

# The Whole Dog Journal™



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*A monthly guide to natural dog care and training*

MARCH 2014

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# Puppy Shots

*Without WDJ, my son wouldn't have known his pup was unprotected.*

BY NANCY KERNS

**W**e have long advised puppy owners to have their vet run a “vaccine titer test” a few weeks after the series of “puppy shots” were completed. In our view, adopted from that of the canine vaccination experts we most respect (Ron Schultz, PhD, who has been involved in the development and testing of most of the vaccines used on dogs in this country; and W. Jean Dodds, DVM, a veterinarian who has extensively studied and written about canine vaccines), only a positive vaccine titer test can tell you whether the puppy’s immune system responded to the vaccines in the manner that was intended.

A brief refresher: Puppies are born with antibodies from their mothers still circulating in their bodies. (Some of these they gained from the blood they shared with their mothers via the umbilical cord, and some from the colostrum that they drank in the first couple of days after they were born). These antibodies “fade” (disappear) at a variable point – from a few weeks to as much as six months after the birth of the puppy.

A vaccination is a weakened, modified, or killed strain of disease antigen – the substance that could otherwise cause disease. We administer disease antigens to a dog or puppy in order to “teach” their immune systems to recognize them as invaders, so they produce antibodies that are specifically designed to recognize and neutralize those antigens. If the animals are later exposed to one of these disease antigens in a live, virulent state, the antibodies will recognize the antigens and annihilate them before they can infect and sicken the dog.

When his mother’s antibodies are circulating in a puppy’s bloodstream, and we vaccinate him (with disease antigens), the mother’s antibodies recognize those antigens and neutralize them. When this occurs, the puppy does not develop his own antibodies (protection) from the vaccines he was given. This mechanism is known as “maternal interference” – the mother’s antibodies have interfered with the vaccine. That’s why we vaccinate the puppy again and again: because until this maternal interference fades, the puppy’s own body can’t begin to recognize

the disease antigens in the vaccines and develop his own antibodies to those diseases. Pups are vaccinated two to three weeks apart, in an effort to minimize any potential gap in coverage (between the fading of the maternal immunity, and a vaccination and resulting development of the pup’s own immunity).

On four separate occasions, my son’s new pup, Cole, was vaccinated at the shelter from which he was adopted. His age was estimated to be six months – the time when a puppy’s maternal interference is almost always gone – when I took Cole in for a vaccine titer test, to make sure he was what’s called fully “immunized,” not just “fully vaccinated.” In other words, to make sure he had developed his own antibodies to the diseases for which he was vaccinated.

Guess what? He hadn’t. The result of Cole’s titer test for distemper was *negative*. We assumed (like almost everyone does) that after all those puppy shots, he was protected, but if he had happened to come into contact with a dog or pup who had been infected with distemper, or had been someplace an infected dog had recently been, Cole could have contracted this often fatal disease.

Thanks to our knowledge, gleaned from the experts who inform WDJ, we found out that he was unprotected, so we vaccinated Cole again. We’ll run another titer test in about three weeks, and keep him away from dog parks and sidewalks until we have the results. And I will discuss vaccinations, titer tests, and Cole’s situation at greater length in the April issue.

NK



🐾 HEALTH 🐾

# So Long!

*Don't allow your fear of hurting your dog to prevent you from keeping his feet healthy.*

BY LISA RODIER

**M**y young Bouvier, Atle, has the triple threat of dog nails: black, stout, and surrounded by lots of hair. Regular nail trimming is not a task I relish, yet the importance of trimming nails can't be underestimated. Left unattended, long nails can splinter or break off, affect your dog's gait, and cause orthopedic issues and pain. Although ultra-critical for performance dogs, proper foot care is required for the health and well-being of all dogs – couch potato or agility star.

Your dog's feet are full of nerves that help him with proprioception; that is, an understanding of where his body is in space and relative to the ground (i.e., which end is up). When your dog's nails are too long, messages to his brain get scrambled, altering his gait and posture. That's anathema to integrative veterinarian Julie Buzby, DVM, CAVCA, CVA, founder of Dr. Buzby's ToeGrips, a company that makes a traction aid to help elderly and other mobility-impaired dogs stop slipping on slick floors.

Dr. Buzby is passionate about canine

nail care and describes the postural changes caused by long nails: "A dog with long toenails can't stand with legs perpendicular to the ground. Rather, he compensates by adopting the 'goat on a rock' stance, where his forelegs are 'behind' perpendicular and his hind legs must come under him to prevent him from tipping forward."

Dr. Buzby regularly sees dogs for orthopedic issues. Her exams start from the ground and work up; after a nose-to-tail physical exam, typically a nail trim is the first "treatment" on her list – even

**Over-long nails alter the way your dog stands and strides, and can actually cause lameness and injuries, as your dog tries to move in a way that doesn't hurt his toes and feet. If you don't feel up to keeping them trimmed yourself, make regular appointments with a groomer.**

before chiropractic care or acupuncture. She recently saw a Dachshund who presented for lameness. His nails were long enough to deform the way his toes contacted the ground, altering his posture and gait.

I'm a sports-medicine junkie, so the idea that regular nail trimming benefits a dog's gait and posture is enough of a "carrot" to get me on board. Those who need a "stick" to motivate them to maintain their dogs' nails should consider the specter of broken nails (and the veterinary visits to treat them), which are prevalent in dogs with long nails.

"This is a fairly common problem in veterinary medicine and it's gruesome to treat – painful for the dog and bloody," says Dr. Buzby. "There is no conservative way to treat this injury." Typically that means cutting the nail short at the nail bed by transecting the nail to remove the entire thing. She goes on to say, "Sadly, I can't remember once in 17 years when this happened in a dog with short nails."

## CLICK CLACK

It's not often that we encounter a Dr. Buzby who will tell us, flat out, that our dogs' nails need trimming; the responsibility to monitor this is ours. There are a

few telltale signs to help you know when it's time to trim:

- Your dog's nails touch the floor when she is standing.
- When your dog walks on surfaces such as hardwood or tile flooring, you can hear clicking.
- If you hold up a paw and look at it in profile, the nail extends past the pad for that toe.

Though we're often told that nails should be trimmed monthly, in fact, they should be trimmed weekly – two weeks at the outside – for best results. Some folks even opt for twice-weekly trimmings.

Front nails seem to wear less quickly than rear, and don't forget the dewclaws if your dog has them!

## CUT TO THE QUICK!

Much of the hullabaloo about nail trimming revolves around the dreaded "quick." This is the center of the nail where nerve and nail blood supply sit. Cutting the quick – as can happen accidentally during nail trims – draws blood and can temporarily hurt.

In light-colored nails, the pink quick can often be seen from the top and sides of the nail, whereas in black nails, the quick is not visible from that perspective. To best see the start of the quick, Dr. Buzby recommends looking at the cross section of the nail (front/underneath) that's visible once the first cut is made. In white nails, the start of the quick is white or pink, while in black nails, it's grey or black. If you take off very thin slices and examine the nail after each



The grey color in the center of each cut nail indicates the quick is close to the (newly cut) surface; stop there.

slice, you should be able to avoid cutting into the quick.

Regular nail trimming at tighter intervals is said to help the quick recede, making it possible to trim nails shorter over time. Despite this conventional wisdom, Dr. Buzby, who uses clippers, does not see that happen; an informal poll of a few of her colleagues leads her to believe that most people who are able to get the quicks to recede use a rotary tool, and trim frequently.

## TOOLS AND TECHNIQUE

The most popular and most recommended tools are scissor-style clippers or a rotary tool/nail grinder (i.e., a Dremel). Dr. Buzby likes the control she gets with her Miller's Forge nail trimmers, the same argument made by rotary-tool fans. She would "never use a guillotine-style trimmer," a sentiment echoed by my dog Atle's groomer, Angela Duckett-Smutney, who says the guillotine trimmers are harder to finesse. If your dog is less than perfectly cooperative and patient, it can be difficult to "thread" each toenail into the hole of the guillotine in order to cut it.

The following is Dr. Buzby's technique for trimming using nail clippers:

**1** Make a coarse cut off the top/front of the nail to remove obvious length. "The angle is very vertical and that is my trade secret!" This is in contrast to a 45-degree angle that is commonly recommended. Since the quick may not be visible on a black nail, the first cut is somewhat blind; err on the conservative side for this coarse cut on dark nails, taking off just the tip to start.

**2** When trimming dark nails, many people remove only the tip, but don't stop there! White or black nail, shave off small slivers until you can see that the quick is close to the cut surface.

**3** Round off the sides/corners using smaller cuts. It's safe to remove the sharp edges on either side of the nail without affecting the quick, since it runs in the center of the nail.

Some individuals prefer to take length off first using clippers, then finish the job with a nail grinder. Whether clipping first or not, Atle's groomer likes to use a coarse 60 grit wheel and recommends a rotary tool that has significant voltage. She prefers to hold the rotary tool close to the wheel, using short strokes from the bottom of the nail up. She starts with one stroke up the middle, then one on each side at a 45 degree angle, holding each toe individually.

Beware of the hair with long-haired dogs! To keep it from getting wound up by the rotary tool, one recommended technique is to push the dog's nails through a cheap pair of pantyhose prior to trimming. For these dogs, too, it's imperative to trim the hair between the pads, as well as any excess hair growing around the edges of the paw.

## RESOURCES

### ❖ JULIE BUZBY, DVM, CAVCA, CVA

Dr. Buzby's Toegrips, Beaufort, SC  
(843) 694-4468; [toegrips.com](http://toegrips.com)

### ❖ SHIRLEY CHONG'S DOGGIE NAIL FILE

A positive technique for getting your dog to file his own nails!  
[shirleychong.com/keepers/nailfile.html](http://shirleychong.com/keepers/nailfile.html)

Most veterinary and grooming professionals prefer the scissor or plier-style nail clippers (like the blue-handled ones here) or a rotary tool (seen at top of photo), versus a guillotine-style tool (center).



## HELPFUL HINTS

The following are a few tips that can help with proper nail-trimming:

■ In addition to our dread of cutting the quick, many dogs aren't keen on having their paws handled, and/or aren't thrilled about the noises associated with nail-trimming tools. See "Positive Pedi-Pedi's" (WDJ August 2012) for tips on getting your dog desensitized to a nail-trimming routine.

■ There doesn't seem to be one favored position in which to place your dog for nail trimming; experiment and see what works best for both of you.

■ Before you start a session, get out your Kwik Stop or other styptic powder – flour, cornstarch, and a bar of soap are all said to work in a pinch – to have by your side should you cut the quick. If you draw blood, don't overreact! Quietly and quickly apply pressure and a pinch of powder to the nail. Your dog will be okay!

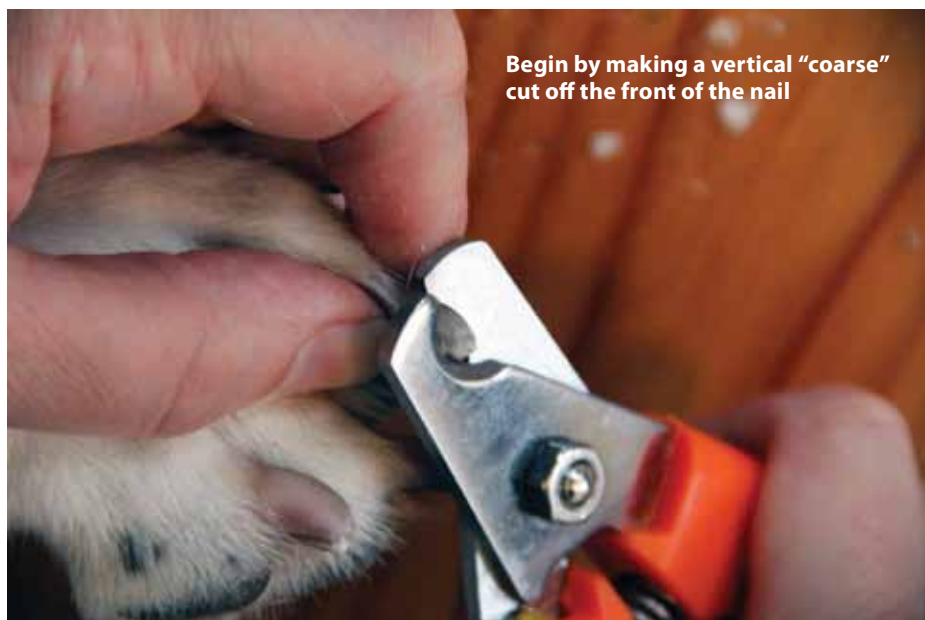
■ Be mindful of how much pressure you're applying to your dog's toes. Hold her paw only as tightly as you need to – too hard and it hurts!

■ To keep yourself and others safe, introduce your dog to a muzzle to wear during nail trims if she tends to go on the offensive. (Use the same technique as outlined in "Teach Your Dog to Love a Head Halter" on page TK.)

■ One other novel approach to consider: train your dog to "do" her own nails by scratching them on a sandpaper-like surface (see "Shirley Chong's Doggie Nail File" in Resources).

If you're still uncomfortable cutting your dog's nails, ask your vet or groomer to show you how. Dr. Buzby notes, "It's critical to keep this a positive experience for the dog. In my first practice, we educated clients on the importance of nail care and the veterinary technicians did a complimentary nail-trimming tutorial as part of every new puppy/kitten office visit. Veterinarians should be tackling both issues [why and how] through client education." 🐾

*Lisa Rodier lives in Georgia with her husband and Atle the Bouvier, and volunteers with the American Bouvier Rescue League.*



Begin by making a vertical "coarse" cut off the front of the nail

PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. BUZBY'S TOEGRIPS



Shave off smaller pieces, avoiding the quick, then round off the edges with smaller cuts to each side

PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. BUZBY'S TOEGRIPS



Done! The finished product shows the foreground nail cut right to the edge of the quick, in contrast to the other nails, yet to be trimmed

PHOTO COURTESY OF DR. BUZBY'S TOEGRIPS

We may not be that aware of it, but we have to touch our dogs all the time: for bathing and grooming; putting on and taking off coats, boots, harnesses, and more; lifting them into cars or onto the vet's exam table, and so on. For safety and happiness, it pays to invest the time in teaching a touch-phobic dog to enjoy it.



# Touching Moments

*Teach your dog to not just accept, but also enjoy handling, examinations, and even restraint.*

BY MARDI RICHMOND, MA, CPDT-KA

**D**oes your puppy or adult dog squirm when you check his ears? Squeal as you touch his toes? Or slink away when you bring out the brush? If so, you are not alone. A very few easygoing dogs seem to have been born enjoying all types of touch and handling. But most puppies and dogs need a little help when it comes to sensitive areas and intrusive touch. Is it really possible to help a dog learn to tolerate all types of handling? Absolutely! And, with a little special attention and training, your dog may even come to love the same types of touch that used to make him squirm, squeal, or slink away.

## GET STARTED WITH PUP

Handling exercises are an important part of early socialization. One of the best ways to prevent problems with handling later in life is to make handling exercises a priority with your pup. Prior to 12 weeks of age, pairing handling and touch with pleasant experiences – say, a

tasty treat – can help condition the pup to enjoy all types of touch.

For example, you may want to gently touch your puppy's ear, and then give her a great treat. After she is happy and comfortable with you gently touching her ear, then you can lift the ear, and once again give the pup a treat. When she is

comfortable with lifting the ear, you can gently rub the ear and offer a treat. This pairing of touching and treats should be repeated with puppy's paws, tail, head, muzzle, mouth, back, belly, legs, neck, and collar. Be sure to have other members of your family and friends help with touching exercises, too. The positive associations created in puppyhood can last throughout their lives.

## ADULT DOGS

Handling exercises are just as important for older pups, as well as adolescent and adult dogs. You can begin with conditioning your adult dog to all types of touch and handling, just as you would a puppy. Depending on the dog and his previous socialization and experiences, you may not need to continue pairing all types of touch with treats, but you will want to keep it up with any sensitive areas. You might skip the treats for any handling that your dog is happy about, such as head pats and belly rubs. But if your dog doesn't really enjoy having her paws held, for example, frequent pairing of gentle paw holding with treats can help her to accept it when it is really needed.

If you have lived with an adult dog for a while, you are likely aware of what he or she does and doesn't like in the way of touching and handling. But if you have an adolescent or adult dog that is new to you, use caution as you discover how she enjoys being touched, and what areas may be sensitive. Some dogs may have had uncomfortable, painful, or frightening experiences with handling. Be sure to respect your dog's sensitive spots until you've had the opportunity to counter-condition handling for those areas.

## ASSESSING YOUR DOG

How do you know your dog doesn't like to be touched in certain places or is uncomfortable with handling? Of course it is obvious if a puppy or dog expresses a strong objection by growling or by trying to get away. If your dog responds with

such negative reactions, you may want to get the help of a professional trainer or behavior specialist to work through handling issues.

However, dogs also express their discomfort in other less obvious ways. Here are a few of the ways a puppy or dog may show discomfort:

- Wiggling, squiggling, or jumping around in a playful manner
- Licking your hands or arms
- Moving away when given the chance
- Repositioning herself to make it more difficult for you to touch her, for example, turning away from you
- Becoming tense
- Putting a chin on or gently mouthing your arm
- Refusing to look in your direction

How can you tell if a dog is truly comfortable and happy about the way you are touching her?

- Her body is soft and without tension
- She makes a connection, often by looking at you with soft, blinky eyes
- She may gently lean into your handling

For the types of handling we do every day, such as petting, grooming, toweling, quick checks for fleas or burrs, both you and your dog will be happier if your dog truly enjoys the activities. For other types of handling, simple acceptance may be enough. For example, I doubt many dogs actually *enjoy* intrusive touching such as opening their mouths or having drops put in their eyes, but they can learn to be cooperative and calm and, more importantly, not frightened or threatened by the experience.

## BUILDING A HANDLING SKILL SET

While conditioning your dog to touch and counter-conditioning sensitive areas are crucial to low-stress handling, training a set of specific skills to help your dog understand the tasks is equally important. Your dog's ability to perform

the following behaviors can significantly reduce her stress and assist with daily handling and grooming, as well as professional grooming and vet exams.

■ **SIT, DOWN, STAND.** As part of basic training, most of us teach our dogs to hold certain positions. Sit and down are the most common. For grooming and vet visits, adding a stand is equally helpful. For comfortable handling, teaching your dog each of these behaviors to fluency (meaning the dog can do them anywhere, anytime, with most types of distractions) is very helpful.

■ **LIE ON YOUR SIDE.** As a variation of the down, lie on your side (sometimes called "lie flat" or "relax") is another position that will come in handy for grooming and exams. As with the sit, down, and stand, building fluency is important with this position. Some dogs are reluctant to lie on their sides when they are in unfamiliar places or around unfamiliar people because this is a vulnerable position. Start by practicing in a variety of places that feel safe to your dog and then gradually extend the practice to other places. This will help build your dog's trust.

■ **STILL.** Still is a variation of a stay exercise. Stay is an exercise in which the dog holds her body in a specific position, such as sit, down, stand, or lie flat. However, most of us train stay with the goal of the handler moving away from the dog. The "still" is similar in that the dog needs to hold her body in one position. However, rather than staying in a position while people move away, the dog must stay in one position even when people are touching the dog. Some people successfully use the "stay" cue for both staying at a distance and staying still for touch. You may choose to build onto your stay cue or use a different cue for the still behavior.

■ **HOLDING THE MUZZLE.** Teach your dog that your hand around his nose and mouth is no big deal. Start by holding your fingers in a C position. With your other hand, hold a treat behind the C so that your dog will move his head into the C to get to the treat. Practice several times, until your dog is happily pushing his muzzle into the C for treats. Then gradually add some gentle pressure on the muzzle. Slowly add more gentle pressure until your dog is comfortable with your



Keep in mind that dogs may feel differently about being touched in different places. Otto is very comfortable with having his head held or restrained, and having his ears, eyes, and teeth examined . . .



. . . But he's quite uncomfortable having his feet held or examined. He especially dislikes having someone check for foxtails between his toes. It's cold outside, but he begins to pant and looks away.



As the handler persists, touching his toes, he continues to pant and begins to yawn. If he suddenly snapped at or bit a handler who wasn't aware that these were signs of stress, he'd probably say it happened "out of nowhere," because Otto wasn't growling or trying to get away. He would benefit from some counter-conditioning.

## HOW TO COUNTER-CONDITION TOUCH AND HANDLING

Counter-conditioning is the process of shifting a dog's emotional response. In the case of handling, it generally means helping a dog who is uncomfortable or frightened when touched in certain ways learn to feel good about being touched. For example, with counter-conditioning, a dog who did not like people touching his head can learn to not only *accept* hands reaching toward his head, but also enjoy it so much that he seeks out head petting and patting.

When you begin the process, I suggest avoiding restraining your dog or having her on a leash. By giving her the freedom to play the game with you or move away if uncomfortable, you will be sure to know how your dog feels and whether you are working under your dog's threshold.

"Working under threshold" is critical to success. You want to find the place your dog will not be upset by the touching – and that may be much farther away than you expect. For example, if your dog is sensitive about having her head touched, you may need to start with your hand approaching your dog's head, but not too close; if you move your hand *too* close, your dog may already be over threshold. (To learn more about thresholds, please see "Across a Threshold," WDJ April 2013.)

Then the pairing begins. Use something very special and novel for your treats. Small bits of chicken, roast beef, and hot dogs are all good choices. For the first couple of pairings, you may want to move one hand toward your dog's head while giving her a great treat with your other hand at the same time. Fairly soon, however, change the order so that you move your hand toward your dog's head first, and then follow with the treat.

Decide when to move your hand closer based on your dog's response. If your dog is enjoying the game and seems to be pretty comfortable with your hand, you can move your hand a tiny bit closer. If your dog moves away from your hand, or doesn't seem to want to play the game, you have gone over threshold. Observe, but don't stare at your dog during this exercise. Keep your body soft, too.

Treats and food are most often used for counter-conditioning, but with dogs who particularly enjoy toys, you can use a game such as tug or throwing a ball as a pleasant thing to pair with touching your dog. I have a friend who taught her dog to accept nail trimming by pairing it with his favorite ball play (he would previously hide and refuse to come out when the nail clippers appeared).

She started by teaching him the trick of putting his paw in her hand. The reward was a ball toss. She then began to have him leave his paw on her hand for a few moments longer before she'd throw the ball; then she *held* his paw, and soon she was able to hold his paw and clip his nail for a single ball toss. This was a combination of training the dog to offer the



**This dog is uncomfortable with being touched on the head. The handler is feeding her a treat that she likes, but you can tell the dog's backward-leaning posture and tightly tucked tail that the proximity of the petting hand and the handler's body has the dog obviously over her threshold for comfort.**



**That's better! When the handler leans back a bit, and feeds the treat with her hand near, but not on the dog's head, the dog relaxes a bit. Her tail is still tucked, though, telling us she is *near* her threshold.**

behavior for a ball toss, and in the process of gradually upping the criteria, her dog was soon running to her when the nail clippers came out, rather than slinking off to hide.



hand holding his nose and mouth. This is a similar technique to conditioning your dog to a physical muzzle, which is also a great idea when preparing your dog for vet visits and emergency situations.

■ **CHIN ON HAND.** You can teach a dog to rest his head on your hand and hold the position. Start by holding your hand out flat in front of your dog's muzzle and place a treat near your wrist as a lure. Your dog's chin will move over your palm to get the treat. After the dog gets the idea of moving the chin onto the palm of the hand, I switch from luring to shaping. At first, your dog's chin may just touch the hand, but you can gradually reward longer and longer holds. I like to teach the dog to hold his chin on my hand until I give a release cue such as "Okay!"

■ **GIVE ME A PAW.** Similar to the trick "shake," this behavior teaches the dog to put her paw into your hand. Unlike the shake behavior, "give me a paw" will also teach your dog to hold the paw in your hand until she is given a release cue such as "Okay!" If your dog offers pawing behaviors, it is generally pretty easy to capture this. Other ways to get the dog to offer the behavior is through shaping it or physically prompting by gently picking up the paw and putting it into your hand.

■ **TARGETING.** Targeting behaviors can be particularly helpful in grooming and handling as they can be a terrific way to move your dog without having to manhandle him. For example, you can teach your dog to "hand target," in which your dog touches your hand with his nose. By moving your hand, and having your dog follow to touch your hand with his nose, you can easily turn your dog around or move him from a down to a stand.

An "eye target" teaches your dog to follow a target with his eyes or head. For example, you can teach him to follow your finger or a pen with his eyes. This is terrific to help a dog turn his head slightly for putting in eye drops or checking ears.

There are many additional behaviors that you might find helpful for your dog. Getting on and off a table for grooming is just one example, and you may be able to think of many more. With some of these behaviors in place, handling, grooming,

and vet exams all become much easier and less stressful. Plus, your dog will have the opportunity to earn rewards in the process, which may build more enthusiasm for handling games.

## TEACH RESTRAINT, TOO

Sometimes we will not be able to ask our dogs to perform a simple behavior when we need to touch or handle them. Sometimes a situation will override early puppy socialization and handling practice. Perhaps the dog is sick or in pain or too upset to be able to stand still or hold his head up in your hand. In these situations, you may need to physically restrain your dog. Helping your dog understand and accept restraint is another critical skill. Training restraint skills will help if you need to take care of a sick or injured dog, and it will lessen your dog's trauma as well.

Teaching restraint is fairly straight-



**This dog loves being petted – but panics when being even gently restrained. He would benefit from some counter-conditioning, so he forms the same sort of positive association he has with being petted as he does with being held or restrained.**

forward. As with all types of touch and handling, you begin where your dog is comfortable and gradually build her acceptance. Start with gentle motions toward restraint, for example moving your arm around your dog's body without touching, giving a great treat, and then moving away.

If you start at a place your dog is comfortable and pair the touch with great treats, your dog will soon be okay with gentle holding. Gradual is the key here,

making sure your dog is not just accepting but fully comfortable at each step. Slowly add in more pressure until you are actually holding your dog firmly, and then gradually build up the length of time you hold your dog. Taking this slowly and building trust as you go will pay off big time if you have to restrain your dog in an emergency.

Practice restraining your dog from the side first (this is easiest for most dogs) with your one arm across the back and under the belly and the other arm around the chest with a hand resting near the dog's head. Other restraint positions to practice are holding your dog while he is sitting and you are kneeling behind, and holding your dog while he is lying flat. Most dog first-aid books have good illustrations showing how to restrain your dog. You can also ask your vet to show you the most effective positions.

Conditioning handling, teaching skills for grooming and exams, and helping your dog become comfortable with restraint are all part of helping him accept the daily handling and occasional invasive touching he will endure throughout his life. As you practice, keeping each step within your dog's comfort zone and gradually building skills, you will also teach your dog to trust you. He will learn that when you put your hands on him, even in ways that are not always comfortable, you have his best interests at heart.

For some dogs, this process will be a breeze and they will learn these skills as a matter of course or through your daily activities. Tooth brushing may help him become comfortable with mouth handling. Regular grooming such as brushing his coat can teach him to love head-to-toe touching. But for other dogs, those who may be more sensitive, uncomfortable, or fearful, the conditioning and training may take some extra time. In the long run, the effort you put in will be well worth it for a dog who is comfortable, accepting, and trusting around touch. 🐾

*Mardi Richmond is a dog trainer and writer living in Santa Cruz, CA, with her wife and her dog Chance. A formerly feral dog, Chance challenged Mardi when it came to handling skills, but today Chance loves all types of touching, handling, and restraint. For contact information, see "Resources," page 24.*

# Hack Job

## Preventing and treating that pesky (and sometimes serious) contagion, kennel cough.

BY DENISE FLAIM

**Y**ou're not likely to forget it if you've heard it even once: the half-cough, half-choke – sort of like a Canada goose in need of a Ricola lozenge – that signals your dog has come down with kennel cough.

As canine illnesses go, kennel cough has something of a split personality. Usually, it's "self-limiting," which means affected dogs generally recover without any interventions whatsoever, leaving the victim none the worse for wear. But every so often, a dog develops serious complications, necessitating hospitalization and extreme measures. Given that, plus the condition's highly contagious nature, means that most boarding facilities and even veterinarians sometimes treat it with the kind of alarm usually reserved for an ebola outbreak.

Kennel cough is a generic name for a group of pathogens that produce a contagious upper-respiratory infection in dogs. Sometimes referred to as bordetella (one of the bacteria that can cause it), kennel cough is also called canine infectious respiratory disease (CIRD) as well as canine infectious tracheobronchitis. The abundance of names reflects the fact that kennel cough is really a loosely defined confederacy of viruses as well as bacteria, any of which can produce a cough that lasts from several days to weeks – and sometimes much longer, if complications such as pneumonia arise.

Kennel cough is spread through respiratory secretions, and since few dogs have learned the kindergarten

trick of sneezing into the inside of their elbows, it can spread widely and quickly. As its name suggests, places where large numbers of dogs congregate can be a hotbed for spreading the disease, from boarding kennels to dog runs. Most dogs show symptoms within three to 10 days of exposure. In addition to the trademark gagging cough, infected dogs may exhibit sneezing, nasal discharge, and mild lethargy. Healthy adult dogs generally don't otherwise act sick or stop eating, and likely will continue to play

and be active, though physical exertion may trigger more hacking episodes.

In dogs who are very young, very old, highly stressed (for example, in a shelter), or immunocompromised, or who have an underlying condition, kennel cough can advance to the lower-respiratory tract and cause pneumonia, which is life threatening.

If this sounds like a wide range of symptoms, it may be because the illness actually is a range of illnesses, and caused by a variety of infectious organisms, bacterial and viral. (For the difference between kennel cough and canine influenza, as well as the newly identified circovirus, see sidebar.)

When she was a veterinary student more than 35 years ago, holistic veterinarian Christina Chambreau of Sparks, Maryland, did an externship at the National Institutes of Health's foxhound breeding colony.

"My job for the summer was to do throat cultures on every coughing dog – and lots of them were coughing," she remembers. "And every dog I cultured had a different combination of bacteria."

At the same time, Chambreau worked part-time at a number of different veterinary clinics. "Each one had a completely different conventional



**This puppy, a shelter ward, has the honking cough and runny nose that indicates kennel cough. The condition can be caused by viruses or bacteria, and can last from days to weeks.**

treatment protocol – one used Prednisone, another used antibiotics, another said, ‘They’ll just get better.’ When you see multiple treatment protocols like that, it means none of them are ideal.”

Is it any wonder this condition is called the kennel cough *complex*?

## GETTING A NOSEFUL

For many conventional veterinarians, the reflexive answer to preventing kennel cough is to vaccinate for it.

Holistic veterinarian Marcie Fallek, who practices in both New York City and Fairfield, Connecticut, is not a fan of the vaccine, pointing out that it is short-lived and may not be adequately protective, as there is no way to cover all the pathogens that can cause kennel cough.

“It seems to cause disease more than prevent it,” she says, adding that facilities that insist on vaccinating new boarders on site are operating largely on reflex – and fear. And in reality, they aren’t doing a thing to protect their other clients.

“It takes several days, if not a week, for the kennel cough vaccine to be effective,” she explains. “So when you give it on the spot like that, it doesn’t protect the other dogs. If it’s going to give any protection, which is minimal, it’s only going to be the animal that receives it.”

Using this logic, some owners have persuaded boarding and day-care facilities to accept a signed waiver in lieu of a vaccine, agreeing not to hold them responsible should their dog contract the disease.

Veterinarian Jean Dodds of Garden Grove, California, says she “rarely” recommends vaccinating for kennel cough, because generally speaking kennel cough is “not a serious problem and the vaccines are not 100 percent efficacious.” But if an owner does decide to vaccinate, she does not recommend using the injectable form; instead, she recommends the intranasal vaccine, which is squirted up the dog’s nose, or the oral form, which is taken by mouth.

Intranasal vaccines for bordetella activate interferon, a pathogen-fighting protein, in the dog’s body, an action that does not result from injectable forms of the vaccine. “The interferon also helps cross-protect against other respiratory organisms,” says Dr. Dodds.

If you want to or need to vaccinate your dog for bordetella, it might make the most sense to ask your veterinarian for the intranasal bordetella vaccine that

## GOING VIRAL

If you spend any time on the Internet, you’ve come across frantic references to canine influenza and circovirus. There seems to be an inverse relationship between the hysteria that mention of these two viruses induces, and what people actually know about them. Let’s take the oldest one first.

**Canine influenza** – specifically, canine influenza virus subtype H3N8 – first surfaced in a Greyhound kennel in Florida in 2004. A mutated version of a horse flu that “jumped species,” dog flu is highly contagious and produces symptoms that are similar to kennel cough – cough and runny nose. Dogs may also have a thick nasal discharge, which is usually caused by a secondary bacterial infection. But one thing that sets it apart, Dr. Dodds says, is the presence of a fever.



Like kennel cough, “canine influenza is generally not a disease of much clinical significance, despite the fact that it is a highly contagious virus,” says Dr. Dodds. For that reason, the canine influenza vaccine is not recommended for routine use, “except when animals may be exposed to high-risk situations such as crowded competitive show events, in which case it should be given prophylactically beforehand – two doses, three weeks apart.”

Dogs are at the greatest risk of complications if they become infected with the flu at a time when they are already coping with another stressor, such as intestinal parasites, malnourishment, or another infection.

“The only other dangerous scenario with this virus is when the dog has an upper or lower respiratory infection with streptococcus,” Dr. Dodds says. According to Ron Schultz of the Department of Pathobiological Sciences at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, in that scenario, two to three percent of dogs infected with canine influenza and strep can die from the co-infection.

The latest panic-inducing virus is **canine circovirus**. Last fall, media reports about dogs who contracted some sort of lethal virus in Ohio, and then later, in Michigan, were thought to have suffered from circovirus. However, investigators later concluded that while some of the affected dogs were *infected with* circovirus, it was not the primary cause of their illness. In an update published in November, Thomas Mullaney, interim director of the Diagnostic Center for Population and Animal Health at Michigan State University in Lansing, said, “Based on our current evidence, dog circovirus is not cause for panic.”

It is, however, cause for greater investigation. “I don’t think we really understand circovirus,” Dr. Dodds says. “It’s like giardia; it’s everywhere. What we don’t know is why it causes a major clinical problem in some dogs and not others.” There is also no vaccine for circovirus at this time.

Circovirus symptoms are more diffuse than those of kennel cough or canine influenza. They include vomiting, diarrhea (possibly bloody), and lethargy, though some dogs exhibit a respiratory component, such as coughing.

Researchers have been able to identify circovirus in lab samples from cases as far back as 2007. “The virus went undetected in dogs for several years and probably longer,” Mullaney wrote. “This supports the theory that dog circovirus exists as a subclinical infection, or as a co-infection with other well-recognized pathogens.”

Bottom line? Like kennel cough and canine influenza, circovirus isn’t a major problem for most dogs, but for some it will be. The best way to ensure that yours isn’t in the latter group is to keep her immune system robust and ready to meet the next challenge.

also contains a vaccine for CAV-2, a strain of canine adenovirus that affects the respiratory tract. A dog who is immunized against that form of adenovirus is also protected against the far more serious CAV-1, or infectious canine hepatitis, which can be life threatening. This might be unexpectedly welcome news to those who use minimal vaccination protocols that do not include canine hepatitis (including the popular one recommended by Dr. Dodds).

Dr. Dodds notes that, as with every vaccine, there are some dogs who react adversely to the kennel-cough vaccine, especially those with “a hypersensitivity-like response” in which the body responds to an immune challenge so severely that it can be life threatening. If your dog has had an adverse reaction to a kennel-cough vaccine, he should not be given any more of those vaccines for any reason.

For her part, Dr. Fallek recommends using a kennel-cough nosode, a homeopathic remedy that contains the energetic imprint of the disorder; while sometimes referred to as “homeopathic vaccines,” nosodes work differently, rebalancing the body rather than prompting it to mount an immunological attack. “Kennel-cough nosodes are not 100 percent protective, but neither are vaccines,” she points out. Dr. Fallek recommends that those who wish to use the nosode to protect a dog who will be in a high-risk environment start dosing the dog several days before the expected risk, giving the remedy once or twice a day with a 30C potency for a maximum of five days.

## IMMUNE-BUILDING

When it comes to preventing kennel cough, the best defense is, well, a good defense.

“The bottom line is, the healthier you can get your dog, the better,” Dr. Chambreau says. “You want to build the immune system so she fights it off herself.”

The basic building blocks of good health are just that – basic. Make sure your dog receives the best-quality food and water possible. Avoid and limit exposure to toxins. And pay attention to the early-warning signs that the body gives when it is beginning to weaken, but before disease manifests.

“These are little things your vet won’t think are wrong,” Dr. Chambreau says, including goopy discharge that accu-

mulates in the corners of the eye, slight waxiness in the ears, a little red line in the gums, minor behavioral problems, and a slight overall odor that necessitates baths every couple of weeks. She recommends keeping a daily journal so you can see patterns in your dog’s well-being emerge over time.

“Any holistic treatment that builds the immune system will usually take care of kennel cough,” adds Dr. Chambreau, who is a staunch believer in what she calls “R&R” – a flower essence remedy called Rescue Remedy and reiki, a healing “life force energy” practice. “You take one course in how to do reiki, and you can start offering it to your dogs every day on a regular basis,” says Dr. Chambreau. And while Rescue Remedy and flower essences in general won’t cure kennel cough or any other disease, many dog owners report that these gentle plant distillations can center emotions and help alleviate anxiety or distress about kennel cough, as much for you as your dog!

Another thing you can add to your preventive toolbox is the thymus thump. During the early part of a dog’s life, the thymus programs the T-cells that are so central to the functioning of the immune system. “By tapping the thymus, you reactivate it,” Dr. Chambreau explains.

To find your dog’s thymus, run your hand down her throat, and below the throat feel for the firm, bony protuberance that is the sternum. Gently thump that area with your hand several times a day, or whenever you remember.

Quite an array of supplements, herbs, and tonics are reputed to help strengthen the immune system; the most commonly cited include coconut oil, apple cider vinegar, aloe vera juice, and whole food supplements.

Melissa Oloff of Canterbury, Connecticut, keeps her Ridgeback Coco on an immune-boosting regimen of Vitamin C and probiotics daily, as well as an echinacea capsule several times a week. When the doggie daycare that Coco attends had an outbreak of kennel cough, Oloff increased the frequency of administering echinacea, giving her dog a dose every day during the week when Coco was exposed. “She was fine, no symptoms,” Oloff says. “The kennel had to send home 50 percent of their dogs.”

## TREATMENT PLANS

As Dr. Chambreau noted when she first began in veterinary medicine, conven-

tional treatment for kennel cough varies, from simply keeping the dog quiet and avoiding drafts and strenuous exercise, to administering antibiotics (which are useless if the pathogen involved is a virus and not a bacterium). Some veterinarians may recommend a cough suppressant, but others, such as Dr. Fallek, contend that cough suppressants further weaken the immune system.

Dr. Fallek is trained in homeopathy, and she finds kennel cough relatively easy to treat with this energy-based modality. Though a dog’s individual symptoms should be used to select the correct remedy, one that Dr. Fallek finds works in many cases is Bryonia, which is indicated for coughs that are made worse by movement.

Dr. Chambreau, who is also a homeopath, notes that kennel cough often can be stopped in its tracks if the homeopathic remedy Aconite is administered at the very beginning. “If you find there is a remedy that works for you [the dog owner], then you might use that,” she says. “Often people and their animals need the same remedy.”

When kennel cough is a concern in Dr. Dodd’s facility (a canine blood bank, utilizing retired racing Greyhounds who are available for adoption!), Dr. Dodds brews a tea made of the herb mullein, which is used for calming the respiratory tract and treating lung ailments.

While mullein is not an endangered plant – the ultimate volunteer, it can get a foothold anywhere, including sidewalk cracks – some popular herbs are. Dr. Chambreau suggests substituting marshmallow root for slippery elm, which is being overharvested because of the popularity of its medicinal bark. As a bonus, marshmallow is the gentler of the two, while still providing soothing relief to inflamed mucous membranes. For throat soothing, Dr. Chambreau suggests aloe vera and raw honey.

No matter what modality they use, Dr. Chambreau encourages owners to do their homework. No treatment is without its risks, and working with a trained practitioner is the best way to ensure that your healing intentions come to fruition. 🐾

*Denise Flaim of Revodana Ridgebacks in Long Island, New York, shares her home with three Ridgebacks, 10-year-old triplets, and a very patient husband.*

## MY HOLISTIC TOOLBOX FOR TREATING KENNEL COUGH

I've had dogs for most of my adult life, and I've dealt with kennel cough more times than I can count – though less and less as the years go by and I learn how to rear dogs with immune systems that can shrug it off. Like anything, how we choose to protect and treat our dogs is an evolution and a journey. Here's where mine has taken me.

Early on in my life with dogs, I vaccinated for kennel cough. Until, that is, one of my fully vaccinated dogs picked it up at a show. Despite being put on antibiotics, he developed pneumonia, and though he recovered, his hospitalization left me with a whopper of a vet bill. I drew two conclusions from that experience: One, I needed pet insurance. And, two, maybe the vaccine wasn't all it was cracked up to be.

From that point on, I didn't vaccinate for kennel cough (along with a lot of other things, but that's a different story). I found that my young dogs tended to develop the most severe symptoms when they first encountered kennel cough, usually at a dog show. By contrast, my oldsters, with their wise and still vibrant immune systems, didn't even sniffle.

After some trial and error, I came across what has become my go-to modality any time I hear that telltale hacking: the homeopathic remedy *Drosera*. Any time I administer it, the coughing stops in its tracks, and asymptomatic dogs in the household stay that way.

That said, I've talked to holistically minded folks who have had zero success with *Drosera*. One homeopath told me it has never worked for her, even though it is considered a potential remedy for kennel cough. Perhaps there is just something about me and my home that dovetails with *Drosera* energetically. Whatever it is, it has never failed me – with one exception.

Several months ago, I had a litter of puppies that was off to a shaky start. The dam had a Caesarian section, and the litter was less than half the size of a typical one for my girls: only four puppies, one of which faded hours after she was born. Less than a week later, Cocoa started hacking: It was kennel cough, picked up in those few hours at the vet's office.

Trusty *Drosera* to the rescue: I dosed Cocoa, and her coughing stopped within hours. I dosed her babies, too, and, because I had never had puppies this young exposed to kennel cough – and none of my mentors or fellow breeders had, either – I started them on antibiotics.

(I feel a little self-conscious and even defensive about admitting here that I used antibiotics prophylactically, even though I believe the decision to have been a correct, potentially even life-saving one; the small litter size and fading puppy suggested to me the possibility of a low-grade infection. But it says something about how militant "holistic medicine" enthusiasts can be when a conventional modality is chosen

as a first course of action; sometimes we fall into the same reflexive judging that we complain about with an allopathic approach! And that's not "wholism.")

Several days later, the large male (who was so big and vigorous that we had dubbed him "Chubsy") began making odd noises, which got worse if he moved around. Despite all my precautions, he had contracted kennel cough, and the noise I was hearing – sort of a snore, really – was a "stertor," caused by a partial obstruction of the airway above the larynx.

Thankfully, Chubsy was still active and eating, and a quick vet visit showed his lungs to be clear. I consulted my copy of Boericke's materia medica (a homeopathic encyclopedia) for other remedies that might help him fight off the kennel cough. But he didn't improve.

After several days, I decided to switch to another modality I was comfortable with, essential oils, which shouldn't be used in conjunction with homeopathic remedies because they antidote them.

I have had success staving off colds with Thieves Essential Oil. A proprietary blend of therapeutic-grade oils from Young Living, it's named for the four grave-robbers of medieval legend who avoided contracting the plague from the cadavers they pilfered by swathing themselves in oils (that turn out to have antimicrobial properties). The oil is a wonderful immune booster; when colds and viruses make their wintertime rounds, I do family foot rubs of Thieves diluted in almond oil to keep us sniffle-free.

Mindful that essential oils can be very powerful, I used a diffuser to disperse the oil in the puppies' room, for short periods several times a day. I watched the puppies and their mother closely for any negative reactions.

To the contrary: Chubsy improved almost immediately, and within a few days, all signs of the infection – including that sleep-aneia-like stertor – had disappeared.

Thanks to that experience, I have another addition to my toolbox if kennel cough crosses my dogs' paths again.



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### RESOURCES

- ❖ **THE ACADEMY OF VETERINARY HOMEOPATHY**  
Leucadia, CA. A referral list of veterinarians who use homeopathy in their practices. (866) 652- 1590; [theavh.org/referral](http://theavh.org/referral)
- ❖ **THIEVES OIL**  
Young Living Essential Oils, Lehi, UT  
(800) 371-3515

# Jaws Too?

## *How to survive your dog's arousal biting.*

BY PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

**Y**ou're frustrated with your dog. Maybe even a little frightened of him. Since puppyhood he's been a happy and loving companion, star of his puppy training class, soaking up new experiences without turning a hair. You were even thinking of making him a therapy dog. But in recent weeks he has started offering new behaviors that have you puzzled and alarmed. When you try to take him for a walk on leash, he grabs the leash and shakes it, or – worse – grabs at your clothing. At home, he will occasionally launch at you with no warning, biting your pant legs or shirtsleeves. It's getting worse – becoming more frequent, and he's biting harder. He's turning into a shark, and you have the puncture marks dotting your arms to prove it.

This alarming behavior can start early, even with puppies as young as six to eight weeks (See "Saving Squid," WDJ April 2012), and even more commonly appears in adolescence – perhaps an interesting canine parallel to human teenagers running amok. It often erupts when there's been a period of prolonged inactivity, such as inclement weather preventing outdoor exercise, or an owner working unusually long hours. There may be a number of additional influences on this sharky, biting behavior:

### ■ EARLY EXPERIENCE IN THE LITTER.

Singleton pups (those who have no littermates) seem particularly prone to hard mouthing, as do pups taken away from their litters too early (prior to the age of eight weeks). Since they have no siblings to let them know they are biting too hard, they may fail to learn good bite inhibition. (See "Light Bite," June 2010.)

### ■ INAPPROPRIATE PLAY WITH PEOPLE.

I counsel my clients to avoid roughhousing with their dogs in a way

that encourages the dog to make mouth contact with human clothing or skin. Although not always, it is often male humans who take pleasure in games of growly rough-and-tumble. I do my best to direct those activities to appropriate games of tug, where the human can play rough and the dog learns to keep his mouth on appropriate play objects. (See "Please Play Tug," September 2008.)

### ■ INADEQUATE PHYSICAL EXERCISE.

There's nothing like excess energy to prompt a young dog to use his mouth in play. I have fostered several puppies and young dogs who hadn't passed their shelter's assessments due to excessive mouthing, and in every case, ample exercise was instrumental in modifying their behavior.

### ■ INADEQUATE MENTAL STIMULATION.

Add "boredom" to excess energy and you have a surefire recipe for disaster. This is the dog who is seriously looking for something to do with all his excess energy, and discovers that he can engage you in his games by using his teeth. Not a good solution!

The good news is that canine sharks are not a lost cause. There are remedies at hand, and most are quite simple to implement if you are willing to invest a little time and effort.

### LIFE IN THE LITTER

If you plan to adopt a pup from a shelter or rescue, you may (or may not) have the privilege of seeing the litter interacting together. If so, at least you know there's a litter, so the singleton pup concern is not an issue. If you are purchasing from a breeder, be sure to ask how many pups were in the litter and how long they stayed together. Might as well sidestep a problem if you can!

If you get to watch littermates playing together, watch how it works. Usually,

**Is your dog is too "mouthy"? Does every bit of play or attempt at exercise seem to result in his getting overexcited and grabbing at your leash, your sleeve, or even your skin? If so, it pays to address the behavior with training and management before he accidentally hurts you or someone in your family.**



(Note: This is actually an agility dog, whose reward for a good run is playing tug with a toy.)

if one pup bites another too hard, that pup yelps or snarls and moves away for a moment. The pup who bit will normally readjust his play, re-engage his sibling, and play will continue. A pup who continues to bedevil his littermates and continues to bite hard even when they let him know they don't like it is likely a shark in the making. Pick a different pup, or be prepared to deal with the behavior.

The best behavioral solution for a singleton pup is for the breeder, shelter, or rescue group to find two or three "spare" pups from another litter and import them with careful introductions to mom, so the pup has brothers and sisters. This is preferable to removing the singleton and placing it in a different litter, since mom will likely grieve the loss of her baby. The exception would be if she isn't adapting well to motherhood and is not taking good care of the pup, or has some medical issue that prevents her from mothering.

If you somehow acquired a pup prior to the age of eight weeks, ask your dog friends and animal care professionals (vet, groomer, trainer) if they know of any litters of a similar age that your pup could spend time with (daily!).

## WAR IS ON

I already mentioned the wisdom of playing a hearty game of tug-o-war rather than physical contact sports. Some old-fashioned trainers still warn against tug with gloom-and-doom predictions about dogs who are allowed to show their "dominance" and resulting "aggression" in the game. I had a client just the other day whose prior trainer said exactly that. He and his dog were as happy as a kid at Legoland when I gave them permission to play tug. The rules are short and simple:

- Dog is not allowed to rudely grab tug toy from your hand; have him wait politely for permission (the cue) to grab. I use "Tug" as my cue. If my dog grabs for the toy before I give the cue, I give a cheerful "Oops!" and whisk the toy behind my back.

- Make sure the dog will "trade" (give you the toy in exchange for something else) – either on cue, or for a treat.

- Take several "trade" breaks from tugging during the game, in order to solidify polite good manners.

## DON'T HIT YOUR DOG!

It should go without saying that we would never advocate verbally or physically punishing your dog, but just in case, here are five reasons why physically hurting or scaring your dog is a bad idea:

1. You can cause physical harm to your dog.
2. You aren't teaching your dog what to do *instead* of biting. You leave a "behavior vacuum," which he is likely to fill with the behavior he knows – being sharky.
3. You can inhibit your dog's willingness to offer desirable behaviors due to his fear/anticipation of being punished.
4. You can damage your relationship with your dog, cause him to fear you, and teach him to run away from you.
5. You can turn your dog's easily managed and modified aroused/excitement biting into serious defensive aggression.

- Canine teeth touching human skin or clothing is cause for a cheerful "Oops, time-out!" This uses gentle "negative punishment" (wherein the dog's behavior makes a good thing go away) to teach your dog that the fun stops if his teeth touch human skin, and gives your dog a brief arousal break – time to calm down before play starts again.

## WORK IT

The last thing you may want to do when you come home exhausted from a day of work is exercise the dog. Your dog, however, has been lying around the house all day just waiting for you to come home to play with him, and you – or someone in your family, or a dog walker – has to oblige. That was the contract when you got him, remember? His excitement over your return and in anticipation of his walk put him at a keen edge of arousal, and tug-the-leash is a natural game choice for him. But you mustn't allow yourself to get drawn into a game that usually ends with your dog overstimulated and you upset (or frightened or hurt)!

It behooves you to get rid of some of your dog's energy before you take that on-leash walk. Of course he has to relieve himself after being indoors for hours. If you have a backyard, allow him to relieve himself there, and then play with him there before you try to take him for a walk. Play hard. Throw his ball. Throw a stick. Have him go over jumps as part of his fetch game. If he's so aroused already

that he's grabbing at you while you play, put yourself inside an exercise pen you leave set up outdoors for that purpose (or behind your closed porch gate) and throw toys or play with a flirt pole from inside the pen until he's tired.

Alternatively, if your dog's not the fetch-'til-you-drop kind, go out in the yard and scatter small but tasty treats all over. He will exercise himself as he crisscrosses the yard in search of treasure, working his nose. (Nose exercise is surprisingly tiring for a dog.)

If you don't have a yard, you probably have to take your dog out on a leash at first to let him eliminate using one of the management solutions described below. When he's empty, bring him back indoors and play physical inside games such as tug, chasing toys or treats down the hall, until you've taken the edge off. Then put the leash back on and go for that walk! (Note: If you just rush him back inside when he's empty and don't play, or don't go for the after-walk, your dog may learn to "hold it" as long as possible to enjoy the outing.)

## BRAIN CANDY

Mental exercise can be every bit as tiring as physical exercise. (I remember in the early 1990s coming home from work exhausted after trying all day to figure out how these new-fangled "desktop computer" things were supposed to work.) On those days when you can't play in the yard with your dog (or if you don't have a yard to play in), take advantage of

the multitudes of interactive toys now on the market. Or make your own: treats in a muffin tin with tennis balls covering the holes can work nicely to occupy your dog and exercise his brain. In addition, sign the two of you up for a force-free basic good manners class. If you've already done basic, go for the more advanced classes. Brain candy.

Once you have taken the edge off with physical or mental exercise, give your dog 10 to 15 minutes to calm down, and then put his leash on for that neighborhood walk. If he's new to the leash-tug game, that may be all you need to do. If it's a well-established behavior, however, you may need some additional management measures in order to help extinguish the game.

## MANAGEMENT MEASURES

Management is always an important piece of a successful behavior-change program. The more often your dog gets to practice (and be reinforced for) his inappropriate/unwanted behaviors, the harder it is to make them go away. Here are some ideas to get you by until your shark has turned into a pussycat.

■ **CHOKE CHAIN.** Yep, you read that right. I love to watch the shock and dismay on the faces of my academy students when I tell them that this is the one time I will actually still use a choke chain. Then I pull out a double-ended snap or a carabiner, and snap one end of the chain to the dog's collar ring, and the other to the leash. Voila! You now have 12 to 24 inches of metal chain between your dog's collar and your leash. When he goes to bite the nice soft leash for a fun game of tug he bites on metal instead. Most dogs don't like that – so they quickly learn that tug isn't any fun anymore and stop trying to bite the leash.

■ **PVC PIPE.** Slip a 5-foot piece of narrow-gauge, lightweight PVC pipe over your 6-foot leash. Again, your dog's teeth have nothing soft to bite on, and they will slide right off the pipe. Additionally, although it is somewhat awkward, you can use the stiff pipe-leash to hold him away from you if he is trying to grab you or your clothing.



Some dogs can grab and tug at a shirtsleeve with the delicacy and gentleness of a surgeon; others get "sharky" and tend to tear fabric or, worse, skin. The latter dogs shouldn't be allowed to practice this behavior, ever.

■ **BABY GATES.** While much of this unwanted behavior tends to happen out of doors, especially when on a leash, some dogs expand their aroused biting to indoor interactions as

well. Pressure-mounted baby gates (so you don't have to put holes in your door frames) are a quick and simple way to put a barrier between you and your shark when teeth are flashing. You can even exercise your dog indoors using gates, similar to the method described above with the exercise pens. Just stand on the opposite side of the gate from your dog and toss your heart out.

■ **REDIRECTION.** You often have some warning before the biting behavior occurs. You see the gleam in your dog's eye, or he does a couple of puppy rushes around the dining-room table. Perhaps it always happens in a particular room, or at a certain time of day. Be prepared! Have a plastic container of treats on an out-of-reach shelf in every room, and when you sense a shark attack coming on, arm yourself and start tossing to divert his attention, redirect his teeth and give him some exercise, all at the same time. Remove yourself to the other side of a baby gate, if necessary.

■ **MUZZLE.** If your dog still manages to grab onto you despite all your efforts, you may want to consider conditioning him to a basket muzzle when he is with you. (This sort of muzzle is not the same as the kind often used for restraint in vet offices; basket muzzles allow a dog to breathe, drink, and even eat, but prevent him from biting. Do not leave one on him unattended, however.)

This requires the same conditioning process as the head halter, so it isn't a quick fix – and there is some social stigma attached to your dog wearing a muzzle. You might elect to use it when there are particularly vulnerable humans present (small children and seniors). If

■ **TWO LEASHES.** Snap two leashes on your dog's collar. When he goes to grab one, drop it and hold onto the other. If he goes for that one, grab the first one again and drop the second. The fun of tug is the resistance you apply on the other end (because you can't just drop the leash and let him run off). If there's no resistance, there's no fun (no reinforcement) and the game goes away.

■ **TETHER.** This one isn't for all dogs, but works for some. Put a carabiner on the handle end of your (heavy duty) leash. When your dog starts grabbing at you, tether him to the nearest safe and solid object and walk a few steps out of reach. (Don't use this one for dogs who will bite right through their leash, or who panic if you leave them.) Make sure you do not tether him where he can run into traffic or assault pedestrians. Return to him when he is calm. If he amps up on your return, step away again. Repeat as needed.

■ **HEAD HALTER.** These are not my favorite piece of training equipment (most dogs find them aversive), but this is one of the few times when the head halter may still have a place in positive reinforcement training, because it does give you control over the dog's head in a way that a front-clip control harness does not. With a head halter, you can actually use the leash to prevent your dog from grabbing you with his jaws by putting pressure on the outside of the halter, away from you. If you are going to use one, however, you must take the time to convince your dog that a head halter is wonderful before you actually start using it. (See "Teach Your Dog to Love a Head Halter," next page.)



you choose to use one, follow the same steps outlined in “Teach Your Dog to Love a Head Halter,” below, to convince your dog that his muzzle is wonderful.

It would also be a good idea to explore other energy-sapping activity options for your dog. Investigate doggie daycare, if there is a decent one in your community and your dog is daycare-appropriate. (See “Doggie Daycare, Yay or Nay?” November 2010.) A well-run dog daycare will give him great opportunities for exercise and social interaction.

A professional pet walker is another

option, assuming you can find one skilled enough to handle your dog’s mouthiness and willing to follow your explicit instructions about how to work with the behavior. If there’s no good daycare in your area, find some appropriate canine pals for your dog and arrange playdates. If you can find another dog who has a similar style of playing, they can gnaw on each other to their hearts’ content and come home tired, so your dog can behave more appropriately with you.

Of course, if after all that you think there is an element of real aggression

in your dog’s biting, or if the behavior is too overwhelming, by all means seek out the services of a competent, force-free behavior professional to help you through the shark-infested waters. Properly handled, your dog can outgrow this phase, and the two of you will be on to smooth sailing. 🐾

*Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, is WDJ’s Training Editor. She lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. See page 24 for more information.*

## TEACH YOUR DOG TO LOVE A HEAD HALTER

Your best chance for convincing your dog his head halter is a wonderful thing is to pair it with high-value treats from the very beginning (this is classical conditioning). At first, and between steps, put the head halter behind your back. This process should take at least several sessions. If your dog is happily going along with the program, it’s fine to continue – but try to always stop before he becomes unhappy with the process. If your dog becomes anxious at any point, or resists the process, back up to an easier level and then figure out how to add more steps in between. If your dog starts fussing, distract him to stop the fussing, and then take the halter off after a bit and slow your training program. Here are the steps (repeat each step many times):

1. Show the dog the head halter and feed him a tasty treat. Repeat until his eyes light up when you bring out the halter.
2. Let him sniff/touch the halter with his nose and feed him a tasty treat. Repeat until he is deliberately and solidly bumping his nose into the halter.
3. Let him sniff through the nose loop of the head halter. Feed him the treat through the nose loop. Repeat until he eagerly pushes his nose into the loop.
4. Attach the collar around your dog’s neck (without the nose loop) and feed him a treat. Remove after one second. Repeat many times.



5. Attach the collar band around your dog’s neck (without putting the nose loop on) and feed him a treat. Gradually increase the length of time that the collar is on your dog.

6. Let your dog push his nose into the nose loop. Keep the loop on his nose for one second. Feed him a treat. From now on, feed all treats through the nose loop.

7. Let your dog push his nose into the

loop, gradually keeping it there longer and longer, until he is holding his nose in the loop for 10 seconds. Treat several treats. This should take many repetitions.

8. Let your dog push his nose into the nose loop, and then bring the collar straps behind the head for a second or two. Do not fasten them. Feed him a treat and remove the nose loop.

9. Repeat the previous step, gradually keeping the head halter on longer and longer, until you can hold it there for five seconds. Treat several times.

10. Put the head halter on and clip the collar behind his head (without a leash attached to it). Treat and remove the collar. Repeat many times, gradually leaving it on longer and longer. Treat generously.



11. Put the halter on (without a leash attached to it) and invite your dog to walk around the room. Feed treats.

12. Attach the leash and take your dog for a short walk – in the room at first, then gradually longer, and outside. Be generous with treats. Now you can use the

leash and head halter to gently move his head away from you if he starts to get grabby.

Here is an excellent YouTube video of the wonderful force-free trainer, Jean Donaldson, conditioning her Chow, Buffy, to love a head halter: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1wakterNyUg>



# Walk On!

*How to find a capable, reliable dog walker, and how your dog could benefit from one.*

BY BARBARA DOBBINS

This past summer, my niece, who was home on college break, picked up a job walking her neighbor's dog. After a few outings, she contacted me because this fairly large dog she was walking had some behavioral issues and she wanted some suggestions on how to work with him. My advice to her was that this wasn't a job for a novice dog walker; after some discussion she agreed but wanted to pass along some recommendations for other walkers to the owner. Knowing this dog had special needs and not knowing anyone in the dog's area myself to recommend, I turned to my colleague Veronica Boutelle to get the inside scoop on finding a dog walker.

"Professional dog walking has grown rapidly over the past 10 years," says Boutelle, former director of Behavior and Training for the San Francisco SPCA. But, she adds, it's a young busi-

ness. "There is currently no regulating body and anybody who wants to go into the business can hang out a shingle. But walking dogs, particularly in groups, takes more than the passion we all share

for them. There is specialized knowledge and skill that walkers should possess to ensure the safety of the dogs in their charge, as well as themselves and the other dogs and humans who share the beaches, trails, and parks."

That's why Boutelle launched the Dog Walking Academy (DWA), the only organization that offers certification in dog walking, as one of the first programs of dog\*tec, a company she founded in 2003 to help dog professionals succeed in their businesses. The DWA curriculum covers learning theory, canine body language, aggression, fight protocols, basic dog training, leash handling, pack screening and management, as well as successful business practices.

To become a dog\*tec Certified Dog Walker, candidates must successfully complete an intensive training program,

**Professional dog walking looks very different in different areas. In New York City, walkers tend to walk large groups of dogs on city streets (not ideal by any measure!). In the San Francisco Bay Area, walkers tend to take groups of dogs to off-leash parks or trails. In other places, individual on-leash walks are most common.**



pass a hands-on practical exam and a comprehensive written exam, be certified in first aid, and pledge to use only humane, scientifically sound training approaches and ethical business practices. Through this commitment to excellence, the DWA is helping to establish the standards of this young profession.

### WHY GO WITH A PRO?

In an ideal world, dog walking is just like Nelly McKay sings in her catchy tune, “The Dog Song:”

’Cause I’m just a walkin’ my dog  
Singin’ my song  
Strollin’ along  
It’s just me and my dog  
Catchin’ some sun  
We can’t go wrong

Unfortunately, many of us are too busy keeping a roof over our own and our dogs’ heads to go out “catchin’ some sun” with our dogs whenever we’d like, or when our dogs could really use a good long walk. That’s where professional dog walkers can be of assistance. Whether individuals or a part of a dog walking business, professional dog walkers provide an on-going scheduled service for those of us who are not able to get our canine companions out for regular excursions, be it an on-leash walk, off-leash hike, or romp in a local dog park.

Dog walking is not a vacation pet sitting service or a general pet care service, though many dog walkers offer these additional care options. There are varied approaches to dog walking and the types available will be largely dictated by geographical location. In the San Francisco Bay Area, for instance, dog walking usually refers to walking small groups of dogs off-leash on beaches, trails, or in parks. In New York City, it tends to be associated with walking groups of dogs on sidewalks. And in most urban and suburban areas, dog walking means single dog or small group on-leash walks in your neighborhood.

What all professional dog walking services have in common is the ability to get your dog good and tired, and return him safely to your home, on a schedule you choose: once or several times a week, or daily, if need be.

Our dogs benefit from regular exercise, just like we do. Physical activity can help with disease prevention, joint stability, flexibility, and cardiovascular

## EXPERT TIPS FOR WALKING YOUR OWN DOGS

- ✓ **No. Headphones. Ever.** A walker’s attention should always be on the dog and the surroundings.
- ✓ **No talking on cell phones** except in an emergency.
- ✓ **Practice makes perfect.** Ask for (and reinforce) your dog for loose-leash walking, and polite sits at street corners and when you stop to talk to someone.
- ✓ **Use good equipment** that is appropriate for your dog (for example, if not well trained, giant dogs probably need more than a flat collar – and retractable leashes are not considered safe, ever). Inspect the fit and condition of all your equipment frequently. Ensure that your dog wears a tag with current information.
- ✓ **Pay attention to your dog’s body language.** Chances are she will alert you about anything amiss on the street or trail long before you become aware of it. Whether that’s another dog walker approaching, a mountain biker flying down the trail toward you, or a mountain lion trailing you, an early warning can help you manage the situation – but if only you are paying attention.
- ✓ **Carry really good treats.** Professionally trained walkers know that good training is built with top-shelf reinforcements.
- ✓ **Make sure your dog is healthy** before starting any exercise program.
- ✓ **Do not let your dog run off-leash** unless he has a reliable recall. (The only exception would be in a fenced dog park, during off-peak hours, so you could work on your dog’s recall!)
- ✓ **Manage your dog’s behavior!** Don’t assume that it is okay for your dog to interact with every dog and every human you come across. Not only is it rude, but it can also trigger unexpected, and maybe unwanted, reactions.



health. Regular outings elevate a dog’s mood, stimulate his mind, relieve boredom and stress caused by inactivity, and provide social interaction and environmental enrichment.

The human client benefits, too, with relief from guilt and the worry that the dog is tearing up the sofa from boredom

or anxiety. There is nothing like the peace of mind you get from knowing your dog is out having a great time and getting the exercise he needs! One also hopes for a better-behaved, relaxed, content dog to come home to at the end of the day. These benefits are profound and contribute to a happier, healthier life.

In some areas, professional dog walkers bring their charges to off-leash trails or, as in this case, to a local dog park. This can be a huge benefit for a young, active, social dog – or a source of significant stress for an older, arthritic dog who does not enjoy socializing. Make sure your walker tailors the outing you pay for to suit your dog!

## CHOOSING A DOG WALKER

Obviously, it's most important to find someone who will take great care of your dog. Again, anybody can call herself a dog walker, so it's up to you to determine whether or not the person is truly qualified. Once you've located an individual dog walker or dog-walking business, interview the person who will actually walk your dog. Your dog should be present so you can view how the walker interacts with him and so you can assess how he feels about the walker.

A good dog walker (or the representative from a dog walking company) should have good answers to all the following questions:

■ **WHO WILL ACTUALLY WALK YOUR DOG?** Some companies are very small, with the sole proprietor serving as the sole dog walker; some might have dozens of walkers. Does the business employ independent contractors or employees? How are they screened?

■ **WHAT IS THE BACKGROUND OF THE PERSON (OR PEOPLE) WHO WILL WALK YOUR DOG?** How much and what kind of training have they had in dog walking? Have they had any education in canine learning theory, body language, and pack management?

Ideally, you want someone with professional training and knowledge and the skill set to implement this knowledge. They should use scientifically sound humane training methods and know how to assess and group dogs for maximum compatibility. They also need to be able to interpret canine body language, handle any issues that arise, take appropriate steps to prevent fights, and have the ability to properly break up a fight if one occurred – or protect your dog in case of an attack by a random dog on the street!

For these reasons, you should be advised anytime one of the walkers that you have approved is not available; don't allow the company to replace your approved walker (without your



knowledge) with an employee who lacks the qualifications you had sought out.

■ **HOW MANY DOGS DO THEY WALK AT ONCE?** Walkers may escort a single dog or as many as 20. Whether on- or off-leash, each dog added to a group increases the potential for conflict, injuries, lost dogs, and distraction, and makes it improbable that your dog will receive much individual attention.

Remember, the walker has only two eyes, two hands, and two legs. Some cities, counties, and park districts regulate the number of dogs a walker can take out together. Certified dog\*tec walkers may walk no more than eight dogs at a time if they want to maintain their certification. Ask for private or semi-private (just your dog and one other compatible dog) outings if your dog is not suitable for or does not enjoy group walks.

■ **WHAT IS THE PROTOCOL FOR SCREENING DOGS WHO WILL BE WALKED TOGETHER IN GROUPS?** How are they grouped? By age, size, activity level? Because it can be easy for small dogs to be injured by one of their larger buddies, insist that your dog is only walked with other dogs about the same size (stick to the 50 percent rule: cohorts should not weigh more than double that of any other one in the group).

■ **HOW WILL DOGS THAT WILL BE GROUPED TOGETHER BE INTRODUCED?** And what kind of management methods do they use? Not all dogs have good social skills or self-control. Your walker should know how to keep (and

be capable of keeping) a group of dogs under control and safe without the use of fear, intimidation, or pain.

■ **WHERE WILL YOUR DOG BE WALKED?** Is the walker familiar with the local rules and regulations? Some areas that allow dogs have specific requirements for dog walking professionals, such as limiting the number of dogs allowed to be handled by one walker.

■ **WHAT KIND OF ACTIVITIES WILL YOUR DOG BE ENGAGED IN?** On-leash or off-leash? Your dog shouldn't be allowed off-leash if she doesn't have a reliable recall, and any new walker should spend at least a few walks with her on-leash before she is allowed off-leash. If your dog doesn't currently have a good recall behavior, don't despair; a really good walker will have a protocol for both training a recall and for keeping your dog safe until your dog's recall is reliable.

■ **WILL THE PERSON WALK YOUR DOG IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, OR TRANSPORT HER ELSEWHERE?** The walker must have an appropriate vehicle, and the dogs inside the vehicle should be safely restrained (with crates or body harnesses and seat belts or tie-downs) during transport. (We saw a nightmare story not long ago about dogs being tied by their collars in a big van; one dog broke her neck during transport by a dog walking company.)

When multiple dogs are being picked up and dropped off during transport, are the dogs left alone in a vehicle, and

## WHAT ABOUT A DOG RUNNER?

Have a super high-energy dog, or a canine athlete who needs to maintain a high level of fitness? Consider a dog *runner*! These specialty dog walkers will *run* with your dog; most of them are marathon or ultramarathon runners who are perfectly comfortable taking your dog out for more miles than you can handle. Running is perfect for burning off an athletic dog's excess energy or shedding excess weight from an overweight athlete (again, make sure your dog is in good health first).

Some running services even track your dog's run with a GPS and then upload the information to a website so you can view the details of the run, including pace, total time, elevation, mileage, and a map of the run.

Dog runners need to do everything that dog walkers do, and also how to interpret your dog's well being, monitoring for signs of heat exhaustion, fatigue, or injury.

**Ultramarathoner Bob Halpenny runs daily with dogs on the trails near Sacramento, California. For more information, call (916) 612-7700 or see [onthetraildogfitness.com](http://onthetraildogfitness.com).**

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if so, for how long? (Client dogs should never be left in a vehicle while the walker participates in an interview with a prospective new client, for example. They should be left for only the minute it takes to bring a client's dog back into their own home.) And is the vehicle always securely locked, so that no one could come along and release or steal the dogs inside?

If on foot, are dogs secured outside during the pick-up/drop-off process? Tying up dogs and leaving them alone is not an acceptable practice.

■ **HOW MUCH TIME DO THEY GUARANTEE ON A WALK?** Confirm that this time is exercise time and does not include any transportation time.

■ **WHAT EQUIPMENT DOES THE WALKER WANT ON YOUR DOG?** Some dog walkers prefer to use their own equipment for a variety of reasons. (This keeps them from having to search their clients' homes if the dog's own equipment can't be located, avoids damaging or dirtying the client's gear, and ensures proper, correctly sized equipment.) That said, you should not give them permission to use equipment that you do not approve of, or that your dog finds aversive. Ideally, the walker uses your well-fitted equipment, outfitted with secure, up-to-date ID, and you make sure

it is in good condition and ready at the door for the walker.

■ **WHAT KIND OF INCIDENTS HAS THE DOG WALKER ENCOUNTERED?** Have any dogs in her care been lost or injured? Safety should be a primary concern. Optimally a walker has been trained in pet first aid and emergency protocols. He should carry a cell phone and have your telephone numbers programmed into it.

What will your walker do if your dog is injured? He should know the location of the emergency clinics in the area as well as your dog's vet and keep a signed veterinary release form on hand in case your dog needs medical attention and you're not available. What will be done with your dog if another dog in the group is injured and requires your walker's full attention? What if the transport vehicle breaks down? If a dog is lost? A natural disaster occurs? Is the walker prepared? If you don't ask, you won't know.

■ **WHAT IF YOUR DOG WALKER CANNOT MAKE IT AT THE SCHEDULED TIME?** Is there a back-up walker? If you count on the walking service to provide a potty break for a dog who can't hold it all day, the walker's reliability (or backup) needs to be impeccable.

■ **WILL INCLEMENT WEATHER BE CAUSE FOR CANCELLATION?** Is your dog walker familiar with the effects of inclement weather (heat, snow) on dogs and how to take precautions? Some walkers in areas with extreme weather provide alternative services when such conditions are present, such as potty breaks and indoor playtime and/or the use of interactive toys (stuffed Kongs, puzzles).

■ **WILL THEY PROVIDE A WALK REPORT?** Some walkers will leave you a note to let you know how your dog did during the outing as well as any observations or incidents.

■ **DO THEY HAVE REFERENCES?** If so (and they should), *check* some! Don't skip this important step. If each client you call has caveats or concerns about the service, choose another provider.

Ask to observe your prospective walker on an outing to make sure you're comfortable with how she treats dogs in her care. Be aware that most group dog walkers won't allow a client to accompany them in order to prevent their attention being diverted from the dogs. They shouldn't mind you observing, however. If you're hiring a walker for private outings, offer to pay her for a trial run with your dog and follow along.

■ **IS THE WALKER LICENSED, INSURED, AND/OR BONDED?** Some cities and counties require professional dog walkers to be licensed and/or bonded. Licensing generally refers to having a standard business license, usually issued by the city in which the business exists. Check with your local regulating agencies to see if there are any special regulations for dog walkers.

In San Francisco, for example, walkers are required to obtain a license from the San Francisco Animal Care and Control in order to use city lands for professional dog walking. This city legislation is the first of its kind and it requires dog walkers to complete a training program like the DWA. Liability insurance is a must. Bonding (a bond provided by an insurance company) protects against damage that might be caused while performing

a service; a walker may not need to be bonded if his insurance covers him in the same way.

#### ■ DOES THE WALKER HAVE A WRITTEN SERVICE CONTRACT EXPLAINING SERVICES AND PAYMENT POLICIES?

Ideally the service should provide you with a contract to sign. Read it carefully.

#### ■ MOST IMPORTANT OF ALL: DOES THE WALKER LIKE YOUR DOG AND DOES YOUR DOG LIKE THE WALKER?

Is the walker's interaction with your dog gentle and kind? Does your dog want to interact with the walker? If your dog is normally shy, does the walker respond appropriately?

### MORE CONSIDERATIONS

Keep in mind that the outing is for your dog. Above all, she should have a good time and get some exercise. If your dog is older and has health problems, the walk may just be a leisurely sniff and stroll. A good dog walker will assess an individual dog's needs and adjust accordingly.

While many walkers have excellent training skills, the outing isn't intended to be a training session; however, a good walker though should be able to follow any training protocols you have in place, and prevent your dog from developing any bad habits while out and about.

Know your dog and communicate what you know to your walker. Teach your dog a strong "leave it" to assist the walker in preventing your dog from picking up or eating inappropriate or dangerous items while out and about.

Speaking of eating, let your walker know of any dietary restrictions or food allergies. Inform the walker if your dog has been experiencing any changes in

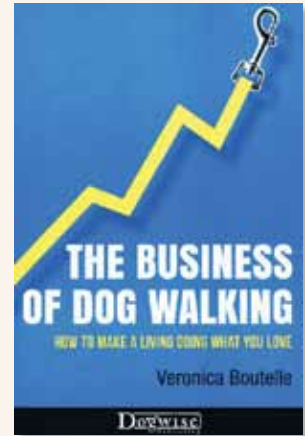
## CONSIDERING BECOMING A PROFESSIONAL DOG WALKER?

From the introduction to *The Business of Dog Walking*, by Veronica Bouteille

(Reprinted with permission, copyright 2014 Dogwise Publishing; available for purchase in hard copy or ebook from [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com))

"It's a lot more complicated than people realize. Factor in squirrels, cats, and other dogs. Consider dogs with leash reactivity or a fear of strangers. Or dogs who like to chase things, including bicycles and skateboards. Imagine little kids with outstretched hands and adults with fear on their faces. Then throw in narrow sidewalks and off-leash trails...

"Still interested? Get educated and certified. Learn: canine body language, pack composition and management techniques, building reliable recalls, fight prevention and protocols, canine first aid, business practices. Start: a legitimate business with required licenses and documentation. Obtain: professional insurance. Research: rules and regulations for dogs and dog walking in your area. Talk: to other walkers to learn of their experiences. Ask: to observe or intern with walkers for hands-on experience. Consider: attending dog\*tec's Dog Walking Academy, now offered in at least 14 cities in the US as well as cities in Canada and New Zealand. Learn more about it at [dogtec.org/dogwalkingacademy.php](http://dogtec.org/dogwalkingacademy.php)"



behavior or health (limping, lethargy, decreased appetite, etc.).

Always let your walker know if something out of the ordinary has occurred in between walks (a scare or a scuffle with another dog, for example) so he can keep an eye out for any side effects. In turn, listen to your walker if he expresses concerns about your dog's health or behavior, or recommends or requests that you hire a trainer or visit your veterinarian.

And don't forget to listen to your dog: if you begin to notice that your dog is not happy to see the walker and excited to go with him, it may be time to find a different walker or different type of activity for your dog.

Be aware of your walker's cancellation policy and follow it. Understand that cancelling a scheduled walk has an impact. Walkers take only a small number of

clients at a time and therefore a cancellation can represent a significant impact on their income. Remember, too, that walkers are not on call 24 hours; respect their hours and limit all but emergency calls to the work day.

### KEEP THEM HAPPY

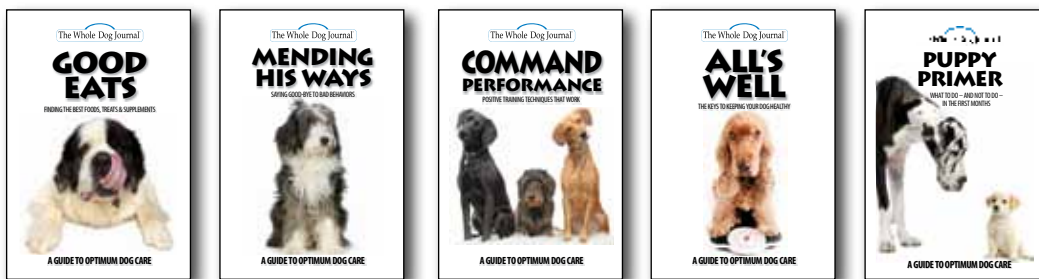
Dog walkers make a valuable contribution to the quality of life of the dogs they serve. Instead of being home alone all day, these dogs are given the much needed exercise and social interactions that they might not otherwise get. This contributes to their health and happiness, which in turn can help keep them safe and in permanent homes. Studies show that many dogs are relinquished because of normal expressions of boredom or lack of exercise, such as barking, chewing, destructive behavior, etc. Our canine companions are doing their best to adapt to our modern lifestyles; the least we can do is to take their well being to heart. 🐾

*Barbara Dobbins, a former dog trainer, writes about dogs and studies canine ethology. She lives in the Bay Area with her Border Collie, Duncan.*



# Shouldn't you have the answers before the questions arise?

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- ❖ WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of *Positive Perspectives*; *Positive Perspectives 2*; *Power of Positive Dog Training*; *Play With Your Dog*; *Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First Class Life*; and her newest book, *How to Foster Dogs: From Homeless to Homeward Bound*. All titles are available from [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com) and [wholedogjournal.com](http://wholedogjournal.com)

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