

VOLUME 11  
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# The Whole Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training



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# ID Required

*No dog should be without this vital equipment.*

BY NANCY KERNS

After resisting *years* of intense lobbying for a family dog by her two daughters, one of my friends recently brought home a rescue dog. Within the first two days, I fielded at least five requests for information from my friend, her husband, and her older daughter. The family had done a lot of research and preparation for the dog's arrival, but there is nothing like the nonstop, real-time activity of a new dog in your home to make you realize that there are many things you *don't* know about dog care and training.

Most of the inquiries I received concerned behavior that I would consider fairly typical for a rehomed adult dog with an unknown background – stuff like urine-marking in the house, jumping up on the couch, barking at every person who walks in the door, etc. But on the third day following the dog's adoption, I got a question that surprised me – at least, once I understood what was going on.

"What should we do if he runs away from us?" my friend asked.

I started explaining how the family should keep the new dog on a leash or long-line (to prevent the dog from practicing the unwanted behavior of avoidance) and offer treats and praise every time the dog comes to them (to reinforce that coming to the family members is a *good* thing). "No!" my friend interrupted. "*He's run away; we can't find him!*"

Yikes! Okay, I thought, I had better get more information before answering these questions. "Alright, don't panic," I told my friend. "Is your number or the rescue group's number on his ID tag?"

"He doesn't have any tags on," my friend

replied. "We just got him a new collar and we don't have a new tag yet."

After dispensing as much useful advice as I could (call all your neighbors, send all available volunteers out to look for him ASAP, put up signs, call animal control, etc.), I hung up the phone and sat in my office for a while, stewing. Days before, when my friend had called to tell me they were bringing home a rescue dog, why hadn't I told her to put an ID tag (with current phone numbers) on the dog and to make sure it was on 24/7? I guess because it would never occur to me *not* to!

In the past three months, I've picked up *four* lost dogs. I found two of them, a month apart, in a far backwoods setting. Both wore collars; neither had ID. I took both to my local shelter. Very recently, I found two four-month-old German Shepherds running lost in a Bay Area city. Both wore collars; one had a tag, which turned out to be from the breeder of the puppies. Fortunately, this number led to the puppies' owner, who had "been meaning to" buy tags but hadn't gotten around to it.

I know that three of these five dogs got home. My friend found her family's new dog and got a tag for him that day. The GSD puppies got new tags, too; I had them made on one of those great machines at a chain pet supply store and delivered them to the owner an hour after I brought her puppies home. I don't know the fate of the two backwoods dogs, but I pray their owners found them in the shelter.



NK

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# New Dog, Now What?

*Ten tips for starting a good life with your new dog.*

BY PAT MILLER

**Y**ou've adopted a new adult dog into your family. Congratulations! As you search for information to help you help your new furry family member adjust to this difficult transition in his life (change is hard!), you may discover that there are lots of resources for new puppy owners, but for new adult-dog owners, not so much. Where do you begin?

We've compiled a list of suggestions to help make life with your new dog easier for all concerned. His first few weeks with you set the tone for your lifelong relationship. If you follow these time-tested protocols, you're more likely to experience smooth sailing – or at least *smoother* sailing – with your recycled Rover, who may arrive at your door with some baggage from his prior life experiences. We hope you've made wise plans and decisions *before* your new canine pal sets paws through your



**Adopting an adult dog can be incredibly rewarding – and challenging at first, while you are getting to know each other. Your new dog may have had little training or exposure to the world, so don't expect a lot right away, and stay positive!**

door for the first time. But even if he's already camped out on your sofa, it's not too late to play catch-up with many of the suggestions that follow.

## First impressions

Your relationship with your new dog starts forming the moment you first meet. As much as you may want to hug him to pieces, let him set the tone.

Canine social norms are significantly different from primate ones. The things we do naturally – approaching head-on, making direct eye contact, reaching out and hugging, patting on the head – can be very intimidating and off-putting to dogs. Canines are more likely to approach in a curving path, avert their eyes, and sniff flanks before deciding to offer and accept more intimate body contact.

If you want to gain your dog's trust

early in the relationship, let him set the tone for greeting and restrain yourself until you see if he prefers calm greetings or wildly enthusiastic ones. **Suggested resource:** *The Other End of the Leash*, by Patricia McConnell. (See page 24 for purchasing information for additional resources.)

## I read you

Even after your initial introduction, you can learn a lot about who your dog is by watching his body language.

Does he stand tall and forward in posture, taking everything in stride? If so, he's likely an assertive, confident dog.

Does his tail wag gently at half-mast and his expression stay soft regardless of what – or who – is going on around him? Then he's an easy-going, friendly kind of guy.

Does he tend to hang back, looking a

## What you can do . . .

- Involve the entire family in the new-dog preparation process.
- Put an ID tag, with at least two current phone numbers, on your new dog before you take him home!
- Plan ahead. The more prepared you are *before* your new dog arrives, the smoother the transition will be.
- Don't hesitate to seek help if things don't go according to plan. Your new adult dog has already lost at least one home. Don't let him lose another.





**It doesn't matter if it's a bejeweled, engraved tag or a temporary plastic one that you write on with a permanent marker: every dog needs to wear an identification tag, 24/7. Put one on your new dog before you even take him home.**

little worried, letting someone else take the lead? He's more timid, lacking in confidence.

Knowing who he is helps you know what to expect from him, and lets you take necessary steps to prevent him from being overwhelmed (or overwhelming others) in new situations. **Suggested resource:** *The Language of Dogs*, a DVD by Sarah Kalnajs.

### **A lost dog's ticket home**

Proper identification is a *must* for all dogs, and especially for a new dog in your home, who isn't familiar with the neighborhood and may take off for parts unknown if he manages to escape. Many shelters and rescue groups provide an ID tag of some kind when they hand over the leash to you. Be sure it's on your dog's collar *from the moment you take possession of him*, not in a folder with all his other paperwork.

In addition to a tag with your current address, two telephone numbers, and his name, your new dog should proudly display a current rabies tag and/or license (required by law in most parts of the country). We also urge you to give him some form of permanent identification such as a tattoo and/or microchip.

Collars and tags can be lost or deliber-

ately removed; permanent identification is a little harder to separate from the dog. **Suggested resource:** "What a Good ID," WDJ November 2001.

### **See Spot run**

Some dogs attach themselves to their new humans almost immediately. I knew on Day Two of Missy's life as a member of the Miller family that it was safe to allow the eight-year-old Australian Shepherd off-leash on our farm. She had glued herself to me tenaciously; I couldn't have lost her if I'd tried. However, most dogs take a little – or a lot – longer than that to be trusted with supervised unfenced freedom, especially if you live on a busy road.

Until you're confident your new dog will come flying when you call even in the face of temptations such as bounding deer, fleeing squirrels, or speeding skateboards, use leashes and solid physical fences to keep the new love of your life close at hand. It could be just a few days to off-leash freedom if he already has a good understanding of coming when called or bonds quickly. It may take a lot longer if he's never been trained to come, or worse, if he's poorly socialized and fearful or has learned to run away as part of a delightful game of "Catch me if you can!"

If you're trusting a solid fence to keep him contained, be sure to check it for holes and weak spots before turning him loose. When you first put him in the yard, watch discreetly from a distance to see if he tries to jump out, dig under, chew through, or otherwise test for weak spots in the fence – or barks nonstop when he's alone. Don't let him know you're watching; he may inhibit his escape attempts until he thinks you're gone. Note: I do *not* recommend leaving your dog home alone in a fenced yard; there's too much that can go wrong without you there to rescue him. **Suggested resource:** *The Really Reliable Recall*, a DVD by Leslie Nelson.

### **Assume nothing**

To be on the safe side, assume your new dog has little knowledge or understanding of the mysterious rules of human society. He may or may not be housetrained. He may or may not understand that perfectly good, edible food left in a receptacle (waste can) on the floor of the food-preparation room (kitchen) is not intended for canine consumption. Or that the fresh water in a gleaming white porcelain bowl (toilet) in the little room off the hall (bathroom) is not for drinking. He might not know that stuffed squares of fabric on the sofa (pillows) are for leaning on, not dog toys for chewing, and you may need to teach him that animal skins in your closet (shoes and belts) have a very different purpose than animal skins made into rawhide chews.

Regardless of your new canine companion's age, treat him like a puppy at first: provide good supervision and management in a dog-proofed home with frequent trips outside to appropriate potty spots until it's obvious that he understands the quirks and complexities of living with humans. **Suggested resource:** *New Puppy, Now What?* by Victoria Schade.

### **Pawternity leave**

It really helps ease the transition for your dog if you can take a few days off work when you first bring him home. Plan ahead and schedule vacation days or personal time off. This will give you time to supervise his activities and find out how much house freedom he can handle, without risking serious damage to your personal possessions. It will also help prevent triggering isolation distress or separation anxiety, giving him a chance to gradually become accustomed to being left alone during a very stressful time in his life.

Dogs who are rehomed multiple times may be more prone to distress over being left alone, as anxiety-related behaviors can be triggered by stress.

During your days off, determine if your dog is comfortable being crated, then leave him alone (crated or not, depending on his response to the crate) for gradually increasing periods over a three- to five-day program, so it's not a big shock to him when you do go back to work and leave him alone for the day. Make arrangements for mid-day visits, either on your lunch hour or from a professional pet-sitter, until you know he can handle a full day alone at home. **Suggested resource:** *I'll Be Home Soon*, by Patricia McConnell.

## House rules

Everyone in the family must agree on house rules ahead of time, and the rules take effect as soon as the dog arrives. Inconsistency is the bane of dog training and management. Dogs do best when their worlds are predictable. If you allow your new dog on the sofa the first week, then Mom yells at him for getting on the sofa when his paws were muddy, and the next day Susie invites him back up to watch television beside her, his world is unpredictable. Unpredictability causes stress, and stress causes behavior problems. I suggest everyone in the family sit down

– before the dog comes home – and agree on important questions like:

■ Is the dog allowed on the furniture? All furniture, or just some? If just some, which pieces?

■ Who will feed the dog? When, where, and what?

■ Who will walk/exercise the dog? When and where?

■ Who's doing supervision and potty-training duty?

■ Where will the dog sleep?

■ Who's the primary trainer (everyone should participate in training) and what methods and cues will everyone use?

■ Which other behaviors are going to be reinforced and which ones are not?

When everyone is in agreement, write down the house rules, make copies, and post them in prominent places throughout the house, for easy referral when questions arise.

Remember that training, too, begins the instant your dog walks in the door for the very first time. Every moment you are

with your dog, one of you is training the other. It usually works best if you're training your dog more often than he's training you. Behaviors that are rewarded in some way will persist and increase. When you give your dog attention, a treat, offer a toy, or engage in a game that he likes, you're reinforcing/training him to do whatever behavior just preceded that "good thing."

In addition to your more formal good manners training, which should start within a couple of weeks of his introduction to the family, be sure that the entire family makes "good stuff" happen when your new dog performs desirable behaviors. Conversely, unwanted behaviors make good stuff go away. When he sits to greet you he earns your attention; if he jumps up to greet, turn your attention elsewhere. **Suggested resource:** *The Power of Positive Dog Training*, by Pat Miller.

## Hello, kitty

Since lots (dare I say the majority?) of animal lovers share their homes with more than one pet, there's a good chance your new dog will need to get along with other furred, feathered, or finned siblings. Proper introductions will help ensure that those relationships are healthy ones, and that the rest of your nonhuman family members are as happy with your new pal as you are.

Dog-dog introductions are best conducted on safely fenced neutral territory (outdoors is better than indoors), with at least one other set of human hands to manage the other dog. If the dogs indicate a healthy interest in each other from a distance (on-leash) bring the dogs closer. If they continue to appear relaxed and cheerful when they are within 10 feet of each other, drop leashes, and let them greet. Leave the leashes on so you can separate the dogs easily if necessary, but don't hold the leashes, so you don't unintentionally create tension in the greeting process.

If at any point you see behavior that makes you think the introduction will be anything but amicable, seek the assistance of a knowledgeable, positive behavior professional to help with the process.

Because dogs are predators and a lot of other companion animals are potential prey (from the dog's perspective), introductions to other species should be handled with extra care. Always have your new dog on-leash when allowing him to meet new animals, with a good supply of tasty treats on hand. When he notices a cat walk into the room, the fish in an aquarium, a bird



**It's irresponsible to just turn your new dog loose with your cat. Their first interactions should be carefully orchestrated, with your dog on leash and with at least one other family member or friend available to help. This goes for all other species in the family, too: birds, fish, reptiles, etc.**

chirping in the corner, or goats in a field, feed him bits of yummy treats so he learns to look to you for good stuff in the presence of other animals. If he decides that other animals make good stuff fall from your fingers, he'll be happier about sharing his home with them.

If he shows any inclination to be predatory toward his nonhuman housemates – chasing or snapping at them – you will need to use scrupulous management to prevent tragedy when you're not directly supervising, until you convince him that the other animals are more valuable to him as predictors of treats than as prey.

Until you're completely confident that he won't hurt them, your dog will need to be safely enclosed in his crate or his own room when you're not there to observe. If you're home but not directly supervising, you can use a leash or tether as an additional management option. **Suggested resource:** "Cats and Dogs, Living Together," WDJ June 2007.

## The social scene

An unfortunate number of adult dogs missed out on important socialization lessons. Until you've had the chance to observe your dog's reactions in the presence of a wide variety of stimuli, err on the side of caution and assume that he's not as well socialized as he could be. Otherwise you could be in for a nasty surprise when you discover that he's never been exposed to people of other races, tall men with beards, babies in strollers, hikers wearing backpacks, or helmet-wearing bikers. Until you know him well, always have your new dog leashed whenever you're in an environment where he could encounter something new and strange to him.

If you discover that he has an adverse reaction to novel stimuli, you need to embark on a behavior modification program using *counter-conditioning and desensitization* to help change his association with new stuff from "Oh no, SCARY!" to "Yay, good stuff!" This process involves keeping him a safe distance from the scary thing, where he's alert and a little alarmed but not barking, lunging, or otherwise freaking out. The instant he notices "scary thing," start feeding him a high-value treat (such as tiny bits of chicken), non-stop, until the scary thing leaves.

Keep repeating this until your dog is happy to see "scary thing" at that distance because he realizes that "scary thing" makes chicken fall from the sky. Now



**This little terror – er, terrier – is friendly with people, but is not necessarily nice to dogs. Like many small dogs, she has an oversized confidence in her ability to run the show. Take nothing for granted about your new dog's social skills.**

move a little closer and repeat the process, until "scary thing" right up close still evokes a happy response.

It's *especially* important to watch your new dog with children. A fair number of dogs who are otherwise well socialized don't do well with children, and need either excellent management or extensive behavior modification to make them safe around kids. If your dog is extremely unsocialized or reactive to novel stimuli in general and children in particular, you may need help from a qualified positive behavior professional. **Suggested resources:** *The Cautious Canine*, by Patricia McConnell and *Help for Your Fearful Dog*, by Nicole Wilde.

## A little help from your friends

Chances are good that your dog-care professionals will become some of your best friends over the course of your dog's lifetime. This will include your veterinarian, pet-sitter, groomer, and trainer/behavior consultant. Take the time to find professionals that you like and trust. Make a list of these dog-care providers before you need them – ones who are willing to communicate freely with you; and who share your philosophies of animal care, training, handling, and management. Interview them before you agree to entrust your dog to their care.

A veterinarian should be willing to sit down with you and talk about their perspective on vaccinations and other routine

procedures, even if you have to pay for an appointment slot to do so. A trainer should welcome your request to watch one or more of her classes in action. If they're not willing to be interviewed or observed, they're not good enough for you and your dog.

Remember that you are your dog's protector. Don't ever let *anyone* talk you into doing anything to your dog – or letting *them* do anything to him – that you're not comfortable with. Trust your instincts. Be willing to step forward and rescue your dog from the hands of an animal care professional who would do him harm in the name of training or management. **Suggested resources:** See "Resources," page 24 for a list of organizations for training and health professionals.

So there you have it. The list may seem daunting, but it's intended to prevent you from being overwhelmed by the actual arrival of your new canine family member. Prepare well, help your dog adjust to the overwhelming changes to his world, and get ready to enjoy the rest of your lives together. 🐾

*Pat Miller, CPDT, is WDJ's Training Editor. Miller lives in Hagerstown, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. Pat is also author of The Power of Positive Dog Training; Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog; and Positive Perspectives II: Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog. See "Resources," page 24.*

# Calendula: Herb of the Year

*This easy-to-grow herb offers your dog almost limitless benefits.*

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Picture a flower with such intense orange or yellow petals that it brightens moods and gardens both. Give it significant healing properties for internal and external application, then add a zesty flavor that makes it a culinary herb as well.

*Calendula officinalis* (pronounced cal-EN-du-la) fits all of these descriptions and more. No wonder it's been named 2008 Herb of the Year by the International Herb Association. This cheerful plant belongs in your garden and in your herbal medicine kit for the benefit of every member of your family – especially your dog.

Vermont herbalist Rosemary Gladstar treasures calendula. “I love how beautiful it is,” she says, “with its golden head rising forth in the garden, a bit of sun on earth. In early winter, this brave little bright light is often the last flower to bloom in my gardens. I’ve often seen it rising out of a fresh dusting of winter snow.

I also love it, of course, because of its medicinal power. Calendula tea or tincture is my favorite herbal treatment for lymph system support, and used externally it is an awesome healing aid for every type of skin condition.”

Calendula, whose common names include pot marigold, marigold, garden marigold, and Mary bud, is entirely different from the more familiar bitter-tasting French or African marigold, *Tagetes spp.*, which has ruffled blossoms. Calendula is a member of the composite or daisy family, and its long, slender petals have a mildly astringent flavor and fragrance. Its Latin name is derived from *calends*, the first day of the Roman month, because it was thought to bloom at every new moon.

Calendula is prized by herbalists for its versatile benefits. Triterpene saponins, flavonoids, carotinoids, and volatile oils give it anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial, antiviral, and antilipid effects. Its virus-

fighting properties have been proven in tests on vesicular stomatitis virus (VSV), a family of viruses that affect horses, cattle, and pigs, and the herb is of interest to AIDS researchers because extracts made from dried calendula have potent anti-HIV activity.

Some human clinical studies support the use of calendula in the early treatment of stomach ulcers, and it is valued as an ingredient in preparations that, when applied externally, reduce pain in post-mastectomy lymphedema. Calendula teas and extracts make effective mouthwashes that help treat and prevent gum disease, and the tea

## What you can do . . .

- Plant calendula in a sunny location and harvest blossoms for months.
- Add fresh or dried calendula to your dog's food for improved digestion and overall health.
- Brew calendula tea for use as a first-aid wash or spray.
- Buy or make calendula salve or infused oil to treat skin conditions and paw pads.



**An “outdoor way” to make a calendula-infused oil to heal and soothe your dog's dry, itchy skin: In a clean jar, cover fresh and/or dried calendula blossoms with olive oil, seal, and leave in the sun for a month or longer.**

can be used as an eyewash.

Calendula is most popular, however, as a wound healer and skin-repair herb. It speeds the healing of cuts, burns, and abrasions by promoting the formation of granulation tissue while preventing bacterial growth. Calendula tea is a highly effective wound wash or rinse, and petals strained from freshly brewed tea make an effective poultice or wound dressing.

## Sunshine in the garden

Native to Europe, calendula is a short (12 to 18 inches tall) annual that, once established, enthusiastically self-seeds and reappears year after year. To grow your own, purchase seeds and plant them directly in the garden, or start them indoors for transplanting after the last frost. Depending on your climate, calendula may thrive in spring and early summer, or it may prefer to be planted in late summer or early fall. For medicinal use, look for traditional *Calendula officinalis* rather than modern hybrids.

Calendula does best in full sun and any moderately fertile, well-drained garden



**A calendula tea rinse can help a dog with itchy skin stop scratching. Be advised, however, that the tea can stain a white coat. It will nicely “highlight” a red, yellow, or light brown coat!**

soil. To avoid crowding, thin the seedlings to between 4 and 6 inches apart.

To extend calendula's blooming season, pinch or cut the flower heads before they develop seed pods.

Harvest blossoms at their peak on sunny days after the dew has dried. The stems exude a sap that will stick to your fingers as you toss flowers into your basket, colander, or collection bag.

Use fresh calendula flowers whole or strip the petals from flower heads to brew tea, make tincture, or add to your dog's food or your own favorite dishes.

To dry calendula blossoms, place them on a mesh rack, wire rack lined with cheesecloth, or cookie sheets. Spread flower heads so they don't touch each other and leave them in a warm, dry, shady location with lively air circulation. An electric fan set on low can speed drying if needed. For faster drying, strip off the petals and discard the flower heads.

If damp or cool conditions prevent rapid air drying, cookie sheets holding calendula blossoms can be placed in an oven warmed by a pilot light or oven light, or the oven can be set to a “keep warm” temperature. Another way to dry the blossoms is to use a food dehydrator or set your drying rack next to a dehumidifier.

Before storing dried calendula flowers in tightly sealed containers, be sure they pass the “snap” test. The flowers should be so dry that when folded they snap and

break rather than bend. Residual moisture causes mold growth, so be sure the flowers are dry, dry, dry. Store calendula in closed containers away from heat, light, and humidity.

### **Calendula at work**

Juliette de Bairacli Levy, founder of the Natural Rearing movement and the author of several books about herbal animal care (see “Grandmother Nature,” WDJ July 2006), considers calendula an important tonic and heart medicine. “Goats and sheep seek it out,” she writes in her *Complete Herbal Handbook for Farm and Stable*. “The flowers possess important restorative powers over the arteries and veins, and thus are much fed by the Arabs to their racing horses. The flowers are fed also to make miserable and fretting animals cheerful.”

Her list of uses for calendula include the treatment of vomiting, internal ulcers, fevers, all ailments of the arteries and veins, heart disease, and all skin conditions, including eczema and warts.

She recommends adding calendula flowers to food, brewing a strong tea for external application, making a lotion by boiling finely cut flowers and leaves in milk, making a therapeutic cream by adding minced flowers to cream or unsalted butter, and making a vinegar tincture for removing the pain and swelling of bee and wasp stings.

New Jersey herbalist Cathy Lauer's

favorite use for calendula is in a mixture she calls Best Bath Ever. “That's a mighty name,” she says, “but for me it feels just like that. I combine equal parts dried calendula, chamomile, and lavender flowers and let them steep in just-boiled water for 15 minutes before straining. The proportions are a handful or so to a quart of water. For your dog's final rinse after bathing or as a between-bath refresher, add a quart of this tea to a gallon of water. As you pour it over the dog's coat, work it in with your fingers or a comb. Blot with a towel before blow-drying, or, if your dog has a short coat, let it air dry. All three of these herbs are soothing to the skin, calming, relaxing, and cleansing. I credit calendula for giving the water an extra-soft feel.”

Carol Lizotte at Green Gems Herbs in Fremont, New Hampshire, is another calendula fan. “I am an herbalist to animals,” she says. “I love calendula for my canine companions and include it in lots of formulas. I make a healing salve by infusing calendula in olive oil with other herbs and essential oils for dogs and people. I consider calendula one of the most gentle and valuable lymphatic herbs we have, and certainly the best skin herb I have found.”

Buddy, a nine-year-old Beagle/Shetland Sheep Dog-mix, had fatty cysts on his hindquarters, chest, and neck. He also had an underactive thyroid and a slight cough. Lizotte combined calendula with other herbs in a tea that was added to his food. “There was a decrease in cyst sizes within one month,” she says. “All is still well with Buddy, and he continues to improve.”

When Vegas, a four-year-old French Brittany, tangled with a woodchuck last year, the woodchuck won. “The wound was so deep it exposed the muscle beside Vegas's neck,” says the dog's owner, Long Island, New York, herbalist Randy Parr. “I applied a calendula-comfrey ointment, and in two days the muscle was covered with new skin. In two weeks, all the hair had grown back. Vegas loved the taste of the ointment so much that he grabbed the plastic jar when I wasn't around, popped the lid off by biting the sides, and ate the whole thing! I'm embarrassed to admit that Vegas did this twice—but he suffered no ill effects. I've learned my lesson and keep it on a higher shelf.”

Rosemary Gladstar uses calendula for animals in two ways. “One is my all-time favorite skin salve made with calendula, comfrey, and St. John's wort,” she says.



“It’s so versatile, you can use it for anything – cuts, burns, sores, cracked paw pads, scrapes, abrasions, and scratches. The other use is as a wash for wounds and infections, including hot spots and allergic rashes.

“I’ve sometimes found that certain infections, especially those that are allergy related, seem to get further irritated with the use of a salve or other oil-based remedy. The oil seems to hold in the ‘heat.’ When this is the case, I brew a quart of calendula tea and let the herbs steep for half an hour or 45 minutes. I don’t strain the calendula but just apply the ‘mash’ over the infected area. If it’s where the dog will lick the wound, no problem. Calendula is totally edible and will aid the dog internally. Other herbs such as comfrey, nettle, chickweed, and a small amount of organically cultivated goldenseal can be added as well, but calendula is so healing that it usually works fine on its own.

“Hot spots and other allergic reactions are sometimes irritated by the dog’s constant biting, picking, scratching, and licking,” she continues. “My beautiful Bernese Mountain Dog, Deva, had many allergies when she was young. Until I found out what she was allergic to and got her on a raw-food diet, she would get terrible hot spots.

“Whenever that happened, I would brew calendula and comfrey tea and blend everything into a mash in the blender. Then I would thicken this brew with comfrey powder until it was quite goey. I would smooth the paste thickly over the irritated area and when it dried, it formed a hard crust that she couldn’t lick off. The calendula-comfrey paste not only healed the area but also prevented her from scratching and irritating it further. Generally after a few days the paste would cake off and underneath would be freshly healed skin.”

## Aromatherapy

Because calendula does not produce an essential oil when distilled, only its hydrosol (flower water) is made by steam distillation. Calendula hydrosol is available from some aromatherapy supply companies and, like calendula tea, it is used as a mouth-wash, skin rinse, and soothing spray. It can also be added to food and water using the same dosages given for strongly brewed tea.

Calendula essential oil is produced by a carbon dioxide extraction method in which liquid CO<sub>2</sub> is used as a solvent in a closed

chamber. When the chamber is opened, the CO<sub>2</sub> evaporates, leaving no solvent residue in the essential oil. “The end result,” says aromatherapy supplier Marge Clark in Madison, Tennessee, “is an extract as close to the natural essence of the plant that anyone has achieved. Small amounts of CO<sub>2</sub>-extracted calendula essential oil, such as 1 to 2 percent of the total, can safely improve the effectiveness of skin care oils, creams, salves, and lotions.”

Calendula-infused oil makes a perfect aromatherapy base for essential oils that fight infection or relieve other symptoms. I Itch Not and Hot Spot, two AromaDog products developed by canine aromatherapist Faith Thanas, use such an oil base.

## Homeopathy

Look through the catalogs or websites of homeopathic supply companies and you’ll find dozens of products that contain calendula, everything from single remedies in various strengths to homeopathic calendula gels, creams, lotions, sprays, oils, and tinctures. These products are recommended for the relief of cuts, burns, skin irritations, bruises, wounds, itchy skin, and rashes.

One manufacturer quotes John Tyler Kent, MD, a leading homeopathic physician, as saying, “Calendula is all the dressing you will need for open wounds and lacerations.”

As explained in “How Homeopathy Works” (WDJ, December 2007), homeopathic remedies are made by diluting and succussing (shaking or pounding) ingredients in a sequence of steps that is said to increase their potency and effectiveness.

“I love calendula gel,” says veterinary homeopath Stacey Hershman, DVM, of Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. “I use it on minor, superficial scratches, rashes, and wounds. If a dog has red, itchy skin, I have the owners store calendula gel in the fridge so the gel can be put on cold, which soothes inflammation. I also use the gel in red, inflamed ears that are ulcerated and bleeding. I apply it after ear flushes.”

## Make your own

Follow these simple guidelines to make your own canine-friendly calendula products.

**Brew medicinal-strength calendula tea** by pouring 1 cup boiling water over 2 teaspoons dried or 2 tablespoons fresh calendula blossoms. Cover and let stand until lukewarm or room temperature, 30 to 45 minutes.

For a more concentrated tea, combine calendula with cold water in a covered pan, bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer gently for 5 to 10 minutes. Then remove from heat and let stand until cool.

Calendula tea can be stored for several days in the refrigerator.

**Make an infused oil** by filling a glass jar with loosely packed fresh blossoms or petals. If using dried calendula, fill the jar half way to leave room for expansion. Cover the blossoms with olive oil, filling the jar to within 1 inch of the top. Seal tightly. You can leave the jar outside in direct sunlight for several weeks or even months before straining. Shake the contents once in a while to enhance the process. This method works best with fresh blossoms that have been allowed to wilt slightly to reduce their moisture content. Otherwise, excess moisture can create a sour smelling oil.

Alternatively, combine blossoms and olive oil in a crock pot or slow cooker set on low, or in the top half of a double boiler set over gently simmering water. After a few hours, the olive oil will take on a deep yellow or golden orange hue. The heat of these methods drives off moisture in fresh blossoms and prevents rancidity.

When the macerated oil is ready to use, strain it through cheesecloth or a dish towel or small towel, pressing the fabric to remove as much oil as possible. For convenience, decant into small glass jars or bottles. Tightly seal the caps or lids. Label the jars with contents and date, and store them away from heat and light.

**Make a salve** by adding 1 ounce (2 tablespoons) shredded or chopped beeswax to 1 cup calendula-infused olive oil. Gently heat the mixture in the top half of a double boiler or melt in a small pan set in a larger pan of simmering water. If desired, add 10 to 20 drops of lavender, tea tree, or other disinfecting essential oils as a preservative. Pour into clean, sterilized jars, like glass baby food jars or plastic salve jars. Label and store away from heat and light.

Or, combine calendula-infused olive oil with equal parts olive oil infused with St. John’s wort blossoms and comfrey. Or, if desired, combine equal parts of fresh or dried calendula, St. John’s wort, and comfrey, cover with olive oil, and macerate as described above. Be sure to let fresh comfrey wilt first to reduce its moisture content. This is the basic recipe for Rosemary Gladstar’s favorite salve. Thicken with beeswax and, if desired,

add several drops of essential oil before pouring the salve into jars for storage.

**Make a tincture** (liquid extract) by filling a jar of fresh or dried calendula blossoms with 80-proof vodka or other grain alcohol. Start with a jar loosely filled with fresh calendula blossoms or half-filled with dried calendula, leaving room for expansion. Seal the jar tightly and leave it in a warm location for six weeks or longer, shaking it every few days. Strain through filter paper or cheesecloth and store in small glass bottles away from heat and light.

For an effective non-alcohol tincture, cover the flowers with raw apple cider vinegar and follow the instructions above.

**Too busy to make your own calendula remedies?** Several pet care products contain this special plant, including Calendula Skin Spray by Tasha's Herbs. Tasha's ingredients are distilled water, fresh calendula flowers, *Echinacea angustifolia* root, aloe vera gel, flower essences, vegetable glycerin, and grain alcohol.

Calendula is also a key ingredient in Pal Dog's Freshen-Up Sprays, Soothing Spot Spray, and Soothing Balm.

## Treating your dog

Calendula has an exceptional safety record and is recommended for dogs of all ages. In their book *All You Ever Wanted to Know about Herbs for Pets*, Mary Wulff-Tilford and Gregory Tilford caution against feeding calendula to female dogs during early pregnancy, not because any dogs have been adversely affected but because in some studies calendula may have triggered miscarriages in pregnant rats.

The comprehensive reference book *Veterinary Herbal Medicine* by veterinarian Susan G. Wynn, DVM, and medical herbalist Barbara J. Fougere mentions only that the herb should not be used when allergy to plants of the Asteraceae or daisy family is known or suspected. Calendula has no known potential drug interactions.

**Add calendula blossoms, tea, or hydrosol to your dog's food.** Some herbalists toss whole fresh or dried flower heads into the bowl while others break the flowers apart or, in the case of dried flowers, grind them to a powder. Calendula may improve digestion, treat colitis and other chronic digestive problems, and help prevent yeast or fungal infections.

As the Tilfords explain, while virtually no scientific data exist to validate the effectiveness of calendula in the treatment

## Herb of the Year

Every May since 1995, the International Herb Association has raised public awareness about herbs that are easy to grow, visually attractive, and well-known for medicinal or culinary uses. This year, calendula (*Calendula officinalis*) joins fennel, bee balm, thyme, mint, lavender, rosemary, sage, echinacea, basil, garlic, oregano, scented geranium, and lemon balm on that exalted list.

The IHA's 2008 Herb of the Year information packet provides a comprehensive review of calendula's history, chemistry, varieties, traditional and modern uses, growing tips, and recipes. To order, send \$10 (which includes postage) to Herb of the Year, International Herb Association, PO Box 5667, Jacksonville, FL 32247, or contact IHA at (904) 399-3241. See [iherb.org](http://iherb.org) for more information.



of fungal infections in dogs and other animals, "calendula's safety and reputed effectiveness as a broad-spectrum antifungal agent make it an option worth trying." For digestive problems, use it alone or combine calendula with fresh or dried chamomile, another important digestive herb. Add up to 1 teaspoon dried or 1 tablespoon fresh flower petals per 20 pounds of body weight per day.

To help improve digestion, treat yeast or fungal infections, or stimulate lymph circulation, add strongly brewed calendula tea or hydrosol to food at the rate of 1 tablespoon per 30 pounds body weight twice daily. If also adding fresh or dried calendula to food, use 1 tablespoon tea per 30 pounds body weight once per day.

**Cook with calendula.** If you ever feed your dog rice or make dog biscuits, calendula can provide both color and flavor. One of the plant's nicknames is "poor man's saffron." Simply add a handful of coarsely chopped fresh or dried calendula petals before cooking or baking.

**Improve your dog's oral health with calendula.** Calendula is recommended for gum disease and mouth irritations. Dampen your dog's toothbrush with calendula tea, hydrosol, or diluted tincture, or wrap gauze around your finger, soak it, and massage your dog's gums. You can also apply calendula tea, hydrosol, or diluted tincture by squirting it into the side of your dog's mouth with an eyedropper or by using a small spray bottle. The more contact calendula has with your dog's mouth, the better.

**Rinse wounds with calendula.** It's an effective wash or rinse for cuts, bites, burns, abrasions, scratches, insect bites,

stings, poison ivy, sunburn, and other injuries. Apply calendula tea, hydrosol, or diluted tincture to remove debris, cleanse the wound, and accelerate healing. All canine skin conditions, including hot spots, lick granulomas, open sores, and itchy yeast infections, can be sprayed or soaked with calendula, or they can be dabbed with a calendula-soaked cotton ball. Repeat often. To speed the healing of yeast or fungal infections, dry the treated area with a blow dryer set on low heat.

**Note:** Strongly brewed calendula tea may temporarily stain a white coat. Applied as a final rinse, it enhances red, yellow, and light brown coats.

**Make an eye wash** for conjunctivitis or minor eye injuries by straining calendula tea through coffee filter paper or several layers of cheesecloth, and add a pinch of unrefined sea salt, such as 1/8 teaspoon salt per cup of tea. Spray the dog's eyes for several seconds at a time and repeat this treatment several times per day.

**Apply a calendula compress** to new, slow-healing, or infected wounds by saturating a wash cloth, gauze, cheesecloth, or absorbent cotton with calendula tea or diluted tincture. Hold on the affected area for five minutes. For burns, cuts, scrapes, and scratches, use cold tea (brew it extra strong, then add ice to chill it quickly) or hydrosol, or add calendula tincture to ice water. For abscesses, infected sores, or impacted anal sacs, use a comfortably hot tea, hydrosol, or diluted tincture. The hot application, which speeds relief, is called a fomentation. After five minutes, remove the compress or fomentation, re-soak the fabric or cotton, and reapply.

**Make a poultice** by mashing fresh

blossoms, or strain fresh or dried blossoms after tea brewing, and apply to any wound to speed healing. Hold the poultice in place by hand for several minutes or with a bandage for an hour or more, then replace the plant material. Repeat as needed.

**Apply calendula tincture** full-strength to burns (it cools the injury quickly and speeds tissue repair) as well as to other wounds. To prepare a compress, dilute 1 part tincture in 3 parts water.

**Apply calendula-infused olive oil** to cuts and other injuries. The macerated oil softens skin and speeds healing.

**Apply calendula salve** to any cut, scrape, bite, or other injury, and use calendula salve or oil to protect your dog's paw pads from winter salt and ice.

**Use homeopathic calendula gel** or other homeopathic calendula remedies for the treatment of all conditions mentioned here. 🐾

*CJ Puotinen is author of The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care, Natural Remedies for Dogs and Cats, and other books (see "Resources," page 24 for purchasing information). She lives in New York.*

## Resources Mentioned in This Article

### EXPERTS

**Rosemary Gladstar, Sage Mountain**, E. Barre, VT. (802) 479-9825; [sagemountain.com](http://sagemountain.com)

**Stacey Hershman, DVM**, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY. (914) 478-4100; [naturalvetforpets.com](http://naturalvetforpets.com)

**Cathy Lauer**, Montvale, NJ, [cathylauer.com](http://cathylauer.com)

**Carol Lizotte, Green Gems Herbals**, Fremont, NH. (603) 679-5042; [greengemsherbals@comcast.net](mailto:greengemsherbals@comcast.net)

**Randy Parr**, Long Island, NY. [rparrny@optonline.net](mailto:rparrny@optonline.net)

### PRODUCTS

**AromaDog**. Hot Spot Anti-Inflammatory Spray and Itch Not for chronic itching and scratching. (508) 892-9330; [aromadog.com](http://aromadog.com)

**Bigelow Chemists, Inc.** Homeopathic calendula gels, creams, and other products. (800) 793-5433 or (212) 533-2700; [bigelowchemists.com](http://bigelowchemists.com)

**Homeopathy Overnight**. Homeopathic calendula remedies and products. (800) ARNICA3; [homeopathyovernight.com](http://homeopathyovernight.com)

**Jean's Greens Herbal Tea Works**. Dried organic calendula, other herbs, infused oils, do-it-yourself supplies, and pet products containing calendula. (518) 479-0471; [jeansgreens.com](http://jeansgreens.com)

**Nature's Gift**. Calendula essential oil (CO<sub>2</sub> extraction) and calendula hydrosol. (615) 612-4270; [naturesgift.com](http://naturesgift.com)

**Pal Dog**. Pet products containing calendula. (888) 738-8390; [paldog.com](http://paldog.com)

**Richter's Herb Specialists**. Superior quality calendula seeds and dried calendula flowers. (905) 640-6677; [richters.com](http://richters.com)

**Tasha's Calendula Skin Spray**. Available from Botanical Dog ([botanicaldog.com](http://botanicaldog.com); 843-864-9368) and other retailers.

**Terra Firma Botanicals**. Organic calendula tincture. (800) 837-3476, [terrafirma.com](http://terrafirma.com)

### REFERENCES

**All You Ever Wanted to Know about Herbs for Pets**, by Mary L. Wulff-Tilford and Gregory L. Tilford. Bowtie Press, 1999

**The Complete Herbal Handbook for Farm and Stable**, by Juliette de Bairacli Levy. Faber & Faber, 4th Edition, 1991

**The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care**, by CJ Puotinen. Keats/McGraw-Hill, 2000

**Veterinary Herbal Medicine**, by Susan G. Wynn and Barbara J. Fougere. Mosby, Inc., 2007

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# Why Vinyl Stinks

*If that vinyl toy smells bad, chances are it contains toxic chemicals.*

BY SUSAN WEINSTEIN

A few years ago, I bought a special bed to help Caleb, my Bouvier des Flandres, live more comfortably with his arthritis. When filled with water, it was supposed to provide him with a cool and supportive cushion. It sounded great.

I looked forward to giving the bed to Caleb. But the moment I took it out of the box, it gave off a powerful odor. Even the cardboard box smelled of it. The odor was so intense that I had to back away from it.

Within minutes, the sharp, distinctive smell penetrated my entire house. I wondered whether the bed might be outgassing industrial chemicals, although I didn't know at the time exactly what kind they might be. What I did know was that my sensitive nose couldn't stand the smell – and if I couldn't stand to inhale around



**These toys are cute! Made of a soft, chewy vinyl, they seem like perfect toys to occupy a teething puppy. But the additives used to soften vinyl can pose health risks to developing puppies, especially under the influence of pressure (chewing), liquid (saliva), and warmth. Toys like these should not be given to puppies.**

## What you can do . . .

- Don't buy vinyl toys for your dog, especially if you have a puppy or a breeding adult dog.
- Notice where you've got vinyl in your house, car, and elsewhere in your life so you can eliminate as much of it as you can, to reduce your dogs', your kids', and your own exposure to it.
- Vacuum your home and car regularly to remove some of the phthalate-laden dust.
- Organize or support efforts to establish laws to protect both children and pets from exposure to problematic phthalates.



the bed, I certainly wasn't going to let Caleb snooze on it! So I whisked the bed outside to the front porch, hoping that passing breezes and ultraviolet rays from the sun would diffuse the source of the odor so that I could bring it back inside and give it to my guy.

But it smelled as bad a week later as it had on Day One. Following my intuition that such a thing was not good for us, I took it back for a refund.

Turns out, it's a good thing I trusted my instincts. The bed was made of vinyl – and the substances in vinyl that smell so awful are suspected of causing all sorts of health problems in animals and humans alike.

## If it's not safe for kids . . .

Over the past few years, public concern has increased about the safety of vinyl products, particularly in items made for kids. This concern has focused on the presence of certain additives used almost

exclusively in vinyl. In response, nine major governments from around the world and many more municipalities have now banned or advised against the use of these additives in children's toys, and sometimes also in childcare items. The state of California (2007), the European Union (EU, 2005), Japan (2003), Fiji (2000), Argentina (1999), and Mexico (1998) have passed laws enforcing such restrictions, and the Philippines recently introduced legislation in its Senate. Canada (1998) and Australia (1998) have asked for voluntary measures or issued health advisories about additives in vinyl, and Australia has just conducted a new investigation into the matter.

These governments have acted because they are convinced of the risk that additives will transfer out of vinyl products and release enough toxins to damage a child's physical development. They believe this because recent studies have shown that the plasticizers used to soften vinyl

interfere with the development of the very young and can do other damage, as well. The conclusions of these studies have been drawn from testing on *animals*. But even though tests based on animals have spawned legislation to protect *human* babies and children, it appears that animals themselves benefit from little, if any, similar protection. This discrepancy has grabbed my attention. It should also grab yours.

## What is vinyl?

“Vinyl” is the common name for polyvinyl chloride, or PVC. It’s a cheap plastic that’s used to make all kinds of stuff. In fact, it’s just about everywhere. You and your dog almost certainly have vinyl in your lives.

Chlorine constitutes one of vinyl’s primary chemical building blocks. It’s well known that under certain conditions chlorine produces some of the most dangerous pollutants humans have yet created: dioxins. Dioxins cause cancers, reproductive and developmental problems, and immune system damage in animals; they also they spread around the environment and concentrate further as they work their way up the food chain.

Dioxins are by-products of several significant industrial processes, one being the manufacture of vinyl. And vinyl produces dioxins not only when it’s made, but also if it ends up being incinerated in a deliberate or accidental fire at the end of its useful life. Plus, vinyl is very dicey to recycle, since the chlorine it contains cannot be mixed with other plastics. The development of

vinyl brought some deadly problems into the world.

Between manufacture and disposal, vinyl itself is pretty stable; toxicologists tend to agree that it’s probably safe for the user. But PVC, by itself, is too hard and brittle to do much with, so manufacturers infuse it with a number of additives that make it soft, flexible, and willing to take colorants. They may also add fragrances. According to Dr. David Santillo, senior scientist with the Greenpeace Research Laboratories based at the University of Exeter in the UK, “You can end up with a vinyl product of which only a small proportion is actually the polyvinyl chloride plastic.” And there’s the rub. While vinyl itself may be relatively safe during use, its additives are not.

## Can you say “phthalates”?

Vinyl may contain a number of additives known to be highly toxic, among them lead, organotin, alkyl-phenols, and bisphenol-A, to name but a few. But those getting the most attention today are called “phthalates.” Phthalates (correctly pronounced with an “f” sound immediately before the hard “th” sound) is the common name for phthalate esters. These human-made chemicals, when introduced into vinyl, make it soft and cooperative. They do this very well in part because their molecules do not bond to PVC, but rather move freely through it. And because they move through it, they also move freely *out* of it and into the surrounding environment.

The phthalates used to plasticize PVC are what give it that familiar “vinyl” smell.

If you can smell vinyl, then you – and your dog – are inhaling phthalates that are out-gassing. Over a product’s lifetime, vinyl phthalates will leach out completely into any skin, other living tissue, air, water, and earth with which it comes into contact. That’s why old vinyl becomes so dry and brittle. A good general guideline is, the stronger a vinyl product smells, the greater the amount of phthalates it contains. (Am I ever glad I returned that malodorous cooling bed that I bought for Caleb, in spite of its potential to be an otherwise great product.)

Of the many different kinds of phthalates, not all have been equally studied. Not all are used in vinyl. Not all may be equally dangerous, and some may not even *be* dangerous. But six types that *are* normally found in vinyl have been identified as culprits behind some serious health concerns. They are:

- DINP (di-isononyl phthalate)
- DEHP (diethylhexyl phthalate)
- DNOP (di-n-octyl phthalate)
- DIDP (di-iso-decyl phthalate)
- BBP (benzyl butyl phthalate)
- DBP (dibutyl phthalate)

All six of these chemicals have been banned in the European Union for use in children’s toys and childcare products, and it’s to them that I normally refer when I mention “phthalates” in this article.

## How phthalates interfere with health

Phthalates can compromise the integrity of the body in a variety of ways. For example, they can cause measurable toxicity and biochemical changes in the kidneys and liver. However, the negative effect that garners the most press is reproductive problems. This may include lowered sperm count, abnormal sperm, and, at a more profound level, improper development of sex organs, especially in males, according to Dr. Santillo.

Further observations show correlations between phthalate exposure and undescended testicles in young children, inappropriate levels of certain hormones in the bodies of newborn babies, and a shortening of the distance

## How to Tell If It’s Vinyl

- Be like a dog and sniff all soft plastic pet and household products. If it smells like “vinyl,” it probably is.
- Check labels and packaging for content descriptions that say “vinyl” or “PVC.”
- Check the product (*not* its packaging) for a recycling symbol with #3 PVC (or #3 V). Products with *no* recycling information may still be vinyl.
- If a soft plastic product does not have that characteristic vinyl smell and lacks a recycling symbol or labelling, ask the retailer for more information. If the retailer can’t tell you what the product is made of, ask the manufacturer. If no one can or will tell you, look for a more clearly labelled alternative.



Vinyl doughnut from Vo-Toys, Inc.

between the anus and the genitalia. Such correlations in themselves, he adds, are not *proof* of cause and effect, but they ring the same alarm bells as those studies that *do* show cause and effect.

Phthalates initiate reproductive damage at what Dr. Santillo describes as “a very fundamental, cellular level.” They do this by interfering with the chemical communication between cells during certain critical stages of development. Babies in the womb can be affected if their mothers are exposed to phthalates. Newborns and very young children are also vulnerable and may be exposed through many sources, including breast milk.

Although phthalates pose other possible risks besides the ones mentioned above, their known effects illustrate that they can cause severe problems to health. I believe that we need to take these things into account as we choose which kinds of substances we choose to interact with – or select for our dogs. In fact, because of the ways they naturally interact with the physical world, our dogs may be at particular risk of absorbing phthalates.

### Speeding phthalates' release

Both puppies and human babies love to mouth things, especially when they're teething. But, whereas babies eventually outgrow this tendency, most dogs keep

joyfully chewing for the rest of their lives, putting them at an increased risk.

The problem arises because phthalates transfer easily from PVC into the surrounding environment. Although they don't need specific conditions to cause this and will leach out of a vinyl object that's sitting quietly all by itself, certain factors will speed up the process. The most effective one of all is what Dr. Santillo calls “mechanical pressure,” which means when something squeezes the object.

The following canine contributions put dogs at special risk of absorbing phthalates from vinyl:

- Chewing (an outstanding example of repeated mechanical pressure)
- Saliva (liquid)
- Body heat (increased temperature)
- Digestion (when pieces of vinyl get swallowed)
- Inhalation of airborne chemicals
- Skin contact (snoozing on or leaning against something)

All of these are a factor when a dog chews a vinyl toy. But some, such as

warmth, inhalation, and skin contact are part of other scenarios too, such as when a dog sleeps on a vinyl bed.

Taking these factors into account, the EU has banned the six major phthalates not only from kids' toys, but also from many other products used by children. Governments are enacting protective legislation for humans; protections for animals are needed. “I see no reason why the same measure should not be immediately justifiable in order to protect those other members of our families, namely, our pets,” says Dr. Santillo.

As long as dogs (and other animals and kids on *this* continent) don't have similar protective legislation, they depend upon us to decide what they'll be exposed to. By learning more about how phthalates (not to mention other industrial chemicals) can affect our dogs, we can make better choices about what we buy for them.

### Great Danes care about dogs

Scientists believe phthalates to be dangerous for humans due to results of tests they've carried out primarily on rats and mice. However, they've seen similar outcomes in experiments on primates as well as in some observations of humans. These problems show up across a wide range of mammals. Although phthalates may have been tested on comparatively few canids,

## If You Already Have Vinyl Products

- Replace vinyl chew toys with non-vinyl toys. Don't give the vinyl toys away, either; get them recycled if you can. *Don't* burn them under any circumstances!
- *Never* let your dog chew on shoes that contain vinyl imitation leather (lots of gym shoes do these days).
- Replace vinyl dog boots with ones made from alternatives such as non-PVC-coated nylon with natural rubber soles.
- Reduce or improve your dog's car time. Cover vinyl seats or the “shelf” under the back windshield (where small dogs like to perch), and wash covers often. Open windows enough to encourage air exchange. Find an outward-blowing fan for car windows. Don't leave your car exposed to sunlight even on a mild day, since phthalates release faster in warmth.
- If your dog carrier, stroller, or tent has a PVC mesh screen, replace the mesh with a nylon screen. Meantime, roll up the vinyl mesh if you can so your dog doesn't have to breathe through it (or have its sharp odor interfere so much with more dog-important scents!)
- Store vinyl raincoats (your own and your dog's), carriers, tennis shoes, etc., outside your home, if possible. Or at least be thoughtful about where you keep them.
- Vacuum your home and car regularly. If you can't get to them often as you'd like, even doing one area at a time will improve things by removing some of the phthalate-laden dust.
- If you've got vinyl floors, open your windows; use fans and air exchangers to move low air out. Don't feed or give your dog treats directly on a vinyl floor. Encourage him to sleep on other floors; if he won't, put down rugs and wash them often.
- Replace vinyl shower curtains and window blinds with non-vinyl ones when you can.
- Don't use your dog's vinyl raincoat if she doesn't really mind getting wet. Replace it with a non-vinyl coat as soon as you can.
- Don't sweat it too much! Vinyl is almost everywhere. Any reduction of its use in your home will help.

Danish researchers have recently spoken up on behalf of pet dogs (and cats), stating that they can suffer the same ill effects from these chemicals as can rodents, primates, and humans.

In 2006, the Danish Ministry of the Environment (MoE) published a report entitled (in the English translation) "Evaluation of the health risk to animals playing with phthalate-containing toys." The researchers started with the results of a 2005 investigation into vinyl toys that had been marketed for dogs and cats in Denmark. The 2005 study had found that anywhere from 10 percent to 54 percent of the total content of tested toys consisted of DEHP or DINP. Both of these phthalates ranked among the six that the EU had already banned from toys and products that were marketed for *human children*.

Based on these as well as other findings, the 2006 MoE project looked at the rate of phthalate transfer into, and its potential effects on, dogs and cats who played with toys that contained the chemicals.

The authors of the 2006 report also reviewed data from other studies. For example, when they compared data from tests carried out on rats with results of the few

tests carried out on dogs, they found that DEHP and DINP cause similar reproductive and liver damage in both species.

From this they reasoned that findings about the dangers of phthalates, drawn from studies carried out on rats, should be seen as significant not only for humans but also for dogs and cats. They also took into account behavioral differences between dogs and cats and the different uses of various kinds of products.

For example, they noted that veterinarians have discovered that when swallowed, soft plastic toys often become hard and sharp during the short time they spend in the gastrointestinal tract. This indicates that the leaching-out of softeners accelerates while the plastic is inside the dog.

In the end, they resolved that the greatest danger lay with dogs playing with toys containing phthalates, since repeated mechanical pressure (chewing) and the presence of saliva speed up the phthalates' release. (They were less concerned about cats' oral exposure since cats tend to play more with their paws than with their mouths.)

The 2006 study presented the following conclusions, which I summarize here:

■ Dogs who eat even small amounts of PVC toy per day can be exposed to toxic doses of DEHP, which can cause reproductive damage.

■ Phthalates migrate into dogs' saliva at rates that can increase the toxic effects of the chemicals.

■ The exposure of pregnant or nursing bitches (for even a very short time) during their puppies' critical development periods to toys containing DEHP can put the puppies' reproductive health at risk.

■ Dogs who eat even small amounts of PVC toy per day may also be exposed to toxic doses of DINP, which can cause liver damage with sufficient ongoing exposure.

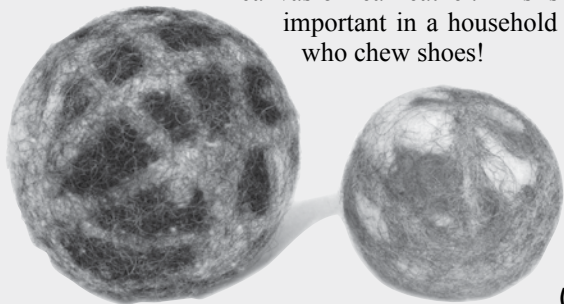
■ Toys may be a major source of phthalate exposure to dogs. Allowing that other sources (for example, the environment, food, and consumer products) also expose dogs to a variety of phthalates, combined and more significantly destructive phthalate actions could be expected.

The Danish study recommends that

## Safe Alternatives to Vinyl Products

The best way to avoid toxins from synthetic chemicals is to not buy synthetic products. But they're hard to dodge these days, and even natural things may be treated with nasty stuff. Besides, you may feel that synthetics offer certain advantages. You don't need to change everything at once; but as you are able to afford to and as you need to replace things, these tips can help keep your dog – and you – safer.

- When shopping for your dog, look for products made from materials that are natural or nearly so, such as toys made of felted wool or natural rubber, real bones to chew, organic cotton or hemp beds, and glass water bowls. Try to avoid synthetic additives such as fragrance or color.
- Replace vinyl-containing athletic shoes with shoes made of canvas or real leather. This is especially important in a household with dogs who chew shoes!



- Consider buying a waxed canvas raincoat for your dog. They are more difficult to find than vinyl coats, but are worth the effort. If you prefer a synthetic coat, choose one without vinyl. Although there are concerns about polyurethane and other chemicals that are used to make high-tech fabrics water-resistant, PVC is arguably worse.
- Nylon mesh is less toxic than PVC mesh used on dog tents, carriers, and crate or stroller covers. Watch out for PVC undercoating on these items, as well.
- When you must replace a vinyl floor, choose natural, non-vinyl linoleum from "greener" flooring suppliers, instead.
- Don't berate yourself if you've bought vinyl products for your dog in the past. PVC has become part of our culture, and it will take time to change that.



**Safe toys: Balls made of organic, dye-free wool (left) from Purrfect Play ([purrfectplay.com](http://purrfectplay.com); 219-926-7604). Orbee balls (above) from Planet Dog ([planetdog.com](http://planetdog.com); 800-381-1516) contain neither vinyl nor phthalates.**



owners “reduce the potential health risk to their animals by limiting the animal’s use of toys that potentially contain phthalates especially during pregnancy and (when they are) pups.”

In other words, don’t give your dog vinyl toys to chew on, *especially* when pups are involved.

But while PVC toys may be the worst source of dogs’ exposure to phthalates, they’re not the only one.

## Other sources

Besides in chew toys, vinyl can show up in dogs’ collars, leashes, clothing, bedding, carriers, and dog tents (it can be in the mesh or used as waterproof undercoating) – in short, in just about anything. It also shows up in the human-made environment you share with your dog. Here are a just few examples to think about.

■ Vinyl linoleum flooring. Phthalates measure at much higher levels of intensity close to the floor, where pets and kids spend their time. They measure at reduced levels higher up, where most adult humans spend *their* time!

■ House dust. House dust has been found to contain substantial amounts of phthalates. Scientists now believe that it’s a very

significant source of exposure to pets, who wash themselves by licking and taking internally what they clean off their fur.

■ Car dashboards. That “new car smell” comes at least partly from phthalates leaking from the dash or any other interior vinyl to penetrate the air inside the car. If your dog loves to ride along, think about how much time she spends in the car waiting for you, and what you might do to improve the situation.

■ Clothing, bedding, strollers, and camping equipment made for humans. Take, for example, the \$800 I spent a few years ago on a respected name brand “technical” nylon tent with room for two adults plus Bouvier, so that we could spend summer nights together in national parks breathing in the fresh air and delectable scents of the wilderness. However, even after several years, the PVC undercoating used to waterproof the tent outgases a strong odor of phthalates and completely dominates our tent’s “indoor” air. Needless to say, this does not make us happy campers.

## Don’t panic, but do act

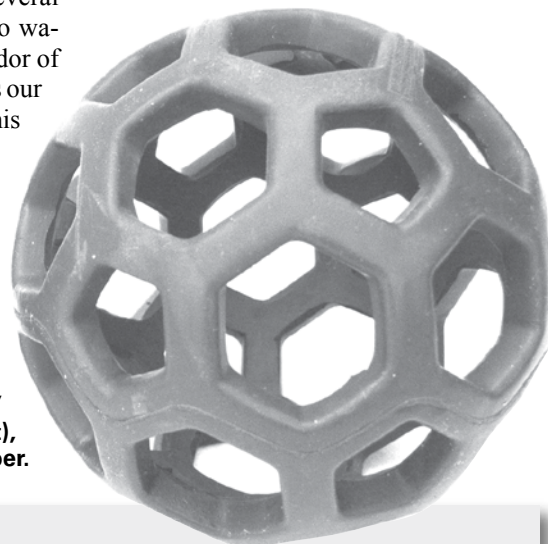
While we can’t expect, in the immediate future, to totally eliminate vinyl from our dogs’ lives, we

**Two more safe alternatives to vinyl toys: J.W. Pet’s “Bad Cuz” (above) and “Hol-ee roller” (right), which are made with natural rubber.**

can expose them to less of it by making thoughtful choices on their behalf.

Protecting the ones we love from the many kinds of human-created, disruptive chemicals that permeate the earth today can seem like an overwhelming challenge. But if you want a good place to start, choose vinyl as the number one plastic to avoid. Why? Because vinyl contributes such a large brew of toxins throughout its manufacture, use, and disposal. And because every person who cuts back on its use can make a real difference for their dogs, themselves, and the planet. 🐾

*Susan Weinstein is a freelancer who writes about dogs, healthcare and humane issues. She also collaborates with long-time holistic practitioner Paul McCutcheon, DVM, on the subject of pet care and stress. Weinstein lives in Grafton, Ontario.*



## Other Additives in Vinyl

Although phthalates may be the most worrisome additives found in vinyl today, others also pose serious health threats. When combined, they can be even worse. “When you’re using vinyl, you’re inevitably exposed to a very complex mix of chemicals,” explains Dr. Santillo. “Whereas predicting the effects of exposure to a single chemical is complicated to start with, looking at the effects of exposure to mixtures can be even more complicated.” The possible presence of these and other synthetic chemicals multiply the reasons to avoid vinyl.

Here’s some dope on a few vinyl additives:

■ **Lead.** Used as a softener. Damages the nervous system in humans and animals, causing cognitive and behavioral problems. No known “safe” level of exposure. This is more of an issue in older vinyl than in newer stuff, but lead has shown up recently in imported painted pet and children’s toys. (To be sure to avoid it, don’t buy painted toys for your dog unless you’re certain they’re lead-free.)

■ **Organotin.** Mono- and di-butyltins used extensively as stabilizers, for example, in vinyl flooring. Di-butyltin is toxic to the immune system in mammals. Some of this family of synthetic chemicals can disrupt the sexual development of marine animals. Not all organotins are used in PVC, but given the high toxicity of some chemicals in this category, scientists such as Dr. Santillo regard those used in vinyl as a concern.

■ **Alkyl-phenols** (nonyl and octyl). Used in the preparation of phthalates or in the extrusion process in drawing out flexible PVC. Well known for their ability to mimic estrogen hormones.

■ **Bisphenol-A.** Used as a stabilizing anti-oxidant in certain phthalate preparations; it stops phthalates from breaking down. A strongly estrogenic endocrine disruptor. Can add to “cocktail effects” by mixing with other vinyl additives. Linked to some forms of cancer.



## Vinyl in Your Dog's Life . . . And Safer Alternatives

After reading this article, it may surprise you to learn that products that are made with vinyl and intended for dog play or dog care are readily available in every pet supply store and catalog. Some are made and sold by high-profile, reputable companies. Whether the makers of these products don't know, don't care to know, or don't believe the studies about the dangers of vinyl and vinyl additives, it's impossible to say.

In addition to the wealth of products openly labelled as "vinyl," we found a number of products labelled with text that seems to acknowledge that someone, somewhere in the products' manufacturing company, is aware that there may be problems with vinyl. We found toys and other products whose labels said "nontoxic vinyl."

Don't be fooled; the "nontoxic vinyl" statement reflects the politics of labelling, not the safety of vinyl products. The

### Toys

In our opinion, the use of vinyl in dog toys is more dangerous than other applications. This is due to the number of mechanisms that come into play when a dog chews a toy that can contribute to the release of toxic substances from the vinyl into the dog (chewing, saliva, warmth, digestion, skin contact).

We contacted a few makers of vinyl toys, to discuss their use of vinyl. Some would not respond; we appreciate those who did, such as Hyper Products, of Wayzata, Minnesota, which sells a line of vinyl dog chew toys called Hardware Hound; these include a toy wrench, hammer, round file, and chisel, all of which give off a strong "vinyl" odor. The packaging says the products are made of "nontoxic vinyl."

Ward Myers, president of Hyper Products, responded to our inquiry with the following: "Our current product line does not have PVC or phthalates in them. They are made from vinyl. We also test all of our



Vinyl toys from Hyper Products, Inc.

vinyl industry lobbies to keep consumers believing that vinyl is safe in spite of mounting evidence to the contrary. Vinyl releases toxins during manufacture and disposal, and it's usually softened with phthalates, which *are* toxic. Therefore, based on information available today, vinyl cannot be non-toxic. (Dr. Santillo warns that phthalate alternatives may not be safe, either, and they haven't yet been adequately researched.)

Some vinyl products are labelled "phthalate-free." However, the U.S. Public Interest Research Group has found, in random testing, that many toys labelled "phthalate-free" do in fact contain phthalates. Its report, "Trouble in Toyland: 21st Annual Toy Safety Survey" (2006) states, "Nothing in the law has changed to hold toy makers accountable to the "phthalate-free" label."

The safest alternative is simply to avoid vinyl.

products for lead and all products are safe." When we pointed out that vinyl *is* PVC and almost certainly contains phthalates, Myers e-mailed us a document called, "Why Vinyl Is a Leading Material for the Toy Industry," which praised the safety of vinyl and phthalates in children's toys based on data drawn "as recently as 1997." However, the shift toward evidence that phthalates are not safe has taken place since that date.

When we asked another pet products company, Hueter Toledo,

Inc., of Bellevue, Ohio, about its vinyl dog toys (including one of our former favorites, the "Soft-Flex Clutch Ball"),

Carey Stiles, company president, confirmed right away that some of its chew toys were vinyl, and acknowledged that phthalates are controversial. She also pointed out that they make another popular toy that is *not* vinyl; the "Best Ball." That's the one we'd buy for our dogs to play with!



A better choice: Non-vinyl ball from Hueter Toledo.

### Beds

Beds that are meant to be filled with water, such as the Cool Bed III, made by K & H Manufacturing and widely sold in pet supply stores and catalogs, are commonly made of vinyl. A profoundly better choice



would be a completely nontoxic bed, such as the **Boulder Zen Dog Bed** made by DoggyArchy, of Vail, Colorado (doggyarchy.com; 877-789-0886). Owner Virginia Briggs of DoggyArchy told us that this bed is made in the U.S. of pesticide-free hemp and flax and filled with kapok fibers. Awesome!

### Raincoats

Raincoats for dogs are frequently made of vinyl, and often are clearly labelled as such, like the Puddles Dog Raincoat, made by Fashion Pet, Inc. (Ethical Products). But you have to do some detective work to find the vinyl in other products, such as the Outward Hound Designer Rain Jacket, sold by The Kyjen Company. On its website, Kyjen describes this coat as an "alternative to the traditional vinyl rain slickers that have been on the market for years." However, when we asked the company what made the coat waterproof, a representative

responded, "The material is nylon with PVC backing."

A better choice would be the **Rain Slicker** by Chilly Dogs (chillydogs.ca; 613-270-0374). Company owner/product designer Julie Kelly said the nylon outer shell fabric is coated with polyurethane; no vinyl or phthalates. Another good alternative is the **Waxed Cotton Dog Jacket** by Barbour. The coat is made of 100 percent cotton, coated with wax, and contains no PVC. It's made in England but sold by Orvis (orvis.com; 866-531-6188) in the U.S.

# Someone Old, Someone New

*How to keep your mixed-age dog pack safe and happy.*

BY MARDI RICHMOND

**C**an older dogs and younger dogs live happily together? Will a puppy bounding around (and possibly on) the arthritic body of an older dog encourage her to be more active, bringing energy and vitality during senior years? Or will the perfectly normal antics of a young dog aggravate and stress what should be a time of happy retirement for a senior dog?

If you've lived with an older dog, you've probably heard someone at some point recommend getting a puppy or younger dog. The advice may be something like, "It will keep your older dog young," or "The new puppy can learn from your older dog."

While you will likely find some truth in both statements, the opposite may also hold true. Your older dog could be stressed or exhausted by a younger dog. Your young dog will certainly learn from your older dog, but the lessons may not be those you would like to be passed from one generation to the next.

While every multi-dog household has its challenges and most have tremendous joys, adding a very young dog to a household made up of one or more senior dogs can bring about a special set of challenges. However, if you find yourself living with an older dog and younger dog (or like me, actively choose to do so in spite of knowing the challenges) you can take steps to ensure the experience is the best for both young and old.

## What's old? What's young?

Because age is relative to breed, size, and overall health and condition, for the purpose of this article, I'll define "older" as any dog that has settled into "retirement." This is not a function of numeric age, but rather defined by the dog's place in his or her life cycle.

An older dog may occasionally still enjoy a game of ball or a few minutes of romping with another dog, but for the most part he or she really prefers quiet and comfortable companionship. An older

## What you can do . . .

- Before you get a young dog, think hard about your old dog's ability to cope, physically and emotionally, with a puppy.
- Provide your older dog with a quiet and comfortable "puppy-free" zone, without sequestering him away from the family altogether.
- Provide your young dog with lots of exercise and individual training sessions.
- Liberally reinforce all your dogs for calm, friendly behavior around each other.



The Whole Dog Journal



**Many owners hope that their senior dogs' good manners will rub off on a new young dog, and sometimes this happens. But be forewarned that some senior dogs want nothing to do with a youngster.**

dog is more likely to sleep a little longer, move a little slower, and tire a little sooner. He or she may have changing senses – be less able to hear, see, and smell – or may live with the constant pain of arthritis. An older dog may have a chronic or hidden illness or be in the last stages of life. An older dog may be a "senior" dog or a "geriatric" dog.

A "young" dog can be a puppy or an adolescent. As with older dogs, adolescence is relative and adolescent behavior may be evident from six months to three or more years of age. Just as it is appropriate for an older dog to be in retirement mode, it is imperative for a young dog to explore the world with gusto. Young dogs (and especially adolescent dogs) need to come to terms with who they are and their role in their world. It is a time for experimenting with behavior, and, like human adolescents, testing limits.

## Why does age matter?

Younger dogs and older dogs often have dramatically differing needs. Older dogs need quiet and comfort; young dogs need activity, excitement, and challenge. Keep in mind that these needs can create conflict in your home!

For example, puppies can be a bother to an older dog who is tired, ill, or would rather just sleep in a spot of sun. They are not very good at remembering manners (“Oh, gee, that’s right. You *did* tell me not to pounce on your head or bite your ears two minutes ago . . . but I forgot!”). They can be relentless in their need for attention and play (“Come on, don’t you want to play? How about now? What if I prance with this toy? How about if I nibble on your toes? Not yet? What about now?”).

While an adult dog with plenty of energy and good social skills may enjoy a puppy’s antics and be comfortable setting limits when needed, a senior or geriatric dog may be more easily exhausted or may even be intimidated as the pup grows into a strapping young adolescent.

The most serious problems I’ve seen when mixing older and younger dogs occur when puppies become adolescents, and these problems can be amplified if the older dog has health issues. While a puppy may be an innocent pest, willing to back off when asked, an adolescent dog has a greater tendency to push limits. Adolescent play styles are often rough: bouncing, bashing, and slamming bodies. Many explore the world as if they are made of steel (and

expect the rest of the world to be made of steel, too). While this is perfectly normal, even appropriate, for the adolescent and young adult dog, the impact on our senior companions can be seriously annoying or even downright dangerous.

A senior or geriatric dog may also be gruffer than a pup deserves. An older dog who does not feel well, for example, may be less tolerant of normal puppy behavior.

In addition, an older dog with compromised hearing and vision may have a harder time responding appropriately to the body language of the young dog. A dog whose movement is limited or who may be in pain may not communicate as effectively. The result can be inconsistent signals or what appears to be more abrupt communication, which can cause confusion in the relationship between the two dogs.

While these types of scenarios are not a given, they are not uncommon. And, the result of these conflicts can vary dramatically. At best, the older dog will set limits, and the younger dog will respect them. At worse, one of the dogs will be injured (or even killed) in a serious conflict.

Most often, of course, the impact is subtler and somewhere in between. An older dog who is disturbed by puppy or adolescent antics may remove himself from the family in an attempt to avoid the chaos. The younger dog may learn that his rough behavior is fun, and learn to pester or bully other dogs.

## Action plan

In a household of dogs with dramatically differing needs, accepting that all is not equal is the key. And remember, meeting the needs of your individual dogs can provide *all* of you with great pleasure. You can enjoy hanging out quietly (perhaps reading your favorite dog magazine) with your older dog. You can enjoy active romps with your youngster. By providing for differing needs, you will get to spend special time with each dog and special time with them together. In addition, you will help prevent problems before they creep up.

■ **Prevention first.** Prevention is a powerful tool. It means understanding the realities of life with dogs of differing ages, and taking the steps to insure all dogs are happy and relaxed. Prevention is partially about managing the environment, and partially about proactively managing behavior. Each situation is different, and some dogs require more help via management, and many will need less.

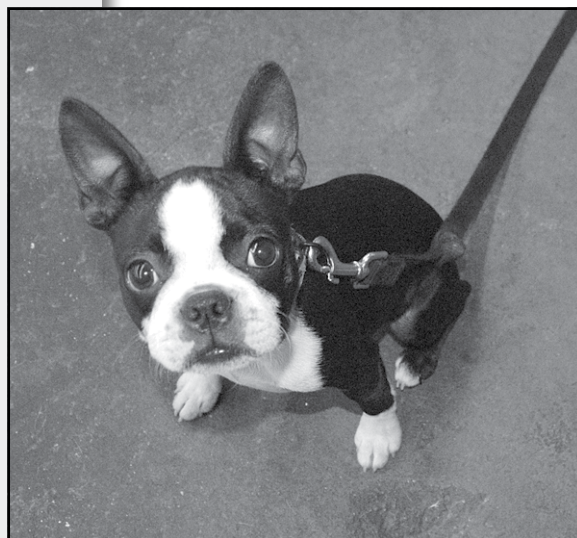
■ **Provide separate spaces.** When you are home, make sure all dogs have a space to which they can retreat in peace. It may be a crate or a bed. Help your young dog learn that when the older dog goes to his place, the youngster needs to find something else to do. When you see your senior dog head for his bed, use that as a cue to give the pup a nice bone or food-stuffed Kong and put him in a crate for a while.

When you are away from home, you will likely want to separate the dogs for safety. While many of us use crates, exercise pens, and baby gates with puppies,

## Consider Before Getting a Younger Dog

Deciding if your older dog will do well with a younger dog (and if the younger dog will benefit from living with your older dog) depends on the health, general well-being, patience, and communication skills of the older dog. It also depends on the inherent energy level and personality of the younger dog. In addition, ask yourself these questions:

- Has your older dog historically enjoyed puppies and the companionship of other dogs?
- Does your older dog have the physical and mental ability to set appropriate limits with a puppy and adolescent dog?
- Are you willing to intervene and set up management strategies and physical boundaries if your older dog’s health changes?
- If, as time goes by, your older dog is less able to be a companion for your younger dog, are you able to provide for your younger dog’s social needs away from home or through other means?





**When your older dog is napping, encourage your young dog to take a break, too. Make sure she's comfortable, and has a nice fresh bone or food-stuffed Kong to keep her happy – but use a crate or X-pen to enforce the rest period.**

you may need to continue using them as your young dog becomes an adolescent and as your older dog moves from retirement into geriatric care. Just as it is not wise to leave a very young puppy unsupervised with an adult dog, it is not appropriate to leave a very old and vulnerable dog alone with younger dogs.

■ **Manage exciting times.** You may also want to separate your young and old dogs during high arousal times, especially while the younger dog is learning manners. For example, in our household, getting ready to go out and returning home are very exciting times – as well as critical times for managing a jumping, bouncing puppy around the equally excited, but less agile old girls.

We now put one or all of the dogs in kennels or separate spaces during high arousal times, and this has dramatically reduced conflict and the risk of accidental bumps and bangs. Our youngest dog enthusiastically runs to her kennel – and is visibly relieved to be out of the path of the grumpy old ladies when we come home or get ready to go out.

■ **Consider feeding the dogs separately, too.** Your older dog may be slowing down in eating. Dental problems are common in older dogs. In addition, when you are talking about vast differences in ages and

abilities, it is best not to set up competition for resources. Consider separating the dogs when giving high value chews, stuffed Kongs, and bones, too.

■ **Support the needs of both young and old!** Make sure all dogs have individual attention from you. Your younger dog may enjoy heading out for a long hike or off to training class with you, while the older dog may enjoy a ride in the car or a walk to the neighborhood park.

■ **In addition, for your young dog:**

- **Provide plenty of exercise.** Remember the exercise needs of a young dog are greater than those of an older dog.

- **Provide appropriate playmates.** Make sure your younger dog has social interactions with dogs closer to her age – other dogs who will appreciate her normal exuberance. This can also help wear her out so she is not as likely to bother the senior citizen.

- **Make sure your youngster has rowdy time at home.** Younger dogs really do need to blow off steam at certain times. Direct rowdy behavior into activities that do not stress the older dog.

- **Play with your pup yourself!** This

will help your young dog learn that his or her play needs can be met by someone other than the old dog.

■ **Support your older dog's needs:**

- **Make sure she has plenty of time to rest and sleep.** My older dogs need to sleep much of the day. A puppy's normal short bursts of sleep and activity can easily disturb an older dog's much needed rest.

- **Provide routine.** Routine is an essential element in stress reduction, and a lower stress lifestyle can support your senior citizen's health as he or she grows older.

- **Make time to engage in favorite activities.** It's easy for the older dog to take a back seat to the loud and clear needs of a puppy. In addition, a young dog can often do the things you used to enjoy with the older dog *and* they need the activity. This makes it especially easy to shortchange the needs of a less-demanding older dog. Consider that your older dog needs your attention as much as the young one.

## Positive bonding times

One of the best ways to insure the happiness of all dogs in a multi-dog household is to make sure they have positive bonding times. For young dogs of a similar age, that may come via rowdy play. For adult dogs, bonding time may take the form of exploring the environment on off-leash outings. Some dogs enjoy snuggling, other find pleasure in a good game of tug.

With a very young dog and an older dog, these natural bonding opportunities may not be as evident. Rambunctious play may not be safe for your senior citizen, and the young dog may not yet be trustworthy in the world for off-leash exploration. But you can provide positive bonding opportunities, even for those dogs with disparate needs.

Non-competitive activities such as on-leash walks are one of the easiest ways for dogs to bond. Sniffing and exploring the world together can bring the dogs closer. Keeping them on-leash can help all remain comfortable and safe.

Sleeping in the same room (with you, ideally) is another way for all to bond. It's okay for one or more dogs to be crated, if needed.

Group training sessions can be great fun for all of the dogs and is a fun and productive way to facilitate bonding. Try practicing calm greetings and doorway manners (especially important skills for older and younger dog groups). In addition, teaching a “stop” during play can be extremely helpful, and a solid group sit and wait are a must for every multi-dog household. Even if your older dog already knows these behaviors, he or she will likely benefit from the training time as it will provide fun with you as well as with the pup.

## Keep everyone safe

A big concern in a multi-dog household, and especially one with very young and very old dogs, is the question of when to intervene, and when to let the dogs negotiate on their own.

One of the most common situations I’ve seen is when an older dog does *not* tell a younger dog to mind his manners. The older dog may simply be passive, or may have been scolded by a well-meaning person for being too gruff with the puppy. (It is hard, after all, to watch an older dog growl or correct a puppy for simply wanting to play.)

While it is important to monitor interactions, an adult dog giving an appropriate correction for rude puppy behavior is an essential way for the pup to learn to be respectful to other dogs. A puppy that is allowed to push around an older dog, even

in play, can easily learn to bully others.

Instead of stopping an older dog from setting appropriate limits, support your older dog by looking for the earliest communications or signs of annoyance. Help your puppy understand that when limits are set, it is time to move away. Redirect your puppy to toys, playing with you, or some quiet time in a crate.

But if your older dog is simply intolerant or grows increasingly grumpy with the youngster over time, you may need to support both dogs by providing separation. Remember that your older dog may not be physically or mentally up for the challenges of a youngster. Support your older dog’s retirement by making sure he or she has the space to be quiet and calm.

And, for the sake of safety, with very old and young dogs, you may want to limit high arousal play (or supervise it closely). High arousal activities can lead to out-of-control behavior in young dogs (high speed zooming around the house or yard, for example!). This is too often a time when a young dog can “blow it” by simply playing too rough or knocking an older dog off of his feet.

Competitive activities such as ball play where they are both chasing and competing for the same ball is another time when conflict can easily develop between two otherwise comfortable companions. If your older dog can no longer play rough, make sure the younger dog has other dogs to roughhouse with instead.

## As health changes . . .

Both of our two senior dogs were still active, strong, and able to engage with seven-month-old Chance when we first brought her home. While both older dogs were experiencing some health issues, they were still vibrant in spite of their 13 years. Our senior cattle dog-mix, Jesse, played like a puppy with young Chance for the first several months. Blue, never one to enjoy a pup, set about teaching Chance to be respectful of her elders.

Within a few short months, though, the older dogs’ health problems really flared up. As their health declined, their relationships with our young dog changed. All had to learn new, gentler ways to interact. With an older dog, health changes are inevitable. And the relationships between dogs will change as health dictates.

When an older dog becomes ill, the management factor in the household is very likely to change. A successful coping strategy can be to simply cordon off the household. A good friend with two younger dogs and a very ill senior dog told me that she kept the younger dogs separate from the older dog in all but the quietest times of day. This was simply to keep the older dog safe and to allow the younger dogs the freedom to play and be active.

## Putting aside guilt

For me, perhaps the hardest part of having two geriatric dogs with serious illnesses and one energetic adolescent dog is the guilt that comes from doing activities with one dog and not the others.

It’s hard to kennel a young dog so an old dog can sleep at your feet in peace. It’s equally difficult to leave an older or ill dog at home while you train and play with your younger friend. But by putting guilt aside and managing the environment, all dogs can enjoy life to the fullest, in safety and comfort.

Watching our older dogs become revitalized by the energy of the young dog was certainly a joy to see. Watching Chance seem to develop compassion as the older dogs have become frail has shown us a side of her we might otherwise not have witnessed. Very old and very young dogs living together are certainly a challenge, and not one I would lightly recommend. But like any challenge, when met head on, the rewards can be dramatic. 🐾

*Mardi Richmond, MA, CPDT, is a writer and trainer living in Santa Cruz, California.*



**Having a younger companion just may invigorate your canine senior citizen, and help inspire him to renewed interest in exercise and a higher level of fitness. Just keep an eye on the old-timer, to enforce a rest period if he’s overdoing it.**

# Food and Friends

*Two cases of anorexia in dogs grieving for their lost companions.*

■ In the February 2008 article on dry dog foods, we incorrectly reported the manufacturer of **Burns Pet Health's** dry foods. These products are manufactured by CJ Foods in Kansas.

■ Due to an editing error, in the March 2008 article on grain-free dog foods, we incorrectly reported the ash content of Taplow Feeds' FirstMate Potato and Chicken with Blueberries food. The correct ash content is 7 percent.

We apologize for any inconvenience we have caused through these errors.

**R**egarding the article about canine anorexia ("Tales of the Lost Appetite," March 2008): As an RN and 50-plus-year dog owner, I appreciated it very much. However I did notice a mention of one cause of anorexia that almost took the life of my Boston Terrier: grief.

I had two dogs at the time, the other being a 10-year-old Pug who suddenly became critically ill with a lethal brain tumor. We had gotten both dogs at the ages of eight weeks and they were very, very close. When the Pug did not come home from the veterinarian and her crate was put away, the Boston totally stopped eating and became very lethargic (she had always inhaled her food and was extremely active prior to this.) We were frightened that we were going to lose her too, and made numerous calls and visits to our vet to investigate.

To make a long, terrifying story short, we never found a physical cause for her inappetence; it was grief. I spent several weeks tempting her with various treats, human food, and finally baby food mixed with her dog food. I also took her to a local pet supply store for a change of scene. She picked out – on her own – a small latex ball slightly larger than a golf ball, proudly carried it out to the car by herself, and it

became forever known as "Happy Ball." That was what started her back on the road to health! Well, that and much loving care and snuggling from her human family.

It did take several months to get her totally back to "normal." She lived many years after this but always had to have "Happy Ball" out to play with daily.

Just as we humans can suffer grief after the loss of a loved one, so can our canine buddies.

Barb Roehl  
Green Bay, WI

**W**hen I got my subscription today, I couldn't WAIT to read "Tales of the Lost Appetite." You see, I'm owned by a German Shepherd Dog with Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency (EPI), who wouldn't eat, but does now.

My girl's saga started when she was diagnosed with EPI about the same time we had to put down our other dog, a 14-year-old. Our girl completely stopped eating for weeks and barely ate for about a year. Her always-lean body went into an emaciated state for that year. I didn't know whether it was the pancreatic enzymes we needed to add to her food for her survival, or whether it was that she missed a valued member of her pack. I tried everything mentioned in the article, but nothing worked. It was the most stressful year of my life.

We ended up adopting another German Shepherd Dog from a shelter and I think the woman must have thought I was nuts when I was mostly concerned with how this dog ate. Was she enthusiastic about food? Did she eat everything on her plate?

Providing another canine companion is what ultimately worked for us. My formerly anorexic girl is now a good healthy weight, although we need to take a few pounds off the rescue who really, really loves food – and who cannot believe we actually cook food for dogs!

I'm glad this topic was addressed in

WDJ as most folks laughed at me when I told them my dog wouldn't eat. They said she was just picky. I had actually put a filet of beef in her dish and she walked away from it. Thankfully, we don't have that problem anymore! Please, let it stay that way!

Donna  
via e-mail

**J**ust to add to the credits of Sue Ann Lesser, DVM, who was mentioned in "Chiropractors for Canines," March 2008. My dog Baby was experiencing seizures on a regular basis beginning in April 2002. We tried acupuncture for a long time, until someone told me about Dr. Lesser. Baby had a seizure three days after her first adjustment – but that was Baby's last seizure.

Baby now sees Dr. Lesser monthly. As far as I am concerned, chiropractic and Dr. Lesser saved my dog's life. She is located in South Huntington, New York, and can be reached at (631) 423-9223 or AR18AR180@msn.com.

Yankee Gindoff  
via e-mail 🐾



Sue Ann Lesser, DVM

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## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of three books: *The Power of Positive Dog Training*; *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog*, and *Positive Perspectives: Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog*. All of these books are available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com

*The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care* and *Natural Remedies for Dogs and Cats*, by WDJ contributor CJ Puotinen, are available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com. Puotinen is also author of several books about human health, including *Natural Relief from Aches and Pains*, available from your favorite bookseller.

### HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

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

### TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

Pat Miller, CPDT, Peaceable Paws Dog and Puppy Training, Hagerstown, MD. Train with modern, dog-friendly positive methods. Group and private training, Rally, behavior modification, workshops, intern and apprentice programs. (301) 582-9420; peaceablepaws.com

### RESOURCES FOR NEW DOG OWNERS

The following books and DVDs are available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com:

*The Language of Dogs*  
DVD by Sarah Kalnajs

*The Really Reliable Recall*  
DVD by Leslie Nelson

*New Puppy, Now What?*  
by Victoria Schade

*The Other End of the Leash  
I'll Be Home Soon*  
*The Cautious Canine*  
by Patricia McConnell

*The Power of Positive Dog Training*  
by Pat Miller

*Help for Your Fearful Dog*  
by Nicole Wilde

The following articles from Whole Dog Journal back issues are available by contacting Belvoir Media Group's customer service: (800) 424-7887 or e-mailing customer\_service@belvoir.com:  
"What a Good ID," November 2001  
"Cats and Dogs, Living Together," June 2007

To start your search for qualified professionals to help care for your dog, see the following:

**Veterinarians:**  
American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association  
(410) 569-0795; ahvma.org

**Trainers:**  
Certified Pet Dog Trainers  
ccpdt.org. (Sorry, no phone number available.)

"Truly Dog Friendly Trainers"  
trulydogfriendly.com. (Sorry, no phone number available.)

**Behavior Professionals:**  
Certified Dog Behavior Consultants  
iaabc.org. (Sorry, no phone number available.)

Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists  
certifiedanimalbehaviorist.com  
(Sorry, no phone number available.)

**Petsitters:**  
petsitters.org; (800) 296-PETS

## WHAT'S AHEAD

### Let's All Stop Jumping

*How to teach your dog to stop jumping up on people . . . and how to teach people to help your dog remember!*

### Frozen Food Review

*A meaty story about this burgeoning segment of the pet food market.*

### Puzzling Pups

*Toys designed to occupy and stimulate your dog.*

### A Sudden Loss of Balance

*"Vestibular disease" can have a sudden onset . . . it's also difficult to determine which of its many causes has afflicted your dog, and to find the appropriate treatment.*

*(We're in the doghouse! Sorry for the delay. This article will run in the May issue!)*

