

The Whole Dog Journal™



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Rattled . . .

. . . but not stirred to take up shock collar “snake avoidance” training.

BY NANCY KERNS

I live in a small town that is surrounded on all sides by either farm land (west and south of us) or foothill woodlands. The historic center of this Gold Rush-era town is located on the banks of a river, and thanks to a large state water project, including a huge dam and lake just above the town, and a man-made recreational lake just below town, there are miles and miles of trails on public lands adjacent to all that water. It's heaven for an off-leash dog walker like myself.

Except, of course, there are hazards aplenty that can befall a dog who lacks training and/or common sense. A dog without a solid and well-proofed recall could disappear without a trace if he chased a deer or rabbit or other critter off into the woods. One who dove in and overzealously pursued a river otter, beaver, duck, or goose could easily drown in the river. And at the time of this writing, there are rattlesnakes literally everywhere. Me and my dogs have had two close encounters with rattlers in just the past *week*.

In the first encounter, my husband and I were out for an evening walk with our dogs Otto (who was visually scanning the field to the right of the trail for deer, since he had a memorable experience with scaring up an entire *herd* of deer there a year ago) and Tito, who was carrying a tennis ball and kept dropping it at our feet as we walked. Otto occasionally angled into the tall grass, trying to subtly leave the trail in favor of sniffing through the field, and I kept calling him back onto the trail; it takes forever to brush out all the little burrs that get in his coat from fields like that.

He was about 10 feet ahead of us when, in one of his mild attempts to edge off into the field, he evidently stepped right near a rattlesnake – the *loud* sound of which cannot be mistaken for anything else.

Fortunately, Otto was both too distracted with his imaginary deer-stalking to give the snake anything more than a curious glance *and* completely responsive to my immediate cue of “Otto! Off! Off! Off! Come! Come!

Come!” (I didn't *need* to repeat myself, it just came out like that as I hovered about six inches off the ground, just like in the cartoons.) And Tito didn't even seem to notice the sound (or smell, if there is one) of the snake; with a ball in his mouth, he's in his own little world. We all just kept walking, although now I was scanning the ground more than the sunset.

In this morning's encounter, I was actually talking to a friend on my cell phone when I heard that distinctive rattle a few feet off the singletrack trail, as my dogs trotted by, oblivious. I let out a little shriek and a jump and we all just kept going.

It seems to be all the rage these days to use a shock collar to train dogs to avoid snakes. I am not insensitive to those who have lost dogs to snake bites, but I can't imagine going that way with my dogs. *Way* too many things can go wrong with that approach, including the injection of fear and mistrust into dogs I've spent years drawing those out of.

Instead, I'm in favor of *daily* training to reinforce my dogs' “rocket recalls,” as WDJ's Training Editor Pat Miller calls them in the article on that topic on page 9, as well as *daily* practice of the “Off!” behavior (discussed in numerous back articles in WDJ) – and close observation of my dogs on the trail. If I didn't feel completely confident in their immediate, proper responses to these two cues, and my ability to keep them close enough to immediately respond to an encounter with a snake (or herd of deer or whatever), I wouldn't have them off-leash in rattlesnake country.

NK

A Pill About Pills?

How to get medication into your pill-weary dog.

BY BARBARA DOBBINS

My Border Collie Daisy trained for the world record in the “hack put” event. This soon-to-be Olympic sport involves hacking pills from the back of the throat as far as possible across the room. Her record is 1.2 meters, even after a time delay of about two minutes following pill administration. Most of us are familiar with the tried and true ways of administering pills to our dogs – hiding them in food such as cream cheese or braunschweiger or vanilla ice cream, or using commercial products such as Pill Pockets. When my dog progressed to the end stage of her cancer disease, I found I had to approach giving medications a little differently; the usual methods ceased working.

1 NOVELTIES AND DIVERSITY. When Daisy’s appetite waned, I began scouring the grocery store for novel food items that she might find enticing: canned cat food, Velveeta cheese, meatballs, banana bread, muffins, tortellini.

A good friend recently went through end stage osteosarcoma with her dog; his pain medication was quite bitter, but much needed. After biting into the awful-tasting pill once, he became wary of treats. My friend discovered a great solution: she twisted off the top of a sandwich cookie (Oreo-type), placed the pill inside, replaced the top, and handed the cookie to her dog. Because it was novel, and the pill well disguised, cookie and pill were gone in a gulp.

At one point Daisy began to associate receiving one of her medications with making her feel sick; it was an antibiotic and antibiotics can often have this effect. (They have this effect on me, too!) Studies have shown that foods eaten in association with developing nausea can turn patients off of that food and sometimes food in general. This is a good reason not to place pills into meals at feeding time

as well as to frequently change the food item you hide the pill in.

2 COMPOUNDED INTEREST. More and more medications are being offered in flavored liquid suspensions ranging in flavors from chicken pot pie to cheddar cheese to strawberry shortcake. Drugs are suspended in palatable flavors (dogs prefer the meat, cheese, and sweet flavors) and are administered with an oral syringe. Flavored chewables are also great alternatives; the active drug is measured precisely to the veterinarian’s orders and then mixed with flavor base and gelatin.

With some medications, transdermal

gels, custom creams, suppositories, flavored powders, and oral gels may also be options. Consult with your veterinarian and a compounding pharmacy that specializes in veterinary drugs to discuss those that might work for your pet. Be aware, though, that compounding costs more than standard prescriptions.

3 MAKE IT A GAME. Play can help boost not only your dog’s spirit but also your own. I found two play techniques to work quite well. The first was toss & catch. Tossing a treat to catch from a short distance away was a game I had often played with my dogs. Now it was repurposed: not only would I toss regular treats, but also the hidden pill. Watch carefully, though, to ensure the pill is caught and ingested! If your dog is not adept at catching, or doesn’t have the energy, you can roll the treats to her.

The other fun thing to do is use dog puzzles, especially if your dog is used to playing with them. The pill can be hidden with other treats and will be gobbled up along with the others. Again, monitor carefully to make sure your dog actually receives the medication.

4 CLICK AND TREAT AND PILL. On a whim one day, I gathered a handful of really tasty treats (baked sirloin) and picked up the clicker. I had taught my dogs many things through clicker training; they thought it was a blast and eagerly offered behaviors in attempts to get the human slot machine to pay off. Every time they would hear a clicker, they would come running because it obviously indicated that a fun training session was about to begin.

To my amazement, this technique, instilled during puppyhood, became not only a great way to get Daisy to eat (even when she wasn’t feeling like it – as if the act of receiving the reward was greater than her lack of appetite), but also proved to be a great way to have her unknowingly swallow a hidden pill as I rewarded her for a behavior.



It doesn't seem like it should be difficult to get a couple of little pills in a hungry dog, but if he has been on medication for an extended time, he may have developed extreme pill-avoidance techniques.

Continued on page 24

JERKY TREATS (AND OTHERS) STILL MAKING DOGS ILL

Six years after first reports of problems, products remain on shelves.

Reports that chicken jerky treats imported from China were linked to illness in dogs began in 2006. The dried treats that have been associated with problems go by a number of names, including tenders, strips, chips, wraps, twists, and more. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) first issued warnings about these treats in September 2007, saying that more than 70 complaints had been received, involving 95 dogs who experienced illnesses that owners suspected were linked to these treats.

The FDA issued another warning in December 2008, and again in November 2011 after reports increased. By 2012, over 1,300 complaints had been received, including reports that dogs had died. The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association also began receiving reports of illness in 2011.

MSNBC reported in March 2012 that internal FDA documents it obtained showed the brands of chicken jerky most often cited in priority 1 cases (those the FDA considers most reliable) are **Waggin' Train**, **Canyon Creek Ranch**, and **Milo's Kitchen**. Other brands often named by consumers include **Kingdom Pets (Costco)** and **Smokehouse**.

Recently, other dried treats imported from China became suspect as well, including duck jerky and dehydrated sweet potato (yam) treats. Suspected brands include **Beefeaters Sweet Potato Snacks for Dogs**, **Canyon Creek Ranch Chicken Yam Good Dog Treats**, and **Dogswell Veggie Life Vitality**. It's possible that the problem may also extend to pork products (pig ears) and cat treats from China.

All of these treats have been associated with a type of kidney failure in dogs called acquired Fanconi syndrome. Recovery can take up to six months, and some dogs have died or been left with chronic kidney disease. Affected dogs may show any or all of the following signs:

- ❖ Decreased appetite
- ❖ Lethargy
- ❖ Vomiting and diarrhea, sometimes with blood
- ❖ Increased drinking and urination
- ❖ Blood tests may show increased creatinine and BUN (signs of kidney failure), low potassium, mildly increased liver enzymes, and acidosis. Glucose and granular casts may be found in urine.

If your dog experiences any of these symptoms after eating treats imported from China, stop feeding them immediately. If signs are severe or persist for more than 24 hours, take your dog to the vet for tests and treatment. Save the bag of treats

in case they are needed for testing in the future. You and your vet should file a report with the FDA (see "How to Report a Pet Food Complaint," www.fda.gov/petfoodcomplaints). You should also report the problem to the company that manufactured the treats and the corporate office of the store where you bought them.

The big question is, why hasn't the FDA recalled these treats instead of just issuing warnings? Its position is that until it can identify the causative agent, it cannot force a recall. According to the FDA's website, "To date, scientists have not been able to determine a definitive cause for the reported illnesses. . . . It is important to understand that unless a contaminant is detected and we have evidence that a product is adulterated, we are limited in what regulatory actions we can take. The regulations don't allow for products to be removed based on complaints alone." The FDA adds, however, "There is nothing preventing a company from issuing a voluntary recall."

In July 2012, the FDA released the results of tests it has conducted looking for salmonella, heavy metals, furans, pesticides, antibiotics, mycotoxins, rodenticides, nephrotoxins (such as aristolochic acid, maleic acid, paraquat, ethylene glycol, diethylene glycol, toxic hydrocarbons, melamine, and related triazines), and other chemicals and poisonous compounds. It is not clear which tests were done on actual products suspected of having made dogs sick versus random samples. Propylene glycol was found at low levels in about half of the samples where laboratories tested for this substance, but the levels were considered to be nontoxic. Propylene glycol is often used as a humectant in semi-moist pet foods. Beginning in March 2012, the FDA also inspected several facilities in China that produce chicken jerky products, but it refused to release those findings.

Pressure has recently intensified, with Sen. Sherrod Brown and Congressman Dennis Kucinich, among others, seeking action from the FDA. At least three class action lawsuits have been filed, one against Nestlé Purina (makers of Waggin' Train and Canyon Creek Ranch brands) and Walmart (where the treats were purchased). The other two suits were filed against Del Monte and its subsidiary, Milo's Kitchen. Despite this, the companies that import these treats have refused to stop marketing them, and




the stores that sell them, with the exception of some independent pet food stores and small chains, refuse to take them off their shelves. They are everywhere, including Costco, Sam's Club, Walmart, Target, Lowe's, Petco, PetSmart, and grocery stores.

When the same problem surfaced in Australia, reports of Fanconi-like syndrome in dogs almost disappeared after certain products were recalled in 2008 and 2009.

In addition to chicken jerky, VeggieDent Chews for Dogs were also associated with Fanconi-like syndrome in Australia (see "VeggieDent Chews Recalled in Australia," WDJ August 2009). No reports of similar problems with these treats have been reported in the U.S. or elsewhere. The big difference is that Australia required these treats to be irradiated in order to kill pathogens. Interestingly, at least two brands of chicken jerky – Waggin' Train and Canyon Creek Ranch – are also subject to irradiation in the U.S., according to information on the brands' websites. Could that be why the FDA can't find contaminants? It will only comment that, "We are considering irradiation as one potential factor in the jerky problem."

While neither the FDA nor the AVMA will come right out and tell consumers not to feed their dogs these products, Dr. Tony Buffington, the Ohio State University Veterinary Medical Center's veterinary nutritionist, created a poster to warn clients of the risk of feeding their pets chicken jerky. The poster reads in part, "Until a cause or explanation can be found, we urge our clients not to purchase or feed chicken jerky products to their pets."

The take-home message is that pet owners must exercise extreme caution when buying treats for their pets. It is not easy to determine where treats are made. A product may say "manufactured in the U.S." without revealing that the source of the ingredients is China. At best, you may find "Made in China" in tiny print on the back of the package. To be safe, stick to treats you know for certain are made in the U.S. or Canada using ingredients from those countries, or make your own treats. 

– Mary Straus

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- ❖ Questions and Answers Regarding Jerky Pet Treats from China: www.fda.gov/AnimalVeterinary/SafetyHealth/ProductSafetyInformation/ucm295445.htm

NOVARTIS DRUG SHORTAGES CONTINUE

Plant shutdowns make it hard to find certain canine veterinary medications

Novartis Animal Health suspended production at its Lincoln, Nebraska, plant in December 2011 following a series of warnings from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regarding manufacturing and quality control violations. At that time, the only veterinary drugs affected were the heartworm and flea products Interceptor, Program, and Sentinel. Novartis said it hoped to return to full production in January.


Instead, further problems were discovered when Novartis warned veterinarians about possible tablet mix-ups in bottles of Clomicalm, used to treat separation anxiety. On January 5th, Novartis sent a letter to veterinarians informing them that it was suspending production and shipments of Clomicalm and Milbemite (used to treat ear mites) in addition to the products listed above.

Novartis resumed shipping already manufactured products in early February, but those have since run out, including supplies of Deramaxx, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) whose production had been moved to the Nebraska facility shortly before the shutdown.

While substitutes for all of these products exist, it can be difficult for pet owners who rely on certain products that they know work well for their pets to suddenly have to make a change. The situation becomes even more stressful when using products

such as NSAIDs, where it is unsafe to switch quickly from one to another without a washout period in between, or medications like Clomicalm that can take weeks to build up to effective levels in the blood.

Almost nine months after the initial announcement, the facility still has not resumed full production. Novartis says that it is now shipping the 5 mg strength of Clomicalm (the generic equivalent, clomipramine hydrochloride, is available in higher strengths elsewhere, including 1800petmeds.com). The company also states that it is at the testing pre-production stage for Sentinel, a combination of milbemycin oxime (heartworm preventive medication also found in Interceptor) and lufenuron (insect growth regulator used to control fleas, also found in Program), but they have not given an estimated date as to when this product will be available. Note that the Novartis veterinary products Atopica, Capstar, and Adequan are made at other facilities and are therefore not an issue.

In Canada, the situation is even more dire. Sandoz Canada, part of the generic pharmaceuticals division of Novartis, discontinued some medications and downsized production of others in response to FDA citations noting product reliability concerns and safety issues tied to the Sandoz plant in Boucherville, Quebec. A fire that broke out March 4 in the plant's boiler room made the problem even worse. Affected drugs include morphine, fentanyl, phenobarbital, diazepam, and more. Sandoz has indicated that no human drugs will be delivered to veterinarians before the end of 2012, and vets are struggling to find acceptable alternatives. 

– Mary Straus

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- ❖ Novartis Animal Health, 800-332-2761, petwellness.com



Treats are powerful tools for dog training. Because we promote force-free training, we recommend the liberal use of treats. And anything a dog eats a lot of ought to be healthy, never harmful.

■ . . . procured from local, traceable, reputable, inspected/audited sources

These latter two criteria eliminate *almost* every commercial dog treat you will find in chain grocery stores or big-box megastores. That's one of the reasons we strongly recommend that you shop for treats in independent pet supply stores with educated staffers – stores that refuse to carry low-quality products. Just as in the human food industry, the titans of the pet food industry (who make the products found in grocery and big-box stores) put a lot of “junk” into their junk foods.

And while a very occasional Cheeto or Pop-Tart (or Sausage or Pup-Peroni) is unlikely to cause immediate harm, *no one* can say they could actually be *good* for you (or your dog). Whereas a handful of dried organic fruit or fresh oatmeal-raisin cookies are the kind of snacks that are delicious and contain nutritional benefits for you; and dried meat treats or fresh oatmeal-chicken cookies can genuinely nourish your dog.

As always, you have to scrutinize those ingredients lists – and be discriminating! Remember that your dog depends on you to make healthy choices for him. Don't be the “pet parent” who gives his kid the canine equivalent of sodas and Fritos every day. If you want a fit, long-lived canine companion, then everything you feed him should support his health, not undermine it. There's no reason that treats can't be good for your dog – in moderation, of course. (If you find yourself cutting back on your dog's nutritionally “complete and balanced” food in order to maintain his healthy weight, rather than cutting back his daily ration of nutritionally incomplete, unbalanced treats, your dog could end up fat and nutritionally deficient.)

Unsure that you can identify healthy ingredients? See the chart on the facing page for tips. If you're still in doubt after that, consider making your dog's treats yourself! We've included directions and recipes on page 8. “Bone” appetit!

Treat Them Right

How identify the hallmarks of top-quality dog treats – and potentially harmful ones, too.

BY NANCY KERNS

There are nearly as many types of dog treats on the market as treats for humans: sweet, salty, crunchy, chewy, meaty, fruity, fatty, savory, and so on. Despite the variety, top-quality dog treats should share the following *two* traits: They should pose zero risk of killing your dog. And they should be appealing to dogs by virtue of the quality of their food ingredients – not as a result of chemistry experiments with 20 or 30 different food by-products and a host of artificial flavors, colors, and preservatives.

DOMESTIC SOURCES, DOMESTIC MANUFACTURE

As to that first trait: Currently, the only dog treats that have been implicated in dog deaths and dog illnesses have been either made in China, or made primarily with ingredients that were imported from China (see news article on pages 4-5). The U.S. Food and Drug Administration and many other parties are searching for an explanation – an agent that could cause the illnesses that have been reported in thousands of dogs who were fed treats containing ingredients from China. We think it's only prudent, then, to avoid buying any product that

is either made in China or contains ingredients from China, until the specific causative agent is identified and can be avoided. In our opinion, there simply is no point in risking the life of your canine family member for a cheap treat.

QUALITY DEFINED

As to the second trait of a good dog treat: What is a quality food ingredient? In our opinion, foods that you feed your canine family member should contain only ingredients that are:

■ Unadulterated, unprocessed or lightly processed, wholesome foods that are . . .

MEATY TREATS	TRAITS OF A GOOD TREAT	TREAT TRAITS TO AVOID
<p>Meaty treats may be 100 percent meat, or contain just one or two other ingredients. Animal muscle and organ meat ingredients are much more expensive than grain- or vegetable-based products, so meaty treats will generally cost more, ounce per ounce, than other types of treats.</p> <p>Products may be quite dry (with a moisture content around 5 percent); or chewy, with as much moisture as 25 percent. The moist products necessarily contain ingredients known as “humectants” – substances that promote the retention of moisture in the product. The low-moisture treats may be dried, freeze-dried, or dehydrated.</p> <p>In general, the fewer ingredients used in these products, the better.</p>	<p>Meaty products should contain as much animal protein as possible! The animal product should be first on the list of ingredients and there should be few (or even no) other ingredients. The source of any animal protein or fat <u>must</u> be named, whether it’s a muscle tissue (in which case it will appear as chicken, beef, buffalo, etc.) or an organ (in which case it should specify which species it came from, i.e., chicken heart, beef liver, lamb lung, etc.).</p> <p>Products that are certified by reliable third parties as containing organic, grass-fed, humanely raised / humanely slaughtered, domestic meat animals or sustainably sourced fish trump other animal protein sources. Nice example: The Honest Kitchen’s Beams (dried fish skins).</p> <p>Preservatives, if used, should be natural, such as mixed tocopherols. The package should contain either a “best by” date and/ or a date of manufacture.</p>	<p>No animal by-products or unnamed animal sources (i.e., meat and bone meal, chicken by-products, “animal fat”).</p> <p>Treats should contain no artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives.</p> <p>Artificial humectants (i.e., propylene glycol) should be avoided.</p> <p>Imported meats should be avoided. No ingredients from China; treats manufactured in China are also to be avoided (see pages 4-5 for rationale). Example: Canyon Creek Chicken Tenders.</p> 
“COOKIE” OR BISCUIT-STYLE TREATS	TRAITS OF A GOOD TREAT	TREAT TRAITS TO AVOID
<p>In general, cookie- or biscuit-style treats are made with grain or another carbohydrate and baked. That said, this is a wide category of treats, and there are many grain-free products on the market.</p> <p>Some biscuits use animal products (such as muscle meat, organ meat, fat, dairy products) as the principle palatant (ingredient used to appeal to dogs), but others use sweeteners or salt.</p> <p>This style of product generally has the same range of moisture content found in dry dog foods – about 10 to 12 percent. “Chewy” treats may contain as much as 30 percent moisture.</p> <p>In general, the fewer number of least-processed ingredients used in these products, the better.</p>	<p>The source of any animal protein or fat <u>must</u> be named.</p> <p>All grain, fruit, or vegetable ingredients should be whole or lightly processed.</p> <p>Certified organic ingredients and local, sustainably farmed ingredients trump ingredients for which no claims are made.</p> <p>“Chewy,” high-moisture cookies should contain natural humectants, such as maple syrup, honey, or vegetable glycerin. Nice example: Cloud Star’s Soft & Chewy Buddy Biscuits.</p>  <p>Only natural preservatives should be used.</p> <p>A “best by” date and/or date of manufacture should be on the package.</p>	<p>No animal by-products or unnamed animal sources (i.e., meat and bone meal, chicken by-products, “animal fat”).</p> <p>Low-quality grain by-products should also be avoided; if the label does not simply say the name of a grain or grain flour, it’s a by-product.</p> <p>Avoid treats containing propylene glycol, an artificial humectant.</p> <p>Treats should contain no artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives. Example: Beggin’ Strips (which contain all three).</p> <p>Imported ingredients should be avoided. No ingredients from China; treats manufactured in China are also to be avoided (see pages 4-5 for rationale).</p>
MISCELLANEOUS TREATS	TRAITS OF A GOOD TREAT	TREAT TRAITS TO AVOID
<p>Dried fruit or vegetable chews?</p>	<p>These should contain only one or two ingredients, which are whole or lightly processed.</p>	<p>Imported ingredients should be avoided. No ingredients from China; treats manufactured in China are also to be avoided (see pages 4-5 for rationale).</p>
<p>Frozen “ice cream” style treats?</p>	<p>These should contain only a few, readily identifiable ingredients. Nice example: Nature’s Variety’s Sweet Spots.</p>	<p>A long ingredient list including many artificial ingredients. Example: Purina’s Frosty Paws.</p>

IF YOU WANT SOMETHING MADE RIGHT, DO IT YOURSELF

BY SHARI A. MANN

Imagine not having to worry about treat recalls or ingredient sources, or, for that matter, whether the actual ingredients match what's on the product label. It's not a dream; in fact, it's well within anyone's abilities. It's easy, it costs less than commercial products, and as an added bonus, you get the peace of mind from knowing these treats won't be recalled.

Heck, you have to go grocery shopping anyway, so it shouldn't be a problem to pick up the necessary ingredients while shopping for the other members of your family. Whether you shop at Safeway or Whole Foods, one thing is certain: the quality of the raw ingredients you'll buy in human grocery stores is far higher than what is used in most commercial treats.

Making dog treats is amazingly simple. No special equipment is needed. You can use a dehydrator for dehydrating if you have one; but all you really need is an oven, which you can use for dehydrated meat treats or baked, cookie-style treats. My oven uses natural gas, and can be used at very low temperatures (under 200 degrees). That's very useful for slow, even, and complete dehydration, which is what's needed to make a good treat.

My oven is old, and has a pilot light, so I can even store my "ready to eat" treats therein. They will stay dry and not mold because of that pilot light, so they don't require refrigeration. Don't forget to remove them before preheating that oven for something else, however! If your oven lacks a pilot light, you will need to store your treats in the refrigerator or freezer.

For dog treats, "simple is best." What do most dogs like best of all? Meat. One of the dehydrated treats I make is London broil (bought on sale for \$3 to \$3.50 a pound). I use London broil because it's a lean cut of beef with good, solid texture. Fat is on the outside of the piece of meat, and so is easy to trim off. Visible fat must be trimmed. High-fat treats must be fed in limited amounts, and are at greater risk of rancidity if not fed within a few days.

After visible fat is trimmed, place the meat (which is usually about an inch thick) flat into a pan of boiling water until it firms up. This step is not essential; but it speeds the dehydration process, and makes it less messy as well. Cut the firm meat into cubes, between $\frac{3}{8}$ - and $\frac{1}{2}$ -inches square, and then place the cubes on a cookie sheet, not touching each other. Put the cookie sheet into the oven at an ideal temperature of 150° - 200°F. Check the treats every half hour or so, move them around on the cookie sheet, and if there is a lot of liquid on the cookie sheet, drain it off. The treats need to be really, really dry; as dry as kibble; moisture is your enemy.

I store the dehydrated treats in food-grade chewing gum dispensers that snap open easily for access. That way, they do not defile my pockets! And the dogs can't immediately tell I'm carrying treats.

I can't estimate what these treats cost someone else to make; I figure my out-of-pocket cost is \$3 for the meat, which leaves me with an estimated 6 oz. of treats, after trimming and shrinkage. I have to allow for energy costs, so the true cost is higher than 50 cents an ounce; and if the meat is \$3.50 a pound on sale, that increases the price, too. But I still think it's the best bargain in town, and encourage you to try it.

Here's a more complex recipe, with *two* ingredients. Don't worry; it's still simple. I came up with this recipe for baked liver-pumpkin cookies when I found that feeding liver-only treats often causes loose stool. Many people wish to avoid feeding grains, but to cut the effect of the liver, something had to be added. Pumpkin functions well as a binder and is palatable to most dogs, to boot. It's just too good to be true that pumpkin acts to firm canine stools if they are too loose, and to loosen them if they are too firm; it's the perfect companion ingredient for liver.



You can use a food processor or hand mixer to combine canned pumpkin and lightly boiled liver. If you don't have time to bake the treats right away, store the combined "dough" in air-tight containers in the refrigerator or freezer.

To make liver-pumpkin cookies, combine a can of canned plain pumpkin (*not* the kind that comes pre-seasoned for pies) and an equal amount of pureed lightly boiled liver in a food processor. Spoon drops of the mixture onto parchment paper-covered or lightly greased cookie sheets. Flatten out the drops so they are an equal height and will bake evenly. Bake in a slow oven (325° - 350°F) for 20 minutes or until firm enough to handle. Remove from the oven, cut the spoon-dropped pieces into the size you want, and then continue to bake them until they are dry. Store in the refrigerator or freezer; they can be layered with waxed paper separators, or they can crumble a bit – the dogs won't care.

Try one or both of these two recipes. You have nothing to lose but your worries about potentially harmful treats. 🐾

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

Rocket Recalls

Tried-and-true tips and new twists for training your dog to come to you FAST when you call.

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

Teaching your dog to come when called is no longer the way it was 20 years ago – when every obedience class taught it by leaving her on a sit-stay, walking across the room, and firmly commanding her to speed to a perfectly straight sit at the tips of your toes. Today’s educated trainers and knowledgeable dog owners recognize the value of making “Come” the happiest word in their dogs’ dictionary, and understand that truly reliable recalls can happen in the face of bouncing bunnies, dashing deer, cavorting cats, and flying squirrels.

There was a time when trainers warned clients that they had to be more interesting than squirrels, cats, deer, and bunnies, if they wanted their dogs to come reliably when called. Good luck making yourself more interesting than a bounding Bambi!

In reality, the foundation for a solid recall starts long before Bambi makes an appearance, and doesn’t rely on you being a one man (or woman) canine entertainment center to successfully compete with significant distractions. It starts when you first introduce your dog to the “Come” cue. Successful recalls rely on a strong, classically conditioned association with high-value reinforcers. In other words, your dog learns that coming when called is so much fun that when you call her she doesn’t stop to weigh her options – she just automatically and gleefully comes flying to you.

LAYING THE FOUNDATION

An enthusiastic automatic response to the recall cue requires that you lay a

strong foundation from the very beginning, associating “Come!” (or whatever your recall cue) with really fun stuff. (See “Beware the Poisoned Cue,” next page). We do this in our basic good manners classes by teaching a “Run-Away Recall!” which looks like this:

1 In a safely fenced or enclosed environment, stash a supply of high-value treats in a bowl on a counter or table next to you. With your dog in front of you, say “Come!” (or your chosen recall cue) in a cheerful “We’re having a party!” voice and feed her a pea-size treat from the bowl.

Repeat several times, until your “Come!” cue elicits a happy “Where’s the treat?” response from her. You’ve now “charged” the “Come” cue, and are ready to try it out.

2 If you stand and face your dog when you call her (as done in old-fashioned training), you risk looking like an intimidating authority figure, which takes



Don’t do this! A straight-on, leaning-forward posture and angry expression are daunting to most dogs. Would you come to someone who looked like this?

the fun out of “Come.” Instead, have your dog at your side (on- or off-leash), say “Come!” in a loud, cheerful, “We’re having a party” voice, and run away as fast as you can. The combination of your charged “Come” cue and your dog’s natural inclination to run after things that move should result in her following you as you run, hopefully at least at a trot, but preferably at a full gallop.

3 As she’s running after you, click your clicker (or use a verbal marker, such as the word “Yes!”). After you’ve run at least 10 to 15 feet or more, stop running and feed her the treat. Repeat several times until it’s clear she understands the game.

If her first response was a lukewarm trot, it may take several repetitions until she gets happy and excited enough about the game to gallop after you. You may need to increase the distance you run to give her time to get in gear. You may also need to increase your excitement to get her more excited, or decrease your



Author/Trainer Pat Miller demonstrates a speedy recall with her Cardigan Corgi, Lucy.

enthusiasm if you think you may be scaring her with your energy level, which can sometimes happen with “soft” dogs.

4 Toss a few treats on the ground. While your dog is busy eating them, walk 10 feet away. As she finishes the last treat, call her and run away as fast as you can. Give her treats again when she reaches you. Repeat this exercise, gradually increasing the distance you walk away before calling her.

5 Start looking for opportunities where your dog is mildly engaged in something of relatively low interest to do your Run-Away Recall. When you can easily call her away from low-level distractions, try it with distractions of gradually increasing value.

Add toys to the mix if you think it will help. Some dogs will romp to you more enthusiastically for a squeaky toy or a game of tug than a bit of chicken; try both and use what works best for your

dog. You can mix it up for dogs who like all three – the unpredictability of the reward can make it more fun and exciting for your dog. If you use the squeak of a toy to elicit a gallop, be sure to toss the toy for your dog when she gets there!

That’s your foundation – but your fun with recalls has only just begun. Add more fun games, like the ones on the next few pages, to generalize her understanding of the “Come” behavior to higher and higher levels of distraction.

BEWARE THE POISONED CUE

A cue becomes “poisoned” when the dog’s association with the cue is ambiguous – it’s sometimes associated with positive reinforcement, and sometimes associated with punishment. When the association is ambiguous, the dog becomes confused and doesn’t know what to expect. Poisoning your “Come!” cue is the best way to ensure that she’ll stop and weigh her choices, then take off after the bounding deer, rather than come galloping to you when you call.

A positively trained “Come” cue always “opens the door” to positive reinforcement. If the behavior does not occur, the only result is that no reinforcement occurs. When the behavior occurs, reinforcement is guaranteed. As soon as the dog understands what “Come” means, the cue itself becomes a positive reinforcer because of its consistent association with a high-value reward.

A recall trained by correction/punishment also creates an association in the dog’s mind – but the association is not positive. If the dog doesn’t come when called, or doesn’t do it quickly enough, the command leads to punishment such as a “leash pop” or verbal reprimand (often called a “correction”). The command is now a conditioned positive punisher (the dog’s behavior makes a bad thing happen) and/or negative reinforcer (the dog’s behavior makes a bad thing go away; the punishment stops when the dog finally comes). The dog works to avoid bad stuff rather than to get good stuff. The dog’s emotional response to the “Come” command is negative/avoidance, not positive.

Even if the behavior was initially trained with positive reinforcement, if a cue is followed by an aversive correction (leash pop, verbal reprimand) for incorrect behavior, the cue immediately loses its positive association *and* its value as a positive reinforcer. It is, at best, ambiguous. It no longer automatically triggers the positive emotions associated with conditioned positive reinforcers. This often occurs with trainers who use positive reinforcement to train a behavior, but then use “corrections” to “proof” the behavior – that is, once they believe the dog “knows” the behavior, they feel they are justified in using punishment if the dog doesn’t do it when asked. This, too, will quickly poison a cue.

Even if primary reinforcers, such as approval, toys, and treats are used during or after training, the “Come” cue is a threat as well

as a promise. Compliance diminishes because behavior that might be punished tends to be avoided. The dog’s attitude often switches from attentive eagerness to reluctance and avoidance, frequently with manifestations of stress. Even though an appropriate behavioral response to the “Come” cue is still followed by reward, if failure is followed by punishment, the cue has become ambiguous in terms of predictable outcome. It is no longer “safe.” You have poisoned your recall cue.

“Come” is one of the cues that are most frequently poisoned by dog owners – if not THE most commonly poisoned cue. Owners often inadvertently poison the recall cue by following it with a consequence the dog perceives as undesirable, even though the owner isn’t intentionally punishing the dog. It can happen to anyone. Before I realized that coming into the house was aversive to our Corgi, I often called her to “Come!” and then took her inside. By the time I realized she was avoiding me when I said “Come,” it was too late – the damage to the cue had been done.

When I realized I had given her a negative association with the word “Come,” I changed her cue to “Let’s go!” and made sure it was frequently associated with fun stuff.

At least one study suggests that it’s easier to use a *new* cue than to rehabilitate a cue that’s been poisoned, as the poisoned cue will likely always carry a negative association. With that in mind, when I realized I had given her a negative association with the word “Come,” I changed her cue.

Now I use “Let’s go!” and make sure it’s frequently associated with fun stuff – even when we’re going into the house. On the way to the house we often play targeting games or “Chase the Cuz,” her all-time favorite toy. Sometimes I don’t call her, but go into the house without her. Because she hates being outside alone, she soon appears at the back door, waiting to be let in. I can get away with temporarily leaving her outside unattended because we live smack dab in the middle of our 80-acre farm, almost a half-mile from the road, and I know she won’t leave. Problem solved.

In this way, you can eventually train your dog to a level that enables you to trust her off-leash in safe, open areas.

MORE RECALL FUN

My personal favorite recall “add-on” is teaching an emergency “stop” cue. I use “Wait!” to pause my dogs in mid-step (see “Wait a Bit, Stay a While,” WDJ May 2001). Once their forward movement is stopped, it is much easier for them to hear and respond to their recall cue. I have also used a well-trained “Down!” as a stop cue. Again, when the dog’s forward motion is stopped, the recall happens more easily.

■ **LESLIE NELSON** of Tails-U-Win in Manchester, Connecticut, is world-renowned for her “Really Reliable Recall” methods, available on DVD and in her book of the same title. Among other things, she advocates teaching an emergency recall cue that you charge with high-value treats and practice often in low-distraction environments.

Because this is a different word from your everyday recall cue, you don’t risk poisoning it accidentally. Then when you need it in a true emergency (dog running toward busy highway), it’s very likely to work. Pick a word that is easy for you to keep the positive association (some people use “Cookies!”) and remember to use it if and when you need it.

Every positive trainer has her own version of recall games. Here are some you can use with your dog:

■ **CLARISSA BERGEMAN**, CPDT-KA, of Canine Company, LLC, in Round Hill,



Laura Dorfman hides a treat or toy in her cupped hands, in a sort of “peek-a-boo” game. The dog’s curiosity about what is hidden in her hands drives his recall.

Virginia, suggests this version of an old obedience competition technique to get faster recalls: “As your dog is running in, whip a tennis ball or other favorite toy out of your back pocket and toss the object between your legs as your dog runs through to get it. It’s not just for small dogs. Coordinated handlers can lift one leg to let the dog run through and play this game with larger dogs, too!”

■ **LAURA DORFMAN**, CPDT-KA, PMCT1, of Kona’s Touch in Chicago’s North Shore, Illinois, invented a new game to play with her recently adopted Terrier-mix, Captain Jack Cricket:

“I sit with him right in front of me and cup both my hands together, playing a kind of peek-a-boo game in which he always finds a treat or toy in my hands. When he is a little farther from me, I get down on one knee and cup my hands together; when he sees this, he comes running for whatever yummy thing I have in my cupped hands.

“Twice, I’ve seen him pick up something I didn’t want him to have, and I’ve cupped my hands together. Each time, he dropped the item and came running. I started this game with him because I wanted to make sure he wasn’t becoming hand shy, but now I’ve taught

him a few different behaviors that end with this great recall. It helps him love her hands. It helps with targeting. And it’s given him an awesome recall.”

■ **CINDY MAURO**, CPDT-KA, of Cindy Mauro Dog Training in Bergen County, New Jersey, reminds dog owners that “Come” shouldn’t always mean an end to the fun stuff.

“When my dog is outside having a good time, playing with another dog or a person, I start with calling his name and letting him know I have something fabulous – steak, chicken, etc. – not an ordinary treat. In the beginning, I let him see the treats, or hear the crinkling bag. He runs to me, and I mark with “Yes!” and feed 1-2-3 treats, then immediately release him with ‘Go play.’

“Doing this randomly throughout the day teaches him that it’s great to come when I call his name, and I’m not always ending the ‘fun’ (play, chasing a squirrel etc.). The key is to do this often and randomly, with lots of repetitions of ‘treat / go play.’ I can get my dogs running to me even when they’re in the far end of the yard playing a rousing game of chase with each other!”



Cindy Mauro follows a delicious reward with another great one: the chance to “Go play!”

■ **SUSIE DAILY**, CPDT-KA, from Pets In Motion in Wayne, Pennsylvania, offers a different perspective on recalls.

She says, “I like to do ‘Opportunity Comes,’ where you identify things your dog runs to you for anyway, and then just add the cue.

“For instance, before dinner time you know your dogs will run to you when they hear the sound of the food bin/bag/cupboard opening, so right before you open it, say ‘Fido, come!’ in an excited happy tone, then open the food and feed dinner! Reward is inherent and they start to perk up when they hear that cue.

“Other examples might be the sound

Trainer Clarissa Bergeman uses a tennis ball or other favorite toy as an exciting reward for a fast recall.





Sean Howard used his dog's favorite activity – the chance to chase a squirrel – as the ultimate reward for a fast and immediate recall.

of the ice cube dispenser on the fridge door (my dogs come running for that), the sound of the car keys, the sound of a squeaky toy, etc. Just be sure not to trick them! If it's the car keys for instance, better take them for a ride. Anything you know your dog will run to you for anyway, just put it on cue!"

■ **SEAN HOWARD**, PMCT1, of Up With Pup in Toronto, used the Premack Principle to teach a solid recall to his dog, Mikka. The Premack Principle says you can use a higher value/more likely behavior to reinforce a lower value/less likely behavior.

Howard says, "Mikka and I play the squirrel Premack game every day of every week. It was how we got recall in the first place; he is a Karelian Bear Dog and like many of his breed, predisposed to chasing things to the end of the earth.

"The game is simple. He targets a squirrel (now, even when he is off-leash), his body itching to launch. I wait a few seconds, and then call him. If he turns and comes at me in a full out run, I drop the leash and scream (mainly to give the squirrel a safe head start) for him to go 'Get it!' He tears off in a mad dash and comes prancing back proudly after he trees the squirrel. If he *doesn't* choose to come to me when called, I say 'Too bad!' and we turn and walk the other way."

■ **ESTIE DALLETT**, PMCT2, of Civil Dogobedience, based in Washington, D.C., recommends Round Robin Recalls, or what she calls "Multi-Person Random Order Recall Circle."

She plays it this way: "At least three

people spread out at a distance suitable to the level of the dog's response-ability, then take turns cuing "come" in a randomly changing order. Often it makes an impression on the dog if you start off by doing two or three 'circuits' of cues in order, going left or right around the circle, then switch into random order. The dog will initially anticipate the next person to go to, but then will learn to pay attention to the person who actually said 'Come.'

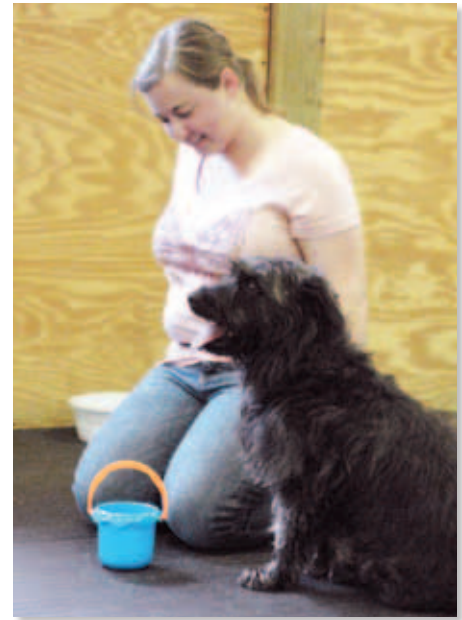
"Distraction levels can be increased by having the non-cuing people do increasingly active or silly dances or talking, applauding, or whatever. It's important that all the people have equally fabulous treats. If not, a beginner dog may just hang around the person with the yummiest food. Of course, if the dog goes to a person who did not call her, then that person must ignore/turn their back on the dog."

You can also enhance the recall response by having the person who calls the dog turn and run away to increase the enthusiasm of the dog's response.

RECALLS WITH CLASS

Trainers are also finding ways to make recalls more fun in the classroom setting. My training center, Peaceable Paws LLC, in Fairplay, Maryland, offers a recall class that makes use of the entire 80-acre farm, giving owners an opportunity to generalize their dogs' recalls to the outdoors, in the presence of distractions such as horses, deer, squirrels, groundhogs, turkeys, and more.

■ **JESSICA MILLER**, PMCT1, one of our Peaceable Paws trainers, likes to demonstrate the "Run Away Recall," to show owners how silly they can be. She says, "When we give a big over-the-top performance, it seems that the class does better! It also helps everyone loosen up and give themselves permission to act silly. I like to give a prize for the person who gives the most exciting recall performance."



When teaching group classes, Jessica Miller demonstrates "Run Away Recalls" in an over-the-top, exaggerated fashion, to loosen up her students – and show how well dogs respond to playful cues.

■ **SUSIE DAILY**, CPDT-KA, holds recall races in her classes. "I like doing recall races at the end of Manners 1, as long as all dogs are friendly and can tolerate it. Instructors/assistants run with the dogs on-leash to prevent any incidents.

"Two dogs are restrained by assistants at one end of the room. A finish line is marked at the other. Owners go across the finish line and wait to be told: 'Ready, set, call your dog!' Both call their dogs, and the one to get their dog across the finish line and into a sit first, wins. Then we race two more, until everyone has raced, then winners race each other. We do heats until we find the fastest recaller!"

■ **DIANA FOLEY**, CPDT-KA, of Progressive Pet Training in Gaithersburg, Maryland, also holds friendly competitions in her classes, but instead of speed, she's looking for the most enthusiastic recalls. "I like to have the dogs line up with their owners, and one at a time, the owners go across the room (I hold their dogs at the starting line) and call their dogs. We have a friendly competition for who can get their dog to come with the most enthusiasm. It helps the owners

Susie Daily sets up recall races in her group classes, having students compete for the fastest recall in heat after heat, building excitement until there is a winner.

Diana Foley also sets up recall competitions in her group classes. The winner is not necessarily the fastest dog, but the one with the most enthusiastic recall.

lighten up and be more silly and fun when calling their dogs, and the other owners observe and cheer them on. It makes for a fun environment where owners are having fun with their dogs rather than the stern and commanding “COME” that I’m sure we’ve all seen!”

■ My personal favorite is the “Hidden Treasure” recall. Leave your dog in the house and set up a “treasure area” by hiding high-value reinforcers in your fenced yard, or along a hiking path. Hide some of your dog’s favorite toys as well as extra-tasty treats. With the treats hidden, bring your dog out to the treasure-laced area, off-leash if she’s ready for that, or on a long line if necessary. Call her. When she gets to you, *run* with her to the nearest hiding place and reveal the treasure. The



combination of the fun run, followed by the appearance and delivery of the treats, will make this an irresistible game for your dog. She’ll be amazed that you can make marvelous reinforcers appear out of thin air!

GET CREATIVE

One of the many things I love about positive reinforcement training is that it encourages trainers and owners to get creative with their training. No longer is there one “right” way to teach behaviors; there are as many ways as there are human brains to think them up.

The panoply of ideas described above for teaching your dog to come to you enthusiastically and fast when called demonstrates this – and these barely scratch the surface. We challenge you to come up with more fun ways to teach your dog to come when you call her. Submit your ideas to WDJEditor@gmail.com, and we’ll post our favorites on our WDJ Facebook page.

Meanwhile, remember to keep your recalls consistently fun and rewarding for your dog so that she’ll romp to you with enthusiasm, each and every time you call her. 🐾

Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, CDBC, is WDJ’s Training Editor. She lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center, where she offers dog training classes and courses for trainers. Pat is also author of many books on positive training, including her newest, Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First-Class Life. See page 24 for more information.

RESOURCES

- ❖ **LESLIE NELSON, “REALLY RELIABLE RECALL”**
Manchester, CT. (860) 646-5033; tailsuwin.com
- ❖ **CLARISSA BERGEMAN, CPDT-KA, IN CANINE COMPANY, LLC**
Round Hill, VA. (540) 554-8738; ready-to-rally.com
- ❖ **LAURA DORFMAN, CPDT-KA, PMCT1**
Chicago, IL. (847) 204-7100; konastouch.com
- ❖ **CINDY MAURO, CPDT-KA**
Bergen County, NJ. (973) 728-8691; cindymaurodogtraining.com
- ❖ **SUSIE DAILY, CPDT-KA**
Wayne, PA. (610) 256-7030; petsinmotion.net
- ❖ **SEAN HOWARD, PMCT1**
Toronto, Ontario. (647) 272-9361; upwithpup.com
- ❖ **ESTIE DALLETT, PMCT2, CIVIL DOGOBEDIENCE**
Washington, DC. (202) 297-3038; info@civildog.com
- ❖ **JESSICA MILLER, PMCT1**
Fairplay, MD. (301) 582-9420; peaceablepaws.com
- ❖ **DIANA FOLEY, CPDT-KA**
Gaithersburg, MD. (240) 669-5807; progressivepettraining.com

What you can do . . .

- **Make your dog’s recall cue the best sound in her world by always associating it with exciting, fun, high-value reinforcers, whether food treats, toys, or some other beloved activity.**
- **Take care to ensure that others who interact with your dog consistently reinforce her recall.**
- **If you have poisoned your dog’s recall cue, stop using it. Teach her a NEW cue – and be careful to keep it consistently positive!**



Raw Diet Pitfalls

Too much bone or fat in a home-prepared diet can lead to nutritional inadequacies.

BY MARY STRAUS

Several raw feeders contacted me after reading my homemade diet guidelines (“You Can Make It”) in July’s WDJ issue. While their diets varied considerably, each had problems that are common with raw diets – but most are easily fixed.

For example, many raw diets are high in bone, which provides calcium and phosphorus. Excess calcium can lead to serious orthopedic conditions in large-breed puppies, especially before puberty. High-calcium diets are not dangerous for adult dogs, but calcium binds other minerals, including zinc and iron, so a diet high in bone may lead to other nutritional deficiencies. Too much bone can also cause constipation.

Most raw diets are high in fat, particularly those that use high-fat meats or include skin from poultry. High-fat diets can be appropriate for very active or working dogs, but too much fat can cause digestive upset and even pancreatitis in susceptible dogs. High-fat diets can also lead to obesity, or be nutritionally deficient when portion sizes are limited in order to avoid feeding too many calories.

Raw diets that are not supplemented will be low in vitamin E. Other nutrients may also be inadequate, particularly in diets that are missing or low in red meat, poultry, fish, or vegetables, and those that are high in fat.

Raw feeders wonder why this is true, since wolves don’t eat vegetables or take supplements, but we can’t really duplicate the evolutionary diet of the wolf, nor is it necessarily the best diet for our dogs. Wolves travel many miles every day, so a higher fat diet is more appropriate for

them than for our more sedentary pets. Wolves eat whole large prey, including things like blood, brains, eyeballs, and a variety of glands that we don’t feed, so we have to replace those nutrients with other foods. Nature is concerned only with procreation, not with longevity. The antioxidants and phytonutrients found in fruits and vegetables may help our dogs to live longer and healthier lives.

HOW MUCH BONE?

I recommend feeding 30 to 50 percent raw meaty bones, using the higher amount only if the parts fed are very meaty. The rest of the diet should consist of boneless meat, organs, fish, eggs, dairy, vegetables, fruits, and grains (optional).

Lori Lockyear, who lives in Michigan, has two dogs: Wilson, a 5 ½-year-old, 34-pound Labradoodle, and Woody, a 4-year-old, 40-pound Goldendoodle. She feeds them a combination of half kibble (Orijen 6 Fish) and half raw. The raw portion of the diet consists primarily of raw meaty bones, including ground chicken and turkey mixes that contain meat, skin, bones, and organs. She also feeds whole chicken thighs and backs (with skin and separable fat removed), beef ribs, and Nature’s Variety Instinct Raw Frozen Diet (lamb variety), and adds vegetables, either leafy green or starchy (sweet potatoes or pumpkin), plus low-fat yogurt and egg yolks. She supplements with fish oil.

Because most of the raw half of the diet that Lockyear feeds is comprised of raw meaty bones, her diet is high in calcium. Chicken thighs are a better choice



Michigan resident Lori Lockyear feeds a diet that is half home-prepared raw, and half kibble, to her Labradoodle, Wilson (left); and Woody, her Goldendoodle.



Wendy Mayer feeds her three Golden Retrievers – Riley (9), Chloe (5), and Jake (2) – a diet that includes a commercial mix of raw meat and ground bone.

than backs, since they have more meat. She should replace some of the ground mixtures with lean, boneless meat, preferably red meat, since the diet is high in poultry. Beef heart would be an inexpensive choice, and she could also include a small amount of beef liver. Low-fat dairy can also be used; it has some calcium, but not nearly as much as bone.

Wendy Mayer, who lives in Alberta, Canada, feeds her three Golden Retrievers a diet based on *Dr. Becker's Real Food for Healthy Dogs & Cats*, by Beth Taylor and Karen Becker, DVM. Instead of boneless meat, however, two-thirds of the meat she uses is a ground product that includes bone. This product claims to be made from whole animal carcasses, but the varieties she uses (elk and bison) are high in calcium, over 1 percent as fed, which converts to over 3.7 percent on a dry matter basis (DM). The maximum amount of calcium allowed by the canine nutrient guidelines compiled by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) is 2.5 percent DM.

Because Mayer feeds boneless meat one-third of the time, one way to reduce the total amount of calcium in the diet is to not add calcium when she feeds boneless meat. This will lower the overall percentage of calcium in the diet to within AAFCO guidelines.

HOW MUCH FAT?

It's best to use meats that are 10 percent fat or less, which is comparable to about 30 to 40 percent fat in kibble, since fresh foods are high in moisture. Most commercial raw blends are higher in fat than this, particularly if you consider that they often include organs and vegetables that should reduce the overall amount of fat.

Lockyear's diet is high in fat, since the mixes she uses contain skin, and Nature's Variety Instinct, like most commercial raw foods, is high in fat. Replacing some of these with lean, boneless meat and low-fat dairy will reduce the amount of fat as well as calcium in the diet. The

two egg yolks fed to each dog should be replaced with one whole egg. Although Lockyear relies on the commercial part of the diet to provide fish, she could consider feeding one meal a week of canned fish with bones (sardines packed in water, jack mackerel, or pink salmon), which are lower in fat than the mixes she uses.

Karen Murad, a Washington resident, is an AKC Breeder of Merit of Papillons. She feeds a raw diet to some of her dogs, making large batches that include 4 pounds of boneless meat, 1 pound chicken necks, 1 pound organ mix, 2 eggs, ½ cup mashed vegetables, and a variety of whole food supplements, including NOW Bone Meal Powder, since her diet is low in bone.

Murad's diet is almost 50 percent fat on a dry matter basis, partly because half the boneless meat she uses is high-fat ground beef (the other half is skinless chicken thighs, which are fine). At least half of the ground beef should be replaced with lower-fat meat, such as 90 percent lean ground beef, beef heart, canned fish, or additional chicken.

Murad also adds 3 tablespoons each of olive oil and coconut oil, neither of which are needed. All oils provide 4.5 grams of fat and 40 calories per teaspoon, which add up fast. The added oils should be eliminated or greatly reduced. I'd prefer to see her feed more eggs instead of so much oil, since the eggs have more nutritional value.

Keep in mind that when fat is decreased, the amount fed must be increased to maintain the same number of calories.

SUPPLEMENTS

All raw diets need added vitamin E. I recommend giving 1 to 2 IUs per pound of body weight daily (larger amounts can be given less often). Murad could add one 200 IU gelcap of vitamin E to her recipe to provide all the vitamin E that her dogs need. Lockyear's dogs get most of the vitamin E they need from the commercial portion of their diet, so giving each dog

200 IUs once a week would be ample.

If kelp is used to provide iodine, make sure the amount is appropriate. Murad was adding 1 tablespoon NOW Kelp Powder to her recipe, which turned out to provide almost 10 times the amount of iodine that her dogs needed. Too much iodine can suppress thyroid function, and kelp is also a source of arsenic, so best to keep amounts small.

Murad supplements with cod liver oil, which is preferable to fish oil in her case because her recipe does not include fish. (Another option would be to include one 15-ounce can of fish with bone in her recipe). One tablespoon of cod liver

oil added to the recipe will provide appropriate amounts of vitamin D and omega-3 fatty acids (make sure it includes vitamin D, which is removed from molecularly distilled products). Lockyear gives each of her dogs 1 gram of fish oil daily, which is a good idea, since omega-3 fatty acids likely don't survive well in kibble.

After cutting the amount of fat in her recipe almost in half (by eliminating the unneeded oils and reducing the amount of high-fat beef), Murad should increase the amount she feeds by about one-third, so as to provide equivalent calories. This also increases all nutrient levels to adequate levels (with added vitamin E and cod liver oil). 🐾

Mary Straus is the owner of DogAware.com. She lives with her Norwich Terrier, Ella, in the San Francisco Bay Area.



Breeder Karen Murad feeds a home-prepared raw diet to some of her Papillons.

What you can do . . .

- Feed an appropriate amount of raw meaty bones.
- Avoid using high-fat meats and mixes, or keep amounts low.
- Always supplement with vitamin E.
- Be careful adding oils, which are high in fat and calories.



Surviving Severe Separation Anxiety

Severe SA can be devastating for owners who fail to build and maintain a support system.

BY SANDI THOMPSON, CPDT-KA

I get several calls a week from people whose dogs are suffering with varying degrees of separation anxiety. The dogs may exhibit mild isolation distress, where they are uncomfortable at being left alone; a severe form of anxiety, where they go into a full-blown panic when left alone; or anything in between.

Separation anxiety is a serious condition. Dogs suffering from the more severe forms may salivate, pace, bark, howl, and/or urinate and defecate in panic. They can destroy cars, homes, and possessions at an incredible rate, and dig and chew their way out of windows and doors. They sometimes resort to self-mutilation when left alone. Just think about how intensely frightened you'd have to be to lose the contents

of your bowels when left alone, or to rip out the walls of a room to escape. These dogs are suffering immensely and miserably. They need help from a patient and understanding owner – and the owner needs professional guidance from an experienced, educated trainer who understands the behavior and the necessary steps to overcome it. What I didn't realize until early this year was that, in order to help a dog triumph over

a severe manifestation of this condition, extraordinary support for his owner is absolutely crucial.

NEVER IMAGINED THIS

I learned this the hard way: first-hand. Though I had no intention of doing so, I adopted a dog that I had cared for at an animal refugee shelter in Thailand. Siam Sam was one of hundreds of street dogs left behind in an evacuated city about 50 miles north of Bangkok. His was one of the cities hardest-hit by record floodwaters. The human residents had been evacuated from the disaster zone, but the abandoned dogs – street dogs as well as family pets – were left behind and had nowhere to go to get away from floodwaters. They climbed onto any surface that was above the water level.

Sam and several other dogs were spotted by an animal rescue team organized by Soi Dogs and the Wildlife Friends Foundation Thailand (WFFT) and photographed as they peered out from the second-story window of an unfinished building. It was their safety zone from the floods, but there was no food and they were facing certain death by starvation or disease, not to mention being easy targets for poachers of the dog meat trade. Sam was one of the lucky ones rescued and evacuated to a shelter.

I met Sam in one of these emergency shelters in Thailand when I went there to do relief work. He was one of hundreds of dogs housed in a cattle quarantine facility with four or more dogs to a stall. I can't say exactly why, amidst all of the hardship in the shelter, Sam stood out to me. He made me laugh every day. He was silly, but in a noble kind of way, like he was clowning around to lighten the mood for the other dogs and the volunteers. He didn't seem to be affected the same way a lot of other dogs were; as the days of close quarters in the shelter stretched into weeks, many of the dogs got more and more stressed. Fights broke out constantly. Several dogs succeeded in chewing their way through the bars in ef-

Siam Sam (right) and two other dogs are spotted by WFFT animal rescue workers in the second-story window of a flooded and unfinished building, where they had taken shelter from floodwaters in Thailand. PHOTO BY EMMA CARTER.





Sam is given food by a rescuer; shortly afterward, he and the other dogs in the flooded building were captured, sedated, taken by boat to a truck, and transported to a makeshift shelter for evacuated animals, where Sandi Thompson first met him. PHOTO BY EMMA CARTER.

forts to escape; some withdrew and shut down. Sam seemed calm in comparison; he smiled and did something goofy each time I went inside his stall.

It was grueling work to take care of hundreds of dogs in such a crude facility in sweltering heat, with just a handful of volunteers – and yet Sam was able to make me smile every day. He began to really grow on me and I knew I'd miss him the most.

Two days before I was to fly home, I went inside Sam's stall for the nighttime feeding and he grabbed onto my waist with both paws, buried his head in my hip and wouldn't let go. He repeated this behavior every time I went into his kennel for the next two days. I knew that dogs who were unclaimed a few weeks after the cities were repopulated would be returned to those city streets – and I found that I simply could not leave Sam to an uncertain future on the streets of Thailand. I made arrangements to have Sam shipped to me if he wasn't claimed.

About 30 days later I flew to Los Angeles and met him at the airport. I was excited to see him again, but concerned about how he survived the flight. Sam was visibly shaken from the 20-plus hour flight and I couldn't tell if he recognized me or not. He had become quite thin since the last time I saw him and he had lost a lot of hair. Since I said goodbye to him in Thailand, he had been moved to two different shelters while waiting to get his papers in order. He was well looked after, but I think his mental state deteriorated from all of the stress. I rented a luxury sedan so that he would be as comfortable as possible and Siam Sam and I drove home to Berkeley, California.

I spent the next week or so slowly getting him used to living in a house. He was afraid of being indoors and walking

through any kind of doorway. He was happiest outside, so we spent a lot of time going into and coming out of the house. I offered him his choice of three different sizes and shapes of comfy plush beds and he chose to curl up on the cold floor each and every night (now he will not even consider sleeping on any bed less than six inches thick!).

Once it seemed that he was getting comfortable, I decided to leave him (and my other dog) for about 20 to 30 minutes while I went to the store. This was a big mistake. I should have tested a shorter absence first. I came home to the frightening spectacle of Sam hysterically screaming and frantically panting. His forelegs were bloody and his pupils dilated. The kitchen doors and windows had claw and teeth marks indicating where he tried to escape. Curtains were chewed and fecal matter was spread all over the floor and walls. My heart sank – but I hoped that it was a short-term problem that I had caused by leaving him too soon and for too long.

I tried again a couple of days later, but this time it was an experiment, rather than a real departure. He had been crated a lot during his stay in the shelters in Thailand and had been fine, so I thought he might do better in a crate. I put him in a crate with a food-stuffed toy, walked out of the house and spied on him from a window. His reaction was immediate and heart-wrenching to observe. He again became hysterical and frantically tried to chew through the bars, and then started chewing his legs.

All this within minutes.

I was stunned. I knew he might have a hard time adjusting to his new life and that it would take patience, time, and understanding – and I was totally on board for that. But I wasn't prepared for the severity of his disorder, and I wasn't prepared for the hardship of helping him overcome this affliction. The first couple of times I left Sam were hell for him. *My* hell began after that.



NEW BUT FAMILIAR

I have helped hundreds of owners of dogs with mild separation anxiety (SA). I could probably recite in my sleep the steps that an owner needs to take in order to modify mild to moderate SA behaviors. However, when a client came to me with a dog who had a moderate to severe case, I would refer them to another trainer. It's not that I felt I was unqualified to help owners through this process; I understood the theoretical steps to modify the behavior. Honestly, it was that I couldn't imagine standing in their shoes.

Seriously. I couldn't fathom *never* leaving a dog alone throughout the lengthy training process and making all the difficult life changes necessary. Rehabilitating a dog suffering from severe SA may require *months* of painfully incremental steps of desensitizing the dog to his fear of being left alone and/or confinement. During this tedious process the dog should never be left alone. I couldn't picture myself spending hours each week of mindlessly dull, repetitive desensitizing departures with the dog's success measured in seconds! So how could I advise someone else to do it?

Well, that was then; this was now. Now *I* was the owner of a dog with severe SA. I needed to get over regretting Sam's adoption and feeling sorry for myself and get to work.

Here is what I knew I needed to do, and what I immediately started doing for Sam:

- Made an appointment with a veterinarian, to make sure he was well and didn't have a health problem that could be contributing to the issue – and, just as importantly, to get a prescription for an anti-anxiety medication for Sam.
- Increased his daily exercise.
- Started “alone” training, to begin helping him to be comfortable away from me. (I have another dog, but as in most severe SA cases, Sam couldn't have cared less whether my other dog was home with him or not; he was anxious about being away from humans.) We worked particularly on minuscule stays, “go to your place,” and rewarding calm behavior.
- Started using counter-conditioning, by giving him food-stuffed Kong toys to work on while I was in another room.

DEPARTURE DESENSITIZING PROTOCOL

This is the sort of desensitizing exercise recommended for a dog with separation anxiety. The goal is to actually do the exercise so many times, in such small increments, and without ever allowing the dog to go “past threshold” (become anxious at all), that the dog becomes bored stiff with your behavior.

I had to desensitize Sam’s “She’s leaving me!” triggers. For Sam, this was walking toward or reaching for the door; being a former street dog, he hadn’t yet learned that an owner who was picking up keys or putting on a coat equaled leaving. I included these things anyway. During these exercises I was in “robot mode”— showing no emotion at all and ignoring Sam. I was keeping a very close eye on him though – making sure he showed absolutely no sign of anxiety. My goal during these exercises was for him to become so bored with my comings and goings that he stopped paying attention to them at all. Here is the sort of thing that I would do:

- ✓ Calmly and while ignoring Sam, pick up keys, sit back down. Repeat every few minutes (keeping time variable).
- ✓ Pick up keys, stand up, take a few steps toward door. Put keys down, sit down. Repeat. Adding more steps toward the door until I could touch it.
- ✓ Keys, touch doorknob, sit down.
- ✓ Keys, touch doorknob, turn doorknob, sit down.
- ✓ Keys, turn doorknob, open door a smidgen, shut door, sit down.
- ✓ Keys, turn doorknob, open door a few inches, shut door, sit down.
- ✓ Keys, turn doorknob, open door a foot, shut door, sit down.
- ✓ Keys, turn doorknob, open door wide, shut door, sit down.
- ✓ Keys, turn doorknob, open door wide for two seconds, shut door, sit down.
- ✓ Keys, turn doorknob, open door wide for four seconds, shut door, sit down.
- ✓ Keys, turn doorknob, open door wide for eight seconds, shut door, sit down.
- ✓ Keys, turn doorknob, open door wide for five seconds, step out with one foot, step back in and shut door, sit down.
- ✓ Keys, turn doorknob, open door wide for five seconds, step out with both feet, step back in and shut door, sit down.

✓ Keys, turn doorknob, open door wide for 10 seconds, step out with both feet, step back in and shut door, sit down.

✓ And so on and so on. Or rather, until Sam falls asleep or goes about his other business, completely bored with my antics and unconcerned with my whereabouts.

For the first couple of months, Sam spent weekend mornings at a dog daycare and boarding facility, while Sandi taught her classes.

● Started desensitizing pre-departures and departures, getting him accustomed to my leaving. I endlessly picked up my keys and walked toward the door – and returned. Tediously. Until we were both exhausted and bored with it.

● Used any “can’t hurt/might help” remedies I could think of, including the flower essence remedy called Rescue Remedy, “dog appeasing pheromones” (DAP), a Thundershirt, and the calming music CD *Through a Dog’s Ear*.

● Used “shaping” exercises such as “101 things to do with a box,” to encourage him to engage his brain and offer behaviors that I could reward. I did not want him to always look to me for a cue; I wanted to encourage his independent thinking.

● Resisted cuddling and “babying” Sam because I didn’t want his attachment to me to become even stronger. And I didn’t want to reinforce his anxious behavior.

AND THEN THERE WERE MY NEEDS

I also had to modify my own life quite a bit so that Sam was never left alone. I knew the drill too well: from this moment forward, until he was well on his way to being cured, I would not be able to leave him alone, not ever. My life had just changed dramatically. I was now standing in those shoes that I could not imagine being in before. I was about to enter into an undetermined period of isolation from friends and family, endless hours of desensitizing protocols, ordering all my supplies and groceries online, and the hardest part for me: relying on others for help.

I called a friend of mine who specializes in SA and pleaded with her to help me. I felt dazed by the colossal tasks I was facing and I needed someone to get me started. “Get a support system in place,” she said. “You cannot do this alone.”

I was daunted by what lay before me, but I had no choice. I didn’t want to ask for help, but I knew she was right: I couldn’t do this alone. I have a training business to run, and couldn’t possibly take him with me to every class I taught. I had to find some paid *and* volunteer dog-sitters; I couldn’t afford to pay professionals for all the time I needed sitters!

I sent out a somewhat dramatic email asking for help (I was in a panic!) to a



group of friends – and was amazed to find several patient people willing to watch him on a regular schedule while I worked. I organized a different sitter for each day I was gone so as not to put too much strain on one person; I needed these people to be in it for the long haul.

Not all of the sitters worked out. I had to find people Sam was comfortable with and who I could trust to keep him safe from any extra stress. It was critical that he never be left alone, that he never be punished or stressed or else it would cause a major setback. I had to find people who understood Sam's condition and took this seriously. Some people don't understand the severity of the condition, or believe that it's just attention-seeking behavior, boredom, or "brattiness."

Oddly though, I felt that I could understand the sensation of pure panic suffered by dogs with severe SA, like Sam. One summer when I was about 5 years old, my brother and I were playing around with an old cedar chest. We loved looking at the old photographs and keepsakes my mother kept inside. At one point my brother suggested that I climb inside it and report to him how dark it was once the lid was closed. I remember protesting but then decided it was safe when he crossed his heart, hoped to die, and swore to God he wouldn't lock it. Click. It locked automatically and the key was long lost.

I became panic-stricken. I screamed and kicked and pounded with my fists from the inside. I heard my brother yelling for help as he desperately tried to pry

open the lid. My fear grew worse with every moment I was trapped inside. Extreme panic suffocated me; I felt that I couldn't breathe. I began to try and claw my way out with my bare hands. I will never forget the uncontrollable fear that overtook my mind and body during this incident. It was more than just being scared; it was sheer terror.

This, I imagine, must be close to what a dog with severe SA feels when left alone. I was trapped in that chest for probably five minutes. Most dogs with SA are left alone for 8 to 10 hours a day, five days a week, and for many weeks or months before their owners seek help. Unimaginable! The lucky ones have an owner who finds a trainer or behaviorist who understands the disorder and can coach them through treating and modifying the behavior.

Most, unfortunately, will get bad advice from all sorts of people (trainers included) who do not understand this complex condition, causing the behavior to get worse, and will end up being relinquished to a shelter and/or euthanized.

In the past few months, I've heard stories from other owners of SA dogs who have been advised to crate the dogs and rap sharply on the crate when the dog screams or paws at the cage walls; to spray the caged dog with water; to use a shock collar to "interrupt" the anxious behaviors; and more. It makes my skin crawl to hear these stories, and to imagine how this treatment must make a dog feel when he is already blind with panic and terror.

THE TOLL ON THE OWNER

I am incredibly blessed to have such a wide circle of dog-loving friends, who became Sam's "staff" and looked after him so I could do the bare minimum of work away from home. But because I wanted to minimize how much I had to lean on these valued friends, I cancelled everything else that required me leaving the house without Sam. I stopped making appointments for private consultations with training clients. I also stopped going to the gym, hair appointments, movies, dinner out, and gatherings with friends. I cancelled all my doctor and dentist appointments and professional meetings. I couldn't even go to the store! I ordered all of my groceries and supplies online.

I remember one pathetic moment when I ran out of a few things and my next delivery wasn't due for several days; a friend brought a tube of toothpaste to my workplace for me. I felt very isolated and depressed. My friends slowly stopped including me in get-togethers and I missed five important milestone birthday celebrations of close friends. It seemed at times I would never lead a normal life again. I felt trapped in my own home.

I kept it up, however; I was fully committed to this dog! I was the one who brought him here – I had to see him through it! If behavior modification protocols to treat SA are not followed carefully and correctly, the dog will suffer and have major setbacks.

Here are the things I put into place during this period:

- I found and frequented only the stores/places that allow dogs; for groceries and other things available only where dogs are not allowed, I found stores that would make deliveries.
- I set up a rotating schedule of dog-sitters for Monday, Thursday night, Saturday, and Sunday, during the hours that I teach dog-training classes. (Kim, a friend who is from Thailand, and her husband Vince, offered to dog-sit Sam on Thursday nights, and began a tradition of cooking an elaborate Thai meal that would be ready to share with me – and Sam! – when I got home from teaching

Thank goodness for stores that allow dogs inside. Shopping online can get you only so far!





my night classes. We started calling this event our Thursday night “Ditch and Dine.” Their kindness, generosity, and gracious company brought me to grateful tears many times.)

- I used Web cameras (and later, a program on my iPhone) to monitor Sam’s behavior when I stepped outside my front door, so I could calmly return before he had even a few seconds of anxiety about my absence. In this way, I could stretch my “departures” out as long as possible, without risking a setback.
- I turned down invitations to anything where my dog was not allowed (missing events with friends/family).
- I kept Sam safe from stress.

I was videotaping each “departure” training session so that I could go back and watch to make sure his body language was calm while I was outside the door. Live streaming also made it possible for my trainer friend who specializes in SA to log in and watch the footage on her computer, too. It was helpful to have an extra pair of eyes and I welcomed her opinion. It was really important to have her validate my progress and keep my sanity in check.

After a *month* of practicing every day, I had tediously worked my way up to 90 seconds – a minute and a half when I could consistently walk out the front door and not have Sam become anxious. Then, suddenly, our progress was stopped

Two close friends dog-sit Sam on Thursday nights, and prepare elaborate Thai meals to share afterward. They called this event “Thursday Night Ditch and Dine,” and it helped keep Sandi sane.

in its tracks. Sam was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer and needed 6 to 8 weeks of chemotherapy. He had an 80 percent chance of remission with this treatment, so it was a no-brainer for us. However, this was a big setback for our SA work and he had major regression. It was extremely stressful for him to have chemo, and for the next two full months, Sam made *no* progress whatsoever. He obviously felt unwell, and even with his daily Prozac, he was clingy and anxious.

This was incredibly disheartening and depressing for me. My spirits were pretty low at that point. I felt like I had wasted three months of tedious work in total isolation, and I was daunted by the process of starting over from scratch. I was also terrified that I was going to lose my support system. My wonderful dog sitters had already been on the job for three months and now I was back to square one. I was going to lose my mind!

I was lonely, trapped in my own home, and I was tired of being misunderstood. People in my life who were supportive at first were also starting to become skeptical. “Why is it taking so long? You’re being neurotic and making it worse. Just leave him and go to the store, for goodness’ sake. He’ll snap out of it!” I didn’t want to get out of bed in the morning. I couldn’t face another day of it.

SUPPORT IN NUMBERS

Then, one day, I came to the realization that if I, a seasoned trainer, was feeling this way, how on earth do other people who have SA dogs cope? I knew of at least four students in my regular classes who were struggling with SA dogs. They had heard me talk about Sam in class and confided in me that they, too, were battling this problem. That’s when I decided I should start a support group for people with SA dogs – and it was the best thing I’ve ever done.

I found a nearby pub with a large outdoor area and a dog-friendly manager,

An early meeting of Sandi’s “SA Support Group” (and their dogs, of course!) at a local pub. The group also communicates via a Facebook page, to encourage and help each other through difficult times.

and invited those clients to join me for drinks and sympathy. We had a great time at the first get-together and word began to spread. Many people found out about it and pleaded to join. I then started a Facebook group so we can support each other in between pub meetings.

My SA Support Group is comprised of people who are all dealing with or have dealt with a dog with SA. It’s important to understand that the unpleasant feelings are normal, that we aren’t alone, that we are not going crazy, and it will get better. We listen to each other’s struggles and encourage each other to carry on. We congratulate the tiny successes as the major milestones that they really are! Who else is going to get excited about a 30-second increase in the dog’s ability to stay home alone?

The group makes the struggle less of a struggle. Even though I’m a dog trainer, and often find myself giving dog-training advice to others in the group, I can honestly say that our meetings are as therapeutic for me as they are for anyone. I was going bonkers from the lack of socializing! A support group makes the experience far less isolating and validates the hard work that we all do. It also is a big relief that no one is judging us, and we can talk freely without the worry of being labeled as obsessive or neurotic. We all look forward to it; it’s fun and it gives us fuel to carry on. Some of us have already won the race and we find satisfaction in helping others still struggling through it.

It astonishes me that, in my 20-plus years of dog training, I haven’t seen a serious discussion of how life-altering (in a bad way!) dealing with a SA dog can be. One of my fellow “SA club” members (interestingly, another dog training professional who rehabilitated his *own* dog with severe SA) baldly stated, “It can drive grown men to tears.” The fact that this condition is generally misunderstood by most people can further add to feelings of isolation.





Sandi uses Web cameras and an iPhone app to monitor Sam when she leaves him at home. Three cameras ensure she can see him at all times, and the pictures are live-streamed to her phone. This enables her to return quickly if Sam should become upset or anxious while she is gone, to prevent triggering a serious setback.

It baffles me, because this is such an important piece of the puzzle. If the owner, who is already isolated, confused, and distraught about the situation, is not getting support, then she won't be motivated to continue with the lengthy training required to get the dog past his fear. If she doesn't do the work, then the dog doesn't get better. If the dog doesn't get better, the owner is miserable, the dog gets returned to the breeder or shelter and either lives in misery or dies. It seems to me that support should be at the top of the list!

Dealing with an SA dog can also cause strife in friendships and relationships. Many couples have confessed at our group sessions that they argue a lot about the dog and that both parties have periods of feeling envious of, or bitter toward, the other. It is common for one person in a relationship to do most of the work with the dog while the other goes about their life – and this, too, can cause a lot of resentment. A friend struggling with an SA dog told me, “As I kissed my husband goodbye in the morning, I remember thinking how lucky he was that he escaped from the building that had become my prison.” Several have even admitted to me that the other party gave them an ultimatum; that if the dog didn't improve soon, then the dog would be gotten rid of. I can't imagine the extra amount of stress this would add to an already horrible situation!

Some “SA Club” members confessed to feeling guilty for somehow causing the separation anxiety in the first place. Some expressed feeling resentful toward the dog and then feeling guilty for be-

ing resentful! Several admitted to almost losing their jobs because of consistently being late for work or not coming in at all (because of a pet-sitting snafu or general depression).

One thing has become clear to me, as a constant attendee of this club: If an owner does not get support throughout this lengthy process, relationships become strained, employment suffers, motivation wanes, and training stops. Everyone loses in the end, most notably the dog.

This knowledge has helped me through the past few months of working with Sam. I've now learned to stay away from people who are not supportive! If a friend tells me that I should “Just let him cry it out!” or “Just let him deal with it while you go to the store!” I avoid discussing Sam with them, or avoid them altogether.

IT GETS BETTER

I never could have gotten here without my support group and my dog-sitting friends, including Colleen Kinzley, who watched Sam for me at the location where I teach on Monday nights – which also happens to be the place she works every day, and her night off! With the help of all of these special people, I've been able to continue Sam's training and he's been able to make more and more progress. As Sam has improved, and the amount of time that he can be left alone has increased, I have been able to “release” some of my dog-sitting friends from their duties (though I don't know how I will ever repay them for their great kindness).

I still use a camera app for my smartphone, so I am able to watch Sam in real time on my phone when I leave the house. I now have three cameras set at different angles so I can watch him and be ready to come back home if he starts to get upset.

Last night I went to work and left Sam home. I had my cameras running and checked in on him in between the classes I was teaching. I was gone for 5½ hours. He mostly slept the entire time.

I think we've crossed the finish line. It was unspeakably hard, probably harder than anything I've ever done. But I have to say that through this difficult journey some beautiful things have happened: I've made a lot of new caring friends. Even today I cannot believe the selfless efforts that these people made to help Sam and me. I could not have done it without their support and the support of the group I created. I am more grateful to them than I can ever express.

Before this started I was afraid of separation anxiety. Now, because of this journey with Sam, I have a newfound sympathy and understanding of what owners of SA dogs are going through and feel confident and uniquely qualified to help others through this.

Many people have asked me, “If you had known about the SA before you brought Sam home, would you have still brought him home?” I can answer that honestly and without hesitation: No. Had I known what was in store for me I would have tearfully said goodbye and walked away.

But if you ask me now, “Would you do it again?” I'd say absolutely, unequivocally yes. My life is better after all the struggles in so many ways, but mostly it is just better with Siam Sam in it. 🐾

Sandi Thompson, of Bravo!pup, is a dog trainer and a long-time model for training articles in WDJ. She shares her home in Berkeley, CA, with Siam Sam and her little dog Turtle, who sometimes gets mistaken for WDJ's Otto. For contact information, see “Resources,” page 24.

Fish Oil

This is one supplement that can benefit all dogs and help with a variety of conditions.

BY MARY STRAUS

Fish oil is probably the most important supplement you can add to your dog's diet, regardless of what type of diet you feed. EPA and DHA, the omega-3 fatty acids in fish oil, provide widespread benefits, but they are fragile and unlikely to survive storage in bags of kibble, or may be rancid even before being added to pet foods. Krill oil and whole fish also provide EPA and DHA that may be better absorbed, providing similar benefits in smaller doses.

■ **BENEFITS:** Proven benefits from EPA and DHA include:

- Improving the coat and skin.
- Reducing inflammation due to conditions such as arthritis, allergies, and inflammatory bowel disease.
- Regulating the immune system, boosting those that are suppressed and calming overactive immune systems for dogs with allergies or autoimmune diseases.
- Aiding in mental development of fetuses and puppies, and improving cognitive function in older dogs.
- Lowering blood pressure and triglycerides.
- Providing support for dogs with kidney disease, heart disease, and cancer.
- Promoting weight loss in overweight dogs.

■ **CAUTIONS:** Fish oil should be protected from light, heat, and air. Store liquid fish oil in dark bottles in the refrigerator. Purchase amounts that can be used within one or two months to avoid

rancidity. If you notice an “off” odor, discard the oil.

■ **INDEPENDENT** agencies have tested many human and pet supplements. None have found mercury, but a few products had unsafe levels of PCBs, provided less EPA or DHA than was shown on the label, or were spoiled. For those concerned about contaminants, look for molecularly distilled products (note the term “pharmaceutical grade” has no legal definition). More concentrated forms, with higher amounts of EPA and DHA per gram, result in lower levels of contaminants.

Liquid fish oil products made for humans often contain flavorings that dogs generally do not like.

■ **DOSAGE:** Use products made for either humans or dogs. The amount of EPA and DHA in various fish oil preparations varies. Look for concentrated forms when giving high doses so you use smaller amounts of oil.

Healthy dogs can be given 100 to 150 mg EPA and DHA per 10 pounds of body weight daily; dogs who have health problems can be given up to 300 mg per 10 pounds of body weight. One ounce of canned fish with bones (sardines, jack mackerel, pink salmon) averages about 300 mg EPA and DHA combined.

The recommended dosage of liquid

fish oil products is often too high, adding unnecessary fat and calories to your dog's diet. High doses of fish oil can interfere with platelets and lead to increased bleeding, and too much can contribute to rather than reduce inflammation.

Cod liver oil is similar to fish oil, but most products also contain high levels of vitamins A and D (molecular distillation removes these vitamins). For those who feed a homemade diet that does not include much fish, give an amount that provides about 100 IUs of vitamin D per 25 pounds of body weight daily. Do not use high doses of cod liver oil. If additional omega-3 fatty acids are desired, add plain fish oil.

■ **RECOMMENDED SOURCES:** There are many different brands of fish oil supplements. Here are a few examples:

- **Enzymatic Therapy's Eskimo-3** (800-783-2286; enzy.com).
- **Mercola Krill Oil** (877-985-2695; krilloil.mercola.com).
- **Neptune Krill Oil (NKO)** (888-664-9166; neptunekrilloil.com) available in many brands, including Source Naturals (NOW brand failed two ConsumerLab tests).
- **Nordic Naturals** (800-662-2544; nordicnaturals.com), a variety of liquid and softgel products for humans and dogs.
- **Sogeval's Derma-3 Twist Caps** (800-877-0177; sogevalus.com), highly concentrated softgels. 🐾



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

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BOOKS AND DVDS

- ❖ WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog; Positive Perspectives 2: Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog; Power of Positive Dog Training; Play With Your Dog;* and *Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance at a First Class Life*. Available from dogwise.com or wholedogjournal.com.
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A PILL ABOUT PILLS
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

We also drew on our experience with the reward marker “jackpot” (where a bunch of treats rains down on the dog); I wouldn’t necessarily ask for a behavior to reward, but would just say the word excitedly and it would trigger an automatic seeking of the downpour of treats (which, of course, just happened to have pills hidden among them).

5 THE WONDER OF IT ALL. There came a time when all the tricks failed. To ensure her proper care and comfort, I had to resort to the standard technique of opening Daisy’s mouth and popping multiple pills down her throat four times a day.

Most pills by themselves can taste yucky and can get stuck in the mouth or throat; to avoid this, I used small pieces of Wonder bread (for some reason none of the other soft white bread brands work like Wonder bread – trust me on this) as a wrap around the pills and then quickly dunked these in water immediately before administering. The bread would turn slimy but add just enough protectant so that the pills would not start dissolving right away and allow them to slide easily into the digestive tract.

6 BONUS SOLUTION: DESIGNATED PILL ADMINISTRATOR. If you’re in a hospice or long-term care situation, giving pills frequently can become a chore. And if your dog is not feeling well or

dreads the act of receiving the pills, it can begin to have an effect on your relationship; that’s the last thing anyone wants. Consider finding someone who can administer the medications for you, such as a friend, family member or veterinary technician. It may not always be convenient and it may not be for every dose, but it can avoid you always having to be the bad guy and allow you to focus on having enjoyable moments with your dearest friend. 🐾

Barbara Dobbins is a San Francisco Bay Area dog trainer on hiatus. She isn’t sure what her life looks like without her girl Daisy, who lost her battle with cancer in July, but she knows it was made so much better because Daisy shared the journey with her.