your dog's care is a process . . . a process of self-discovery on your part, leavened with lots of trial and error.

The real meaning of "holistic," of course, is doing what's right for your individual dog – and for you, taking into account your circumstances, lifestyle, budget, and beliefs. There is no template to follow, other than: Know your dog – and yourself.

Little more than a decade ago, inspired by a skinny, diarrhea-plagued puppy, I started exploring a new way of feeding my dogs. From there, I shifted my attitudes about vaccination, veterinary care, even training. It didn't happen overnight: I made plenty of mistakes, and

I continue to learn and grow and evolve my approach.

Here are 10 things I learned along the way. A lot of them are common sense, others may sound "woo-woo" if you're not in a place where you're receptive. And that's okay, because the whole point of this journey we're on is that your mileage can – and should – vary.

**1 THE BUDDY SYSTEM.** I'm not going to compare feeding my first raw doggie meal to having to swallow centipedes on "Fear Factor," but the undeniable

truth is that many people feel trepidation on a Jungian scale when they begin to tinker with their dog's diet. Many are anxious at just the thought of changing brands – "Will he get diarrhea? What I am I going to do with this \$45 bag of food if he does?" – let alone feeding something as "out there" as raw meat. You visualize the microbes crawling all over the dish. You mentally plot your course to the nearest emergency clinic when . . . When what? When the ground opens and your beloved pooch is swallowed up, Hades-style?

The biggest antidote to that hollow-stomached, lung-squeezing sensation of not knowing if you are doing the right thing is finding people who have done it – successfully. In this, the Internet is a great place to find kindred spirits. They've been there, done that. Their experiences can reassure you. The biggest problem with turning to such people for comfort is that they're so accustomed to doing what they're doing that it's now second nature – they don't see it as any big deal. But it is a big deal to you, and having someone to talk to and compare

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**Author Denise Flaim raises Rhodesian Ridgebacks on a raw diet, using holistic healthcare methods. She lives with three generations of dogs (and 8-year-old triplets, including Allie).**





notes with often makes the difference between plucking up your courage and blazing forward – or just abandoning ship and continuing with what hasn't worked.

**2 LOOK UP – IT'S A PIANO.** All this isn't to say that any "holistic" course that you take – whether it's raw feeding or minimal vaccination or "alternative" therapies, from Chinese medicine to chiropractic – is entirely safe. Everything comes with a degree of risk, including that bag of kibble, that syringe of attenuated live virus, that dose of prednisone.

We have no idea what tomorrow brings, and worrying about it is not only a waste of time, but – some would argue – only serves to roll out the welcome mat. I suppose when I walk down the street in Manhattan, a piano could fall on me. That doesn't mean the risk of falling pianos outweighs the rewards of catching a Broadway show.

The doggie equivalent of 42nd Street is a walk in the woods. I know of dogs who have literally impaled themselves on sticks in their gorgeous frolicking abandon that is a wild race through a crunchy-leafed trail. This doesn't mean that you never walk in the woods together, or that you do a stick sweep of the area. It just means you balance the risk with the reward of a gorgeous day out getting exercise and stimulation, and you decide accordingly. (And if your dog does impale herself, as counterintuitive as it sounds, don't remove the stick. Just get her to a vet – any kind of vet.)

It's easy to say, "Don't get overwhelmed with the 'what ifs'" – especially if, as luck would have it, a "what if" has actually happened to you before. But when making any important decisions in life, your mind has to be clear. And obsessing over what could go wrong – as opposed to weighing risks calmly and rationally – dooms you to failure before you even start. In order to successfully make a decision about your dog's care, it has to feel good to you. Find a way to make that happen – which, for many, sounds easier than it actually is.

**3 JUST PICK SOMETHING.** The great thing about complementary and alternative medicine is that there are so many options, so many different heal-



**Diva, shown here at a healthy, alert 12 years old, is the grandmother of the author's pack – and one of her first holistically reared Ridgebacks.**

ing traditions available. That's also the most frustrating thing: How do you know what route to choose? What's the best way to treat your dog's problem? Homeopathy? Flower essences? Essential oils? Acupuncture? Kinesiology? I can't even spell it, much less wrap my brain around it.

In this, research can take you only so far. If you've narrowed your search down to a few modalities that keep coming up over and over again, just pick one. Maybe you've heard about a local veterinarian who specializes in one particular modality. Maybe you have a friend who had great success using another. (See revelation #1.) Maybe – and I don't diminish the power of this for one moment – one just "feels" right. Whatever your rationale, as those sneaker commercials exhort: Just do it.

Sometimes, of course, things don't work out. When one of my dogs developed an ear hematoma, I researched how best to treat the growing, sausage-sized, blood-filled lump on his ear. I came across very few holistic options, and none of the conventional treatments – surgery to "quilt" the ear, cannula implants to drain the fluid – sounded appealing. "Acupuncture!" I thought, and I made an appointment with a vet whose success with Chinese medicine I had long heard about. But during our consult, I was made to understand why acupuncture

didn't come up as an option for these annoying blood blisters of the ear: It doesn't work on them. "Chinese medicine not good for everything," the vet shrugged. Lesson learned.

Blitz's ear eventually did heal, as wizened and cauliflowered as any old prize fighter's. But that visit was not a waste of time or money: It established a relationship between me and that vet, and taught me the limits of his modality. Today, 12-year-old Diva and I are regulars, and the vet's herbal formulations are doing wonders for her degenerative disc disease. Trial and error – and all I ask is that I learn something from the error.

**4 DEAR DIARY.** In these Face-booking times, it seems that every meal we eat, every television show we watch, every speck of minutia in our daily lives is broadcast to the world. But you're only as good as your last post or share, and sometimes, in the flood of all that

information, and the relentless scroll of the News Feed, the most important thing is lost: continuity and context.

Holistic veterinarian Christina Chambeau has a great idea that too few owners follow: Keep a journal for each of your dogs. You don't have to write in it religiously, but make a notation of things that may seem different or noteworthy: increased water consumption, changes in coat color or texture, seemingly minor health issues like a passing ear infection, sleeping later than usual, eating more ravenously, unusual discharge (from any of a number of places!), an odd odor (my son maintains that one of my Ridgebacks smells like pancakes, which may not be journal-worthy, but I still like hearing it).

Those little scraps of information – impressions, mostly – are fleeting and seemingly insignificant on a day-to-day basis, but taken as a whole they can illuminate patterns that can help in managing your dog's health. For example, my dogs' journals showed that bleeding ear tips – and by extension that annoying hematoma – happen mostly in winter. Turned out our toasty house was drying out the dogs' skin, which made them more itchy, which made them shake more, which increased the likelihood they'd whack a flapjack ear on a table corner. The solution? A pan of water on the radiator in each room.

**5 AN OUNCE – NO, MAKE THAT A POUND – OF PREVENTION.** Most alternative healing modalities believe that disease is a manifestation of deeper imbalances. Rather than treat the symptoms you must go deeper and bring things into equilibrium.

The easiest thing to do, of course, is to make sure that the imbalance doesn't occur to begin with. That requires a strong, clean foundation: good food, good water, adequate exercise, mental stimulation, and a safe, toxin-free environment.

That last requirement was missing with a dog I bred. He was naturally reared, raw-fed, and minimally vaccinated, but since puppyhood, he was beset with all kinds of allergic reactions – red ear flaps, rashes on his undersides, puffy eye rims. He had every test under the sun, hypoallergenic diets, and nothing worked.

The dog lived in a rented house on a canal that had been flooded multiple times, and instinctively I thought: mold. When a new puppy arrived on the scene (from a different litter) she too started getting itchy and scratchy.

The family moved – far from the water this time – and at last report, the itchiness was receding. Good news not just for the dog, but his family as well: Dogs are our sentinels, and what unbalances their bodies and their health is a risk to ours, too.

**6 THE VET QUESTION.** In a perfect world, you and your vet would be one – cue babbling brook and clinking wind chimes – when it comes to your

dog's care. If you have a relationship of respect and equality, any differences of opinion are more than surmountable.

But personality conflicts sometimes can create havoc with this relationship, all the more so if your conventional vet is unfamiliar with or suspicious of alternative modalities.

A common first reaction – especially if you encounter resistance – is to think about just leaving your vet, but sometimes you're better off with the devil you know: There may not be a holistic vet nearby, and you may not click with him or her, either. Some holistic vets do not provide “nuts and bolts” care, but rather operate more of a specialty-based practice. And remember that geography doesn't have to be an issue: You can supplement your conventional vet's knowledge with a phone consultation with a more holistic-minded practitioner.

I've found that a two-prong approach works best in having your dog treated holistically by a conventionally minded vet: You need to have respect and regard for your veterinarian's expertise, and you need to become educated about the approach you are advocating.

Part of having respect for the veterinarian is making her aware of what treatments you are pursuing outside of her office – nobody likes surprises. And becoming educated about holistic medicine means acknowledging the risks as well as the advantages. If you want to follow a less aggressive vaccine protocol, for example, tell the vet up front that you are aware there is a risk of not vaccinating for X, but here is your rationale for why the

pros do not outweigh the cons. Remember that vets are human, too, and direct experience often informs their reactions: Treating just one case of parvo can make a vet super-sensitive about vaccinating lightly against the disease; being blamed by clients when things go wrong is another reason for a reflexive reluctance to try new things.

To put it bluntly, often what you are up against is the combined stupidity of all your vets' other clients, those who can't or won't follow directions, screw up even the most basic instructions, and are quick to blame everyone else when things don't go just right. There aren't enough people willing to do the research and go the extra mile to provide the kind of care you are advocating for your dog. When your vet realizes that, chances are you'll see a change of attitude, too.

**7 SOMETHING IS BETTER THAN NOTHING.** It's the height of irony that while a holistic approach is supposed to be about doing what's best for the individual dog – and the human who is charged to care for him – that so much criticism can be leveled for not “doing it right.”

But holism isn't an all-or-nothing approach: Even if you're limited by what you can do, that doesn't mean you do nothing at all. Feel good about what you can do; don't focus on what you can't do.

For example, I'd be lying if I said that I thought raw feeding wasn't the best way to feed most dogs: It's natural, bioavailable, and species-appropriate. I've seen a difference not only between dogs fed kibble and those that are raw fed, but also between dogs that have their food cooked as opposed to fed raw. Raw, in my experience, always comes out ahead, hands down.

But that doesn't mean everyone is in a position to feed this way. Budget and supply come into play. Maybe there are infants or immune-compromised individuals in the household. Maybe someone just isn't ready to take the leap.

Similarly, even if you are an ardent supporter of minimal vaccination, if you live in a microclimate where, say, leptospirosis is circulating, you might opt to protect your dog against that disease, despite the limitations of the vaccine,

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**Jamie, shown here with Denise Flaim at 18 months old, is from the third generation of Ridgebacks bred by the author.**



PHOTO BY THERESA M. LYONS



its relatively short duration, and concerns about its side effects.

Giving a lepto vaccine doesn't invalidate your holism, any more than feeding a high-quality kibble does. You do the best you can, with the resources you have, at the pinprick of time that you are living in. Don't let anybody make you feel otherwise.

**8 AVOID EXTREMES.** Our animals, our bodies, our energy fields crave balance, and that's what we should strive for in caring for our dogs. On the one hand, be consistent: Give modalities a chance to work. Remember that problems take a while to brew and manifest, and so they can take a spell of time to resolve, too.

At the same time, don't get stuck in a rut. Changing up every once in a while isn't just a good idea, it's a necessity. Rotating food sources, exercise patterns, and herbal supplements is important. As opportunistic omnivores, dogs are biologically programmed for variety. Their bodies crave it, and if we are to develop one habit, it is to remind ourselves in our busy lives to give it to them.

**9 GO BACK TO BASICS.** Every time I am tempted to overthink or overdo things, I pick up a copy of Juliette de Bairacli Levy's *The Complete Herbal Handbook for the Dog and Cat*, first published in 1955. Long before it became fashionable to feed locally or organically, de Bairacli Levy was there, sharing the wisdom she learned from the Gypsies, Berbers, and Bedouins.

In this day and age, when we expect precise directions and how-tos, her books can seem quaint. But there is powerful wisdom in them, reminders that the less interference we place between our animals and their source energy, the better off they are. De Bairacli Levy is one of the few authors who bothers to talk about the importance of sunshine in rearing healthy dogs. Fresh air, good light, the time and room to run free . . . I am reading *The Secret Garden* to my chil-



PHOTO BY THERESA M. LYONS

**A raw diet, with plenty of fresh air, sunshine, and time and room to run free . . . these do not constitute a guaranteed formula for success – but they're a great start.**

dren at bedtime, and these are precisely the things that transformed the cranky, coddled twosome in the story, Mary and Colin, into healthy youngsters. They are as crucial as food in that regard. And sometimes we need pragmatists such as de Bairacli Levy to remind us of the basics.

"I pray you who own me, let me continue to live close to Nature," de Bairacli Levy wrote on behalf of the dogs. "Know that: I love to run beneath the sun, the moon, and the stars; I need to feel the storm winds around me, and the touch of rain, hail, sleet, and snow; I need to splash in streams and brooks, and to swim in ponds, lakes, rivers, and seas; I need to be allowed to retain my kinship with Nature."

It is no coincidence, I think, that de Bairacli Levy's line of Turkuman Afghan Hounds was so sought-after, and no mere happenstance that the stock she sent to the United States went on to produce a dynasty of the world's most beautiful and biggest-winning Afghan Hounds.

**10 BELIEVE IN INTENTION.** Here we are at number 10, the most diffuse

and hardest to grasp of these lessons, because it's one that you feel your way to.

Early on, a good friend of mine who I consider a wonderful healer told me, "Intention is important." In other words, wanting to make your dog well is an important part of getting there. I thought that was kind of obvious: Who doesn't want their dog to get better?

Then I learned more about vibrational medicine, about the power of thoughts and feelings, and about the law of attraction, which created a big buzz a few years ago but which was brought home more powerfully to me in the Abraham work of Esther and Jerry Hicks. (Google them if the names are unfamiliar: The premise behind their work is a little "out there" for many, but make like a buffet, take what you like, and leave the rest.)

Yes, you can want your dog to be well, but that intention can be so clouded

and weighed down with worry about things not going right, with visions of worst-case scenarios, with fear and doubt, that it defeats the purpose.

My outcomes are always best when I envision what I want for my dog, let go of any underlying wanting that feels desperate or forced, and just proceed in the moment, not fast-forwarding to dissect any of the what-ifs.

The best way I can describe it is knowing how I want things to be, acknowledging that in the end I have no control over how they actually will be, but deciding that things will work out fine regardless. No more thinking beyond that, which is the tough part.

It's sort of like watching a movie: I am invested in the outcome, know I want person A to fall for person B, but don't micromanage my expectation of every scene. In the end, Spielberg never disappoints, anyway – even when the ending is not what I envisioned. 🐾

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

# Bully For You!

## What to do when faced with a canine bully.

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

**T**here's nothing like a good dog-pack hike to give our canine companions an opportunity to have fun with their peers and run themselves into a happy state of exhaustion – provided there are no bullies in the group. Just like human bullies on a school playground, canine bullies take the fun out of the game, put everyone on edge, and bring to the party a real risk of physical as well as psychological damage. A dog who is bullied, especially at a young age, can quickly develop a negative association with other dogs and become defensively aggressive as a result.

My love affair with group dog hikes goes back to my days working at the Marin Humane Society in California. Employees were allowed to bring dogs to work with them, and many a lunch hour found several of us hiking together. I don't recall incidents of bullying from those days, perhaps because our dogs were well socialized from their "go-to-work" privileges, perhaps due to selective memory, or perhaps because of my blissful relative ignorance of canine behavior in those early days. But bullying is a very real possibility anytime a group of dogs gets together – at dog parks, daycare, at organized or impromptu play sessions, or when multiple dogs live together in the same household.

I recently invited all our Peaceable Paws trainers to come for a dog-pack hike on our 80-acre campus in conjunction with one of our occasional trainer meetings. We hike before our meetings so our four-legged pals are too tired to pester us while we plan future Peaceable Paws events and debrief past ones. As you might expect, the canine participants in this group were varied and enthusiastic, including a German Shepherd/Rottweiler-mix, an American Pit Bull Terrier, a pair of Dachshunds, a hound-mix, a Labrador Retriever, a Border Collie, a Miniature Pinscher, and two of my own dogs: Lucy the Cardigan Welsh Corgi and Missy the Australian Shepherd.

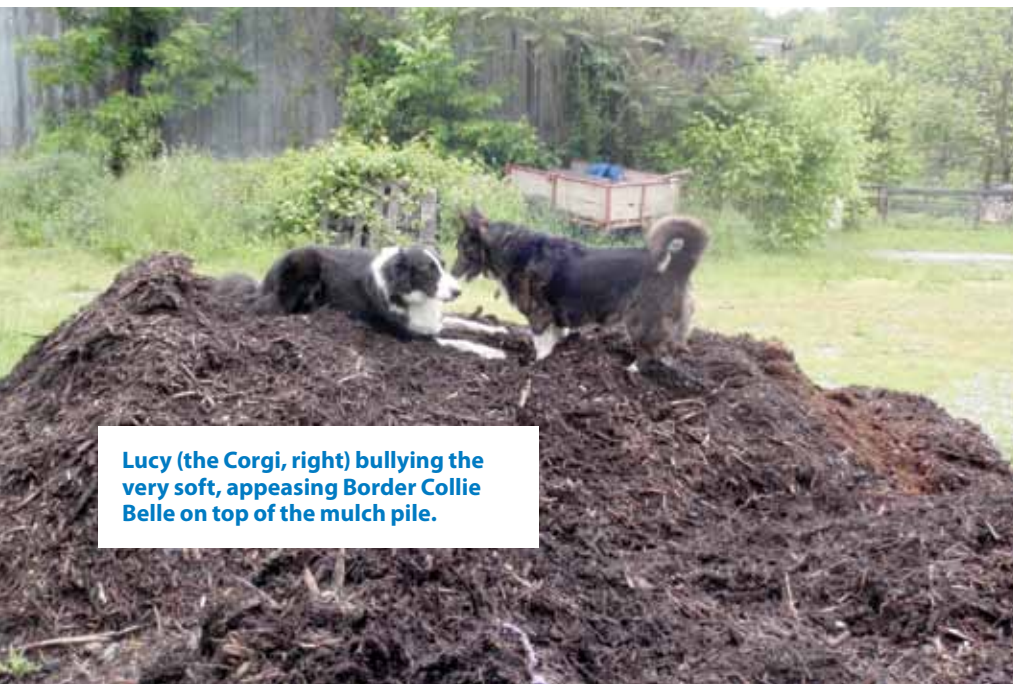
Much as I love a good group hike, I was dismayed when, throughout the hike, Lucy demonstrated a strong penchant for bullying Belle, the very soft, extremely appealing Border Collie belonging to Peaceable Paws trainer Beth Joy.

Bullying – an inappropriate canine behavior – is often misidentified as "dominance." Much has been said lately in the dog world about dominance, but the short version of the discussion is that, while dominance is a correct term for a very narrow selection of *appropriate* social behaviors, it is *not* a correct term for a wide range of *inappropriate* social behaviors that include bullying and aggression. (See "Alpha Schmalpha," WDJ December 2011.)

Although the "bully" term isn't found in most behavior literature, in her excellent book, *Fight!*, trainer and author Jean Donaldson defines bullying dogs – not to be confused with "Pit Bull-type dogs" – as those dogs for whom "roughness and harassment of non-consenting dogs is quite obviously reinforcing." Like the human bully on the school playground, the bully dog gets a kick out of tormenting less-assertive members of his playgroup. Donaldson says, "They engage at it full tilt, with escalating frequency, and almost always direct it at designated target dogs." Target dogs are most likely to be those who, like Belle, are non-assertive and quickly offer exaggerated appeasement signals. Appeasement signals are meant to cut off another dog's overly assertive behavior, but with bullies, it just seems to egg on the bullying behavior.

Like all behavior, bullying is a combination of genetics and environment. A dog who becomes a bully is born with a genetic predisposition to be reinforced by another dog's appeasing response to his socially overbearing behavior, just as a Border Collie finds it reinforcing to chase things that move, or a Lab is reinforced by holding things in his mouth.

If a pup or a young dog has an opportunity to test a bully behavior strategy on another pup or dog who offers a satisfyingly appeasing response, the behavior has been reinforced and the bully-to-be is more likely to attempt the behavior again, perhaps more forcefully (inappropriately) the next time. If, however, his early attempts



Lucy (the Corgi, right) bullying the very soft, appealing Border Collie Belle on top of the mulch pile.



at bullying are ignored, or squashed by a more assertive response from his intended targets, the bully behavior may never develop. Hence, bullying, like other undesirable behaviors, is easiest to modify early on, before the dog has a long and strong reinforcement history for the behavior.

## PLAYING V. BULLYING

It can be difficult for some owners to differentiate between appropriate rough play and bullying. Some may think that perfectly acceptable play behavior is bullying because it involves growling, biting, and apparently pinning the playmate to the ground. Appropriate play can, in fact, look and sound quite ferocious. The difference is in the response of the playmate.

If *both* dogs appear to be having a good time and no one's getting hurt, it's usually fine to allow the play to continue. Thwarting your dog's need to play by

stopping him every time he engages another dog in rough-but-mutually-agreeable play, can lead to other behavior problems, including aggression, from the frustration of not being able to fulfill his desire for social interaction.

I recently saw a couple for a private consult who had added a third dog to their happy family, and now everyone was miserable. The wife was stressed because she thought the dogs were playing too roughly; the husband was stressed because he thought the dogs should be allowed to play together; the senior dog (10 years old) was stressed because he didn't like the new young upstart (1 year old) playing with *his* canine pal (5 years old); and the two younger dogs were stressed because they weren't being allowed to play together.

I watched the two younger dogs interact while the husband restrained the elder to keep him out of the mix. Their play was lovely to watch. Rough, yes,

with lots of "chew-face," growling, and body-slamming, but perfectly appropriate. Both dogs were fully engaged in play, and each, when given the opportunity, chose to come back and re-engage. After a full 90 minutes of non-stop play, they finally ended the session of their own accord and lay happily panting on the floor, at which point the senior dog, who was indeed very tense about the high-energy play session, was also able to relax. So was the wife.

I reassured the couple that there was no bullying happening here, and that they were fortunate the two younger dogs would be able to play together regularly. What a great way to provide exercise for the young, energetic dogs! Over time, the intensity of their play would likely diminish somewhat, as they were allowed to "get it out of their system." A bigger challenge was the senior dog. They would need to remove him from the play area when the other two were playing, and/

## ROUGH PLAY DOES NOT EQUAL BULLYING



Looks fearsome and terrible, doesn't it? It's actually not. These two young dogs are having a great (and reciprocal) game of bite-face.



Here's a big clue: *Both* dogs take their turn at the bottom of the pile, flinging themselves down on the ground and inviting the other to "attack."



More clues: When one dog starts to lose interest in the game, the other dog actively tries to re-engage the tired or bored one, who says . . .



"Ok, why not?!" If there is a size or age disparity, it may appear that one dog is getting bullied, but if she repeatedly initiates play, she's probably fine.

## BE ALERT FOR SIGNS OF BULLYING



Otto played nicely with the dog above, so we won't worry about him with this puppy, right? Wrong. Different play partners can trigger different behaviors and play styles.



The puppy initially wanted to play with Otto, though she apparently thought it prudent to take an appeasing posture on her back. To his credit, Otto is biting her very gently.



The puppy soon wilts under the big dog's intense attention. Her flicking tongue and rolling eyes signal her distress. He may be gentle, but his intensity is too much for her at this time.



The puppy keeps trying to appease Otto with a lowered posture and averted eyes. Without intervention, even these mild experiences could make her fearful of big dogs.

or implement a behavior modification counter-conditioning program to help the elder dog become comfortable with the younger dogs' play.

## MODIFYING BULLY BEHAVIOR

If you do have a dog who is bullying others, you may be able to successfully modify the behavior, especially if you start young. If not, you will need to always manage his behavior by selecting playmates for him who don't fall into the "target" category. Successful modification of bullying behavior requires:

**1** Skilled application of intervention tools and techniques: Use leashes, long lines, "no-reward markers" (NRMs), and time-outs to prevent and remove

reinforcement for inappropriate play behavior.

**2** Excellent timing of intervention: Prompt application of NRMs and time-outs will let your dog know exactly what behavior makes the fun stop.

**3** Reinforcement for appropriate behavior: Allow play to continue or resume when the bullying dog is calm and can play nice.

**4** Selection of appropriate play partners: Dogs who are not intimidated or traumatized by bullying behavior, and who don't take offense by fighting back, may be appropriate playmates for bullies.

The most appropriate human intervention for bullying is the use of negative

punishment, in which the dog's behavior makes a good thing go away. Negative punishment, in this case a time-out, works best for bullying behavior in conjunction with a "no-reward maker" (NRM) or "punishment" marker.

The opposite of the clicker (or other reward marker, such as the word "Yes!"), the NRM tells the dog, "That behavior made the good stuff go away!" With bullying, the good stuff is the opportunity to play with the other dog. Just as the clicker or other reward marker *always* means a treat is coming, the NRM *always* means the good stuff goes away; it's *not* to be used repeatedly as a threat or warning!

My preferred NRM, the one I teach and use if/when necessary, is the word "Oops!" rather than the word "No!" The word "No!" is often used by dog owners to

## WHAT TO DO IF YOUR DOG IS A BULLYING VICTIM

So, what should you do if your dog is the victim of a canine bully? Intervene, by all means. Here are some of the signs to look for that tell you that you need to step in and break up the interaction. Your dog:

- ✓ **tries to get away or hides behind you, or behind chairs**
- ✓ **offers appeasement behaviors (ears back, squinty eyes, lowered body posture, rolls on her back, urinates) to signal the other dog to back off**
- ✓ **snaps at the other dog when his appeasement signals are ignored**
- ✓ **doesn't offer to re-engage if there is a pause in the action**
- ✓ **just doesn't look like he's enjoying himself.**

If you see any of these signs when your dog is interacting with another, step in and separate the dogs. Give both dogs a time-out to let arousal levels settle. If your dog was enjoying himself for a while but then became overwhelmed, you might try letting them play again. Watch closely. If the other dog starts to become inappropriate again, stop the play before your dog shows signs of discomfort. Give both dogs another time out, and try again.

Over time, the bully may learn that play stops every time he gets too rough, and start to self-inhibit his play. Alternatively, you can ask the bully dog's owner to redirect her dog's behavior to a different activity that will keep your dog safe, as we did with Lucy.

If your dog was intensely bullied from the start of the interaction, a serious fight erupted, you can't redirect the bully dog's behavior to another activity, or you're not interested in risking your dog's safety in the interest of modifying the other dog's behavior, you're better off ending the session after the first intervention.

**The Husky pup is not playing very roughly, but it's a little more than the Lab pup is ready for.**



**A time-out is called for. You don't want the Husky to learn to enjoy being a bully, or the Lab to fear playtime with others.**





## SAM, THE BULLY PUP: A SUCCESS STORY

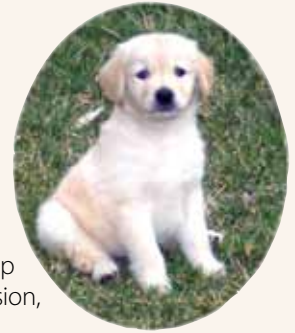
On his first night of puppy class, Sam was an endearingly woolly bundle of baby Golden Retriever, with no indication that he had a social problem. Golden Retrievers are usually social butterflies, and Sam was a star performer during class for clicks and treats. However, when playtime arrived, his demeanor changed from an attentive pupil (“What can I do to get you to click the clicker?”) to a bully (“I’m tough and you just try to stop me!”).

Sam’s chosen victim was a Rottweiler – not a breed you’d expect to find wearing an invisible “bite me!” sign. Max was about Sam’s own age and outweighed Sam considerably but was no match for the smaller pup’s intensity. Several seconds after they began frolicking together, Sam suddenly pinned Max to the ground with a ferocious snarl, then released him briefly, just to pin him again.

Needless to say, we intervened quickly in that relationship! Each time his intensity with Max began to escalate he got an immediate, “Oops, time out!” and was removed from play. His

patient owners diligently monitored his activity, and by the end of the seven-week class Sam was improving, but still demonstrated unacceptable bullying behavior. After two more six-week class sessions he played well with a stable group of four other dogs, under general supervision, without needing any time-outs.

Sam developed into a perfectly normal, socially appropriate dog, thanks to very early intervention. Now seven years old, he has been known to frequent the City of Hagerstown’s annual Pooch Pool Plunge without incident, engaging with the 100-plus dogs who attend the event, playing off-leash in the municipal pool at summer’s end when the facility closes for the season. At a recent behavior consult for their newly adopted rescue Golden, Sam’s owners confirmed that he continues to play well with others, and is socially appropriate with every dog he meets.



deliberately shut down behavior. It’s also usually delivered firmly or harshly – and unfortunately, often followed by physical punishment. In contrast, “Oops!” simply means, “You made a wrong behavior choice; the good stuff is going away.” Deliver your NRM in a cheerful or neutral, non-punitive tone of voice; your intent is not to intimidate your dog with the no-reward marker. Thus my choice of “Oops!” – it’s almost impossible to say the word harshly. Try it!

Timing is just as important with your NRM as it is with your reward marker. It says, “Whatever you were doing the exact instant you heard the ‘Oops!’ is what earned the time-out.” You’ll use it the *instant* your dog starts bullying. Then grasp his leash or drag-line (a long, light line attached to his collar) and calmly remove him from play. Don’t repeat the NRM. Give him at least 20 seconds to calm down, more if he needs it, then release him to go play again. If several time-outs don’t dampen the behavior even slightly, make them longer and make sure he’s calm prior to returning to play. If a half-dozen time-outs have absolutely no effect, end the play session for the day. If the NRM *does* stop the bullying, thank your dog for responding, and allow him to continue playing under direct supervision as his reward.

Another approach to bully modification that is sometimes effective requires access to an appropriate “neutral dog” who is confident enough to withstand

the bully’s assault without being traumatized or responding with inappropriate aggression in return. A flash of the pearly whites as a warning is fine. A full-out dogfight is not. It’s important to watch closely during interactions with the bully. Any sign the neutral dog is becoming unduly stressed by the encounters should bring the session to an immediate halt. A neutral dog may be able to modify your bully’s behavior, and have it transfer to other dogs – or not. If not, you may be able to find one or two sturdy, neutral dogs who can be your dog’s play companions, and leave the softer dogs to gentler playpals. Not all dogs get along with all other dogs – and that’s perfectly normal.

### MANAGING MY BULLY

We managed Lucy and Belle on our dog-pack hike by putting a lot of space between them, and by keeping Lucy occupied with chasing a stick (one of her favorite activities). Since Belle was more than happy to keep her distance from Lucy, we only had to body-block Lucy a few times when we saw her zeroing in on her target. The after-hike meeting was without incident; I put Lucy back in the house so Belle could hang out, worry-free, with the rest of the dogs. 🐾

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

*author of many books on positive training, including her newest, Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First-Class Life. See page 24 for information about Pat’s books and academies for trainers.*

### What you can do . . .

- **Watch your dog closely when he plays with other dogs to be sure he’s being appropriate. Intervene promptly if he’s being a bully – harassing a “non-consenting” dog.**
- **Watch your dog’s playmates closely to be sure they’re being appropriate. Intervene promptly if a dog bullies your dog (your dog isn’t enjoying the intensity-level of play).**
- **Allow your dog to play roughly with others as long as everyone’s having a good time and no one’s getting hurt.**
- **Educate your fellow dog owners about the difference between socially appropriate behavior and socially inappropriate bullying.**



# The Eyes Have It

*Conjunctivitis affects many dogs – and it has many causes.*

BY CJ PUOTINEN

**S**omething is wrong with your dog’s eye. It’s bright red or oozing pus or itching like crazy. Could it be pink eye? This common childhood condition, also known as red eye or conjunctivitis, affects people, cats, and our canine companions.

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the conjunctiva, the tissue covering the eye and inner surface of the eyelid. If caused by bacteria or viruses, it can be infectious. Noninfectious conjunctivitis can be caused by allergic reactions, irritants, or trauma injuries.

While contagious conjunctivitis is common among cats and schoolchildren, most canine cases involve seasonal allergies or pollen exposure, injuries like cuts or scratches, or the presence of a small foreign object – anything from a grain of sand to a sliver of bark, piece of grass, tiny leaf, or small insect. In those

cases, secondary bacterial infections may develop.

According to veterinary ophthalmologist David T. Ramsey, DVM, “Primary conjunctivitis attributable to infectious pathogens is exceedingly rare in dogs. In contrast to canine conjunctivitis, feline conjunctivitis is almost always primary and attributable to infectious pathogens (viral, chlamydial, or bacterial). Bacterial conjunctivitis in dogs almost always occurs secondary to an underlying disease

that alters normal resident conjunctival flora and favors bacterial proliferation.”

## GETTING A CORRECT DIAGNOSIS

The symptoms to watch for are eye redness, discharge, swelling, squinting, excessive blinking, sensitivity to light, pawing the eyes, or rubbing the face and eyes on floors, the ground, or other surfaces.

If you think your dog might have conjunctivitis, see your veterinarian. An eye exam can rule out corneal diseases, disorders of the tear ducts or tear production, eyelid abnormalities, or parasites of the conjunctiva or eyelids. It is important to get an accurate diagnosis because what works for simple conjunctivitis will not treat these more serious underlying problems.

Your veterinarian may perform certain tests, such as fluorescein staining to detect corneal ulcers or superficial abrasions, the Schirmer tear test to determine whether your dog is producing sufficient tears, and a thorough exam of the external eyelids, third eyelid, and conjunctiva.

If needed, additional tests can check for specific bacteria, the distemper virus, glaucoma, and other illnesses.

### What you can do . . .

- Check your dog’s eyes daily.
- Report any redness, discharge, itching, squinting, or other symptoms to your veterinarian.
- Use a saline solution to flush irritants or foreign objects from the eye.
- Treat simple conjunctivitis with herbal or medicinal eye drops.
- Recurring or chronic conjunctivitis requires an accurate diagnosis and appropriate treatment.



**This dog was surrendered to a shelter with a myriad of problems related to neglect, malnutrition, severe flea allergy (he was loaded with fleas), and perhaps other allergies, too. He had severe conjunctivitis in both eyes.**



Treatment may include thorough rinsing or irrigation to remove foreign objects or irritating substances, medication to correct insufficient tear production or eyelid infections, antibacterial eye ointments for secondary bacterial infections, or anti-inflammatory eye medications to help reduce swelling.

Types of conjunctivitis include:

- **Serous conjunctivitis**, which is a mild (not serious) condition, causes membranes to look pink and swollen, with a clear, watery discharge. This condition is usually caused by irritants such as dust, allergens, and cold or windy weather.

- **Allergic conjunctivitis**, a form of serous conjunctivitis, can cause itching. Household chemicals, lawn and garden sprays, and smoke from cigarettes or wood-burning stoves or fireplaces are potential causes of serous conjunctivitis. While foreign objects tend to affect a single eye, environmental factors that cause allergic conjunctivitis often affect both eyes.

- **Keratoconjunctivitis sicca**, or dry eye (also known as **KCS**), contributes to irritation, inflammation, and infection. The conjunctiva is usually red and inflamed, and symptoms may include squinting; a thick, ropey, mucous-like discharge; and corneal scarring.

- **Follicular conjunctivitis**, also known as **mucoïd conjunctivitis**, results when small mucous glands (follicles) react to an infection or eye irritant and form a rough, cobblestone surface that irritates the eye. The resulting discharge resembles mucus, and if the problem persists, the rough surface can be a chronic irritant. Puppies and young dogs are typical follicular conjunctivitis patients, and the illness usually subsides with age.

- **Purulent conjunctivitis** is usually associated with *Streptococcus* and *Staphylococcus* bacteria. Thick secretions of pus and mucus may form a crust on the eyelids.

- **Neonatal conjunctivitis** affects the eyelids of infant puppies before or after their eyelids separate, which usually happens at 10 to 14 days of age. During or shortly after birth, bacteria may move behind the eyelid. Prompt veterinary treatment is important because untreated

## CHERRY EYE IS SOMETHING ELSE

**Cherry eye** is different from conjunctivitis. It occurs in puppies when a membrane at the inside corner of the eye is red and visible. This membrane, which is part of the third eyelid, can protrude, making it susceptible to infection and irritation. Beagles, Bulldogs, and Cocker Spaniels are associated with the problem, which may be hereditary or the result of inflammation caused by viruses, bacteria, or fungi. Cherry eye can be corrected surgically if necessary.



neonatal conjunctivitis can result in corneal damage and blindness.

- **Parasitic conjunctivitis** is rare in North America, but in some cases bot fly larvae or, in the Western United States, the parasitic worm or nematode *Thelazia californiensis* can inhabit the conjunctival sac between eye and eyelid. Eyeworms, as they are commonly called, are transmitted to dogs by insects. Both adult and larval eyeworms can produce symptoms ranging from mild tearing or discharge to conjunctivitis, keratitis (inflammation of the cornea), or corneal ulcers.

### OTHER CAUSES

In addition to injurious conditions like **corneal ulcers** and **keratitis**, **blepharitis** (inflammation of the eyelids) and **skin diseases** that affect the eyelids can all contribute to conjunctivitis.

Some upper respiratory diseases, including kennel cough, involve **viruses and bacteria** that can produce conjunctivitis in one or both eyes along with coughing, sneezing, lethargy, decreased appetite, fever, and nasal discharge.

In some dogs, conjunctivitis is caused by **anatomical irregularities**, such as loose or drooping eyelids that cannot close completely, or eyelids that roll inward, or lashes that grow in the wrong direction, any of which can cause lashes to rub against the cornea.

### TREATMENT

If you suspect that your dog has something trapped in her eye, don't waste time. Flush the eye with a sterile saline solution or, if that isn't possible or effective, go to your vet right away. An irritating foreign object can create serious eye problems if left untreated, especially if the dog is doing her best to dislodge it.

Underlying problems that result in conjunctivitis should always be treated. For example, artificial tears and lubricants help dogs with keraconjunctivitis sicca, or dry eye, along with topical antibiotics to resolve bacterial infections or concurrent corneal ulcers.

Abnormal eyelids or eyelashes can be treated surgically.

Conjunctivitis accompanying upper respiratory infections is typically treated with topical antibacterial medication and supportive care.

Allergic reactions can be challenging because dogs, like people, can be allergic to all kinds of things. But if your dog is diagnosed with allergic conjunctivitis, it's a good idea to protect him as much as possible from cigarette or wood smoke, spray-on carpet cleaners, lawn chemicals, and harsh cleaning products. Change furnace and air-conditioner filters frequently, and experiment with air purifiers or humidifiers to see if they help prevent symptoms.

Parasitic conjunctivitis requires the physical removal of eyeworms or larvae, which can be accomplished by flushing the conjunctival sac with sterilized saline or by removing them with a fine forceps or cotton swab while the dog is sedated. Treatment with a parasiticide such as moxidectin is reported to be even more effective than mechanical removal, especially where eyeworms are endemic.

### HOME FIRST AID

Sterile saline solutions are widely available, and the same products can be used to rinse foreign objects or irritants from the eyes of both canine and human patients. For general first aid, keep a sterile eye rinse on hand.

Most natural food markets and some

pharmacies sell eye washes for pets. For example, Espree Natural Aloe Optisoothe Eye Wash for Dogs & Cats contains purified water, aloe vera, benzalkonium chloride, and sodium chloride; V-Pro Eye Rinse for Dogs contains boric acid, purified water, sodium borate, and sodium chloride; and the human product OcuFresh Eye Wash contains sodium chloride, sodium borate, and boric acid. All of these can be used to flush a dog's eyes.

If you don't have one when you need it, you can make a simple saline eye wash with 1 cup distilled water and 1 teaspoon salt, boiled for 5 minutes and then cooled to room temperature. This solution should be freshly made and stored in the refrigerator for no more than a day or two before use.

Willard Water concentrate, described in "Willard Water: A Powerful Antioxidant" (WDJ June 2006), has helped many dogs recover from eye injuries and infections. Simply add a small amount of the concentrate (about ½ teaspoon concentrate per cup of water) to your saline solution. To be sure the solution is completely clear, strain it through a paper coffee filter before applying.

It often takes two people to rinse a dog's eyes, one to hold the head steady and one to keep the dog in position. For best results, tilt the dog's head to one side so that the rinse flows from one side of the eye to the other.

Homemade or purchased eye wipes can be used, although they should not be applied directly to the eye, but rather used around it. To make your own, simply saturate cotton balls or a cotton pad and dab around the eye. Solution released from the cotton will rinse the eye.

A sterile spray bottle can also be used as well. Simply spray a fine mist of solution over the eye area. Even if the dog's eyes are closed, some will enter the eye.

## TREATING CONJUNCTIVITIS AT HOME

The easiest form of this disease to treat at home is serous conjunctivitis. Infection-fighting ophthalmic gels and rinses, such as Vetericyn products, are sold through veterinary clinics and pet supply stores. Some come with a cone-shaped applicator that helps control delivery.

Herbal eye drops, which can be made at home or purchased at most pet supply or natural food stores, can help in many cases. Pet Alive's Eye-Heal herbal



**When just one of the eyes is affected, it's likely that a foreign object was the initial cause of the irritation and resulting infection. A thorough exam is needed to be sure the object is gone and the cornea is undamaged.**

eye wash contains burdock, greatercelandine, meadowsweet, and rosemary. Animals' Apawthecary Eye & Nose Herbal Drops contain sodium chloride, boric acid, sodium borate, and extracts of certified organic goldenseal, eyebright, and usnea. Halo Cloud Nine Herbal Eye Wash contains eyebright extract, goldenseal extract, boric acid, and sea salt. NHV Ey-Eas eye drops contain chamomile, eyebright, goldenseal, and rosemary in a base of purified water and glycerine.

Several eye-friendly herbs are effective, gentle, and well tolerated by most canine patients. To brew any of these herbs as a tea (called an infusion), add 1 teaspoon dried herb to 1 cup boiling water, cover, and let stand until cool. Add 1 teaspoon unrefined sea salt, if available, or any table salt. Alternatively, dilute the tea with any over-the-counter saline solution labeled for eye use. You want the result to be slightly salty, like tears.

Add ½ teaspoon Willard Water concentrate if available. Strain the mixture through paper coffee filter to remove any plant parts or undissolved salt. Apply with an eye dropper, cotton balls, or spray bottle every two to three hours as needed.

● **Calendula** (*Calendula officinalis*) is among the first herbs to consider for minor first aid. A broad array of medicinal compounds in the flowers of the plant, including various essential oils, flavonoids, saponins, triterpene alcohols, and carotenes, combine to help speed cell reproduction and inhibit bacteria and fungi at the site of injury. For minor cuts, insect bites, abrasions, or post-surgical incisions, a calendula wash will bring quick, soothing relief to pain and swelling, while lending antimicrobial

properties to the body's healing effort. Cool calendula tea works well as an eye wash for conjunctivitis, where its mild but predictable astringency combines with bacteria-fighting properties to reduce irritation and infection.

● **Chamomile**, both the German (*Matricaria recutita*) and Roman (*Chamaemelum nobile*) varieties, is considered one of the safest and most versatile herbal pet remedies. Because of its anti-inflammatory properties, chamomile is often recommended as an eye wash ingredient. Follow the tea-brewing instructions above and apply when cool.

● **Nettle** (*Urtica dioica*) has so many medicinal properties, it's considered an all-purpose healing aid. As herbalist Gregory Tilford wrote in "Learning about Nettle" (WDJ, May 2003), "Nettle is one of the first herbs I reach for when a need arises for a soothing, anti-inflammatory eye rinse."

● **Raspberry leaf** (*Rubus idaeus*) is another soothing herb that helps reduce the discomfort caused by conjunctivitis. Best known as a uterine relaxant and whelping aid, red raspberry leaf is an astringent herb containing polypeptides, flavonoids, and tannins. Its tea works well as a first-aid rinse for cuts and abrasions.

● **Goldenseal** (*Hydrastis canadensis*) is a key ingredient in some eye drops because it is both anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial. This makes it especially appropriate for conjunctivitis that is secondary to bacterial or fungal infections. Goldenseal quickly reduces inflammation and redness. Because the plant part used is the root rather than leaves, goldenseal tea should be brewed as a decoction rather than an infusion. Combine 1 cup water with 1 teaspoon chopped dried root, cover, bring to a boil, and simmer over low heat for 20 minutes, then remove from heat with cover in place and let cool to room temperature.

● **Oregon grape root** (*Mahonia aquifolium*) fights infection and reduces inflammation, making it another herb appropriate for the treatment of conjunctivitis. Prepare as a decoction, like goldenseal. Because the berberine in this solution can irritate the eyes, dilute this tea with an equal or greater part of chamomile or raspberry leaf tea, some other



soothing infusion, or a saline solution.

- **Cornflower** (*Centaurea cyanus*) tea is a traditional eye wash in parts of France. Its mild astringent and antiseptic qualities make it effective in the treatment of conjunctivitis and inflammation.

## DON'T BOTHER WITH THESE REMEDIES

Although **Eyebright** (*Euphrasia spp.*) is widely recommended as an herbal eye treatment, and although it is astringent and has antibacterial properties, there is no scientific evidence showing that eyebright is effective against conjunctivitis or any other eye disease, and Germany's Commission E (an agency that documents the effectiveness of herbal preparations and approves or disapproves their use) recommends against using it. In addition, eyebright is considered an at-risk herb because of over-harvesting. Most herbalists agree that eyebright can safely be eliminated from herbal eye formulas.

Another widely recommended product that has not been shown to be effective against conjunctivitis is **colloidal silver**. This solution, in which minute particles of silver are suspended in water, has been marketed for decades as a natural infection-fighter and as a treatment for conjunctivitis. In 2004, the *Journal of Wound Care* published a study in which three different colloidal silver solutions had no effect on the growth of test organisms.

## SUPPORT THERAPIES

In addition to treatments that address conjunctivitis directly, consider some with a less obvious healing connection.

When Chloe, my eight-year-old Labrador Retriever, developed a bright red left eye with an oozing white discharge, her veterinarian, Tia Nelson, DVM, diagnosed conjunctivitis. Her symptoms developed in December, when many dogs in Montana's Helena Valley experience seasonal allergy symptoms in response to smoke from wood-burning stoves and fireplaces, and they appeared the day after we went for a very cold, windy hike. Because Dr. Nelson is also a veterinary chiropractor, she adjusted Chloe's neck and jaw, explaining that eye conditions often respond to alignment corrections.

Acupuncture is another supportive therapy. As Randy Kidd, DVM, wrote in "The Structure of the Eye" (WDJ, Sep-

## RESOURCES

- ❖ **"CONDITIONS OF THE EYELIDS AND OCULAR ADNEXA IN DOGS AND CATS"** by David T. Ramsey, DVM, presented at the Waltham/Ohio State University Symposium on Small Animal Ophthalmology, October 27-28, 2001.
- ❖ **"COLLOIDAL SILVER AS AN ANTIMICROBIAL AGENT: FACT OR FICTION"** by P. van Hasselt, et al. *Journal of Wound Care*, Vol. 13, # 4, April 2004, pp 154-155
- ❖ **ADELE DELP, APEX ANIMAL HOSPITAL**  
Helena, MT. (406) 449-4455, apex-animal-hospital.com
- ❖ **TIA NELSON, DVM, TOTAL DYNAMIC BALANCE VETERINARY CLINIC**  
Helena, MT. (406) 442-0188, tbdhelena.com

## EYE DROPS

- ❖ **ANIMALS' APAWTHECARY EYE & NOSE HERBAL DROPS**  
Sold at [onlynaturalpets.com](http://onlynaturalpets.com), pet supply stores, and natural food markets.
- ❖ **ESPREE NATURAL ALOE OPTISOOTHE EYE WASH FOR DOGS & CATS**  
Espree Pet Care, [espreecom.com](http://espreecom.com)
- ❖ **HALO CLOUD NINE HERBAL EYE WASH**  
Available from [halopets.com](http://halopets.com), pet supply stores, and natural food markets.
- ❖ **JEAN'S GREENS, SCHODACK, NY**  
Dried organic herbs for tea brewing. (518) 479-0471, [jeansgreens.com](http://jeansgreens.com)
- ❖ **NHV EY-EAS** Available from [petwellbeing.com](http://petwellbeing.com)
- ❖ **OCUFRESH EYE WASH** Info at [ocufresh.com](http://ocufresh.com); sold at CVS and other pharmacies.
- ❖ **PETALIVE EYE-HEAL**  
Available from [naturalpethealthproducts.com](http://naturalpethealthproducts.com) (877-289-1235) and pet supply stores.
- ❖ **VETERICYN ALL ANIMAL PINK EYE SPRAY, ALL ANIMAL OPHTHALMIC GEL, AND ALL ANIMAL EYE WASH** (877) 572-5455, [vetericyn.com](http://vetericyn.com)
- ❖ **V-PRO EYE RINSE FOR DOGS** Available at [PetSmart.com](http://PetSmart.com) and other retailers.
- ❖ **WILLARD WATER, NCI** Fargo, NC. (800) 447-4793, [willardswater.com](http://willardswater.com)

tember 2004), "Acupuncture has been successfully used to treat many eye conditions. Keratitis, chronic conjunctivitis, and all sorts of eye irritations typically respond favorably to acupuncture, and cataracts or even blindness may respond."

He explained that an acupuncturist might diagnose conjunctivitis as an example of excess heat of the liver. Acupuncture needles positioned to bring the liver back into balance would then restore the body to a state of harmony.

Various energy healing therapies,

such as Reiki and Jin Shin Jyutsu, are also used to restore balance and health to the body. When Chloe's symptoms developed, canine massage therapist Adele Delp performed Jin Shin Jyutsu around her eye.

We also applied NHV Ey-Eas eye drops. Chloe's eye quickly returned to normal. 🐾

*Freelance writer CJ Puotinen lives in Montana. She is the author of The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care and other books. See "Resources," page 24 for more information.*

# Legal Beagles

*Why and when you may need a “dog lawyer” and how to find one.*

BY SUSAN SARUBIN, CPDT-KA, PMCT

**Y**ou’re out for a walk in the park with Sasha, your 6-month-old German Shepherd, who is a little nervous around small children. Suddenly out of nowhere, a five-year-old girl runs up from behind squealing, “Can I pet your dog?” while grabbing for Sasha’s head. A freaked out Sasha reacts by biting the girl’s arm, and it’s more than just a nip. A frantic scene ensues complete with screeching from both the girl and her parents. You are subsequently sued for significant damages, medical expenses, and pain and suffering. You need a dog lawyer!

A “dog lawyer,” or more accurately, an animal lawyer or animal law attorney, is an attorney who specializes in matters of animal law. Circumstances in which you may need sound legal advice and representation from someone with extensive experience with dog-related cases are not limited to dog bite incidents. Veterinary malpractice cases, custody issues in divorces, and landlord-tenant disputes are just a few examples of when an animal law attorney can help with legal issues pertaining to your dog.

## WHAT IS ANIMAL LAW?

A relatively new and diverse legal specialty, animal law is an umbrella term encompassing all types of non-human animals. Animal law includes animals used in research, sports or entertainment, livestock, animals in the wild and wild animals in captivity, as well as companion animals. Issues in animal law range from contracts to property rights, government regulation, torts, and criminal matters.

In 2000, nine law schools in the U.S. offered courses in animal law. According to the Animal Legal Defense Fund (ALDF), the number offering animal law courses has now increased to 100 of the 200 law schools approved by the American Bar Association. A decade ago, an attorney specializing in animal law might have raised eyebrows. But high

profile legal cases in recent years involving dog fighting rings, tainted pet foods, and pet trusts amounting to millions of dollars, in addition to a greater presence of the animal welfare and animal rights movements in the legal arena, have added credibility and legitimacy to this fast emerging area of law.

Part of the reason for the rapid increase in the number of animal lawyers is due to the rise in status of our companion animals and their importance in our lives. Today’s owners often spend thousands of dollars to provide their dogs or cats with the best health care, training, day care, and grooming. For those owners, attorney’s fees are viewed as just another necessary expense in caring for and protecting their pets.

## CAN’T ANY LAWYER HANDLE THIS?

Anyone licensed to practice law in your state is theoretically qualified to take on almost any legal matter. However, most attorneys develop expertise in one or two areas of law. The law regarding animals is complex and continually changing, with new legislation enacted, new rules and regulations applied, and new interpretations impacting existing statutes. An experienced animal law attorney is more qualified to represent your interests than a general practitioner or an attorney who specializes in other areas.

Many legal matters that may involve your dog don’t have to end up in court. Settling issues to the satisfaction of all parties involved without a court case is always preferable. Using a mediator to facilitate a mutually acceptable resolution may be an option. When resolving issues on your own is unlikely or impossible, the following are services that an animal law attorney can provide:

■ **VETERINARY MALPRACTICE.** Like medical malpractice, veterinary malpractice involves issues of a professional’s competence and judgment. As with medical care for people, sometimes things go terribly wrong. Veterinary malpractice is professional negligence, an error that should not be made based on a level of competence expected of a veterinarian as a result of specialized training and experience, which results in injury or death to your dog.

If you feel an error was made by your veterinarian in treating your pet, an animal law attorney can help you determine if the case is actionable (malpractice) or a case of simple negligence (carelessness) that does not constitute malpractice. Examples of malpractice include misdiagnosis, prescribing inappropriate medication, following the wrong course of treatment, or abandoning treatment.

The lack of significant monetary damages to the owner usually makes veterinary malpractice lawsuits impractical to pursue. If your dog is injured, you can recover only the amount paid for vet services. If your dog dies, most states consider only “market value” of your dog, and you can recover only the amount needed to replace your dog. Even if you win your court case, the cost of pursuing a veterinary malpractice lawsuit will likely exceed the amount you will recover. There have been awards for non-economic damages from negligent veterinarians for emotional distress or loss of companionship, but proposed reforms in state legislatures allowing recovery for these damages are not yet widely accepted. Some states have laws recognizing sentimental value, and some allow owners to sue for mental anguish, but laws are still developing in these areas and are not well defined.

If possible, it is most prudent to settle your matter outside the courtroom. A



mediator can help defuse emotions of both parties and assist in working out issues between you and your veterinarian. If your vet carries malpractice insurance, it is possible to reach a settlement with the insurance company without going to court.

Veterinarians are licensed by the state in which they practice, so you can also lodge a complaint with your state licensing agency. After an investigation, the agency may pursue disciplinary action, if appropriate. This may include fines, additional training, suspension, and/or revocation of the veterinarian's right to practice. Some state veterinary associations have a dispute resolution service, a quicker and less expensive alternative than a court case.

■ **INJURY OR DEATH.** The law also provides for the recovery of damages if your dog is injured or dies because of a deliberate or careless act of someone other than your veterinarian. Dogs have suffered or died due to product defects, tainted food, attacks by another dog, and mistreatment and mishandling by groomers, trainers, dog walkers, kennels, dog sitters, and transport services.

Keep in mind that, as with a veterinary malpractice lawsuit, the monetary damages you may receive in a court case may not even cover the costs of going to court. Working out a settlement is quicker and less expensive. Pet care professionals as well as transport services, including airlines, often have liability insurance. You may be able to reach a settlement directly with the insurance company. Again, a mediator may be helpful in working out issues.

If you do have to go to court, small claims court is probably the best choice.

Depending on your state, lawsuits in small claims court are limited to between \$3,000 and \$10,000. Small claims court offers you the opportunity to resolve your dispute with less complication and at low cost by representing yourself. Most states allow you to be represented by a lawyer if you choose, but hiring a lawyer is not cost efficient in most cases. According to Nolo Press (nolo.com), several studies show that people who represent themselves in small claims cases do as well as those who are represented by a lawyer.

#### ■ **TENANT/LANDLORD DISPUTES.**

Policies regarding pets are often unclear in leases or homeowners association agreements. Even when policies are clearly spelled out, they may not be uniformly applied or enforced. For example, you may move into an apartment or buy a home where dogs are welcome and later be told that they are not allowed. If you don't know your legal rights your options are limited to moving out or getting rid of your dog. Try to find a workable solution with your landlord or homeowners association. If not, an animal law attorney will be familiar with any local laws and ordinances regarding pets in rental properties, homeowners association agreements, and state housing and disability laws for people with service dogs.

#### ■ **CONTRACTUAL DISPUTES AND CONSUMER CLAIMS.**

Contractual disputes and consumer claims involve the purchase of animals or products and services related to their care. Fewer than 20 states currently have "Lemon Laws" for dogs, allowing buyers to return an unhealthy dog to the seller (breeder, broker, or pet store) for another dog or a refund. Several of these states require the seller

to provide the consumer with written notice of their rights under the law.

Other examples of consumer fraud and contractual disputes involve misrepresentation (your puppy is not purebred as claimed), defective products, or services contracted for but not provided as specified (pet cremation or burial). An animal law attorney can represent your interests if you are a victim of fraud or are treated unfairly in the marketplace.

#### ■ **CUSTODY AND OWNERSHIP DISPUTES.**

Pet custody disputes have become increasingly common in divorce cases. The bonds that people form with their dogs can make an already emotionally charged situation even more volatile. When you and your spouse decide to split up, you may not love each other anymore but your dog loves both of you. If you are unable to reach an agreement as to who will get custody of your dog, the courts will have to decide for you. Sole custody, joint custody, sole custody with visitation, no ongoing relationship, and splitting up pets between partners are all up for consideration in custody disputes.

Current laws provide for companion animals to be treated as personal property, and the home determined based on property laws as part of the marital estate. While current societal attitude is moving away from this treatment, and some judges make exceptions to the property model, the laws do not yet reflect this trend.

There is no standard in law for what is in the best interest of the dog. The best case scenario with a divorce is when you and your spouse put aside emotion and resentment and focus on what is truly best for your dog. If you can come to a decision on your own, the most the courts will have to do is review the settlement agreement that you have reached. If you are unable to do this, an animal law attorney who understands the bonds that people establish with animals, and what caring for them entails, can be your advocate.

Custody and ownership disputes are not limited to divorces. Legal representation may also be of benefit in cases of breakups of live-in relationships, a bailment (when a dog is left in the temporary

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**Dogs find law school exhausting . . . If your dog is at the center of a legal issue, you'll need help from an attorney who is experienced in animal law.**



care of another), a dog's pregnancy, or a breach of a sales agreement.

■ **DOG BITES.** Millions of people are bitten by dogs every year. We know that *any* dog can and will bite given the right (or wrong) set of circumstances. What is your liability as an owner if your dog bites someone? Dog bite laws vary greatly from state to state. There are three basic types of dog laws that may make you liable for damages or injuries caused by your dog. Strict liability laws hold the dog's owner liable for just about any injury your dog causes. The only possible exceptions to strict liability laws are bites to a veterinarian, a trespasser, or someone who provokes the dog.

"One bite" laws basically allow your dog one "free" bite but hold the owner liable for a second bite. An exception is if you knew, or should have known, that your dog could hurt someone.

Negligence laws are common in most states; if the owner is unreasonably careless in controlling their dog, and this negligence results in injury, the owner is liable. In addition to addressing dog bites, there are state statutes that cover other types of injuries or property damage caused by dogs where the owner may be held liable.

If your dog bites someone and you are sued, how will you pay the victim's damages? If the victim wins in court you may be paying not only for medical costs, but also for lost wages and pain and suffering. Homeowner's or renter's insurance is your best protection. Make sure your policy covers dog bites, and be certain your dog's breed is covered as well. If you are sued for damages, you will need a lawyer. An animal law attorney familiar with your state's bite laws and experienced in dog bite cases will be your best choice.

■ **ESTATE PLANNING.** Many dog owners want to provide for the care of their animals after they die. Because by law animals are property, they cannot be beneficiaries of a standard will. Simply put, dogs cannot own property.

While you can't leave your estate directly to your dog, there are things you can do to better ensure that your final wishes for your dog's care and maintenance will be honored. Most states now allow trusts for animals. By establishing a legally enforceable pet trust you can leave property for the benefit of your dog,

with a trustee in charge of managing it. You may also name a new owner for your dog in your will or in a revocable living trust. If you don't name a new owner, your dog will likely go to your next of kin in most states. And when you name

If your dog bites someone and you are sued for damages, an animal law attorney familiar with your state's bite laws and experienced in dog bite cases will be your best choice.

a person as the new owner of your dog in your will, you can also leave money to that person for the costs of caring for your dog.

*Note: An entire article devoted to estate planning for your pets will appear in an upcoming issue of WDJ.*

## HOW DO I FIND AN ANIMAL LAW ATTORNEY?

There are few attorneys who practice animal law exclusively. In general, it's not a specialty that is financially viable practiced on its own. Lawyers and law firms who offer animal law as one of their specialties will provide the expertise and experience to assist you in pursuing your legal matter that others who only dabble in animal law may not.

We asked four animal law specialists for their suggestions regarding engaging the services of a "dog lawyer" and their answers appear on the facing page. The following are further suggestions for finding an animal law attorney:

- Your local shelter may know someone who handles animal law cases.
- Call your local bar association. Many offer referral services (for a fee) to find an attorney with experience to match your needs.

- The website for the American Bar Association ([findlegalhelp.org](http://findlegalhelp.org)) has state-by-state listings of lawyers and can be searched by legal specialty.

- Legal publisher Martindale-Hubbell's website ([lawyers.com](http://lawyers.com)) lists animal law attorneys by state and city.

Once you have found a qualified attorney, ask some pointed questions: "How many years have you practiced animal law? What portion of your practice does it constitute? Have you handled cases like mine before? What were the outcomes? How much will this cost?"

Don't overlook the lawyer-client relationship; you may end up spending a significant amount of time with this person, and you should feel comfortable discussing details of your case with him or her, even when emotionally difficult. Chemistry is important. Ask the attorney questions; if you can't understand her answers, or you are uncomfortable with her style of communicating, she may not be the right person for the job.

If you are unable to find an animal law attorney in your area, ask your lawyer to find one to consult with on your particular legal matter.

## SELF-REPRESENTATION?

If you decide to do your own legal research there is a vast body of information available on the Internet, including websites that list animal-related laws state-by-state. You can also contact your local courthouse or law school to find the nearest public law library.

The old legal maxim is "he who represents himself in court has a fool for a client." If an issue involving your dog is serious enough to end up in court, no matter how solid you believe your case is, consider retaining competent legal representation. It can mean the difference between keeping your dog or losing custody, receiving compensation for an injury to your dog or paying thousands in medical bills, or even whether your dog lives or dies. Don't be that foolish client. When it involves the dog you love, and the stakes are high, hiring a "dog lawyer" is money well spent. 🐾

*Susan Sarubin, CPDT-KA, PMCT, is owner of Pawsitive Fit, LLC, Puppy and Dog Training in Easton, Maryland. She's also Maryland State Coordinator for Rhodesian Ridgeback Rescue, Inc. See page 24 for contact information.*



## GOT A DOG-RELATED LEGAL PROBLEM? These animal law specialists have suggestions.

**Jennifer L. Amundsen**  
Solheim, Billing & Grimmer, S.C.  
Madison, WI (608) 282-1200  
sbgllaw.com  
facebook.com/dogsavvyllawyer

### **What are the advantages of engaging the services of an attorney with experience in dog-related issues?**

Due to his or her familiarity with the issues that are likely to arise, an attorney with experience in dog-related issues may be able to help resolve a dog-related matter in a more efficient (thus, more cost-effective) manner than an attorney without such experience.

### **How do you suggest people find attorneys with dog-related experience?**

Contact your local kennel club; they often publish a directory of service providers in their areas. Alternatively, state bar associations may have an online directory that is searchable by practice area or key word, or a referral service that can help to connect a potential client to a lawyer with relevant experience. Although distance should be taken into account (attorney licensure is handled on a state-by-state basis), relevant experience is important to ensure efficiency, as well as appropriate focus on any dog-specific issues that are a part of the case.

### **How does your knowledge and/or experience with animal law make the difference for your clients?**

When I prepare contracts or estate planning documents for a client, my knowledge and experience with dogs and the dog community allows me to speak the client's language and ensures that I share the client's understanding of what is customary within his or her community. It also allows me to anticipate the types of issues that may arise in a given matter and to help the client to be comprehensive in his or her planning.

For example, when preparing an estate plan, I can ask relevant questions that may help a pet owner or breeder communicate the goals he or she hopes to achieve through the planning process, which will almost certainly include protecting pets in the event of the client's death but can also include other goals such as transferring items related to a breeder's longstanding breeding program.

**Dane E. Johnson**  
Animal Law Office of Dane E. Johnson  
Portland, OR  
(800) 714-3204 or (503) 975-8298  
OregonAnimalLawAttorney.com  
AnimalsAttorney.com

### **What are the advantages of engaging the services of an attorney with experience in dog-related issues?**

Cases involving dogs present several important legal issues depending on the practice area. A case of injury caused by a dog bite, for example, requires knowledge of how a canine guardian's responsibility is regulated under applicable law. A case involving harm or death of a dog, such as an intentional injury or veterinary malpractice, requires knowledge of how the applicable jurisdiction measures a dog's value for damages purposes. Some states limit a dog's value to the cost of a replacement animal. Others allow the dog's guardian to present evidence of its special qualities and characteristics.

Many people consider dogs as family members, but courts and codes still generally define them as nothing more than property. An attorney familiar with the statutes, regulations, and legal precedents establishing the landmarks in dog law should be well equipped to argue for legal treatment of dogs that reflects their real place in our lives.

### **How do you suggest people find attorneys with dog-related experience?**

Animal law is a growing practice area, but attorneys focusing on animal-related legal issues are still relatively few. Some state bar associations have an animal law section and may be able to refer people to lawyers licensed in the relevant jurisdiction who have at least an interest in dog-related matters. Finding a lawyer with significant dog-related experience may be challenging.

Finding an animal law lawyer is not absolutely necessary for a case. An attorney who specializes in personal injuries or injury to property should be able to handle a dog bite or veterinary malpractice case. But the limited potential for recovery of damages in animal cases may mean that a lawyer who does not focus on animal law may be unwilling to consider taking the case unless the client pays a retainer first.

**Jennifer A. Dietz, Esq.**  
Animal Law Attorneys, LLC  
Tampa, FL (813) 789-8029  
jenniferdietz.com

### **What are the advantages of engaging the services of an attorney with experience in dog-related issues?**

Advantages: Experience in the areas of tort law, dangerous dog law, negligence issues, preparation of will and trusts for animals, etc.

### **How do you suggest people find attorneys with dog-related experience?**

It is extremely important to find a lawyer with animal law experience, no matter the distance to the client. Experience with the specific laws pertaining to animal law issues is invaluable. The most efficient way to locate an animal law attorney is to google "animal law attorney" or contact the Animal Legal Defense Fund, who will locate an animal law attorney in the area needed. Another method for locating an animal law attorney is to contact the local bar association for your area.

**Christine Garcia**  
The Animal Law Office  
San Francisco, CA (415) 297-3109  
animalattorney.com

### **What are the advantages of engaging the services of an attorney with experience in dog-related issues?**

Animal rights attorneys are more familiar with the broader laws/codes – and thus more capable of oral argument on the spot. Animal law expands over at least seven different relevant and applicable statutes and an animal attorney will be ready with relevant rebuttals at argument. Also, most animal attorneys are sensitive to the role of an animal in a home as a family member as opposed to property.

### **How do you suggest people find attorneys with dog-related experience?**

See [animal-lawyer.com/html/referrals\\_.html](http://animal-lawyer.com/html/referrals_.html). Also, I give out referrals nationwide (and a few worldwide). E-mail me for an additional list of attorneys.

### **How does your knowledge and/or experience with animal law make the difference for your clients?**

I am always more experienced than my opposing counsel who does not work in these cases. I often have to educate the court.

# “Pro” Probiotics

*Friendly bacteria can play a “best supporting” role in your dog’s digestive health.*

BY MARY STRAUS

**P**robiotics are beneficial bacteria that live in the digestive tract. There are a variety of different species belonging to genera that include *Lactobacillus*, *Bifidobacterium*, *Streptococcus*, and *Enterococcus* (often abbreviated by first initial only in names). Some species, such as *Lactobacillus*, live primarily in the small intestine, while others, such as *Bifidobacteria*, reside in the large intestine (colon).

■ **BENEFITS:** All dogs can benefit from probiotics, which aid digestion and modulate the immune system. Probiotics produce short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs), which inhibit the growth and activity of harmful bacteria, such as *E. coli*, *Salmonella*, and *Clostridium perfringens*, as well as providing other benefits to the intestines. Human studies have documented the effectiveness of certain strains in treating diarrhea, irritable bowel, and intestinal inflammation (fewer studies have been conducted on dogs). Probiotics may help prevent urinary tract infections, and can even reduce allergic reactions by decreasing intestinal permeability and controlling inflammation.

Species with specific strains known to benefit dogs include *Enterococcus faecium* (strain SF68) and *Bacillus coagulans*. *Bifidobacterium animalis* (strain AHC7) has been shown to reduce the time for acute diarrhea to resolve in dogs. Certain strains of *Lactobacillus acidophilus* improve frequency and quality of stools in sensitive

dogs. *Lactobacillus rhamnosus* strain GG (LGG) is effective in preventing and treating diarrhea in humans, and may benefit dogs as well. Probiotic products may contain one or several strains.

■ **CAUTIONS:** Some probiotic species require refrigeration in order to remain viable; follow label recommendations for storage. It’s questionable how many survive passage through stomach acid into the digestive tract, and whether they then colonize or must be continually replenished.

Many products, particularly those that are not refrigerated, contain fewer live organisms than their labels claim. Freeze-dried probiotics may last longer than refrigerated or other powdered products, especially if the powder is exposed to moisture (such as when the container is opened and closed). Probiot-

ics in commercial foods may not survive processing or storage. Probiotic products should always provide an expiration date.

■ **DOSAGE:** Probiotics are measured by colony forming units (CFUs). Few studies have been done to determine effective dosages, but these numbers are usually in the hundreds of millions or higher. If probiotics are being used to help with digestion, they should be taken with meals, but otherwise they may survive better if given between meals, particularly if taken with liquid that helps to dilute stomach acid and move them more quickly into the digestive tract (maybe give them after your dog takes a big drink). Probiotics may be given short-term or long-term.

When using products intended for dogs, follow label suggestions for dosage. When using human products, give the full dosage to dogs weighing 40 pounds or more. Reduce the dosage for smaller dogs or if you see loose stools.

■ **RECOMMENDED SOURCES:** Examples of canine probiotic formulas that include strains known to benefit dogs:

- Thorne Research’s Bacillus CoagulansVet (thorne.com)
- Jarrow’s Pet Dophilus (jarrow.com)
- Vetri-Science’s Vetri-Probiotic (vetriscience.com)
- Nusentia’s Probiotic Miracle (nusementia.com)
- Purina’s Fortiflora (fortiflora.com)

Several people whose dogs have serious digestive disorders, including small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO), have told us of success using Primal Defense with homeostatic soil organisms, made by Garden of Life (gardenoflife.com). Products made for humans can also be given to dogs. Yogurt and kefir with live cultures often contain *lactobacillus acidophilus*, and sometimes other species as well, but dosages are usually lower than those in supplements. 🐾

Mary Straus is the owner of DogAware.com. Straus and her Norwich Terrier, Ella, live in the San Francisco Bay Area.



Check the expiration date on any probiotic you buy for your dog; if the product doesn’t have one, don’t buy it!



# Hydrotherapy; Emergency Health Exam; Gear of the Year

**T**hank you for posting the article on hydrotherapy (“Walking in Water”) in your December 2011 Issue. I am thrilled that water therapy is finally becoming recognized and talked about as a valuable tool in canine health care.

After years of working with horses in rehabilitation and in water, I opened my first pool 18 years ago in Seattle and began offering services to the dogs in my area. I was surprised to learn that this was such a new concept in the canine world.

In my practice, I have found that the benefits of body work and massage in water while resting can often be just as, if not more important, than the swimming aspects. The warm water allows a three-dimensional access to the body and an educated therapist can help the dog achieve wonderful stretches, deep relaxation, and enhanced circulation. Also, with this nurturing body work and attention to emotional safety first and foremost; I have never met a dog who didn’t grow to love the work we do in the water.



**Cindy Horsfall works wonders in the water with Cricket, a 17-year-old client.**

My hope is that this article will inspire others to write in about their experiences with

hydrotherapy and will continue to inspire different training opportunities to emerge and evolve.

We love your journal. I’ve kept every copy since its inception and we always have copies out in our reception area for our clients to enjoy.

Cindy Horsfall, lapawspa.com  
Sequim, WA  
via email

**T**hanks so much for “Emergency Health Exam” (January 2012). I have subscribed to WDJ for many years, have a bookshelf loaded with dog books, volunteered for two years at a local animal shelter, worked nine years at a dog daycare and boarding facility, lived with three dogs and a cat for many years – yet I did not know to check the gums on one of my dogs when he wasn’t up to par.

He had been to the vet’s just two weeks earlier for pre-dental bloodwork – all was fine. No overt symptoms other than lethargy and that “just off” behavior we all know. I took him back to the vet when he didn’t eat a meal (he was a chow hound). One of the first things the vet did was check his gums. They were so pale she admitted him to ICU immediately. We lost him two days later to autoimmune hemolytic anemia (AIHA).

Had I known the simple technique of checking the gums, he may have been saved. I had also never heard of AIHA, which

might be a worthy article in the future; my best friend lost her cat to this disease who had the same symptom – “just off.” I now know about checking the gums and something about AIHA, both via a devastating lesson.

Kathleen M Fitzgerald  
Denver, Colorado

*We’re so sorry to hear about your loss. Your suggestion of an article on AIHA is a good one. We’ll put it on our “to do” list.*

**I** have been a subscriber to the WDJ for years and value your insights and the thought and research that goes into your articles. You always give me a lot to think about and I thank you for that. I have never responded to an article before, but today I read your recommendation of antlers as a great chew for dogs (“Gear of the Year,” January 2012) and I had to comment.

You should have included a warning that antlers have the potential for chipping dogs’ teeth. I am sure if you had talked to any accredited and trained veterinary dentist they would have been appalled that your fine magazine would advocate antlers as a safe treat for dogs.

I have an 11-year-old German Shepard. I have always been super careful about what she eats and so I was excited three years ago when I found antlers at my local pet store for all the reasons you cited in your article. I had never given her any other chews before because I was worried about the chemicals used to make them so I thought I was making a safe and natural choice. My dentist checks my dog’s teeth regularly so I was stunned to find out at my next visit that she had broken the tips off her top front molars on both sides. The only thing different in her diet had been antlers.



Given that these teeth were critical to her eating and that dogs use their mouths for so much more than people, I took her to see Dr. Paul Mitchell, an American Veterinary Dental College-accredited veterinary dental specialist. My worry was trying to save these critical teeth. Dr Mitchell said that antlers are too hard for dogs to chew. Please keep in mind that my dog is a German Shepard. She was eight at the the time, in her prime, and she chipped perfectly healthy teeth on antlers.

I had two choices: Having the chipped teeth pulled so they would not chip further and get infected, or having them capped, which is also risky given that dogs naturally chew and are hard on caps. I elected caps because of how critical these teeth are but it was extremely expensive. I hope that you will advise your readers that antler chewing does carry a substantial risk of chipping teeth and chipped teeth on dogs is not a good thing.

Mary Osmolski  
Canton, CT

*Mary, you are absolutely correct: We should have mentioned that these are HARD items, and not appropriate for a dog with an aggressive or dedicated style of chewing.*

**R**egarding the practice of flushing dog poop down the toilet (mentioned in the review of Flush Puppies non-plastic poop bags in “Gear of the Year”): We used to have a Shih Tzu and since she was a poop-eater, I decided to quickly pick up her small poop in the backyard, throw it down the toilet, and throw the baggie in the trash. It didn’t take long before we had to have the plumber unstop the toilet; he told me that the problem was that the dog poop was simply too hard to disintegrate and flush down.

I feed my dogs a raw meat diet, so their poop is nice and firm. Perhaps this might work with a dog whose stools are soft or I guess if you have a composting toilet, but I surely won’t do it again! I think that people with standard plumbing need to be aware of this problem.

Laurie Pevnick  
via email

*We’ve never heard of this problem before. . . Has anyone else had problems with their plumbing as a result of flushing dog poo?*

**T**he entire staff here at All The Best Pet Care thoroughly enjoys your publication. We carry quite a few of the products featured in the “Gear of the Year” product review. Our stores have many of the Nina Ottosson Interactive Toys, the Bravo! Freeze Dried treats and a large selection of deer, elk, and moose antlers. I know in the article it mentioned these things can be purchased online, but small pet care businesses also carry these great products! We work hard to keep healthy treats and fun, safe toys on our shelves for our customers and always appreciate the reminder for people to check out their local stores too.

Kris Palmer, Assistant Manager  
All The Best Pet Care  
allthebestpetcare.com

*We strongly recommend that people ask their local, independent pet supply stores about products they are interested in. It helps the retailers – who are always looking for fun or useful new products to carry. And the type of well informed, passionate, involved staff typically seen at independent stores can help owners learn more about the products and their appropriate use. Great point; thanks!*

**I** just received the February issue of WDJ and read your editorial protesting the use of “No” (re: specific ingredients) on dry dog food packaging and in advertisements. I agree with you that not all ingredients commonly listed on various products’ “No” lists are bad for all dogs, though my personal feeling is that a food manufacturer is doing more of a service to the potential customer than a disservice to a given ingredient.

For example, having a “No” notice on avocados as an ingredient lets me quickly move on to another brand if I specifically want my dog to have avocados . . . or to quickly zoom in on said brand if I want to exclude avocado exposure for my dog.

Another dog owner may appreciate a “No” notice when it comes to some ingredient to which a family member (other than the dog) may be allergic. Some food allergies can cause problems when a food is simply touched or inhaled (I’m thinking dry food dust becoming airborne at feeding time.)

Christine Holder  
Via email

*Good points, Christine. I did see some labels that expressed a “No” list in a way that did not imply that the omitted ingredients were bad – just that they were not present (one such example is the first label shown below). But many others blacken the reputation of ingredients that are useful (in moderation) by associating them with ones that are generally accepted as unhealthful.*



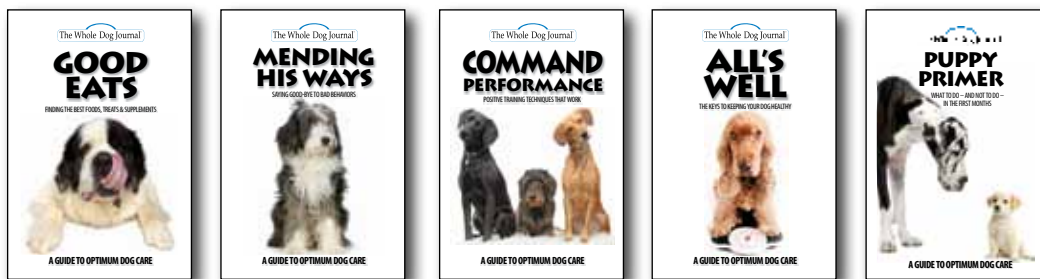
**CORRECTION: We accidentally omitted Laughing Dog’s foods from our “2012 Approved Dry Dog Food List.” Here is their information. We apologize for the error.**

<b>LAUGHING DOG, INC.</b> — Ventura, CA; (805) 653-7813; laughingdoginc.com	
<b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – 3 “life stages” varieties.	<b>MADE BY</b> Taplow Feeds, Chilliwack, BC, Canada (APHIS-registered, Canadian Food Inspection Agency [CFIA]-registered, EU-certified).
<b>HIGHLIGHTED VARIETY</b> – Brave Dog (adult) variety contains: Chicken meal, oats, barley, brown rice, chicken fat, fish meal, potato, potassium chloride, kelp, calcium propionate . . . 26% protein; 16% fat; 5% fiber; 10% moisture.	
<b>MISC INFO</b> – “We entered into an agreement with the Haida Tribe in Canada to provide us with their premium kelp, an excellent detoxifier. Virgin coconut oil , extra omegas, and the inclusion of antioxidant berries give our food the extra punch the immune system needs.” Products available in independent pet supply stores and direct shipped to consumers.	



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### BOOKS AND DVDS

❖ WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog*; *Positive Perspectives 2: Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog*; *Power of Positive Dog Training*; *Play With Your Dog*; and *Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First Class Life*. Available from Dogwise, (800) 776-2665 or [dogwise.com](http://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](http://dogwise.com). Puotinen is also author of several books about human health, including *Natural Relief from Aches and Pains*, available from your favorite bookseller.



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### ❖ DIABETES IN DOGS

*Types of diabetes, symptoms, causes, treatments (including the best diet for diabetic dogs).*

### ❖ PICTURE THIS

*Want to take professional-quality photos of your dog that reveal his true personality? We share tips from the masters.*

### ❖ ROSE: HERB OF THE YEAR

*How roses can help your dog.*

### ❖ TRUST IN CASE

*Speaking of dog law, have you made provisions for your dogs in case of your death? Here's how it can be done.*

### ❖ BITEY NO MORE

*How one dog flunked his behavior assessment at a shelter due to his hard biting, but was rehabilitated into a solid canine citizen.*