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# The Whole



# Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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# Field Research

*Sometimes, seeing is believing.*

BY NANCY KERNS

I gotta get outta the office more often! In September, I attended the annual meeting of the American Holistic Veterinary Medicine Association (AHVMA), and then got to spend a few days hunting around Missouri, sniffing for background information for a number of future articles. As a result, I've got enough "scoops" to last the next six issues or so!

At the conference, I feasted on information from two brilliant doctors – W. Jean Dodds, DVM, and Ronald D. Schultz, Ph.D. – about the latest on canine vaccines. I was also fascinated with Dr. Dodds' presentation on canine behavioral problems related to thyroiditis, as well as her casual observation that the nutritional approach of a veterinarian who was attending the conference, John Symes of Mobile, Alabama, seemed to improve the health and behavior of many dogs, including dogs with thyroid problems. I'm planning articles on all of these topics.

At the AHVMA trade show, I got a chance to talk with a number of representatives for premium dog food companies. I learned about some new products from some of our favorite companies, fantastic products coming from companies I should have known about before now, and got to hear everyone's opinion about what's wrong with WDJ's food reviews. Believe it or not, that's the part I like best! It's my goal to shake up the reviews in 2005, taking our selection criteria to an even higher level.

To that end, much of the rest of my trip was about dog food. I've been writing about pet food manufacturing for years, but I've never gotten to *see* it. On this trip, to the middle of the grain belt, I figured I'd get that chance.

I guess I shouldn't have been surprised that none of the largest dog food companies in the country wanted to have anything to do with me! The public relations person for Hill's pretty much said, "Sorry, we don't *do* tours." Purina's reps wouldn't even return my dozen or so calls. I had a long, good talk with a rep from Doane, the country's largest private label pet food manufacturer... who regretted not being "able" to help me this time. One of the largest pet food canneries in the country, which makes a number of the foods on our "approved" food lists, was similarly unable to help. A maker of dog chews let me come to its corporate offices, but didn't really want me to visit its manufacturing plant.

I kept thinking, "What don't they want people to see?"

Fortunately, a couple of small companies *did* welcome me into their production facilities. In Kansas City, the folks from Three Dog Bakery bent over backward to show me how their treats are made, and even let me sample fresh, hot cookies from the ovens (*all* the ingredients are human-grade). I can't tell you how impressed I was with their products and the company itself. Spectrum Pet Care, of Montgomery City, let me spend half a day standing over a steamy extruding machine as a batch of organic turkey dog food cooked. I happily *reeked* of dog food for the rest of the day.

I also started researching pet food feeding trials, by visiting a contract research laboratory where feeding trials are conducted – the very one, in fact, that was infiltrated by a PETA "investigator" and accused of cruelty in a huge media campaign. Stay tuned! All I can say now is that things are never quite what they seem at first glance.

NK

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# Anesthesia-Free Teeth Cleaning

*It's a great idea for some dogs – but it should take place in a vet's office.*

BY NANCY KERNS

Most of us have seen signs or advertisements for “anesthesia-free teeth cleaning” for dogs and cats. To most people, this sounds like a good idea, especially if you have a really old dog, a dog with a heart condition, or any other dog you’d hesitate to put through general anesthesia.

The procedure *can* be a terrific service for some dogs, but only if rendered under the direct supervision of a veterinarian, if not *by* a veterinarian. Unfortunately, some vets don’t offer the service – often, because they don’t believe it’s necessary. This pretty much guarantees that some pet owners will seek out non-veterinary technicians who perform the procedure – illegally – in grooming shops or pet supply stores.

We suggest that dog owners who are concerned about the risks of anesthesia ask their own trusted veterinarians to provide dental cleanings without anesthesia – and to seek out another veterinarian who does provide the service if their own veterinarian does not or will not. Here’s why:

## Cleanliness is healthiness

Tartar-encrusted teeth are not just unattractive; they are absolutely dangerous to a dog’s health.

Just as with humans, tartar or calculus forms on a dog’s teeth when plaque – a combination of salivary proteins and bacteria – accumulates on the teeth and is not brushed or mechanically scraped away by vigorous chewing. And just as with humans, some dogs seem more prone to tartar accumulation than others. Some of this may be due to an inherited trait; it’s also thought that the chemistry in some dogs’ saliva seems to promote tartar formation.

However it happens to accumulate, the mineralized concretion acts as a trap for even more plaque deposits. Soon, the gums become inflamed by the plaque, and bacterial infections may develop. Yes, the dog will have bad breath and unsightly red gums. He may experience pain when he’s eating his food, playing with toys, or during recreational chewing. Chronic mouth pain can cause behavioral changes, including

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **If your dog’s teeth are tartar-encrusted, or if his gumline looks inflamed, schedule an exam with your vet. Make sure she is aware of all of your dog’s health issues, and ask for her treatment recommendations.**
- **If your dog’s teeth need cleaning, but he has health problems that put him at risk for complications during anesthesia, ask your vet whether she will perform an anesthesia-free teeth cleaning. If she declines, make it clear that you will seek the services of a veterinarian who *will* provide the service.**
- **This is not the time for bargain-hunting. Whether or not anesthesia is used, be prepared to pay for appropriate supportive measures as needed: blood tests, IV fluids, antibiotics, and/or pain-relieving drugs. Any or all of these may be needed to maximize the safety and effectiveness of the procedure.**



**The accretion of tartar on this dog’s front teeth is fairly minor, but all the teeth behind the canines are invisible under a thick layer of dental calculus. Given this dog’s gentle nature, anyone with a little training could scrape away most of the tartar. But only a veterinarian can provide the antibiotics needed to prevent a systemic infection that the teeth-cleaning procedure could cause.**

crankiness and sudden onset of “bad moods.” But even more serious dangers are lurking unseen.

When plaque deposits begin to form in proximity to and then, gradually, under the dog’s gums, the immuno-inflammatory response begins to cause destruction of the structures that hold the dog’s teeth in place: the cementum (the calcified tissue that covers the root surfaces), periodontal

ligament (connective tissue that helps anchor the teeth), and alveolar bone (the bone that surrounds the roots of the teeth). As these structures are damaged in the inflammatory response “crossfire,” the teeth can become loose and even fall out.

A more serious danger is the bacterial infection and resultant inflammation in the gums, which can send bacteria through the dog’s bloodstream, where it can wreak havoc with the heart, lungs, kidney, and liver. Dogs with chronic health problems that affect these organs and dogs with immune-mediated disease are at special risk of experiencing complications due to periodontal disease. For this reason alone, owners of these dogs should be the most proactive in keeping their dogs’ teeth clean.

### Appropriate fears

People whose dogs are in poor health, however, are often the most reluctant to schedule a teeth-cleaning. Most frequently, they cite the effects of anesthesia on their dogs’ already compromised health as their biggest concern. In many cases, though, there are more serious things they should be concerned about, because the fact is that the vast majority of dogs, even old ones, come through the anesthetic experience

without peril, as long as the veterinarian provides appropriate supportive care. (See “Awaking Okay,” WDJ November 2002, for a detailed article about the safest anesthesia protocols and how to insist on them for your dog.)

Far more perilous than properly administered anesthesia are the risks posed by dental “technicians” who are not well trained or are inexperienced, and who are working without the benefit of veterinary support or supervision. (See sidebar below.)

Undoubtedly, some of the people who provide “anesthesia-free teeth cleaning” services outside of veterinarians’ offices are well-educated and experienced. Some may be former (human) dental hygienists or licensed veterinary healthcare technicians. Some do a terrific job.

But the fact is, no matter how talented or experienced or well-educated they are, if they are not working with a vet who will perform a complete physical examination of the dog before the procedure and provide care afterward (if needed), they are performing veterinary medicine without a license. And because their services are illegal, it’s not possible for a consumer to confirm their credentials or even have legal recourse if they injure or harm a client’s dog.

## The best candidates for anesthesia-free service

Fortunately, some veterinarians now offer anesthesia-free dental cleanings in their clinics, in recognition of the fact that *some* dogs *may* be adversely affected by anesthesia, and yet would benefit from dental care. The best candidates include dogs with tartar-encrusted teeth who exhibit any of the following:

- Poor kidney and/or liver function (detected with a blood test)
- Congenital heart defects (including murmurs), impaired heart function (such as congestive heart failure) or arrhythmia
- A recent injury or infection of any kind (even skin infections, including “hot spots,” are good cause to delay scheduling any procedure that requires anesthesia)
- A history of seizures (some preanesthetic sedatives can lower the seizure threshold)

If your dog has one of the conditions listed here, or another health problem that concerns your veterinarian, he may be a

## Unless They Work With a Vet, They Work Without a Net

In the United States, only licensed veterinarians, or certain healthcare workers *who are under the direct supervision of a veterinarian*, may legally clean your dog’s teeth. (“Healthcare workers” include licensed, certified, or registered veterinary technicians, veterinary assistants with advanced dental training, dentists, or registered dental hygienists; “under the direct supervision of a veterinarian” means with a vet in the same building, who will examine the dog and check the tech’s work.)

Some technicians allege that this is a matter of veterinarians protecting their revenue. They claim that teeth cleaning isn’t rocket science, and that an experienced technician can do as good a job or better than most vets. The vastly lower price they charge for the service, they say, encourages more pet owners to have their pets’ teeth cleaned more frequently. This is all true.

But because of the risks of harm that can be done by an unskilled or poorly educated technician – or even a skilled one without veterinary backup or supervision – we suggest making sure your dog’s teeth are cleaned in a veterinary clinic.

Inexperienced technicians, especially working on a wide-awake dog, might not notice dental problems that need professional veterinary dental care, such as a fractured or loose tooth, extra or retained teeth that are causing orthodontic problems, or advanced periodontal disease. Dogs with the latter condition (especially small and tiny dogs) risk jaw fractures caused by weakened, diseased bone.

There are also plenty of non-dental health problems that a

non-veterinarian may fail to notice, such as early signs of oral tumors, enlarged lymph nodes, or certain odors in the dog’s breath that can indicate other disease processes (sweet, fruity breath can indicate diabetes, and the odor of urea can indicate kidney failure). A vet can take a tissue biopsy or pull a sample for a blood or urine test if she notices one of these signs, thus diagnosing serious health problems in their earliest stages; of course, a technician working without a vet cannot.

The most likely problem that can be caused by a technician who has no veterinary supervision, however, is infection. Teeth-cleaning unleashes a storm of bacteria into the mouth and into the bloodstream. For dogs with cardiac problems and many other illnesses, this can be fatal – if not countered with preemptive as well as postoperative antibiotics, which are legally available only with a veterinarian’s prescription.

Recently, Oakland, California, veterinarian Jenny Taylor had a client bring her dog in for an emergency visit, admitting she had recently had her dog’s teeth cleaned by a technician, who suggested she get the dog to a vet for antibiotics immediately.

“I would have preferred that the tech had declined to clean the dog’s teeth until the owner got the dog on antibiotics,” Dr. Taylor says ruefully. “But at least the tech was competent enough to recognize a case where the dog really needed to get prompt follow-up care from a vet. By insisting the client follow up with a vet, he took the risk that the vet would report him; some might have just risked the dog’s health and kept their mouths shut.”

good candidate for anesthesia-free teeth cleaning. But you should understand that the procedure is *not* a walk in the park; it can be hard on the dog, and the cleaning is necessarily less thorough than one conducted with the dog asleep.

"It's *so* much easier to do a good job on a dog who is asleep," says Jenny Taylor, DVM, founder and co-owner of Creature Comfort Holistic Veterinary Center in Oakland, California. "You get a vastly more thorough examination and a much better cleaning when the dog is unconscious."

To do a good cleaning, the veterinarian or technician will need to spend long moments on each tooth – the cute ones in the front *and* the difficult-to-reach ones in the back. The outer surfaces (closest to the lips) are the easiest to reach and are always the most tartar-encrusted, but even the surfaces on the inside of the dogs' teeth (closest to the tongue) should be examined and cleaned. This is tough to accomplish with even the most compliant dog.

Also, working without anesthesia may require the vet or technician to work without the benefit of the fastest and most effective tool in the teeth-cleaning arsenal: the ultrasonic scaler. Few dogs will sit still in the face of its noise and vibration, so the vet frequently can use only hand-held scalers. It can be difficult to manipulate the sharp tools with the required force to remove stubborn calculus without causing inadvertent injury to the dog's gums, tongue, or lips, especially if he's wiggling.

Finally, there is the dog's experience to consider. A few happy-go-lucky dogs will comply with any procedure dreamed up by humans, as long as they get kisses and treats. But for some dogs, it's torture. "People need to understand that working in the mouth can be a traumatic experience for some dogs," warns Dr. Taylor. "We do a lot of things to keep the dog as comfortable as possible, but the procedure *can* cause some discomfort. Some dogs can tolerate a little pain and not hold it against anyone. But others can get upset no matter how tactful we are."

For all of these reasons, even veterinarians who perform anesthesia-free teeth cleaning for certain dogs may promote an anesthetized procedure to the owners of dogs who are not at any special risk of complications from anesthesia. "Sometimes an anesthetized procedure is the kindest, safest thing for the dog," says Dr. Taylor. "You have to consider each dog's case individually and weigh all the factors: health, age, condition of the teeth, and temperament."

## Don't delay

In the best of all possible worlds, dog owners would provide appropriate home care to prevent their dogs from developing tartar buildup and gingivitis. (Some dogs go through their entire lives with sparkling white teeth, with absolutely no effort on their lucky owners' part; we're not talking about them!) For dogs who develop tartar buildup very quickly, daily brushing can go a long way to reduce (although, probably not eliminate) the need for professional cleanings.

For people who have concerns about professional teeth cleaning with anesthesia, then, prevention should be key. Maintaining your young, healthy dog's mouth is largely a matter of daily discipline. (See "Clean Teeth, Healthy Dogs, WDJ October 2002 for information about home care for teeth.)

If your dog has already developed tartar accumulations, though, don't despair. But don't delay taking action, either, because tartar leads to gum disease which leads to systemic disease. Recent human health studies, in fact, have suggested that there may be a link between periodontal disease, heart disease, and other health conditions, and that gum disease may be a more serious risk factor for heart disease than hypertension, smoking, cholesterol, gender, and age. So get that dog to your vet's office and map out a management strategy. It might take just one cleaning to get your dog back on a healthy track, enabling you to maintain his pearly whites thereafter.

## Don't clean without a vet

But in case we haven't already said it clearly enough, don't just have a groomer or technician clean your dog's teeth in the back room of a pet supply store. A veterinarian should examine your dog before his teeth-cleaning appointment, and may want to give you antibiotics to give the dog a few days before the cleaning takes place and for a few days afterward. Even if a dog owner sought out a technician who was not working under a veterinarian's supervision, this one thing could make the difference between life and death for some dogs.

Another reason why a vet exam is critical: She may judge your dog to be a poor candidate for *any* sort of teeth-cleaning, with or without anesthesia. If your dog has advanced periodontal and/or active infection



**If your dog develops tartar buildup rapidly, the best thing you can do is to brush his teeth daily. Providing chews and an improved diet may help, but daily brushing is proven to be most effective.**

in his gums, any sort of cleaning may be temporarily out of the question. He'll need antibiotics to get the infection under control before dental work should proceed.

And if your vet judges your at-risk dog to be very near the end of his life, if he is very ill, or if the amount of gingivitis (inflammation of the gums) is relatively minor considering the amount of tartar present, she may suggest *not* cleaning the dog's teeth after all. In these cases, often the vet will opt to treat the dog with an occasional dose of antibiotics to reduce the bacterial burden, and monitor the response. If the dog improves sufficiently, she may proceed with an abbreviated, gentle cleaning.

Dr. Taylor began offering anesthesia-free dental cleaning in her practice specifically to ensure that her clients who were worried about anesthesia wouldn't just sneak off to a back-room technician for their dog's dental care. "I want my clients to discuss their fears with me, so I can help them understand all of the ramifications of their decisions, and help them plan the most effective and safest course of treatment for their dogs," she says. "If they really want the anesthesia-free service, I'm happy to provide it – along with any other needed support. This may include antibiotics, but it also includes flower essences, aromatherapy, and maybe even acupuncture to help reduce the stress of the cleaning."

It's a model we wish *all* veterinarians would emulate. 🐾

*Nancy Kerns is Editor of WDJ.*

*For contact information, see "Resources," page 24.*

# Sit, Stay, Cha, Cha, Cha

*Participants in musical freestyle (a.k.a. “dancing with dogs”) say the sport is great for training, exercise, bonding, and just plain fun.*

BY MARDI RICHMOND

**D**ance fever is sweeping through the canine community. Dogs are spinning and twirling to country western, rock 'n roll, movie theme songs, and more. What's driving these dogs (and their handlers!) to move to the beat? It's none other than the tail wagging sport of canine musical freestyle.

Musical freestyle is a choreographed routine performed by handlers and their dogs. A relatively new addition to the dog sport world, freestyle came onto the scene less than 20 years ago. According to a few sources, freestyle seemed to pop up simultaneously in several countries, the way dog sports often do.

Today, freestyle is an established sport today, but it continues to evolve and grow.



**Laurel Rabschutz of Willington, Connecticut, and her five-year-old Newfoundland, Rollo. All three of Rabschutz's Newfs hold freestyle titles and frequently perform for dog-related fundraising and public service events. Here they perform to “Drunken Sailor” during the “Celebrating the Sea Dog” exhibit at the Mystic (CT) Seaport.**

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **Attend an event where freestyle will be demonstrated so you can see for yourself how much fun the participants – human AND canine – have with the sport.**
- **Buy a book or videotape that teaches you some of the basics, so you can start introducing some moves to your dog.**
- **Join a freestyle training club for advice, support, inspiration, and further education.**
- **Consider the sport even if you or your dog are less than athletic; even individuals in wheelchairs can participate! And many older enthusiasts find it irresistible.**

The sport's early beginnings may have been rooted in formal heeling. But musical freestyle has moved beyond heeling routines into a true crowd-pleasing performance sport that incorporates a variety of trick-like movements such as spinning, backing up, weaving through legs, and jumping over arms.

## It's about the relationship!

We've all seen a couple on the dance floor that rivet an audience. When partners dance – really dance! – it isn't just the footwork or the fancy moves that fascinate; it's their connection, chemistry, and relationship. In musical freestyle, where the dance partners are dog and handler, the relationship and the chemistry are also key.

“I first saw freestyle on TV, watching a

performance of Mary Ray and her Border Collies from England. I was moved to tears,” says Nacina Dawn, a freestyle enthusiast from Valley Ford, California. Dawn says that the relationship aspect is what first drew her to the sport. Dawn was so inspired by the bond she witnessed between Ray and her dogs that she had to try freestyle. Today, Dawn dances with her seven-year-old Golden Retriever, Candy, and chairs the Gold Coast Freestyle Guild, a division of the Canine Freestyle Federation (CFF).

Kris Hurley, a freestyler from Edmond, Oklahoma, agrees. “I think the most wonderful thing about freestyle is the relationship it builds between you and your dog,” she says. “The next best thing might be the relationship between you and other freestylers!”



PHOTO BY  
SUE COCKRELL PHOTOGRAPHY

**Heather Somers of Vancouver Island, B.C., and Pasha, her 12-year-old Silky Terrier, often earn extra recognition for technical merit and artistic impression.**

Hurley, who has participated in musical freestyle since 1996, is a founding member of the Musical Dog Sport Association (MDSA), an organization that promotes the sport. She also teaches through Freestyle Dogs of Oklahoma, and dances with her three dogs, Maggie, Nellie, and Roxie.

Unlike other dog sports, where the course or expected performance is essentially the same for each team, the focus of freestyle is the individuality of routines. Each team determines the music, moves, and interactions that will highlight the physical ability and personality of each team member. This aspect of freestyle readily lends itself to building on both the dog and the handler's strengths – and thus on strengthening their relationship.

While the relationship-building aspect of freestyle is part of what makes it so attractive, the obvious joy – and just plain fun – of dancing with your dog cannot be overlooked.

“Although I participate in conformation and agility, my dogs and I have found canine freestyle to be the most joyous!” says Dawn. She explains that while the focus of freestyle is the bond, there is simply a large dose of “let’s have FUN!” thrown into the mix.

### Anyone can play

So far, we’ve got a relationship-building sport that is a whole lot of fun. Is there more reason to take a closer look at this sport? Definitely!

“I think the flexibility of freestyle results in the sport having a little something for everyone,” says Hurley. For example, Hurley began musical freestyle when her dog, Maggie, was already nine years old.

“Maggie had stopped really enjoying obedience, and although she liked agility, the running and jumping were difficult for her,” says Hurley. “She seemed to like the change that freestyle offered – more fun, less stress.”

Now, at an amazing 17 years of age, Maggie is still doing freestyle demos and loving it. “She’s not as quick or precise as she once was, but there is a spring in her step and a sparkle in her eye when she’s doing her routine that just makes me smile. I think freestyle has enabled her to maintain physical strength and

flexibility, which has helped her as she enjoys her senior years.”

Dawn agrees and points to two of her freestyle colleagues as examples. “Judy Gamet, of dogscandance.com, dances with an 11-year-old rescue Rottweiler who has one artificial hip and one severely dysplastic hip,” says Dawn. “Margine Webb dances with her 14-year-old Chesapeake Bay Retriever who is deaf and has arthritis. Freestyle has conditioned them and increased their strength, flexibility, agility, and confidence.”

But freestyle isn’t just for older dogs or dogs with disabilities, either. Hurley does both competitions and demonstrations with her four-year-old Pug-mix, Roxie, and her eight-year-old Toy Manchester Terrier, Nellie. Dawn has earned a beginner’s freestyle title with Candy. Plus, freestyle has some distinct advantages for puppies and younger dogs.

“Freestyle can be a great activity to teach the dogs to ‘learn how to learn,’” says Hurley. “Many puppies don’t have the attention span for the precision required in obedience, or shouldn’t be really jumping until after they grow. But you can train many of the freestyle behaviors at a very young age. Learning the process of learning is a skill that will carry over into whatever other activities they may want to do as an older dog – in addition to freestyle.”

Hurley also points out that the same flexibility applies to the human side of the team. “I have a student in one of my classes who is 70 years old and is training a dog for the first time. Again, because freestyle routines can be tailored to the participants’ physical characteristics, any age, shape, size, speed, or skill can be successful in freestyle. While

there may be certain moves that a dog or handler can’t do, it would not preclude them from participating in freestyle.”

### Dance illusions

Both Dawn and Hurley also assured me that the people involved in freestyle don’t have to be able to “dance,” at least not in the traditional sense, to participate in this sport. As someone who is investigating freestyle as a potential new activity for my slightly senior dogs, this has been my biggest concern!

“Although a sense of musicality can be helpful, I definitely don’t feel that being a good dancer is a requirement. It’s all about presenting an illusion of dance,” says Hurley. She explains that by adding simple gestures that match the feeling of the music, the teams appear to be dancing though there is not a formal dance step anywhere in the routine.

For example, thumbs hooked through belt-loops with a small hitch-step to a country song, or a quick head-snap and hands clapped above the head to start a tango, create the illusion of dance.

According to Hurley, one of the philosophies that MDSA promotes is that the music selected should match the natural rhythm of both the dog and the handler. “When the music selected is a good match, the team almost naturally moves in time with the music,” says Hurley.



PHOTO BY PATIE VENTRE,  
COURTESY OF WCFO, INC.,  
THE WORLD CANINE  
FREESTYLE ORGANIZATION

**This Pennsylvania pairs team were 2003 National Champions: Diane Kowalski of Tyrone and her Border Collie, Wes, with Mark Criste of Altoona and his Golden Retriever, Ashley.**



**Seventy-year-old Oklahoma freestyler Janet Chadwick says her two-year-old Labmix, Maggie, is the first dog she's really trained, despite having had dogs all her life. Freestyle makes it fun and rewarding.**

Dawn agrees, noting that the various freestyle organizations put different emphasis on the handler movements.

"CFF does not require an athletic 'dance' performance by the handler," she says. "Handlers showcase all of the beautiful qualities and strengths their dogs possess. For example, a friend of mine who no longer is able to compete in other dog sports due to an injury, stands in one area and 'conducts' her dog in the space around her."

## In the spotlight

While anyone can enjoy freestyle in their living room, if you have a desire to perform, either through demonstrations or in competition, a sense of showmanship and enjoying the spotlight is very helpful. For some people and dogs, being in the spotlight presents a challenge.

"The biggest challenge I had when starting was Candy's shyness," says Dawn. "But with a combination of clicker training and freestyle classes, she now has more confidence and grace than any dog I have ever had. My dogs and I love freestyle for the relaxed, happy, and fun way we can express to the audience our loving relationship."

Hurley says that another challenge many people face is that freestyle involves two entirely different skill sets – the actual training process and the creative process used to develop a routine.

"Sometimes people who are amazing dog trainers struggle with the creative pro-

cess – hearing the music, visualizing a routine, etc.," says Hurley. "And many of the creative people sometimes struggle with the details and structure needed to train the moves. Bringing the two components together can often be the biggest – and most rewarding – challenge."

Hurley notes that her biggest personal challenge has been getting past the need to have everything perfect in both training and competition. "In training, I've tried to change this by focusing on the positives. Clicker training has been a real blessing. It has really changed my way of thinking. I'm not looking for errors, but focusing on the good stuff."

## Moving to the music

The first step in developing a musical freestyle routine is picking the music. The primary consideration is how well it fits the natural movement of the dog and handler; its rhythm needs to complement the dog's and the handler's rhythm, too. The music should also highlight the personality of the team. Music can create a mood that reflects the seriousness, power, or playfulness of the team. Or it can conjure an atmosphere of romance or joy.

"You also must pick a song that you really like," says Dawn, "because during training and practice, it will be played over and over."

## Uncommon moves

Once you have a music choice, the moves in a routine are designed to complement the music. The moves used in freestyle can be quite varied, depending on if the routine is being developed for competition, demonstration, or just for fun.

"The only move I consider to be a 'required' move is attention," says Hurley. She defines attention in this context as "being focused and engaged with the handler," not necessarily the "look straight at me and don't look away" attention that is often associated with traditional obedience.

The need for focus and attention is in part because it is considered a demonstration of the bond between the handler and dog, but also because it is necessary for the dog to see the handler's cues within the routine. Hurley notes that "attention" is not really an indication of the true bond between a dog and handler, but rather is a way to present that connection to the audience.

Other movements, however, are commonly incorporated into freestyle routines. Traditional heelwork, for example, is often

at the foundation of a dance. Heelwork includes right and left side heeling, turns with the dog in the heel position, and right and left side finishes.

Backing up is another common movement in freestyle routines. Backing can be done with the dog in the right or left side heel position, with the dog in front of the handler, or with the dog backing away from the handler.

Sidestepping or lateral moves are often incorporated. Lateral movements can be done in conjunction with the handler's movements, in a right or left side heel position. Sidestepping can also be done with the dog moving away from the handler, or with the dog moving in front of the handler.

Circles can be incorporated where the dog circles the handler or another object. Spins, where the dog turns in a 360-degree circle independent of the handler, are also popular in freestyle routines.

Other more advanced moves include a dog weaving between the handler's legs. This can be done as a figure 8, as a moving weave through the legs, or when a dog simply goes through the handler's legs. Teams can also incorporate tricks such as rolling over, crawling, or jumping. Distance-work (when a dog does any of these movements away from the handler) is also considered to be advanced.

Hurley emphasizes that you don't have to do anything that isn't comfortable for the dog. "If there is a move or type of move that doesn't work well for my dogs, or that they don't like, then I don't have to do them," says Hurley. This takes the stress and frustration out of training; the pressure to make a dog do something specific is completely removed.

"Quite often, the moves incorporated into the routine are moves the dogs do naturally during play. And because I'm not worrying about something going wrong or or my dog just not getting a certain move at a certain time, I'm more relaxed and we can enjoy the interaction and time working together."

## Taking the show on the road

It is important to note that in a freestyle competition, certain movements may be required at each level, depending on the organization. For example, in CFF (the organization Dawn is involved with), a beginning routine is done on-lead, and should include specific elements of heeling, working in front, turns or pivots, and spins or circles.



There are four levels of competition in CFF, and in the most advanced level, the routine is done off-leash and includes distance work, lateral movements, and backing up. All levels can also incorporate movements like weaving through legs, crawling, rolling over, and jumping over arms or legs. Even in competition, however, the required elements allow for a great deal of flexibility and creativity.

Plus, there are quite a few different organizations that promote freestyle, and each has its own unique philosophy. By investigating the different avenues for competition, a team is sure to find a match that will work for them. And for demonstration, exhibition, or “just for fun” freestyle routines, of course, anything goes.



PHOTO BY PATIE VENTRE, COURTESY OF WCFO, INC.

**Costumes are not necessary, but they help identify a team and complement the mood of the music. Here is Susan Brogan, of Nokesville, Virginia, and her cane-wielding Australian Shepherd, Jazz, at the 2003 OFF LEAD Disco Doggie Dance Invitational.**

animal shelters, humane societies, rescue benefits, and various canine sporting events,” says Dawn. “Candy is also a registered therapy dog through the Delta Pet

## Unexpected benefits

If competing is not your thing, Dawn emphasizes, you can take your dance “on the road” in a variety of other ways. “Thrill your friends, bring cheer to those confined to hospitals or nursing homes, or promote responsible pet guardianship to children at schools,” she suggests.

“Although we enjoy competing, the majority of our performances are ‘dancing for a cause’ such as Northern California Golden Retriever Rescue,

Partners and performs at hospitals and nursing homes.”

Hurley echoes the sentiment that competition isn’t the only venue for freestyle. “Since I’ve come from a competitive background, freestyle competitions seemed like a logical choice. However, I’m finding that I am beginning to enjoy the demonstrations more than the competitions.

“Freestyle is a great way to show what you can accomplish with positive training methods. And since several of us perform with rescue dogs, it really helps show what great dogs rescues can be,” she adds.

Hurley says she has also performed for community events like the Alzheimer’s Walk and for senior and children’s groups. “You get to have fun with your dog AND make people smile. It doesn’t get much better than that.” 🐾

*Mardi Richmond is a writer and trainer who shares life with her human partner and two wonderful dogs in Santa Cruz, California. She is the co-author of Ruffing It: The Complete Guide to Camping with Dogs. See “Resources,” page 24, for purchase info.*

## Getting Started in Musical Freestyle

Kris Hurley, freestyle competitor, teacher, and founding member of the Musical Dog Sport Association, suggests that the first step for people interested in musical freestyle is to seek knowledge. “There are so many wonderful resources available to freestylers – e-mail discussion groups, training videos, competition videos, seminars, workshops, and classes. All these resources can really help a team get started,” says Hurley. “Since seminars and classes are becoming popular, some people think they need a class or seminar to get started. I think it is important to remember that many of the top freestylers trained on their own.”

If you haven’t yet seen musical freestyle in action, you might want to visit the Musical Dog Sport Association’s Web site where you can view a short video of Hurley and her dog Maggie performing to “Hang ’Em High.” The Web site also has videos of other members, including a well-known musical freestyle routine (thanks to e-mail and the Internet), Carolyn Scott and Rookie dancing to “You’re the One That I Want” from the movie, *Grease*.



**Nancy Haddock and her four-year-old Malamute, Nanook, also participate in rally, obedience, agility, and sledding.**

### FREESTYLE ORGANIZATIONS

Musical Dog Sport Association: [musicaldogsport.org](http://musicaldogsport.org)

Canine Freestyle Federation: [canine-freestyle.org](http://canine-freestyle.org)

World Canine Freestyle Organization: [worldcaninefreestyle.org](http://worldcaninefreestyle.org)

Freestyle Dogs of Oklahoma: [freestyledogs.com](http://freestyledogs.com)

Dogs Can Dance: [dogscandance.com](http://dogscandance.com)

### BOOKS AND OTHER SOURCES

The following are available from DogWise, [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com) or (800) 776-2665:

*Dancing With Your Dog: The Book*, by Sandra Davis

*Dancing With Your Dog Video Series*, (three tapes) by Sandra Davis

*Dances with Dogs*, by Kay Laurence

*TEAM-Dance: A Guide to Canine Freestyle*, by Ekard Lind

# Know the Nose

*Getting to the source of the dog's ability to smell.*

BY RANDY KIDD, DVM, PHD

**W**hen I watch our pooch, Pokey, nose his way over the prairie and through the woods around our homestead, I sometimes try to imagine what he is smelling. It's an impossible assignment. His ability to smell and his repertoire of scents is, after all, at least hundreds of times and perhaps more than a million times more acute and more expansive than mine.

I watch as he trots ahead, nose just above the grasses, head ever on the swivel, left to right and up to down – air-sniffing, selecting scents, veering to wherever the pleasures of his nose takes him. Suddenly he stops, noses into a clump of grass, snorts, burrows his nose deeper into some fragrance I will never know, an odor that recalls some aromatic memory, perhaps a primitive recollection from even before he was born. He digs into the memory of odor. Digs with his paws for a while, snorts, then decides it is a lingering smell no longer worthy of his work. He rises up, glances my way . . . and then lifts his leg and marks this location for any who might follow.



**Cody was perplexed as to how we knew he buried his treats in the backyard with his nose. No wonder he often sneezed! Fortunately for him, the canine nose contains numerous “filtering” systems inside to trap most debris and particulate matter.**

The Whole  Dog Journal™

## WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **A runny nose should always warrant further inspection and monitoring. Consult your holistic veterinarian if symptoms persist.**
- **If your dog comes in from a walk outside and has an acute attack of sneezing that doesn't resolve within 20 minutes or so, take him right to your veterinarian. He probably has inhaled a foxtail or other plant awn, and will need anesthesia to remove it.**

## The canine nose

The dog's nose consists of a bony nasal cavity that is divided into two separate chambers by a bony and cartilaginous nasal septum. Within each of the cavities are the turbinate bones (conchae) and the paranasal sinuses.

The turbinate bones form into several scrolls of moveable cartilage and bony tissue that is lined with ciliated epithelial cells. The turbinate bones are a veritable maze of structure, and locating a foreign body hidden in their depths can be an extremely frustrating undertaking – a procedure that almost always requires general anesthesia.

The nose opens to the exterior via two external “nares” or nostrils and the ethmoid bone marks the posterior aspect of the nose. The paranasal sinuses are extensions of the nasal cavity and various diseases or tumors may impair their drainage (especially of the

frontal sinuses). When the dog sniffs, there is forced inspiration and the nostrils are dilated. The inspired air is warmed and humidified as it passes through the turbinates, and the mucus layer that lines the air passages serves as a filter to trap bacteria and particulate matter.

The dog collects scents by air-scenting (sniffing volatile oils that are traveling in the air) and sniffing the ground. A dog's nose is ideally made for sniffing – the outer nares are mobile and allow for expansion on inspiration and contraction to prevent the entry of unwanted objects. When a dog sniffs, he inhales the scented chemicals into his nasal cavities, where they are trapped in mucus and processed by the sensory cells. Expiration forces air out the side of the nares so that its exit doesn't interfere with odors still in the air or on the ground.

Several cilia extend from each of the

sensory cells into the nasal cavity, and each of these cilia contains many scent receptors. After the cell receptors trap the smells, each cell has several (10 to 100) axons that deliver their messages back through the ethmoid bone directly to the olfactory bulb of the brain.

Once in the olfactory bulb, scents are transported to the frontal cortex for recognition as well as to other regions of the brain that include the brain's centers for emotions, memory, and pleasure. There are many interconnections between all these centers, with the result that a simple smell, detected by a dog, likely has an entire set of meanings, memories, and emotional ties that only that dog can know and interpret.

Much of the deeper work of trying to understand the sense of smell has been done on humans; how do you ask a dog what he feels or remembers when he smells a certain odor? But we do know that dogs have much more surface area within their nasal cavities, and this area is well supplied with sensory cells – estimates of the total number of these cells vary and depend on the breed, but they have been cited as somewhere between 125 million and several times that. (This compares with estimates of human numbers that are in the 5- to 10-million-cell range.)

In addition, the dog has devoted a tremendous amount of his brain tissue to olfactory cells. (Some estimates allocate one-third of the dog's brain to the chore of scenting.) All this adds up to a canine scenter that has thousands to millions of times the ability of his human counterpart.

We also know that we can use the dog's incredible sense of smell to benefit mankind in ways we are only beginning to imagine. Today's working scent dogs are involved in search and rescue (some dogs can follow a trail that is more than a week old), finding cadavers (dogs have even detected drowned people in a depth of 80+ feet of water), detecting explosives, firearms, and drugs, and even scenting tumors in human patients. Early work has begun to use dogs to test the breath of humans – to help diagnose internal diseases before they become evident with other methods.

## Jacobson's Organ

Inside the nasal cavity and opening into the upper part of the mouth is the final piece of the dog's scent-related puzzle, the remarkable Jacobson's Organ. Jacobson's Organ is a "sense of smell" receptor that is actually not receptive to ordinary odors. Rather,

the scenting nerve cells of the organ are quite different from those in normal olfactory tissue in that they respond to a range of substances that have large molecules, but often no detectable odor.

The sensory cells of Jacobson's Organ (which anatomists claim are unlike any other nerve cells) communicate not with the olfactory bulbs and cortex, but with the accessory bulbs and the part of the brain that coordinates mating and other basic emotions. In fact, recent evidence suggests that the two separate but parallel systems of odor detection cooperate in surprising ways to produce novel sensibilities not achievable by either of them on their own.

The primary function of the Organ is to detect pheromones, which then provides both sexes with information as to the availability of the opposite sex for breeding. Additionally the Organ is apparently able to detect other, normally undetectable, odors – odors that may enhance the newborn's ability to find its own dam, for example. Search and rescue dog handlers notice that many of their dogs lick the air, as if to give additional input into their "scents-ability."

Animals enhance the sex-detection ability of the Organ with what is called the "flehmen" reaction or "flared face." When exposed to the urine of an animal in heat, a male will typically throw back his head and raise or curl his upper lip – both of these help to open the entry slits into Jacobson's Organ.

Horses, deer, and goats are the masters of this reaction, and many dogs can produce a rather pronounced flehmen when the time is right. Interestingly, although just a few years ago it was thought that Jacobson's Organ did not exist in humans, a recent anatomical study of 400 human subjects

confirmed both its presence and the fact that its nervous connections are capable of sending functional messages to the brain. Apparently, as much as some folks would like to deny it, we humans are indeed sexual animals, just like the rest of nature.

## More than scents alone

The nose and the sense of smell are vastly expanded by Jacobson's Organ, but an animal's ability to smell extends into many other realms as well. Since smelling is hooked into the most primitive areas of an animal's brain, there is reason to believe that smell is also linked to sensations created long before the animal was actually born.

We know, for example, that animals (and humans) prefer to mingle with the scent of members within their own pack or herd (or, in the case of humans, in their own culture), and horses and dogs can detect the human scent of fear. Also, shortly after birth, mothers are able to pick out their own offspring by smell, and puppies quickly learn the smell of their mother's milk . . . and before long, the smell of a preferred teat.

We know that certain scents may be linked with memories of past events, and even with positive or negative emotions. The fragrance of cookies baking, for example, may remind us of the good times we had at grandma's house, many years ago. Throughout our lifetime, then, the smell of fresh-baked cookies may evoke a positive feeling. It's not easy to correlate long-lasting emotions to past events in dogs, but it is certainly something to consider when we are dealing with a behavior problem that we can't explain physically; could it be related to some household odor that was associated with a bad experience in the dog's past?

In traditional Chinese medicine, the nose



**The length of a dog's snout can have an effect on his ability to smell. Longer-nosed dogs have more scent-reception cells. Even short-nosed dogs can smell hundreds of times better than a human, however.**

– along with the throat and vocal cords – are all considered to be intimately connected to the function of the Lungs. Many nose and throat disorders are therefore treated through the Lung Meridian.

## Nose nutrition

In addition to the normally recommended wholesome diet for dogs, a few nutrients may be especially beneficial for the nose and its ability to smell. Vitamin A seems to be directly involved in the sensory cells' ability to receive and activate the energy of odorant molecules. Glutamate has been proposed as the olfactory cell neurotransmitter (at least in turtles, toads, and rats). While these may prove to be helpful for smelling (especially in the older dog), no definitive studies have yet been done to ascertain proper dosages (or definite benefits) for dogs.

Remember that, as an animal ages, he loses some or all of his ability to smell. Older animals may need to be tempted to eat, and some seem to find spicy foods more palatable. Try several culinary herbs to see if your dog prefers any of them – most of the culinary herbs are high in nutrients and antioxidant, anti-aging activity.

In my opinion, the best “nutrition” we can give to a dog's nose is a daily dose of natural odorants, generated from the fields and woodlands out of doors – the perfect way to build up the reserve of sensory cells and brain connections related to smelling.

## Disease etiologies

Viral infection is the most common cause of acute rhinitis or sinusitis in dogs, with canine distemper, adenovirus types 1 and 2, and parainfluenza the most frequently incriminated.

While primary bacterial sinusitis or rhinitis (inflammation of the mucus membranes of the nose – from the Greek “rhis,” meaning nose) is extremely rare in dogs, secondary bacterial infections are a frequent complication of viral infections.

Allergic sinusitis or rhinitis may occur seasonally in association with pollen production, or it may be the result of household and environmental irritants such as cigarette smoke, housedust, mold, irritant gasses, excess or abnormal odors (perfumes and

perfumed air fresheners, for example), and exposure to toxic chemicals such as pesticides and herbicides.

If rhinitis becomes chronic, consider a persistent secondary bacterial infection after a viral infection, trauma, or presence of a foreign body, or the possibility of a tumor or fungal infection. Rhinitis or sinusitis may also result when a tooth root abscess extends into the maxillary region.

In the course of a normal smelling adventure, a dog will inhale a variety of foreign bodies, most of which are too small to worry about or are immediately sneezed out. Occasionally a dog may, however, inhale a splinter or a plant awn or some other small particle that remains lodged in the nasal cavity, causing local irritation and infection. Finally, both fungal and neoplastic disease may center in the nasal cavities, generally producing chronic symptoms.

## Clinical signs

Acute rhinitis is characterized by one or more of the following: nasal discharge, sneezing, pawing at the face, respiratory stertor (snoring or sonorous breathing), open-mouthed breathing, or other signs of inspiratory difficulty. Tearing (lacrimation) and red eyes (conjunctivitis) often accompany upper respiratory inflammation.

There is often a nasal discharge that may be serous (resembling serum or watery in appearance), catarrhal (discharge created by the inflammation of a mucus membrane), purulent (containing pus or white blood cells), or hemorrhagic (bloody), depending on the degree of mucosal damage and on the increased amount of normal (or abnormal) secretions. The amount of discharge may also reflect decreased “grooming” of the nostrils with the tongue when the dog is ill.

Sneezing, in an attempt to clear the upper airways of discharge, is seen most frequently in acute rhinitis; as the disease progresses to a more chronic form, the sneezing becomes intermittent. The presence of a foreign body is suggested by

frantic sneezing; an acute, one-sided nasal discharge (especially if it is bloody or tinged with blood); and possibly accompanied by pawing at the face or rubbing one side of the face against the ground. Neoplastic or fungal disease is suggested by a chronic nasal discharge that was initially unilateral

but becomes bilateral or that changes in character over time (say, from serous to blood-tinged).

Pure sinusitis is not very common in dogs; sinus infections are generally associated with diseases of the nasal cavity. Epistaxis (bloody nose) is a rare occurrence in dogs and may be the result of recent trauma or the presence of a nasal foreign body or tumor.

## Conventional treatment

Since the primary etiologies of rhinitis and sinusitis are viral, supportive therapy may be the only conventional treatment available . . . and to be fair, most cases of rhinitis and sinusitis will resolve themselves with nothing more than supportive care.

Make sure your dog continues to eat and drink when he's suffering from any sort of nasal problem; remember that most of a dog's ability to “taste” food resides in her nose, and if she can't smell the food, she may not want to eat it. Furthermore, even a mild fever will quickly dehydrate a sick animal, and if you can't get her to drink at home, consider a trip to the vet for fluids.

Foreign bodies will need to be removed, most often under general anesthetic. Tumors of the nasal cavities can be nasty and will require the full concentration of a holistic veterinarian.

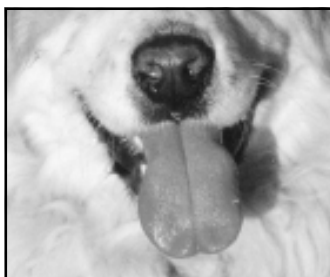
## Alternative therapies

**Acupuncture** treatments will most often be aimed at enhancing the immune function, and since the nose is connected through the Lungs, will often include treating the Lungs.

The Lung Meridian begins at the forward point of the shoulder and proceeds downward around the upper arm, extending along the medial aspect of the foreleg to end at the medial aspect of the first (inner) phalanx.

To help alleviate conditions involving the nose, **massaging** both forelegs from the shoulder down to the toes will stimulate all the Lung points and important immune-balancing points (LI-4 and LI-11). In addition, a massage of the neck and upper back, from the base of the head (at the occipital bone) back to the shoulder blades, will stimulate points along the Bladder Meridian that are correlated to the Lungs (BL-13, at the third intercostal space, is the Lung association point, and BL-9 at the base of the occipital bone, indicated for headache, neck pain, and nasal congestion).

LI-20, located just lateral to and slightly below the nasal ala (the fleshy part of the



**It can be a sign of immune problems if a dog's nose is normally black, but starts losing pigment; see your vet.**

nostril), is specific for rhinitis, epistaxis, and facial paralysis. Sometimes stimulation of this point will cause an intense outflow of gunk from the nasal cavities, much like an artificial “nose-blowing.” Most dogs seem to tolerate needles in this point, but I’ve not had much luck trying to stimulate it with a finger (acupressure).

Everyone should learn one particular nose-related acupuncture point, GV-26, the point

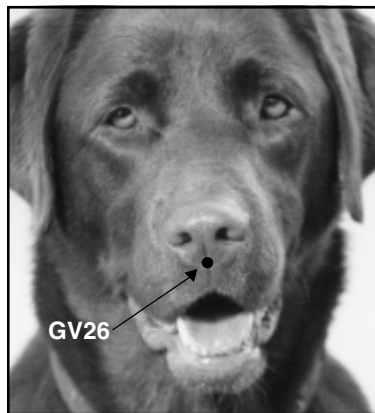
located on the lip at the center of the nose, just below the fleshy part of the nose. GV-26 is the most important point for acute emergencies such as shock, collapse, heat-stroke, cardiac arrest, coma, severe bronchitis, or acute epileptic attacks. If a newborn puppy is not breathing properly or a dog is not recovering from anesthesia, this is the point to stimulate.

If you don’t have acupuncture needles, use whatever sharp object is at hand – a safety pin, knitting needle, your fingernail, whatever is available. For emergencies use strong stimulation – the “hen pecking” technique is appropriate here, rapidly jabbing the sharp object straight into the acu-point, about ¼ to ½ inch into the skin – much like a hen would peck at grain on the ground.

**Homeopathic** remedies can often be very useful, especially for the acute sinusitis or rhinitis, and the analysis of nasal symptoms can sometimes lead to a remedy that offers a cure for the totality of the patient’s symptoms. The problem is that nasal symptoms can also be extremely confusing in the initial case-taking.

To get some perspective on the magnitude of remedies listed for the nose, using the classical repertory, *Kent’s Repertorium Generale*, edited by J. Kunzli, there are 24 pages of remedies dealing with the nose alone. If we were to use nasal “discharges” as our key symptom, we would need to wade through almost four pages of remedies, each one applied to one of the 56 descriptive terms used to describe a specific type of discharge.

Additionally, when an animal is being treated with homeopathic remedies, external symptoms may be the last ones to clear up. Nasal symptoms are thus not the most reliable to monitor when you’re trying to



**The most important acupuncture point for dog owners to know is GV-26, which should be strongly stimulated in a health emergency.**

decide which direction the case is taking.

Given all this, I still rely heavily on Aconite (30c, three times, the doses given 12 hours apart) when treating almost any acute nasal infection. My approach is to give the aconite at the first signs of rhinitis or sinusitis (or actually, almost any acute disease), wait a few days to monitor results, then (if any more treatment is needed) decide on

which remedy to follow up with, depending on the specific signs seen.

Homeopathic remedies have shown some success when treating nasal tumors, and if a tumor is diagnosed in your dog, it is certainly worthwhile to consult with a holistic veterinarian who has experience treating them homeopathically.

## Herbal medicines

Herbs that may be helpful for treating rhinitis and/or sinusitis include a mixture of two or more of the following:

- Elder flower (*Sambucus nigra*)  
Has anti-catarhal effects and is tonifying to mucus membranes
- Goldenseal (*Hydrastis canadensis*) or Oregon grape root (*Berberis aquifolium*)  
Antibacterial and antiviral
- Goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*)  
Anti-inflammatory and anti-catarhal
- Peppermint (*Mentha piperita*)  
Decongestant
- Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*)  
Especially beneficial if the disease has become chronic and is accompanied by fever
- Echinacea (*Echinacea spp.*)  
Aids the immune system

Mix the herbs chosen in equal amounts and brew a mild tea from the mixture. Cool and pour the tea over the dog’s food – about 1/4 cup of tea per 20 pounds of dog, one to three times daily. Alternatively, sprinkle the mixed herbs (fresh or dry) on the dog’s food – about a teaspoon of herbs per 20 pounds of dog, two to three times daily.

## Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is directly applied through the animal’s ability to sense odors that in turn are directed to various parts of the brain. The effects on the brain centers depends on the flower essence used, and an entire repertory has been developed to help the practitioner and a dog’s caretaker decide which aroma may be beneficial for the condition.

While the development of aromatherapy treatments for animals remain a work in progress, recent studies using electroencephalograms (EEGs) confirm that at least some of the aromas do affect brain centers just as they are supposed to.

One study in particular shows that rosemary depresses alpha-activity (i.e., acts as a stimulant) and ylang ylang enhances it (providing relaxation) – just as the aromatherapy “textbooks” say they should. In aromatherapy, rosemary is used as a stimulant and ylang ylang is a soothing, relaxing aroma. In addition, one trial demonstrated that kenneled dogs bark less when they are exposed to the soothing aroma of lavender.

## Flower essences

Flower essences can help alleviate any emotional upset that may come along with problems that involve the nose, and there are some essences that may speed up the healing process. Crab apple is good for general detoxification, and cedar may be helpful whenever environmental or chemical toxicants are involved. Salvia supports an immune system under stress.

## Summary

The dog’s nose may be his most powerful organ and it is certainly one of the most dynamic of all animal systems, with activities that range from basic smell detection, to sensing fear, to memory, to emotions, to mate- and pack-selection, on to a genetic history carried from one generation to the next. Fortunately, disease doesn’t often waylay its functional capability, and fortunately again, most of the diseases of the nose are easily treated naturally. 🐾

*Dr. Randy Kidd earned his DVM degree from Ohio State University and his Ph.D. in Pathology/Clinical Pathology from Kansas State University. A past president of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association, he’s author of Dr. Kidd’s Guide to Herbal Dog Care and Dr. Kidd’s Guide to Herbal Cat Care (see page 24).*

# The Social Scene

*Dogs who are confident and comfortable in public are made, not born.*

BY PAT MILLER

I just completed a private consultation with a client whose under-socialized Australian Shepherd recently bit their 6-year-old daughter in the face, and nipped a friend of their 9-year-old son. I'm cursing a world that allows this to happen.

This well-meaning family adopted Blue from a shelter when he was 16 weeks old. He was "shy," they said – he hid under a chair in the get-acquainted room when they met him. He had been at the shelter for two months – half his life. According to his paperwork he was the last of a litter of six and was timid when initially assessed.

In fact, all the pups were timid, but he was the worst – which was why he was the last one left when the Petersons went to the shelter to adopt last February. He was the only puppy in the shelter at the time, so they

decided to take him despite his shyness. He'd come around, they thought, with love and attention.

## Nature versus nurture

What they didn't know was that at 16 weeks, Blue was reaching the end of a pup's most important socialization period – the time in his life when he learns what is safe and good, and what is scary. In the wild, the lessons learned during the first few months of a pup's life are critical to his survival. As he ventures out of his den he learns to be bold where it counts – pouncing on prey, for example – and cautious where prudent. Pups who don't learn to avoid poisonous snakes, rushing floodwaters, and precipitous cliffs don't live to pass on their genes!

During this period, puppies who live with humans need to learn that the world is a good and safe place. Their general assumption then becomes that people and other animals, places, and things are okay unless proven otherwise.

In contrast, puppies who are not socialized tend to be suspicious of everything except for a very narrow range of experiences they encounter in their very limited environment – a basement or backyard, for example. The rest of the world terrifies them, and any positive exposures they get later in life must struggle against this early, very strong programming.

A genetically sound pup has a better chance of recovering, at least to some degree, from a poor start in life. A pup who inherited poor genes for temperament and wasn't well



## WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **Have a concrete socialization plan in place when you prepare to adopt your next puppy. Make a commitment to follow through with your plan – and then do it.**
- **Let friends and relatives know about the importance of socialization so *their* next pups get the full benefit of a solid socialization foundation.**
- **Sign up for a good positive puppy class – a great place to expose your pup to good socialization experiences.**
- **If you have a poorly socialized puppy or adult dog, seek the assistance of a qualified, positive behavior consultant to help you implement a plan for remedial socialization.**



**An outdoor cafe can be an excellent place to find people to help you socialize your puppy. Look for a variety of people – old, young, big, small, etc. – and give the volunteers a few delicious tidbits to feed to the pup.**

socialized early is often a lost cause – or, at least, a huge challenge for someone who is well-prepared, educated, and equipped to deal with him or her.

The fact that Blue and all his siblings were deemed to be "shy" when they were dropped off at the shelter indicated that they hadn't received adequate early socialization. Most shelters aren't ideal environments for remedial socialization, so by the time Blue was finally adopted, he was woefully behind in his "life is good" lessons – the lessons that, once missed, are very difficult (if not impossible) to make up.

The Petersons also didn't know that if they wanted to try to make up for lost time

they had to immediately start super-socializing their new pup. By the time they brought Blue to me he was 11 months old, and the prognosis for successful behavior modification was dismal.

This dog's future is unknown. The Petersons want to try, and I will certainly try to help them, but they are facing a huge challenge. When children are involved and at risk, the tolerance for error is low and rightly so. I'm hoping to be pleasantly surprised by the outcome of this case.

Every dog is a product of the influence of his genes *and* his environment. If a pup comes from parents who have very genetically sound temperaments, then the pup can get by with an average amount of socialization – or even less. However, if Mom and Pop are genetically unstable, Pup needs to be ultra-socialized if he is to become a safe and friendly member of society.

The problem is, it's pretty hard to tell

the difference. If you adopt a pup from a shelter, you rarely get to meet the parents. Even if you buy from a breeder, you can't tell if Mom and Dad are friendly because they're genetically sound or because they were exceptionally well socialized. How do you know whether to give your new pup average socialization or the ultra package? You don't.

The answer to this conundrum is to socialize the heck out of every single puppy. Then you don't risk finding out later that you had a pup who needed an extra boost in the social department – you already gave it to him!

### Early socialization

The best socialization programs begin while pups are still with their dams. A good breeder begins handling her pups gently and early, just as their eyes begin to open, giving them a positive association with human

touch. As they get a little older (5-6 weeks) they should start meeting more humans – all shapes, colors, ages, and sizes – who feed them treats and pet them gently. The breeder will need to supervise these interactions closely, as rough handling at this stage can have the opposite effect, teaching the pups that humans *aren't* safe to be around.

The mother dog's attitude is important at this stage, too. If she is aggressive toward humans, or even just stressed about her pups being handled, the pups can register her attitude and learn this inappropriate behavior. If Mom is calm and relaxed around humans, pups are more likely to be, too.

By the time a pup is weaned at 7-8 weeks, he should already have a positive worldview programmed into his little puppy brain. When you select your pup from a litter, whether you're at a breeder's home or a shelter – or picking one from a box of free

## Rescuing the Shrinking Violet

Cautions and common sense aside, it's human nature to want to rescue the doggie in distress – the pup who shrinks away from human contact and looks at the world with fear in her eyes. If you are the rescuer type, you have my respect and admiration. I know of many poorly socialized pups who were rescued and go on to live happy and normal lives because their rescuers recognized the daunting task they faced, and made a solid commitment to do the work. Here are some tips for you if you know that your heart will someday be captured by the challenge of an unsocialized pup:

- Get her as young as you can. The benefits of staying with her litter until eight weeks of age are outweighed by the benefits of getting started with socialization.

- Or, give her the best of both worlds: take the entire litter, or at least several of the pups, and start them *all* on the road to a happier life. Then be sure to find capable, knowledgeable adopters for her siblings when they turn 8 weeks – adopters who will continue with remedial socialization.

- Avoid the temptation to *keep* more than one pup. They are likely to bond to each other more closely than to you, which makes your socialization challenge many times more difficult. Even *well*-socialized littermates or same-age pals that are raised together can become highly stressed while separated from their buddies.

- Have a solid understanding of

counter-conditioning and desensitization, and make a strong commitment to practice this with her *every single day*.

- Read *The Cautious Canine* by Patricia McConnell, and *Dogs Are From Neptune* by Jean Donaldson, two books that clearly explain how to work with poorly socialized dogs using counter-conditioning and desensitization.

- Be prepared to assertively protect your pup from unwanted advances by well-meaning strangers who want to pet your puppy. You must not let people pet or harass her until she is well-socialized enough to tolerate petting and harassment.

- Know that love is not enough. Many well-meaning rescuers think that giving a psychologically neglected pup a home filled with love will be enough to “fix” the problem. Don't fool yourself. Love is an important part of the equation, but it will take a lot of work as well.



**Don't fall for that shy, withdrawn puppy (especially an older pup) unless you are committed to her social rehabilitation.**

- Be prepared for heartache. Some poorly socialized pups – most likely those who are genetically sound – do respond well to remedial socialization and grow into reasonably well-socialized adult dogs. Others don't.

If you don't succeed in enhancing your pup's social skills, are you prepared to live with a fearful dog who may be at high risk for biting you, your visitors, children, and goodness knows who else? Or to make the difficult decision to euthanize, so she doesn't have to live a life of fear and stress?

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puppies on a street corner – choose wisely. Resist the temptation to rescue the pup who hides in the corner. Select, instead, the pup who is outgoing without being overbearing – the one who seems to have a cheerful, “Life is good!” attitude. Otherwise you risk finding yourself in the Peterson’s shoes, with an 11-month-old dog who is biting children in the face.

Okay, you’ve adopted a friendly pup with a sound temperament. Good for you! That doesn’t mean your job is done, however. You must continue your pup’s socialization lessons assiduously until he is 16 weeks old, and then maintain his positive association to the world throughout his life. If you take an 8-week-old well-socialized pup and stick him in your backyard with no outside exposure, the odds are good that you will end up with a problem.

## The health dilemma

Puppy owners are often counseled by their veterinarians to keep their baby dogs cloistered safely at home until they are fully immunized at age 4-6 months. Looking at the situation purely from a physical health perspective, this makes good sense. You certainly don’t want to risk exposing your pup to nasty distemper or parvo bugs.

From a mental health perspective, however, it’s horrible advice. You only have two to three more months to give your pup an unshakable faith in the goodness of the world. You cannot afford to wait until those shots are done. During this period, you want to give your pup at least 100 new positive exposures and experiences, to “vaccinate” him against the possibility that he will feel compelled to bite someone, someday (see “100 Exposures In 100 Days,” next page). It’s not a guarantee against biting, but it’s by far your best chance of ending up with an adult dog who is friendly and safe.

## Fear periods

At one time in the last several decades, much ado was made about a pup’s “critical fear periods.” Behaviorists attempted to pinpoint those periods of time in puppyhood during which a “bad experience” would scar a pup’s psyche for life. More recently, we have come to realize that, although pups *do* seem to go through periods during which they are more fearful than others, that time can vary from one pup to the next. Rather than wrapping your pup in cotton wool for a designated period, it makes more sense to watch him closely and ensure that he has mostly good experiences, especially if he



**A dog who was well-socialized should exhibit confidence and poise in any setting, interacting comfortably with people wearing any manner of dress.**

seems to be going through a cautious stage.

Even if something *does* frighten him, it’s not the end of the world – you can set up a counter-conditioning and desensitization (CC&D) program to restore a positive association with that particular stimulus, and your pup should recover nicely.

## Lifetime socialization

Now your pup is 16 weeks old. You’ve reached the end of that magic socialization window, your “100 exposures” list is all checked off, and your pup loves the world. Are you done? Hardly.

Like your training efforts, which continue on into adulthood and throughout your dog’s entire life, you are never done with socialization. You’ve laid a very solid foundation; that’s something to be proud of.

Much of that will be lost, however, if you toss your four-month-old pup into the backyard and cease all exposure. He still needs to meet and greet people, go places with you, and continue to share your world and your experiences, if you want him to continue to be the happy, friendly puppy he is today. And, of course, that’s what you want! 🐾

*Pat Miller, CPDT, is WDJ’s Training Editor. She is also author of The Power of Positive Dog Training, and Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog. For contact information, see “Resources,” page 24.*



## 100 Exposures in 100 Days

Giving your pup 100 positive experiences in his first 100 days with you is not as daunting as it may sound. The most important thing to keep in mind is to control the circumstances so that the experience remains positive for your puppy. When introducing your pup to children, for example, put your body between your pup and any overeager, rambunctious kids until you have a chance to tell the kids how they must behave if they want to meet the puppy. Don't let a baby clamp his hand onto any part of the puppy's anatomy, or hand the puppy to anyone who is in danger of dropping her.

It's also best to bring an ample supply of extra-tasty treats anywhere you take the pup. When someone sees your puppy and starts making the inevitable "Oh what a cute puppy!" approach, hand the person a couple of treats and ask if he would feed them to the pup as they pet her. Or bring along your puppy's favorite stuffed toy, and give it to the person so he can offer it to your puppy. Keep an eye on your puppy's response; she should be happy, confident, and obviously pleased to see any and every new person approaching. If she appears frightened or overwhelmed, think about how you can make the interactions more rewarding for her.

You'll find many opportunities in your own neighborhood to start your list of 100. You'll also want to get into the habit of taking your pup with you to as many *safe* places as possible, to enhance his socialization, and to start him on his path to being your well-behaved companion, welcome wherever you go.

We suggest you keep an actual written list of your pup's socialization exposures, with a goal of a minimum of one new exposure per day until you've reached the 100 mark. If you put a little effort into it, we're betting you'll get there well before your 100 days are up – more likely in half that time! Here



**Seek out people who look different: people with hats or canes, on bikes or skateboards, in uniforms and formal wear.**

are some suggestions to start you off:

1. Your mail carrier. Snag him on his daily rounds and ask him to feed your pup a tidbit or two. Start an early positive association with this daily visitor to your home.
2. Your UPS or FedEx person. Add a little extra power to the positive association with uniformed visitors to avoid trouble later.
3. Your neighbors. Actually, this can count toward many of the exposures on your list if you live in a diverse neighborhood. If your neighborhood is homogenous, try a park or the bench in front of your local library. Look for tall men, (4) short men, (5) tall women, (6) short women, (7) skinny men and (8) skinny women, (9) portly men and (10) portly women, (11) babes-in-arms or babies in backpacks or slings, (12) babies in strollers, (13) women pushing babies in strollers, (14) toddlers, (15) older children, (16) tweens and (17) teens, (18) men with beards, (19) people with hats, (20) people with backpacks, (21) people with umbrellas, (22) people in wheelchairs, (23) people using walkers and crutches, (24) kids on bikes, (25) kids on scooters, (26) kids on skateboards, (27) kids playing basketball . . .

. . . and all of the above in various ethnic groups.

Then add locations to your list, including your (28) bank, (29) vet's office, (30) pet supply store, (31) copy center, (32) hardware store, (33) puppy kindergarten class, (34) outdoor cafe, or (35) any place of business that doesn't have a "No Dogs" sign on the door.

Okay, you're one-third of the way there. You get the idea, and get to think up the rest. Be creative, and remember to control each interaction to keep it positive for your pup.

## Places *Not* to Take Your Pup

While socialization is a wonderful thing, it's important to avoid places that pose a risk to your pup's physical and mental health and safety. Here are some places that are important to avoid:

- Off-leash dog parks, until he *is* fully immunized against the most common puppy diseases, or any places with accumulations of feces from unknown dogs.
- Any place where he is likely to encounter stray or sick dogs.
- Any place where he is likely to encounter aggressive dogs.
- Any place he is not welcome.

- Any place where he would have to be left unattended or in a hot car (no tying up outside the cafe or ice cream store, even if you need to run in "just for a minute!").
- Any place where he will be uncomfortable (sitting in the full sun while you watch your son's Little League game).
- Any place where he is likely to encounter aggressive, rowdy, drunk, or otherwise inappropriate humans (this includes street fairs and festivals, parades, marches, and other public events).
- Any place where you won't be able to devote enough attention to him to ensure his safety, security, and well being.

# Still Flying

*An occupational therapist rehabilitates a paralyzed athlete – her dog.*

BY CARI NOGA

Just over a year ago, Cindy Creighton stood in a veterinary neurologist's office in Fort Lauderdale, gazing at radiographs that showed an incomplete spinal cord injury suffered by her 18-month-old Whippet, Gideon. Two days earlier, the slender young dog had collided with a larger dog while warming up for a flyball competition.

As Creighton listened to the veterinarian, she heard the words "downer dog." She saw Gideon himself, a champion flyball dog, immobilized in the animal hospital, though he could squeak the toy she brought him.

Creighton, who for 30 years has worked as an occupational therapist, helping seriously injured human patients find ways to resume their regular lives, made a decision.

"My training is about finding ways for people to do things that matter to them,"

says Creighton, 52. "I had a responsibility to Gideon. I took him into my family and I owed him care. There was no question I was going to work with him."

## A canine athlete

The idea of working with her dog predated Creighton's relationship with Gideon, going back to her decision to get a dog in the first place. First, she first researched breeds. She'd been fascinated by an agility competition she had seen, and thought it would be fun to learn and teach agility to a young dog. After falling in love with Gideon's mother at a dog show, she decided on a Whippet. She waited a year for the mother to have a litter, and took four-month-old Gideon home in August 2002.

Seeking an outlet for Gideon's energy, Creighton joined a dog club in February 2003, and took agility and flyball lessons.

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## WHAT YOU CAN DO . . .

- **If your dog suffers a physical trauma, get him to an emergency veterinary hospital *fast*. Prompt care makes all the difference in the world in cases of spinal cord injury.**
- **Educate yourself – quickly but thoroughly – about the course of treatment that will be needed to rehabilitate your dog. Not everyone is equipped or capable of providing the time, money, and education that may be needed for an extensive recovery effort.**
- **Consider your dog's temperament and "will to live." Once paralyzed, some dogs may lack the ability or interest to participate in their rehabilitation.**



**Before his accident, Gideon enjoyed a short but brilliant career in flyball. In this exciting sport, a dog runs down a lane jumping hurdles, then steps on a spring-loaded box that shoots out a ball. After catching the ball, the dog runs back down the course. Each team has four dogs that run the course, one after the other in rapid succession.**

"He really had potential as an athlete, because he's fast and he's bright," says Creighton. It was in flyball – the canine relay race where teams of four dogs each dash across a course of low hurdles and retrieve a ball – that Gideon literally hit his stride. In just two tournaments he accumulated enough points to earn the title of flyball dog champion, and was running as the lead dog on his team, Raiders of the Lost Bark, based in Miami, Florida.

"In a very short time, with him on our team, we were running pretty fast and pretty competitively," says Dana Hanson of Miami, who organized the Raiders. Hanson's own Whippet, Huey, ran after Gideon. "They ran like they'd been running together for 10 years," Hanson says.



**Two weeks after his injury, Gideon soaks up some sunshine. Though his hind end was paralyzed, he remained very interested in life, and continued to enjoy the company of other dogs and people and playing with his toys.**

The team's success earned them an invitation to demonstrate flyball at a pet fair in Fort Lauderdale in October 2003. There was even a chance for the legendary 15 minutes of fame for Gideon and the Raiders: Purina pet foods would be there, filming an ad that would run during local broadcast of the Westminster Dog Show.

The pet fair arrived. Purina's crews filmed and left. It was day two of the pet fair, and the Raiders were warming up, owners calling to dogs, dogs running to owners. Somehow, Gideon and another dog on the team ran into each other.

Gideon – at 35 pounds, less than half the size of the other dog – took the brunt of the force of the collision. Flyball captains on hand for the fair loaded Gideon into a van and had him at an animal hospital emergency room in 10 minutes. This turned out to be an important factor in his recovery, since he quickly received intravenous steroids, which can mitigate spinal cord swelling.

For the moment, Creighton had to let others do the work for her dog. Some 48 hours later, she got the grim diagnosis from veterinary neurologist Julia Blackmore. Gideon's hind end was paralyzed due to an incomplete spinal cord injury between his 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> vertebrae, below his ribcage. Dr. Blackmore warned Creighton that because mobility is so important to them, sighthounds like Whippets don't usually

adapt as well to the loss of function as other breeds. In addition to that mental obstacle, Gideon had physical disadvantages. As a thin dog, his limbs weren't covered with much padding, making him vulnerable to sores and skin problems from lying down through a long rehabilitation.

But Dr. Blackmore also showed Creighton a section of undamaged nerve fibers, which allowed hope for some return of function – how much was impossible to say.

Creighton's work with Gideon shifted from the fun of training and conditioning for flyball to round-the-clock rituals of nursing care.

### **Nursing experience helped**

At home, the first tasks set the stage for the many to follow that would be resolved through trial and error. Creighton needed a bed with extra padding to counter Gideon's susceptibility to sores. She also needed supplies to manage his incontinence. Spinal shock effectively halts bladder function in the first weeks after an accident like Gideon's, although this function often returns and becomes reflexive. In the meantime, "accidents" leave the skin wet and prone to breakdown.

To avert sores, Creighton purchased a special bed and changed Gideon's position in bed every three hours around the clock. By learning to express his bladder and us-

ing a combination of a quilted pad in bed and an absorbent wrap while up, plus a daily waterless bath and vigilant monitoring of his skin, she kept Gideon clean and dry.

That regimen, similar to what Creighton had seen prescribed for human patients with spinal cord injuries, lasted about eight weeks. But she shrugs off any suggestion of going above and beyond the call of duty. Almost everyone she knows, she says, has nursed an old pet, or spared no expense for medical care.

"I totally understand the importance of that nursing care at the beginning. Investing time and energy early *really* pays off later," Creighton says.

### **Keeping movement in mind**

Mindful of Blackmore's warning that Whippets don't easily adjust to being paralyzed, she was eager to get Gideon moving again, another principle that translated from her professional life.

"It's so important that a person or an animal keeps interest in life," Creighton says. "That was one of my motivating forces, especially because he was so young, because he was an athlete. How would I keep him happy?"

Creighton used three different techniques in those first few weeks:

- A therapy or fitness ball, sized to reach up to his shoulder. Creighton laid the ball against Gideon's belly, draped his front legs over it, and slowly rolled it back and forth, as a way to teach him to balance and bear his weight on his front legs.

- A Walkabout Harness, which fit like a pair of snug shorts, allowing Creighton to lift Gideon's rear legs, enabling him to walk wheelbarrow-style on his front legs. The Walkabout required another adaptation – since Gideon couldn't feel Creighton steering from the harness, she added a vest that fitted over the shoulders. Equipped with a leash, it allowed her to steer him along with her other hand.

- A standing frame similar to a walker a person would use. The Evans Mobility Unit was a lightweight metal frame equipped with wheels and a harness in which Gideon would be suspended, feet touching the floor. In it, Gideon could readjust to being upright and moving.

In addition to the therapy, Creighton simply had to be patient until Gideon –



**Cynthia Creighton used an exercise ball to help with several aspects of Gideon's rehabilitation: It helped him get used to being upright again and recover his balance, prepared his front end for the challenge of supporting his weight on his front legs, gently stretched and worked his muscles, and encouraged circulation.**

confused by his new limitations – calmed down long enough for her to be able to get him into her car and take him to more professional help. After equipping the car with a padded cargo liner, Creighton set off for the Animal Recreation and Rehabilitation Center in Davie, Florida, run by Joyce Loeser, a veterinarian specializing in rehabilitation.

## Discovering a partner

At ARRC, Creighton found a partner to share her work with Gideon. Besides her DVM training, Loeser's certified as an acupuncturist, chiropractor, massage therapist, and physical therapist.

"I'm not a strict anything. I'm kind of a fence rider," says Dr. Loeser. "I kind of believe the black beads and feather theory – whatever you need to get the job done."

In Gideon's case, that meant acupuncture needles with electrical stimulation to activate his paralyzed leg muscles. Dr. Loeser also tried pool therapy, and sent Creighton home with a catalog of carts – canine wheelchairs – while Gideon stayed for a few days of intense therapy.

Dr. Loeser considers herself on a mission to change the prevailing veterinary mindset about the quality of life dogs with injuries like Gideon's can have. The traditional thinking, she says, is "he's down in the rear, you have to express his bladder, (therefore) put him to sleep." Herself a sur-

vivor of chronic pain and partial paralysis, a veteran of back surgery, knee surgery, acupuncture, and chiropractic, Dr. Loeser's practice is dedicated to her belief that a disability does not have to diminish quality of life.

"To watch these guys get back on their feet, to get them moving and having a happy, viable life, is the best feeling in the world," she says.

From her first examination of Gideon, Dr. Loeser was optimistic. Tests revealed that Gideon had the ability to feel "deep pain" in the inner spinal cord. He'd retained the tone he'd acquired in his short canine athletic career, which further indicated something was still stimulating his muscles. And Gideon's own temperament contributed to his recovery, Loeser says.

"Some dogs give up, just like people. They just fold," she says. "Gideon never gave up."

Dr. Loeser's office is a two-story house given over to her practice, surrounded by a three-acre plant nursery that itself is part of the therapy regimen. She and her staff work with the animals outdoors, on grounds that feature tree roots, soft sand, high cut grass – all things they would encounter in everyday life.

"These guys don't recover sitting in stainless steel cages," Loeser says.

She works to find the right combination of therapy for each animal. Gideon, for instance, hated pool therapy, freezing in the water instead of paddling. "With some guys you have to rethink your path and go on to the next one. Just like anything in medicine, it's a little bit of an art," Dr. Loeser says.

## Keeping the faith

Creighton worked to weather the ups and downs over the course of Gideon's rehab. She got a big boost when she picked up Gideon from ARRC the first week of November; with the help of a member of Dr. Loeser's staff, Gideon actually took steps toward her, with his hind legs following his front legs.

That was followed by a disappointment when Gideon's custom wheeled cart arrived from Massachusetts-based Eddie's Wheels for Pets in December. Rather than freeing him to move, Gideon seemed to think the cart restrained him, and wouldn't budge.

Creighton says her work as an OT helped her deal with disappointments.

"This is familiar to rehab professionals. It is a problem-solving process. You expect that some of the equipment isn't going to work, and there will be a learning curve and resistance sometimes."

She also advises taking the long view.

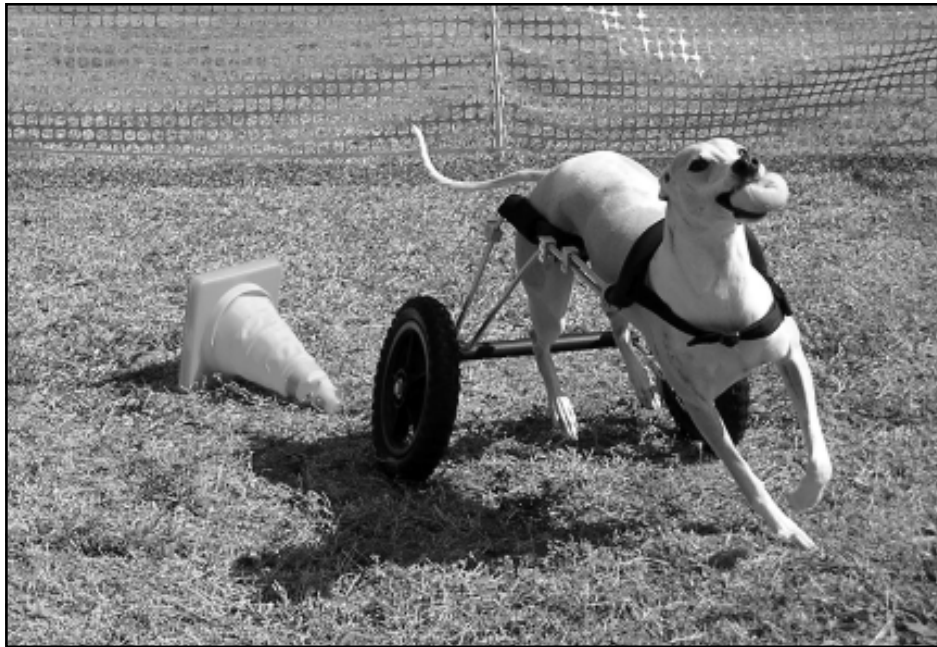
"The main thing is not to be discouraged in the beginning," Creighton says. "I had some perspective from working with patients with spinal cord injuries. I know it always looks very discouraging in the beginning, and it gets better. Even if it doesn't



**At first, Gideon wouldn't move when strapped into his wheelchair. Creighton used his favorite toys to encourage him, and gradually he gained mobility.**

get better physically, they learn how to manage their bodies."

Creighton's flexible work schedule also allowed her to engage in hands-on, intensive participation during Gideon's rehab. She maintained a one-day-a-week clinical practice at a local school. As a faculty mem-



**A year after his injury, Gideon joyfully “races” in a modified, wheelchair-assisted version of his favorite sport, which has his owner wondering if there ought to be some sort of Para-Olympics for dogs with disabilities.**

ber at Barry University in Miami Shores, she taught two weekends a month in a master’s-level program for working adults studying to become occupational therapists. The service-oriented environment at the Catholic university allowed her to bring Gideon to work often. When that wasn’t possible, the supportive staff at Bark Avenue Pet Resort in Hollywood, Florida, filled in, accommodating Gideon and his special needs.

“We did that gladly, to get him back on some kind of a track,” Bark Avenue owner Paul Funt says. “Little by little – it was really gradual! – he was able to stand, and then take a couple steps. It’s pretty incredible to watch, from a dog that was going to be crippled.”

### **Faith rewarded**

After a long month of work in January, Gideon overcame his reluctance to move in the cart. With it, he regained the speed that had made him a leader on the Raiders. (Team leader Hanson says the Raider’s best time, 21.3 seconds, recorded with Gideon running in the lead dog position, still stands.)

To motivate and reward his efforts, Creighton created a modified flyball course, minus the hurdles, in which Gideon would race to retrieve a ball from a traffic cone and bring it back to her. The activity seemed to benefit him more and more. On February 1, they took their first walk without the

cart or any special equipment. While slow and a bit awkward, Gideon was moving all four paws on his own! Three weeks later, they rejoined the Raiders (as nonparticipant guests) for the team’s first tournament. While Gideon socialized on the sidelines, Creighton helped with registration. Hanson and his dog, Huey, were thrilled to have them back.

“Huey is just as excited to see Gideon as he ever was,” Hanson says. “We all learned a few things in terms of patience and work paying off.”

Today, Gideon still walks with what Loeser calls a “hypermetric” gait – a somewhat mechanical walk, with wider steps and higher lifts of the legs than he did before his accident. He has to concentrate to walk well, and can fall if distracted, by a squirrel, say. He sleeps on an orthopedic bed and uses raised food and water dishes. Creighton still gets up with him once a night. There’s the occasional potty accident.

But to Gideon, life is as good as it ever was. And Creighton’s starting to think about returning to dog sports. The Raiders have set up a special flyball lane for

Gideon when he attends meets, with wooden slats on the ground instead of hurdles, and a ramp up to the flyball box. Creighton is thinking about taking Gideon to lessons for disabled dogs in other sports, like agility and rally. And she and Dr. Loeser have discussed setting up an adapted sports course on the property at Loeser’s Animal Recreation and Rehabilitation Center.

“Why couldn’t there be a special Olympics for dogs?” Creighton asks.

Loeser thinks it’s an idea that has real potential, given the number of disabled dogs and the connection power of the Internet. It could also shatter some beliefs about downer dogs.

“These guys can have an amazing quality of life,” she says. “Gideon is a wonderful example.” 🐾

*Author Cari Noga is a freelance writer from Traverse City, Michigan.*

*Thanks to encouragement from Dana Hanson, Cindy Creighton kept an online journal during Gideon’s rehabilitation, both as a way for friends to track his progress and for others to learn from her research. To read the journal, see [flyballdogs.com/raiders](http://flyballdogs.com/raiders), then click on “Gideon’s Rehab.”*

*For more information about the sport of flyball, see [flyball.org](http://flyball.org), the Web site for the North American Flyball Association, or write to NAFA at 1400 West Devon Avenue #512, Chicago, IL 60660. Further information and more links are available at [flyballdogs.com](http://flyballdogs.com).*



**Today, Gideon can stand and walk on his own, though his rehabilitation and strength training is ongoing.**

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- OCT '04 – Commercial Calming Formulas • How to Select a Tug Toy
- SEPT '04 – Alternate Sources of Meat for Home-Prepared Diets
- AUG '04 – Identification Microchips • De-Skunking Treatments
- JULY '04 – Dog Food Pre-Mixes • “Light” Flea Traps
- JUNE '04 – Sweet Treats • Yucca Root Supplements
- MAY '04 – Topical Herbal Solutions to Stop Itching • Interactive Toys
- APR '04 – Hair-Removal Tools • BSE and Dog Food
- MAR '04 – Dangers of Antibiotic Misuse
- FEB '04 – Annual Dry Food Review • Seat Belts for Dogs
- JAN '04 – “Dog Appeasing Pheromone”
- DEC '03 – Best Canned Foods • Gear of the Year
- NOV '03 – Best Bets for Boarding
- OCT '03 – Training Tools for Dogs Who Pull
- SEPT '03 – Promising New Toys
- AUG '03 – Recreational Bones • “Elizabethan Collars” and Alternatives
- JULY '03 – Canine Life Jackets
- JUNE '03 – NSAID Considerations
- MAY '03 – Choosing Chews • Safety Products and Practices
- APR '03 – Healthy Treats
- MAR '03 – Carry-On Small Dog Carrier
- FEB '03 – Best Dry Dog Foods • Electronic Containment Systems
- JAN '03 – Food Grinders
- DEC '02 – Gear of the Year • Body Wraps for Anxious Dogs
- NOV '02 – Dog Massage Videos • Books on Nonforce Training
- OCT '02 – Top Canned Foods • Chew-Resistant Toys

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# Timely Information

*It pleases us immensely when we print the "right" article at the right time!*

A friend copied the article, "Monkey See, Monkey Do?" from the July issue for me, knowing I would want to subscribe, which I did.

After many months of thought and worry, I adopted a shelter puppy with the hopes that my old 12-year-old girl would pass on some of her wisdom and gentleness – also hoping it would not be a reason for my old girl to give up. I did another round of comprehensive blood work and full exam on my old lady companion, and other than her arthritis that she's had since she was five years old and the lupus we've kept under control for nearly four years, she was in good health.

I brought eight-week-old Ossa Jordan in the house in my arms, and knelt down on the floor almost immediately to introduce her smell to my old lady, Ginger. She most lovingly sniffed the new pup in my arms and her old tail was wagging as if she was a kid again.

Ossa Jordan had been in the car with me for a couple of hours at that point, so before putting her down in her new home, I said, "Okay, ladies, let's go out and go potty." I let Ginger out the back door into an enclosed dirt dog run and brought the little pup with me. I put Ossa Jordan down and said, "Go potty, ladies." Ginger has been trained to go potty (both kinds) on cue. Ossa looked at Ginger, Ginger looked at Ossa and squatted – and then Ossa squatted, and has been house-trained from that moment.

There have been many instances where I am confident that had Ginger, my perfect companion, not been here to help me raise this little treasure, I would have had a handful to deal with! There is absolutely no doubt in my mind that my old dear dog has trained this puppy through action and some level of canine communication . . . many important traits that I, as a mere human, may have spent weeks or months teaching her.

"The Pine Grove Clan"  
via e-mail

*Thanks for sharing your story! – Editor*

I just received my first copy of WDJ, and couldn't be more pleased! The article on allergies ("Walking the Allergy Maze," WDJ August 2003) and the one on glucosamine ("Go With Glucosamine") came at just the right time!

I adopted a seven-year-old Weimaraner earlier this year, who developed allergies within days of moving in with us. I was suspicious of beef, since she had a marrow bone as well as a rawhide within the first few days of being with us. I was also concerned that it might be something in her new environment, like her beds, so we paid a visit to the vet. After several vet visits and a few months of specially-prescribed diets, someone from the pet adoption agency sent me a copy of your top foods list, and suggested that we try Solid Gold's food "Hund-n-Flocken."

I couldn't believe the difference, which was noticeable within three days! After trying to reintroduce other foods, I believe that she is allergic to not only beef, but also wheat and eggs.

After we tackled the allergy problem, my dog injured her knee. I was terrified that it was going to be diagnosed as an ACL tear. Fortunately, it wasn't a tear, and the vet put her on a supplement containing glucosamine to help her heal. Unfortunately, she had an allergic reaction to the supplement (which I believe was caused by brewer's yeast) within two days. I have searched local pet and health food stores for another supplement, with little success.

The August WDJ issue arrived in my mailbox that day, and the article convinced me that it was worth trying harder to find another glucosamine source. Luckily, after doing some research online, I found another glucosamine supplement that does not contain any sugar, wheat, yeast, corn, or soy. I am anxiously awaiting delivery of the new glucosamine supplement, because she is restricted to low-level activity for the next few weeks to let her knee heal, and we are both missing our daily hikes and playtime at the park. It isn't easy trying to keep an

active Weim on "low level activity," that's for sure!

It can be very challenging to have a dog with allergies, but there are products out there if you look hard enough. I love my dog dearly, and will do anything to keep her happy and healthy.

Nicole DeRaleau  
Longmeadow, MA

I have been a faithful subscriber since 1999. I cannot even remember how I found your wonderful publication, but I don't even make it in the front door without reading the cover page and your editor's note on every issue.

My holistic education began in 1997. I married my husband and found myself the stepmom to a beautiful Golden Retriever named Gus. He had hot spots and constant ear infections. I began by reading everything I could find and (next to your publication) one of the best sources I found was Dr. Pitcairn's *Natural Health for Dogs and Cats*. From the day I bought that book I started cooking for my dogs.

Over the years I have gained much more knowledge and have even started a degree program for a second career as a veterinary technician. I just love having the knowledge! With the help of a very open conventional veterinarian, who was always looking up vitamin dosages for me, we kept Gus healthy until the age of 13.

I do have the privilege of having two fabulous Jack Russell Terriers, Stymee (eight years old) and Darla (three years old). Both have benefited greatly from my experience with Gus. I cannot tell you how WDJ has been such a blessing in my dogs' lives, and mine. I could send you a thank you letter concerning every single issue because I have always gotten so much great information out of them. Please keep up all the great work because there are (hopefully) many grateful readers out there who appreciate every bit of information.

Sandy Guy  
Via e-mail 🐾

## WHAT'S AHEAD

### Scents-Ability

*Training Editor  
Pat Miller explores all the things a dog can do for us using his superior sense of smell. Plus, how to make your dog's nose work for you!*

### Canned Food

*The best canned dog foods, and why they might be better for your dog than dry. Plus, an alarming development in the canning industry.*

### Tour of the Dog

*Holistic veterinarian Randy Kidd talks about teeth . . . and everything else in a dog's mouth.*

### Housetraining Adult Dogs

*Lacking a medical excuse, all dogs can be housetrained. Here's a remedial class for adults who still "go" indoors.*

### Smell This, You'll Feel Better

*Yes, it sounds a little farfetched. But aromatherapy really can affect your dog's health and well-being.*

### Gear of the Year

*The best products for dog care and training we've seen all year.*

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

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

*Dr. Kidd's Guide to Herbal Dog Care* and *Dr. Kidd's Guide to Herbal Cat Care* are published by Storey Books, (800) 441-5700 or [storeybooks.com](http://storeybooks.com)

*Ruffing It: A Complete Guide to Camping With Dogs* by Mardi Richmond (Alpine Pubs, 1998), is also available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com)

### HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association (AHVMA), 2214 Old Emmorton Road, Bel Air, MD 21015. (410) 569-0795. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a list of holistic veterinarians in your area, or search [ahvma.org](http://ahvma.org)

Jenny Taylor, DVM, Creature Comfort Holistic Veterinary Center, Oakland, CA. Acupuncture, homeopathy, herbs, nutritional counseling, and conventional veterinary medicine. (510) 530-1373

### TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) has references to member trainers in your area. Write to PO Box 1781, Hobbs, NM 88241, call (800) 738-3647, or view its database of trainers at [apdt.com](http://apdt.com)

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

## ATTENTION, BUSINESS OWNERS!

In response to a number of requests from dog-related businesses, including veterinarians, pet supply stores, groomers, and trainers, our publisher has a new program that will enable businesses to buy copies of WDJ in bulk for reselling to their customers.

If you are the owner of a dog-related business, and you would be interested in buying copies of WDJ for your customers each month (at a special price), contact Dean Lage at [dlage@belvoir.com](mailto:dlage@belvoir.com) or (941) 929-1720.

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