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Summertime News

Heated up? Cool down! And read a good book.

BY NANCY KERNS

Does your attention span get shorter when it's hot? Mine does. I'll keep these notes short and sweet.

I've received some fascinating responses from pet food company executives regarding the long-term fallout, positive and negative, of the pet food recalls early this year. I've received so many, in fact, that I'm going to expand them into a longer article and run it *next* month. I'd like you to be able to read, in their entirety, what some of the execs say their companies are doing to ensure that we don't experience anything like "the gluten recalls" again.

For years, we've pressed pet food companies to disclose their ingredient sources and manufacturing locations. Many people are starting to realize that this is information they don't know about their *own* food supply – and many have renewed their efforts to pressure Congress to stop blocking laws that would require country-of-origin labeling (known as COOL) for meats and produce.

Such a labeling law was enacted as part of the 2002 Farm Bill, but it has been largely blocked from taking effect. A July 2 article in the *New York Times* blames the meat lobby in general – and former Representative Henry Bonilla (R-TX) specifically – for pushing through delays of the mandatory origin labeling. If you need motivation to act, here is Bonilla's comment: "No one was prohibited from putting labels on products. If consumers wanted this, they could have demanded it." Let's demand it!

Everyone who takes their dogs to swim in lakes or ponds should read CJ Puotinen's warning (page 17) about toxic algae blooms in

warm, shallow water. On June 27, we received an e-mailed account from a Michigan man whose dog died two days earlier as a result of swimming in and drinking toxic pond water. The man, with a lifetime of professional dog ownership, had never known of such a danger, and neither had we. We put an alert on the WDJ website and sent out an e-mailed bulletin to dog owners as soon as we confirmed the story.

Which reminds me: If you haven't signed up for the website access to WDJ that comes with your paid subscription, you should. Those who do will receive any "emergency" e-mail bulletins we publish, sometimes weeks before we can get the information into the print version of the magazine.

Finally, a summer treat: If you are seeking an enjoyable and intelligent dog-related book to help pass these long, hot days, look no farther than Ted Kerasote's *Merle's Door: Lessons from a Freethinking Dog*. Kerasote is an award-winning nature writer, and Merle is the Lab-mix former stray who came to share his rural Wyoming home. The duo had an enviable relationship, based on an uncommon degree of mutual respect instead of the dominant master/submissive pet paradigm, with remarkable results.



I don't agree with all of Kerasote's theories on canine behavior or condone all of his training practices, but I hugely enjoyed his thoughtful account of a special dog's life and gifts. *NK*

MISSION STATEMENT: WDJ's mission is to provide dog guardians with in-depth information on effective holistic healthcare methods and successful nonviolent training. The methods we discuss will endeavor to do no harm to dogs; we do not advocate perpetrating even minor transgressions in the name of "greater good." We intend our articles to enable readers to immediately apply training and healthcare techniques to their own dogs with visible and enjoyable success. All topics should contribute to improving the dog's health and vitality, and deepening the canine/human bond. Above all, we wish to contribute information that will enable consumers to make kind, healthy, and informed decisions about caring for their own dogs.

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Keeping It Raw

Owners share their raw diet sources, strategies, and recipes.

BY MARY STRAUS

The idea of cooking for my dogs turns me pale. Not because I think there's anything wrong with cooked diets, or because I'm worried about doing it right, but for one simple reason: I hate to cook.

Had my only option for feeding my dogs a homemade diet been cooking their food, I'm afraid they'd still be eating out of a bag. But the idea of a raw diet, once I wrapped my mind around the concept of feeding bones, seemed, if not exactly simple, at least feasible, given my limited kitchen skills.

I've been surprised to learn that there are many people like me: we don't cook for our families or even ourselves, but we feed our dogs a homemade raw diet, and actually enjoy preparing their meals.

Feeding a raw diet is quite simple, especially once you have a system in place, but like anything else new, it can seem very complicated when first starting out. I hope these sample diets will be helpful to newcomers considering feeding a raw diet, and that even those who have been doing it for awhile may learn some new tricks to make the process of finding, preparing, and storing food simpler.

My dog's diet

In 1998, I began feeding a raw diet to the three dogs I had at the time. While getting started took a lot of planning, the routine I've worked out makes it simple for me to manage now. Piglet, my 15-year-old Chinese Shar-Pei, weighs 35 pounds, and is relatively inactive due to her age. She ate more when she was younger, and I gave her more fat. Here's what I feed her now:

Breakfast (4 ounces, plus dairy and vegetables)

1 large egg alternating daily with 1 to 1½ oz liver or kidney

Muscle meat, heart, green tripe, and/or



Piglet is a healthy 15-year-old, 35-pound raw-fed Chinese Shar-Pei.

healthy leftovers, enough to equal 4 oz total food (including egg/organs)

A spoonful of yogurt or cottage cheese (I use low-fat or nonfat varieties)

3 to 4 oz veggies, alternating daily between steamed veggies and pureed "veggie muffin" (described below)

Dinner (5 ounces)

Mon/Wed/Fri: rotate among chicken necks, chicken backs, and lamb breast (with skin and visible fat removed)

Sun/Tues/Thurs: rotate among different ground products, ranging from raw meaty bones only to complete diets

Saturday: canned fish, alternating between jack mackerel and pink salmon, or occasionally sardines

Dietary supplements

2 high-potency fish oil gelcaps (I give high doses due to her arthritis)

Antioxidants (Vetri-Science Cell Advance 880, Thorne Veterinary Small Animal Antioxidants, or Thorne Veterinary Immugen)

What you can do . . .

The key to a healthy diet is variety – don't feed just meat and bones, or too much of any one food.

Organ meat, especially liver, is a must for any homemade diet.

If you or your dogs are not comfortable with whole bones, try cutting or grinding them, or buying preground products.

Develop a system for storing and preparing food, to make feeding a raw diet easier.



B-50 vitamin complex

Splash (1 tsp?) of organic apple cider vinegar

¼ tsp green blend (usually Berte's Green Blend)

I do not package food in meal-sized portions. Instead, I divide food up into amounts that will last around one to three meals, and freeze. I store most food in Ziploc-style freezer bags that I wash and reuse. Each time I feed a meal, I move anything that I will need for the same meal in two days from the freezer to the fridge. When I run out of one food, I start on the next, so meals are often a mixture of several different kinds of food.

"Veggie muffins" are prepared in large batches that last a month or more. I puree a mixture of various fruits (apple and banana, sometimes others as well), vegetables (lettuce, celery, cucumber, zucchini, dandelion greens, arugula, etc.), and

herbs (always ginger and garlic, usually along with parsley or cilantro) in a food processor, then spoon the mixture into a muffin tin and freeze (you can use ice cube trays for smaller servings, but Piglet loves veggies). Once frozen, I transfer the veggie muffins to freezer bags.

Steamed veggies are usually frozen broccoli or sometimes cauliflower or winter squash. I save any leftover sauces, gravy, meat drippings, chicken carcass, etc., and add them to the water that I use to steam the veggies, then pour the water over the meal to make "breakfast soup" (any bones are removed first).

Eggs are soft-cooked using microwave egg cups. Pills are given dipped in a bit of cream cheese or peanut butter.

The ground mixtures I feed are primarily a source of bones that my dogs would not otherwise get, such as beef, pork, and venison.

I helped to start a raw food co-op in my area that allows us to buy directly from vendors at lower prices and gives us access to foods not normally found in stores (though stores can often order these products for you). I get all my raw meaty bones from the co-op, along with beef, lamb, and pork (ground, trim, heart, cheeks, liver, and kidney). I have a small 5-cubic foot upright freezer that allows me to buy in bulk.

Piglet's teeth are too worn to chew raw meaty bones (RMBs) properly, as she can't shear off pieces small enough to swallow, so I cut her RMBs into small pieces using Joyce Chen scissors. I weigh all of her food using a postal scale, as otherwise she gains weight.

I used to give Piglet beef rib bones for recreational chewing, but she eventually broke a couple of teeth, so now I use chicken feet and bully sticks. Bully sticks, also called beef, steer, or macho sticks, or pizzles, are made from beef penises. Dogs love them, they last a long time, and they're readily available.

At the time I made the switch to feeding a raw diet, my oldest dog was 13, and had suffered from allergies all his life. He became completely allergy-free within three months of starting the raw diet. A second dog prone to allergies improved, but continued to have some problems. Piglet was also able to come off all arthritis medications for several years, though she is back on them now. All of my dogs have loved raw food and never experienced any problems with it.

Using a grinder

Laura Fulton, who lives in Diablo, California, grinds most of the food she feeds her two Weimaraners. She explains:

I began feeding Violet, now 10 years old, a diet from Dr. Pitcairn's book (see Resources) after she had a horrible reaction to vaccinations as a puppy. She did well on that diet, which included raw meat, cooked grains and supplements, for five years.

When I got a new puppy, Dozer, I wanted to start both dogs on a raw diet that included bones, but I was concerned because Violet is a "gulper" – she prefers to swallow her food whole, no matter the size or shape. After removing a pork bone lodged in her throat, I knew I could not continue to feed her whole bones. I decided grinding raw meaty bones would be better than just feeding meat, as I liked the idea of them getting the natural balance of nutrients, including calcium, from the meat and bones.

I tried several small, mediocre grinders before I got my American Eagle ¾ horsepower grinder. It grinds everything I need to feed my dogs a varied diet. It weighs 75 pounds, so it usually stays on my kitchen counter.

I do give my dogs bones to chew when I can supervise them. Dozer gets more whole RMBs, as he is a very thorough chewer. I believe that chewing on bones provides good exercise and helps clean their teeth more than the ground bones do.

Violet (who weighs 76 pounds) and Dozer (84 pounds) each eat about 2 pounds of food daily, though I adjust the amounts depending on how they look.

In the morning, they each get 1 pound of ground meat, usually hearts or trim from beef, pork, lamb, turkey, or ostrich, mixed with ¼ cup of veggies three times a week. They also get whole, raw eggs without the shell two or three times a week, and I give each dog 2 tablespoons of yogurt or kefir after their breakfast.

In the evening, they each get 1 pound of ground RMBs, such as chicken necks, backs, or wings; lamb breast; turkey necks; or rabbit. Once a week they get canned salmon.

For veggies, I rotate through a mixture of celery, kale, beets, beet greens, romaine lettuce, spinach, sweet potato, apple, carrots, broccoli, string beans, snap peas, bok choy, collard greens, parsley, avocado, dandelion greens, and mustard greens. I blend these with enough water to make a thick liquid in my blender and freeze them in muffin tins, then transfer them to Ziploc bags to stay in the freezer. They also get whatever fruits I eat, such as bananas.

If either dog seems hungry or has a growly tummy in the evening, I will feed a grain meal, such as oatmeal, before bed. I also use canned pumpkin and slippery elm as needed for upset stomachs.

Each dog gets the following supplements daily or as noted:

400 IU vitamin E

1 Tbsp wild salmon oil

1,000 mg Ester C

B-complex vitamin

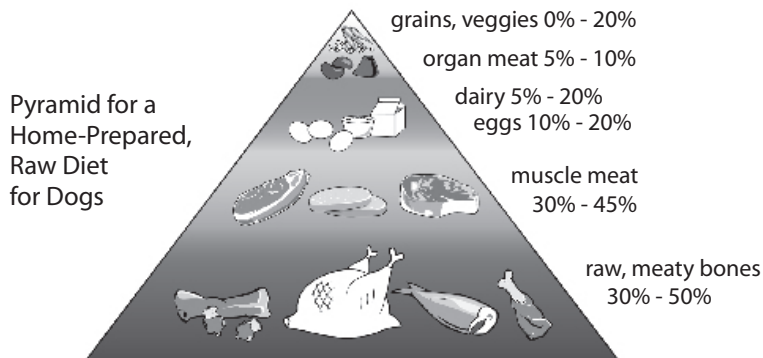
Liquid trace minerals (1 drop three times a week)

Probiotics (two or three times a week)

Alfalfa tablets or a teaspoonful of liquid chlorophyll (three times a week)

Wheat germ (just a sprinkle now and then)

Zinc supplement: one capsule with 15 mg zinc and 2 mg copper split between the two dogs once a week



I purchase my meat monthly in bulk through a dog food co-op. I also buy meats on sale at various grocery stores. I typically grind most of the meat when I get it and then put it into 2-pound plastic yogurt containers that are easily frozen.

I use between 90 and 120 pounds of meat per month. I have a freezer in my garage as well as an extra refrigerator that comes in handy when I need to defrost food in bulk, for repackaging.

My dogs are very healthy – their coats shine and they smell good. Their teeth stay clean, and typically the only time they go to the vet is for regular check-ups.

Our comments: I have seen the American Eagle grinder in action, and it is awesome. The more powerful, stainless steel grinders are expensive, but they make the job of grinding much easier, particularly if you have a lot of food to process. Try to find one with a reverse switch, as this one has, which also makes a big difference.

The right tools

Shari Mann, of San Francisco, has fed her dogs a raw diet since 1993. She has an active Cardigan Welsh Corgi, Meg, who just turned five years old – and she just got a Bull Terrier puppy.

Meg weighs a lean 25 pounds. She eats 9 to 10 ounces of food daily, divided into two very unequal portions: about 1 ounce for breakfast, and 7 to 8 ounces for dinner, with the rest coming from snacks and treats.

Breakfast is home-ground beef, pork, or lamb rolled into balls containing pills: 500 mg vitamin C, and 100 to 200 IUs vitamin E. She loves to work for her food, so these are fed as training rewards.

After her three- to five-mile daily exercise, she gets a quarter-ounce cube of cheese or meat, or maybe raw beef liver.

For dinner, we work in variety. The one constant is a chicken foot with each evening meal, which she eats first. She gets at least two different kinds of animal protein (meat, meat mixes, raw meaty bones, eggs, or fish), and either goat milk yogurt or green tripe. I add 1 gram of salmon oil with each dinner.

I'm fortunate to be able to order most food from the SFRaw co-op. I buy some

items from the grocery store as well, such as canned mackerel. Eggs come from my friend's organic chickens.

Raw meaty bones are turkey, duck, chicken, or pork necks; chicken backs; or pork ribs. She does not like large chunks of food, so I cut them up with a meat cleaver, or I use my Estwing kindling axe and a chopping block for pork neck bones. When chopping, I keep my unused hand behind my back, and make sure there are no dogs around. Any sharp bone edges can be smashed with the flat backside of the axe.

The main meats I use are beef, lamb, and pork, cut into half-inch cubes, as well as turkey heart and gizzard, and canned jack mackerel. She gets bones in the evening meal only once or twice a week (she doesn't really like them that much, unlike prior dogs I've had); the rest of the time we use powdered eggshell calcium, about ¼ teaspoon per meal. She gets tiny snippets of raw beef liver or Organ Blend from greentripe.com.

I grind mixes for the dogs that include meat (beef heart, pork roasts, London broil, or leg of lamb) and organ meat (beef liver or kidney). This is especially convenient to feed on trips to our vacation cabin.

I chunk or grind meat when I get it, and freeze in Ziploc containers. I buy whole

them). I add a tiny sprinkle of kelp powder to her evening meal. Now and then, I'll add fresh crushed garlic, herbs or bury some veggies under her yogurt.

Treats are most often dehydrated meats, such as turkey heart, London broil, or beef liver, which I make myself in my L'Equip dehydrator. I also mix an equal amount of beef liver and canned pumpkin in the food processor, then bake it, and serve that as treats.

My new puppy has been fed Halshan's ground chicken and ground turkey (with bone), and Honest Kitchen Embark (approved for puppies) by her breeder. I'll continue with similar foods, plus fresh raw goat milk. After a few days I'll start gradually adding my usual variety, including small amounts of veggies and fruits (apples, bananas). I'll start her on chicken feet to see how she handles raw bones (whether she is a chewer or a gulper). If she can't handle bone just yet, I'll grind it for her. I'll give salmon oil, vitamin E (100 IU), and a B-complex vitamin every couple of days.

Comments: Having the right tools can make the job much easier. Shari's grinder, dehydrator, hatchet, and Tilia FoodSaver simplify preparing and storing healthy meals and treats.



Shari Mann's Cardigan Welsh Corgi, Meg, provides chewing oversight for Mann's new Bull Terrier puppy.

beef livers and kidneys from the co-op, which I partially freeze for slicing ease. I use my Tilia FoodSaver for the organs, since it preserves the food value longer.

Meg gets no grains or veggies on a regular basis, as she doesn't like them (I fed veggies to prior dogs who enjoyed

Lacto-fermented what?

WDJ's longtime contributor CJ Puotinen, who lives in New York, describes the diet she uses for Chloe, her 3-year-old, 75-pound Labrador Retriever:

I feed Chloe pasture-fed organic meat, poultry, and eggs from farms here in New York and New Jersey, with occasional raw goat milk cheese from the farmer's market or health food store and goat milk kefir that I make at home. I also make lacto-fermented vegetables with finely shredded carrots, sweet potatoes, ginger, and other root vegetables. Lactofermentation predigests vegetables, increases their vitamin content, and provides both probiotics (beneficial bacteria) and prebiotics (foods that feed beneficial bacteria).

My first pet nutrition mentor was Juliette de Bairacli Levy, whose *Complete Herbal Handbook for the Dog and Cat* introduced her Natural Rearing philosophy.

I started following her guidelines 20 years ago with our cats and then with our first Lab, Samantha.

Levy believes that meat fed in large pieces exercises stomach muscles and helps prevent bloat and other digestive problems, so Chloe never gets ground meat. Whenever we buy a side of beef, we have it cut to order with the maximum amount of bone on the meat, whole or cut into large chunks, and wrapped in 1- to 2-pound packages.

Chloe gets more chicken and beef than other meats because we have such good local suppliers. She also gets lamb, goat, turkey, venison, or bison. Once in a while she gets wild-caught Pacific salmon, and I do cook that to prevent salmon poisoning. Chloe's recreational bones are usually beef, lamb, goat, or turkey.

I try to provide raw meaty bones at least every other day because if Chloe goes for several days without any, she will have a loose stool with mucus when bones are reintroduced. Many people say that they



CJ Puotinen and her Labrador, Chloe.

can't give their dogs raw bones because they get diarrhea. This is not unusual – it takes the digestive tract a while to adjust, which is why it makes sense to start with small amounts of bone, or to take the bone away after a few minutes and give it back to the dog the next day for a few minutes more.

Whenever we run out of raw bones and then get a new supply, Chloe has loose stools for a day, and then they become small, hard, and chalky, like plaster. In my experience, bone-fed dogs seldom have anal sac problems.

Chloe's dinner usually starts with 2 or 3 tablespoons of lacto-fermented veggies, 1 to 2 tablespoons coconut oil, a tablespoon of shredded dried coconut, a teaspoon of cod liver oil, and a little fresh organ meat, such as liver, if available. If she's getting

an egg or cheese that day, it gets mixed with the veggies.

The meat or poultry comes next, fed in her crate on a towel because of the mess it makes. She gets raw meaty bones at least three or four days a week. If she gets meat without a bone attached, she'll get an after-dinner bone to chew on. I use raw marrow bones for that – once she cleans them out, I fill them with raw goat cheese.

I put Willard Water concentrate in her drinking water and often add a splash of it to her dinner. Her other supplements are Standard Process Canine Whole Body Support powder and Seacure powder, both of which help the vegetables taste better.

Chloe gets between 1 and 1½ pounds of meat and raw meaty bones per day, usually fed in a single evening meal. Lately I've been giving her a cup of fresh goat kefir for breakfast, which I plan to continue as she has become fond of kefir, and it's so good for her. I generally feed a light evening meal with eggs and/or raw dairy or kefir on Saturday, and then fast her (water only) on Sunday.

Chloe was weaned on kibble, but it didn't take long to switch her to raw food. Less than a week after we brought her home at eight weeks, she was eating 100 percent raw and has ever since. She sometimes gets grain-based treats from friends or vets or trainers, but most of her training treats are freeze-dried liver, lamb lung, turkey hearts, or other low-carb or no-carb fare.

Comments: I find it fascinating to see how CJ integrates many of the things she has written about in her WDJ articles into Chloe's diet, including lacto-fermented vegetables ("It's All in How You Make It," March 2001), coconut oil ("Crazy About Coconut Oil," October 2005), Seacure ("Securing Seacure," April 2003), and Willard Water ("Willard Water," June 2006). She also wrote more about Juliette de Bairacli Levy in "Grandmother Nature," July 2006 and about using pasture-fed meat in "Upgrading to Pasture Fed," July 2003.

Even toy breeds eat bones

Randall Mackie, of San Francisco, has fed his 7-pound Yorkshire Terrier, Pumpkin, a raw diet for eight years. He explains why and how:

I started feeding a raw diet when Pumpkin, who was a puppy at the time, just

wouldn't eat kibble, canned, or any other processed foods. She also had several bouts of serious gastrointestinal problems, one of which landed her in the pet hospital for several days. Within a month of switching to raw, she had gained weight, was more active, and she had no further digestive disorders – ever!

I feed muscle meat for her morning meal, and raw meaty bones for dinner. I don't worry about balancing each day's meals, but believe in the concept of "balance over time."

A typical morning meal is one ounce of meat, usually beef stew meat or beef heart, but I vary this with chicken or pork meat, chicken hearts, chicken or duck gizzards, and whatever else I can find at the Asian markets here. Every few days, I add a small amount of cooked beef liver (she gets the runs with raw liver, even in tiny amounts).

Her favorite evening meal is a 1- to 2-ounce piece of pork neck bone. She loves these, and even if she can't completely consume them, they give her lots of chewing pleasure. I used to use a meat cleaver to chop them up, but I found an Asian market nearby where the bones actually come cut up in the perfect size for her. I find that she can generally consume about ¼ to ½ of the bone. Some nights, she gets chicken necks or chicken backs instead, and about once a week, she gets jack mackerel for her RMB meal. Pumpkin is good about not gulping, but I still split the chicken necks lengthwise, then split them again, and I hold onto them while she eats them. I also mince up the chicken backs before I give them to her.

A couple of days a week, Pumpkin is fed pre-made raw medallions from Nature's Variety, when other family members are caring for her.

Finally, she gets table scraps, cottage cheese, yogurt, cheese, etc. – almost anything I eat, she will eat, except for veggies and eggs. I've tried and tried to get her to eat those, but finally gave up. Sometimes she'll eat bits of fruit (apple, melon, etc). And she loves vanilla ice cream!

For treats, I primarily use EVO kibble. I've even fed EVO at times when I didn't have anything thawed for her.

The only supplements she gets right now are fish oil and sometimes vitamin E, both of which I mix in with the cooked beef liver she gets in the morning.

When I first started feeding raw meaty bones, Pumpkin didn't quite know what



Randall Mackie's Yorkie, Pumpkin, pulls meat off a bone held by her owner.

to do with them, but she picked up on it quickly. In the beginning, I held the bone to help her get started, and now that's part of our routine. I'll hold the bone for a while, then after a few minutes I'll let her take it away from me, and she'll go and chew on it for a good long while.

Comments: Many people think that toy breeds cannot handle bones, but Pumpkin would beg to differ! Small dogs seem to be more susceptible to esophageal damage from bones, so be sure your dog chews them up well, or help out by holding onto the bones (if your dog doesn't object), cutting them up into pieces too small to cause choking, or grinding them.

Mass production for big dogs

Bridget Moran, of Pleasant Prairie, Wisconsin, is a Rottweiler breeder and Bravo! retailer who feeds a whopping 12 pounds of food a day to her six dogs, ranging in age from 2 to 11 years old, and weighing from 67 to 115 pounds. She reveals her system for feeding so many big dogs:

I feed raw meaty bones (RMBs) in the morning and muscle meat in the evening, for a total of 6 pounds of food each meal:

Morning meals may be composed of:

Pork rib tips

Chicken quarters, or chicken necks with added chicken hearts or gizzards

Venison, lamb, or duck necks

Turkey necks, or turkey backs with added turkey hearts

Chicken breast meat with bone

Evening meals:

Chunked pork heart (cheaper than beef heart, which one dog doesn't like)

Ground turkey, beef, venison, or buffalo

Tripe, always mixed half and half with another protein

Chicken hearts and gizzards, or turkey hearts

Jack mackerel (canned)

Supplements:

50/50 mixture of Berte's Immune Blend and Berte's Green Blend

Salmon oil

I buy pork rib tips, chicken quarters, chicken necks, and pork heart in bulk from a restaurant food supplier that delivers near my house. I purchase turkey backs from the local grocer. The rest of my products are from Bravo.

I split the food unevenly between my six dogs, adding muscle meat to RMB meals when needed to get the proper amount of food for each dog, or if stools seem too dry. I weigh all my dogs' food, to help me get the amounts right, and mix and match proteins at will. I have been very lucky and have never had a choking incident (a friend lost her dog, a full sister to one of mine, to a turkey neck).

I use Bravo! Blends, which contain meat, bone, organ meat, and veggies, a few times a week to supply the bulk of my organ meat, or I add a handful of Bravo beef liver cubes to either meal. Once every month or two, I feed the more expensive exotic ground raw meaty bones from Bravo, such as elk, ostrich, or quail, for variety.

Here is my system. At an office supply store, I buy unscented garbage can liners for around \$10 for 10,000 bags. These bags are not freezer-weight, but the food does not stay in the freezer long.

I split each case of food into bags containing enough for a meal for each of my dogs, plus a little extra. If I have time, I cube pork heart or beef heart, or grind muscle meat, and put about five pounds each into rectangular Glad or Ziploc containers (this shape works best for maximizing freezer space).

I have a 22-cubic-foot chest freezer.

With chest freezers, it's helpful to know approximately where everything is, so I made a wooden divider that splits the lower half of the freezer into thirds, allowing me to put 40-pound bulk cases on top. The divider also lets me stack and retrieve Bravo rolls more efficiently. When I put food into the freezer, I alternate between muscle meat and RMBs, making it easier to get to what I want. I'm also careful to shift older food to the top when I fill my freezer up again.

The first dog I switched to a raw diet was my 11-year-old male who was very lame, but could not handle any pain medications. After a few weeks on the raw diet, he started putting weight on his bad leg, and was soon trotting around and retrieving balls. He lived almost another year before I lost him to cancer of the spleen. The vet and I were totally amazed, and I was a convert from that point on.

Comments: Feeding a raw diet to so many large dogs can seem overwhelming, but once you have a system worked out, it goes quite smoothly.

Weaning pups onto raw food

As a breeder, Moran explains how she feeds her Rottweiler pups:

The first solid food I feed puppies at about four weeks of age is a very soupy mix of goat milk and ground turkey, gradually adding more turkey and less milk (all meals followed by nursing on the dam).

After a few days, I add whole, skinless chicken drumsticks and thighs, with the meat scored. Chewing meat helps relieve teething pain and saves the dam's nipples – most dams do not want to nurse during this stage, but I have found this helps tremendously (I've also found a raw diet increases the amount of milk the dam has at this point).

At five weeks of age, I give the puppies a meal of ground raw meaty bones (usually from Bravo!). The second meal of the day is whole RMBs (skinless chicken), and the third meal is ground turkey and goat milk.

The puppies soon begin chewing the edge of the chicken bones. When this starts, I introduce chicken backs (I still give larger chicken pieces as well, as there is not much meat on the backs). I like to use chicken backs as they are too big for the puppies to swallow whole, and they learn to hunker down and chew through the

backs until they have pieces they can swallow. I found that if I started with chicken necks first, there was always one puppy that would swallow the necks whole. I had a 5-week-old puppy who swallowed three chicken necks whole, then pitched a fit when I took him from the food bowl, wanting even more! He was fine, but it's better that they learn to chew their food first before swallowing it.

Once the puppies are doing well with their chicken backs, I add in another protein. I use ground RMBs from Bravo!, starting with the beef blend. I continue to add one new food every few days.

I recommend to their new owners that puppies be fed three meals a day, as follows (the order does not matter):

Meal one: whole raw meaty bones

Meal two: meat meal (no bones), eggs, organs, cottage cheese and yogurt, along with veggies, if desired

Meal three: ½ meat, ½ raw meaty bones (ground or whole)

This diet is half RMBs and half meat and other animal products. The emphasis is on the "meat" in RMBs as well. If chicken necks or backs are the RMB of the day, I recommend adding more meat to this meal to improve the meat to bone ratio. I also suggest the same supplements I use for all my dogs (see above).

With my Rottweiler puppies, I feed 5 percent of their body weight at seven to eight weeks of age daily, divided into three meals. I then monitor their condition at least weekly, increasing each meal by one ounce when I see a puppy start to look thin. The timing will vary depending on each puppy's activity level and genetics.

By 12 weeks of age, pups need their food increased every one to two weeks, and by six months, usually only monthly increases. By ten months, I am feeding 2 to 3 percent of their estimated adult weight, and no further increases are needed.

I find the body structure of my raw-fed puppies seems to be more solid. I believe they are a little more muscled from putting their front feet on the raw meaty bones and pulling the meat off. Muscles work out while eating!

Comments: This feeding approach can work for any puppy, but it may be best to wait a week or two after bringing a new puppy home before changing his diet, so

that if digestive problems develop due to parasites, disease, or the stress of a new home, you'll know diet is not the cause.

A "prey-model" diet

One style of raw feeding called "prey model" advocates feeding a diet based on whole prey and excluding anything else. This is based on a desire to mimic the diet of the wolf in the wild. Ginny Wilken, of Alameda, California, describes the prey-model diet she has fed Tomo, her 11-year-old, 85-pound American Staffordshire Terrier, since he was four years old:

Tomo had three surgeries for hip and knee problems when he was young, prompting me to seek options to help him. I started with a Billingham-style raw diet, which soon morphed into a prey-model approach.

"Prey model" is a concept with wide latitude. Tomo is not fed a strict prey-model diet; I've tailored it to meet his individual needs. I think this diet is well suited to folks with moderately good access to meat sources.

Tomo is a low-activity senior, an easy keeper with definite preferences. He enjoys food, but sees a meal as a social event, and is always happier to eat if someone is watching or sharing. This is sometimes a challenge, as he will turn down "difficult" meals at home alone that he will gladly tackle in "public."

Here are his diet items:

Pork neck bones (whole split necks), ribs, shoulder, and shanks

Turkey parts, including unattached necks

Chicken and duck (whole or half)

Lamb necks (whole), heart, and kidney

Goat (six-way cut)

Meaty chunks of beef, lamb, pork, and venison

Raw eggs, free-range (home grown)

Organic or natural beef liver, heart, and kidney

Green tripe, cow gullets, and tracheas (from greentripe.com)

Chicken feet

Pork brains, spleen, and pancreas

Whole small fishes, like smelt or sardines

Intact heads or whole animals, when available

Homemade soups from all varieties of bones

My table scraps or "shares," just meat, fish, and vegetables (only broccoli and greens, and only with fat on it)

Timberwolf salmon oil



Ginny Wilken's handsome 11-year-old American Staffordshire Terrier, Tomo, waits politely for his raw meal.

I buy food from butchers, Asian markets, or wholesale from packers and ranchers. All our food is from quality sources, and much of it is organic or naturally raised.

These days, Tomo can't skip meals, as he needs to take a number of supplements twice a day, including antioxidants for his heart, anti-inflammatories for arthritis, and thyroid medication. He gets pills in slices of meat or handfuls of tripe or ground beef, usually when I am eating, to make a treat out of it.

Tomo is a very careful chewer, but large pieces may come up and go down a few times to get chomped just right. He has never choked on food. I don't fast him, but I do feed a bountiful day, followed by one or more lean days. He averages 1½ pounds of food a day, with a higher percentage of bone than is common with a prey-model diet. This regulates his digestion, which tends toward quick and loose.

I saw lots of positive changes. First, he ate, without being picky! Then I noticed that fleas no longer bothered him. His skin and ear problems cleared up quite a bit, though not entirely. His breath and coat improved, and his digestion became much more consistent. He became less manic, and easier to train and handle. His hips seemed to bother him less. Eight years later, I'm still very happy with his diet.

Comments: It's important when following the prey-model style to feed a wide variety of foods, as shown here, not just meat and bones, and not just one or two meat sources. Tomo's diet also demonstrates how supplements can be used appropriately.

Getting started

All those who shared their diets with us have fed a raw diet for a long time, and we've become quite relaxed about it. Believe me, we all suffer anxiety attacks the first time we hand our dogs a raw meaty bone. It's hard to overcome the warnings we've received all our lives about giving bones (especially chicken bones) to dogs. Remember, though, that those warnings apply to *cooked* bones.

Most dogs handle raw bones without a problem, especially if they are careful chewers. However, if you have a dog who tends to gulp his food, or if you just don't feel comfortable feeding whole bones, you can still feed ground or cut-up raw meaty bones, and can give recreational bones instead for chewing pleasure and dental health.

Most of us who feed a raw diet have seen a variety of health improvements in our dogs, including cleaner teeth, healthier coat and skin, less problem with fleas and allergies, better muscle tone, and increased vitality. As always, however, if your dog has any problems, it's a good idea to try changing what you feed. If you see an improvement after making a change, that points to a nutritional problem, either due to excesses or deficiencies in the diet, or to an allergy to one or more ingredients. No matter what style of diet you feed, the cardinal rule is to always do what works for your dog. 🐾

Mary Straus does research on canine health and nutrition topics as an avocation. She is the owner of the DogAware.com website. She lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with her 15-year-old dog, Piglet.

Resources Mentioned in This Article

STAINLESS STEEL GRINDERS

American Eagle, ameagle.biz, (800) 836-5756. Also available at retailers such as Pierce Equipment (pierceequipment.com, 877-354-1265) and North Coast Pets (northcoastpets.com, 877-231-7416)

Cabela's, cabelas.com, (800) 237-4444

L.E.M., lemproducts.com, (877) 536-7763

Sam Baere Meat Grinders, sillypugs.com, (925) 778-2340

OTHER TOOLS

Joyce Chen Scissors, joycechen.com. May be purchased from amazon.com and other retailers.

Tilia FoodSaver, foodsaver.com, (877) 777-8042

L'Equip Dehydrator, lequip.com, (800) 816-6811 US or (877) 453-7847 Canada

Estwing Fireside Friend or Sportsman's Axe, estwing.com, (815) 397-9558

Microwave Egg Boiler, sold by Fante's Kitchen Wares Shop, fantes.com, (800) 443-2683

SUPPLEMENTS

Vetri-Science Cell Advance 880 Antioxidant Formula, vetriscience.com, 800-882-9993

Thorne Veterinary Small Animal Antioxidants, Immugen, Basic Canine Nutrients, thorne.com, (208) 263-1337. Also available from wellvet.com, (303) 702-1986

Berte's Immune Blend, Green Blend, B-Naturals, b-naturals.com, (866) 368-2728

Standard Process Canine Whole Body Support, standardprocess.com, (800) 848-5061

Seacure, propernutrition.com, (800) 247-5656

Timberwolf Salmon Oil, timberwolforganics.com, (407) 877-8779

Willard Water, Nutrition Coalition, Fargo, ND. (800) 447-4793 or (218) 236-9783; willardswater.com

COMMERCIAL RAW FOODS

Bravo!, bravorawdiet.com, (866) 922-9222

Green Tripe and Organ Blend, greentripe.com, (831) 635-0724

The Honest Kitchen, thehonestkitchen.com, (858) 483 5995

EVO from Natura, naturapet.com, (800) 532-7261

Nature's Variety, naturesvariety.com, (888) 519-7387

Halshan, halshan.com, (888) 766-9725

Dr. Billinghurst's BARF Diet, barfworld.com, (866) 282-2273

BOOKS

Give Your Dog a Bone, Grow Your Pup With Bones, and The BARF Diet, by Dr. Ian Billinghurst

The Complete Herbal Book for the Dog and Cat, by Juliette de Bairacli Levy

Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs & Cats, by Richard Pitcairn, DVM

See the author's Web page at dogaware.com/dogfeeding.html for more information on home feeding books, websites and email groups; supplements; commercial raw diets; and local raw food co-ops and groups.

Chew Chew? Train!

How to properly channel your dog's need to chew.

BY PAT MILLER

Puppies are notorious for their ability to chew on anything and everything. If you're at all dog-savvy you know when you get a new puppy that despite your best efforts to manage and supervise, you're likely to lose at least one valuable personal possession to the razor-sharp implements known fondly as puppy teeth.

Puppies chew to explore their world as well as to relieve the pain and irritation of teething. What many dog owners *don't* seem to realize is that while puppies sooner or later get beyond the stage where they feel compelled to put their teeth on *everything* they see, mature dogs also need to chew to exercise their jaws, massage their gums, clean their teeth, and to relieve stress and boredom. It comes as an unpleasant surprise to many owners that chewing doesn't end at the age of six months when all of the dog's adult teeth are grown in.

The wolf, ancestor and cousin to our

dogs, chewed to survive. His meals weren't served to him as measured rations of kibble in a stainless steel bowl. Long ago, as a pack member, he used his strong teeth and jaws to bring down his prey. He chewed through tough moose hide to consume the life-sustaining flesh beneath. He crushed elk leg bones with powerful jaws and teeth to slurp up the rich, tasty marrow inside. He chewed to eat, to live.

Neither tens of thousand years of domestication nor a recent switch to processed foods have extinguished the adult dog's need and desire to chew. Many dogs continue a significant amount of vigorous adolescent chewing until the age of 18 to 24 months as those teeth continue to mature, and then still chew, but with somewhat less intensity, as they age.

Chewing is as basic a behavior to a puppy as a human baby sucking on a pacifier. Humans, as they grow, transition to sucking on thumbs, then lollipops, straws, sports bottles, and perhaps cigarettes.



Puppies should have a variety of chew items, of varying resistance, to help deal with their ever-changing baby teeth and gums. When their mouths are sore, they may seek out one type of chew, but then look for other items when feeling fine.

What you can do . . .

Manage your pup well until he's through adolescence and mature enough to handle house freedom, to avoid having him learn inappropriate chew habits.

Recognize your dog's need to chew and provide him with age- and chew-style-appropriate chew objects throughout his life.

Examine chew toys regularly and remove any that have become too worn or small to be safe.



Dogs, like us, can learn to transition to appropriate objects for mature oral attention, but they never completely outgrow the need to gnaw. Given the opportunity, mature dogs will chew for as long as they live and have teeth to chew with.

Case in point: Katie, our 15-year-old Australian Kelpie who can barely hear, has difficulty walking, and whose vision is failing, still happily chews raw bones and chicken wings right alongside her younger packmates.

Building good chew habits

Puppies develop substrate preferences for elimination in the early months of their lives, and they similarly develop chew-object preferences. Hence the inadvisability of giving your old shoes or socks as chew toys.

If you give your baby dog the run of the house and he learns to chew on Oriental carpets, sofa cushions, and coffee table legs, you will likely end up with a dog who chooses to exercise his jaws and teeth on

inappropriate objects for years to come. You'll find yourself crating him frequently even as an adult dog, or worse, exiling him to a lonely life in the backyard, where he can chew only on lawn furniture, loose fence boards, and the edges of your deck and hot tub.

Instead, focus your dog's fangs on approved chew toys at an early age and manage him well to prevent access to your stuff. In this way, he'll earn house privileges much sooner in life. By the end of his first year, you'll probably be able to leave him alone safely while you go out to dinner or shopping – or even while you're away at work.

As long as he still snags the occasional shoe, knick-knack, or other off-limits possession for a mid-day gnaw, it's too soon to give your dog unfettered freedom. When you're home, he needs to always be under your direct supervision. You may need to keep him on a leash or a tether, or simply close the door of the room you're in so he's shut in with you and can't wander into the parlor to shred your grandmother's antique lace doily while your back is turned. If you're otherwise too occupied to supervise, put him in his crate or exercise pen to keep him out of trouble.

At the same time, supply him with "legal" chew objects to keep his needle-sharp puppy teeth appropriately occupied. Stuffed Kongs, Buster Cubes, and Busy Buddies are just a few of the many interactive toys available that can keep your dog's teeth and mind acceptably busy. If you consistently supply him with desirable and acceptable chew objects, he'll eventually develop a strong preference for chewing on those same objects. He will seek these items out when he feels the need to gnaw, and ultimately your personal possessions will be safe, even when your back is turned.

Individually appropriate

Because different dogs chew with different levels of intensity, it is impossible to make definitive statements about which types of chew products are appropriate for your particular dog. The safety of chew objects such as rawhide, various bones, pig ears, and cow hooves is a hotly debated topic. Rope tugs are wonderful chew toys for some dogs, but others chew off and ingest the strings and risk serious gastrointestinal complications, even death.

Check with your own veterinarian and follow his/her recommendations regarding



Puppies lose their "baby teeth" over a period of weeks, between three and six months of age. While the baby teeth are shedding and the adult teeth are erupting, the puppy's gums are likely to be irritated – and he'll urgently wish to chew.

the use of these and other chew items for your dog. Regularly check the condition of any chew toys you do give your dog, and discard them when they begin to show signs of wear and tear.

One of the basic tenets of positive training is that it's much easier to teach the dog what *to* do rather than what *not* to do. If you program your dog's chew preferences early in life by consistently directing his attention – and teeth – to appropriate objects and preventing his access to inappropriate ones, you won't have to constantly tell him he's chewing on the wrong things.

Interactive toys can help here too. A stuffed Kong suspended just out of your dog's reach can keep him occupied and work off excess energy as he jumps and grabs at the tempting prize. Instead of giving him his bowl of food in the morning, fill the Buster Cube with his kibbles and make him work for his meal by pushing cube around to make the food fall out. He won't have the time, energy, or desire to shred your grandmother's antique afghan if he's out "hunting" for his breakfast!

Note: Some destructive chewing and other related inappropriate behaviors are a result of isolation distress or separation anxiety rather than "normal" chewing. Such chewing is often – but not exclusively – directed toward door and window frames, and occurs only outside of the owner's

presence, by a dog who shows signs of stress at the signs of his owner's pending departure. Separation anxiety dogs often don't crate well either, which makes managing the destructive behavior even more challenging. If you think your dog's chewing is related to separation anxiety or isolation distress, you'll need to work with a qualified, positive dog training professional to modify the behaviors.

The trading post

You can reduce the risk of damage to occasional ill-gotten items by teaching your pup to exchange toys for treats, using something he loves that he's allowed to have, such as a favorite chew toy or a food-stuffed Kong.

The key to this game is he learns that if he gives something up, he gets something *better* in return *and* he gets the original thing back as well. Two rewards for the price of one! Then, when he has a forbidden object, he's more likely to bring it to you to trade than to drag his prize to his cave under the dining room table for a leisurely chew. The rare occasion that he doesn't get "the thing" back won't be enough to overcome the programming you've done by playing the "trade" game with him frequently.

In order for this to work, you have to stop playing "chase the puppy" when

Product Review: Tuffies

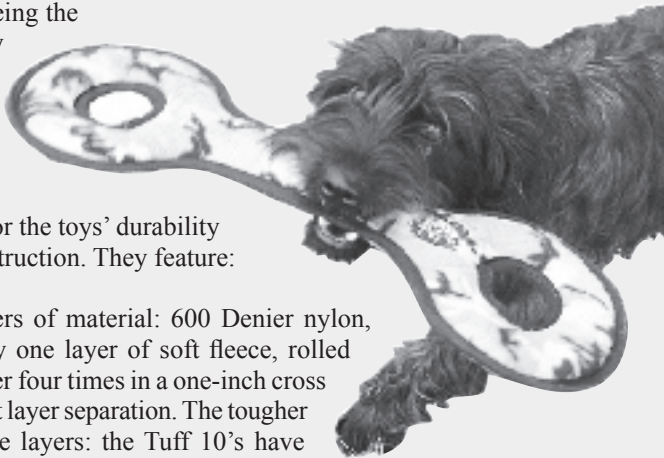
Some dogs, like Lucy, our 3-year-old Cardigan Corgi, delight in destroying plush toys. Bonnie, on the other hand, is one of those dogs who cherishes her playthings. She would gently carry and nurture her stuffed “puppy” for years, until it disintegrated from natural wear and tear. To her everlasting dismay, we must restrict her access to stuffed toys to prevent Lucy from shredding them in mere seconds.

Until recently. Two months ago we discovered “Tuffies,” marketed as “the world’s tuffest soft dog toy.” They are soft enough to satisfy Bonnie’s needs, and tough enough to stand up to Lucy’s determined attentions. Readily found online and in select pet supply outlets, Tuffies are rated on a “Tuff Scale” from 5 to 10, with 10 being the toughest. They range in price from \$9 for the #5 Tuff Log to \$27 for the #10 Mega Tuffies.

The reason for the toys’ durability lies in their construction. They feature:

- Multiple layers of material: 600 Denier nylon, PVC, and finally one layer of soft fleece, rolled and sewn together four times in a one-inch cross pattern to prevent layer separation. The tougher the toy, the more layers: the Tuff 10’s have seven layers of material.
- Protective webbing: Additional industrial-grade nylon webbing sewn around the outside edge with three rows of stitching to cover and protect the first four rows of stitching.
- Squeaker safety pockets: Squeakers are sewn into nylon safety pockets beneath the four other layers of material.

We purchased two Tuffies – a #8 Tug o’ War (\$14) and a #9 ring (\$15). They are serving their purpose well. Soft enough to appeal to Bonnie, they are her first choice when she’s rooting through her toy box. Plus, they have withstood Lucy’s concerted attempts to shred – to the point she no longer even tries! No doubt there are dogs out there who are determined enough to destroy even these if left alone with them long enough; like any chew toy, some monitoring is recommended. We did hear reports that some of the Tuffie toys that have small appendages, such as the Sea Creatures and the Dinosaurs, are prone to losing limbs to determined chewers.



he grabs the sofa cushion or some other forbidden object. This is often an attention-getting behavior; he’s learned that grabbing “your” toys and dashing off with them initiates a rousing play session.

Here’s what you do:

1. Offer him his well-stuffed Kong and say, “Take it!” Have him on a leash if you think he’ll run off with it.
2. Give him a little while to get fully engaged in chewing, and then say “Give!” or “Trade!” in a *cheerful* tone of voice and offer him a handful of irresistible treats, such as small bits of chicken or cheese.
3. Hold the treats under his nose and let him sniff. It may take him several seconds to think about it, but eventually he should drop his Kong and start eating the treats. Don’t let him gulp them! Hold the tidbits so he can only take them one by one.
4. When he drops the Kong, say, “Yes!”
5. *While he is still nibbling*, reach down with your *other* hand and pick up the toy.
6. Let him nibble a bit longer, then offer him the Kong again.
7. Repeat the exercise several times. Then end the game by giving him back his Kong and letting him chew to his heart’s content.

8. Play this game at every opportunity, whenever he’s engaged in chewing on his toys on his own, or whenever you feel like initiating the game, until he’ll give up his chew object easily on your “give” cue.

Troubleshooting

What if the game doesn’t always go as smoothly as you might like? Here are some of the challenges you may face:

- Your dog may not be willing to drop his toy in exchange for the treats in your hand. Try dropping the treats on the floor in a little Hansel-and-Gretel-trail. Lots of dogs are more willing to give up their valued possession if the treats are within easy reach on the floor. Then, while he is following the trail to your hand that’s still holding a reservoir of treats, pick up the Kong with your *other* hand.
- Your dog may lose interest in his toy

after he realizes you have yummy treats in your hand. Try using less valuable treats, or a more valuable chew toy. Or simply play the game when he happens to be chewing on one of his toys.

- Your dog may be a resource guarder. If he growls, snaps, or even stiffens and looks angry when you try to trade with him, you should STOP practicing this exercise and seek the help of a qualified and positive training professional to help you resolve the resource guarding challenge. (For more on resource guarding, see “Thanks for Sharing,” September 2001.)

Meanwhile, supervise him very closely to prevent his access to forbidden objects

so you don’t put yourself at risk for being bitten because you *have* to take something away from him.

Leave it

You can also teach your dog to respond to your cue to leave something alone *before* he sinks his sabers gum-deep into a treasured possession. To teach “leave it,” have your dog on leash in front of you. Show him a tasty treat, tell him “Leave it!”, and let him see you place it under your shoe. Freeze-dried liver cubes work well for this; they are high-value for the dog, but firm enough that they aren’t easily squished under your foot.

Your dog will probably dig, claw,

and even chew at your foot to try to get the treat. Let him. This is an exercise in patience for you as well as an exercise in “Leave it!” for him. *Be sure to wear durable shoes for this exercise.* Sandals may leave you with bloody toes, and patent leather will be permanently scratched.

Your dog may give up easily when he realizes he can’t get the treat, or he may be very persistent. Either way, you’re just going to wait for him to give up. The instant he looks away from your foot, “mark” the moment with the click of a clicker or word such as “Yes!” and feed him a very tasty treat. If he continues to look away from your foot, keep clicking and treating at a high rate of reinforcement – lots of clicks

Choose Chews According to Chewing Style

For a chew toy to be effective it must meet three criteria:

1. It must be attractive to the dog. The dog must want to chew it, or it is useless.
2. It must be durable. If it lasts only 30 seconds it won’t help with a long-term chewing problem.
3. It must be safe. It must not contain toxins, or break up (or break down) into pieces that can cause the dog to choke or do internal damage.

It is important to look at individual dogs when deciding which chew objects are safe. Aggressive chewers can splinter objects and swallow large pieces that can choke a dog, cause life-threatening bowel obstructions, or tear the lining of the intestines. Delicate chewers can safely be given items that would be deadly for some dogs.

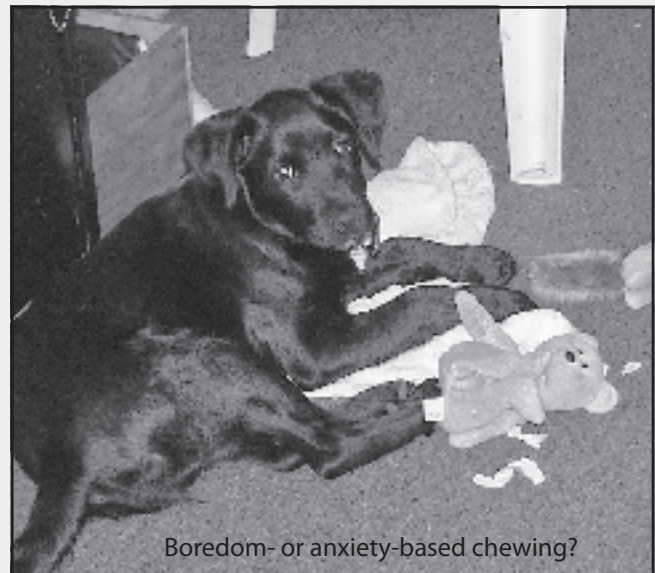
A veterinarian friend gives her Greyhounds rawhide chips, which would not be safe for more aggressive chewers. Aggressive dogs and dogs who are left alone with a chew object are safest with a hard, rubber, hollow, Kong-type toy that can be filled with something tasty to hold the dog’s interest. Very large carrots can make ideal chew objects for many dogs.

Over time, any chew toy softer than your dog’s teeth will become worn down. Any chew object *harder* than your dog’s teeth will cause wear to the teeth. It’s generally preferable to have wear to the toys than wear to the teeth.

Safety requires good judgment. Many chew objects can eventually become small enough to be swallowed (or choked on) and should be disposed of before they reach a dangerous (swallowable) size.



Speculative, investigatory chewing?



Boredom- or anxiety-based chewing?

and treats. If he returns his attentions to the treat under your foot, just wait for him to look away again. Do *not* repeat the cue. When he looks away again, click and treat – again, at a high rate of reinforcement.

When he can control his urge to maul your foot for at least five seconds, carefully move your foot off the treat. If he tries to grab it, simply cover it back up with your foot. You don't need to repeat the "Leave it" cue. In a surprisingly short time, he'll ignore the treat on the floor. Now pick it up, show it to him again, repeat the "Leave it!" cue and try it under your foot again, still with a high rate of reinforcement. Remember to keep your cue cheerful; you're not trying to intimidate him away from the forbidden object; you're just giving him information.

When he's reliably ignoring the treat, you can move a few inches away from it. Don't get too confident! The farther you move from the treat, the more likely he is to think it's okay for him to have it. Take it slow. Set him up to succeed, and in time you'll be able to tell him "Leave it" and leave the object unattended.

You can translate this exercise to real life as soon as your dog understands to look away from the object when he hears the "Leave it!" cue. Set some tempting items on the floor, put him on leash, and walk him past the objects, just out of reach. The instant he looks at an object, say "Leave it!" in a cheerful tone, and stand still. He may stare at and strain toward the object. Just wait. When he gives up and looks away from the forbidden object, click and treat. Then continue toward the next object.

When he'll do this reliably without the leash tightening at all, you're ready to try it off leash. Then, as you supervise your pup's antics, if you see him coveting an inappropriate object, just say, "Leave it!" in that cheerful tone, and be ready to click and treat when he turns back toward you.

Once you've taught your dog the "trade" and "leave it" games, the rest is up to you. Of course, you'll continue to supervise him closely to minimize his access to forbidden objects and redirect his attention when you see him covet an inappropriate one.

If, however, he does happen to find something he's not supposed to have, odds are he'll bring it to you to exchange for something better. Next time you see your dog with Aunt Ida's antique lace doily in his mouth, instead of going into "Omigod the puppy has the doily!" panic mode,



There are many toys that are designed to have food smeared or stuffed into their crevices, encouraging the dog to take his time chewing.

walk to the refrigerator, take out a bag of his favorite treats, and calmly initiate the trade game. You'll be surprised by how easy it is.

Adult chewing

On occasion, an adult dog who has been trustworthy with his chewing habits may suddenly surprise you with an oral foray into the forbidden.

This may be a stress response to something environmental happening in your absence, such as a burglar trying to break into your home, loud equipment working in the street in front of your house, or stray dogs romping through your yard. Sometimes even something like a compelling need to urinate or defecate can stress a well-trained dog into inappropriate chewing.

If you can determine the nature of the stressor and control or remove the cause, your dog should quickly revert to his prior good chewing behavior. He might also need a refresher course in the crate, after a veterinary exam to rule out possible medical causes. (Anytime there's a significant behavior change in an adult dog it's important to rule out – or treat – any possible medical contributors to the undesirable behavior.)

A return to inappropriate chewing may be a result of inactivity and pent-up energy. Perhaps the weather's been bad or your workload extra heavy, curtailing your normal exercise sessions with your canine

companion. That energy has to go somewhere – and for some dogs, it goes right to their jaws. The solution here is a renewed commitment to provide adequate exercise, with the addition, perhaps, of mental exercise into your dog's daily routine. (See "Mind Games," October 2004, for a list of activities for low-mobility games.)

You may also have misjudged your dog's maturity, giving him a little too much freedom a little too soon. When we went to Australia last October for two weeks, I left detailed instructions with our pet-sitter, including a caution that Bonnie, our youngest pack member at 18 months and the only one still routinely crated in our absence, should be given no more than a couple of hours of house-freedom at a time, maximum.

We returned home to discover that particular instruction had somehow gotten lost in the shuffle; the sitter had been crating Bonnie only at night. As a result of too much freedom and less exercise than normal, our little black Scottie/Corgi mix discovered the joys of nibbling on various household objects, including the corner of the plastic dog food bin.

Six-plus months of strict remedial supervision and management later, we're now, again, able to leave her uncrated for up to two hours at a stretch. If I leave the house for longer than that, she's back in her crate. I probably could leave her for longer periods, but I'm a firm believer in erring on the side of caution.

Finally, a well-run positive training class can assist in resolving behavior problems, chewing and otherwise, by helping you and your dog learn to communicate more clearly with each other. The better you understand how his mind works, and the better he understands what you expect of him, the stronger the relationship between the two of you. In the end, it's the strength of this relationship that will carry you through the challenges of chewing and other dog caretaking adventures, and allow you to experience the joys and rewards of sharing your life with a canine companion. 🐾

Pat Miller, CPDT, is WDJ's Training Editor. Miller lives in Hagerstown, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. She is also the author of The Power of Positive Dog Training and Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog. For more information, see "Resources," page 24.

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Chill Out!

The best methods for cooling that hot dog (and why it's a good idea).

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Hot weather spells trouble for dogs. Because they can't release heat by sweating the way humans do, heat and humidity can raise canine body temperatures to dangerous levels. Heat stroke kills, and heat stress (a less severe condition) can take a serious toll on a dog's health. Unfortunately, heat-related problems are among the most common summer canine ailments.

Conscientious caregivers plan ahead and do everything they can to keep their dogs safe in the heat. Here are some strategies and products for helping hot dogs chill out.

To reduce summer heat stress, let your dog become accustomed to climate changes naturally and gradually, the way animals adapt in the wild. Schedule long walks for the coolest time of the day but spend a few minutes outdoors during warmer hours, too. Unless your climate is dangerously hot, your dog can be comfortable for short periods.

Summer daytime temperatures are coolest at dawn and dusk. Just after sunrise and just before sunset are the best times

What you can do . . .

Never leave your dog in a car parked in the sun.

Watch for symptoms of heat stress and if they occur, give immediate first aid and go to the nearest veterinary clinic.

When temperatures climb, provide extra drinking and splashing water.

Plan exercise and outdoor play when temperatures are coolest.



Obese dogs, flat-faced dogs, and (especially!) obese, flat-faced dogs are at increased risk of heat stress and heat stroke. Exercise dogs in the cool of the evening, or close to dawn, and make sure they have adequate shade and water.

to take your dog for a run or a long walk. Humidity matters as much as temperature; in fact, a combination of high humidity and moderate temperatures can stress a dog as much as mid-day sun. Always watch for signs of stress. Dogs pant to release heat, so if your dog pants more heavily than usual, slow down, stop, find shade, offer water, and rest for a while.

Ideal exercise locations are shaded parks or lawns near a pond, river, creek, or pool. Beaches are usually cooler than inland areas, and both lakes and oceans (assuming conditions are safe for swimming) allow dogs to cool off whenever they like. Whether your dog is a wader or swimmer, let him rest in the shade after playing in water. At home, a plastic wading pool can be a perfect place to dip and chill.

Whenever temperatures climb, provide extra drinking water. Your dog's panting cools him by releasing body heat, but this process also can dehydrate his body.

To encourage a hot dog to drink on hot days, resupply his cold water. Some people fill a dog bowl or bucket and freeze it overnight. As it melts during the day, it provides a steady supply of refreshing, cold water (check to make sure it melts quickly enough to provide as much water as he might wish to drink).

Alternatively, or in addition, freeze or simply chill water in the refrigerator in a plastic water bottle and add the melting or chilled contents to your dog's water periodically throughout the day. Change your dog's water more often during hot weather and add ice cubes to your dog's bowl.

Many hot dogs enjoy curling up with a nice cold ice pack. A frozen plastic water bottle stays cool for hours. Dogs who use frozen water bottles as pillows cool down quickly, since blood circulates close to the surface at the neck and throat.

For summer comfort, nothing beats the shade of trees, so as you plan the day's

Cool Your Dog in Safe Water; Algae “Blooms” Can Kill

Water is wonderful, but not if it's toxic. When conditions promote the growth or “bloom” of toxic blue-green algae in lakes and ponds, animals can die. In the U.S. and Canada, blue-green algae blooms have claimed the lives of deer, elk, livestock, and dogs, soon after drinking algae-infected water.

There are hundreds of species of algae, but the family of blue-green algae called cyanobacteria can produce toxins that affect humans and animals. According to the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (pca.state.mn.us/water/clmp-toxicalgae.html), this type of algae occurs in many aquatic environments year-round, but may thrive to a dangerous degree during periods of sustained warm, sunny days in shallow, nutrient rich bodies of water. In these conditions, the blue-green algae suddenly “blooms” – that is, reproduces exponentially. The algae produce a powerful toxin – one of the most powerful natural poisons known.

In September 2006, the *Quebec Gazette* reported that scientists blamed global warming for the increase in Canada's algae problems. Blue-green algae contaminated 43 Quebec lakes and rivers in 2004 and 50 more in 2005. Health inspectors closed lakes and waterways to swimmers and boaters because in addition to killing dogs, the algae causes skin irritations, headaches, nausea, and other health problems in humans. Oregon, Washington, Minnesota, and several other states have reported algae problems.

In 2001, a new planktonic blue-green alga, *Cylindrospermopsis*, was identified in reservoirs and lakes in Indiana. This organism was described in India in the early 1900s, spread to Australia by the

1980s, and reached Florida lakes in the 1990s. It is thought to produce toxins continuously, not sporadically like North America's native blue-green algae.

In June 2007, a Michigan dog died as a result of swimming in (or drinking water from) a pond containing a blue-green algae bloom.

The state of Minnesota warns its citizens about this hazard, stating that the blue-green algae blooms are occasionally responsible for the deaths of livestock and dogs who drink contaminated water. Although toxic blooms may occur in any ice-free water, they *usually* develop in late summer and early fall. (Michigan authorities were surprised by toxic blooms in that state's ponds in mid-June of this year.)

Algae blooms may turn the water cloudy with a green (like pea soup), yellow, or blue-green hue. The water may develop a “swampy” odor as the algae accumulate in large floating mats and decompose. Wind-driven blooms often accumulate on down-wind shorelines.

Algae blooms may be toxic, but not all of them are; it is impossible to predict which blooms are toxic and which are not. In addition, blooms can be temporary, for the wind can completely dissipate a toxic bloom in a few hours or over the course of a day.

People and animals should avoid swimming in or drinking water from ponds or lakes that contain an algae bloom. Check with park departments, state cooperative extension offices, and local news media regarding the algae status of nearby lakes and ponds before planning outings with your dog. And always carry enough fresh water for both of you!



Whenever possible, take your dog swimming in clean, clear, flowing water, rather than warm, shallow ponds or lakes. And avoid any water that is green or thick with algae.

activities, look for parks, play areas, picnic tables, and hiking trails that are sheltered from direct sunlight. At home, if your dog doesn't have a dog door or easy access in and out, be sure he has shade to rest in and ample water supplies. The sun's angle changes with the seasons, so be aware of shifting shade patterns. Providing shade is most important between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Ventilation and air circulation are crucial when dogs are confined to pens, crates, and kennels. Solid walls interfere with air circulation while chain link fencing, screens, or mesh fabric allow the air

to move. Shade covers help reduce heat loads, and fans that circulate air have a cooling effect.

Study the forecast as you schedule play dates and outdoor events. When heat and humidity are high, save outdoor activities for breaks in the weather or days with lower humidity.

As all WDJ readers know, it's never safe to leave a dog in a parked vehicle. The inside of a car parked in the sun, even with its windows down, can increase by several degrees per minute, quickly reaching 125°F or even 150°F.

Keep your dog well groomed, with

frequent brushing to remove dead hair, especially the undercoat. Some long-haired or heavy-coated dogs feel much more comfortable with short summer cuts, keeping in mind that dogs whose coats are shaved or cut very short are at risk for sunburn.

Heat stress risks

Heat stress, heat exhaustion, and heat stroke or heat prostration are increasingly severe levels of the same basic condition.

Any dog can suffer from heat stress, but dogs who are most susceptible include the very young and old; any dog with a history of heat stress; breeds with flat faces or

short noses; and dogs who are overweight, physically inactive, have cardiovascular disease, or respiratory problems. Some prescription drugs may increase the risk.

The symptoms of heat stress include profuse panting, salivation, an anxious expression, staring without seeing, failing to respond to commands, skin that is warm and dry, fever, rapid pulse, fatigue or exhaustion, muscular weakness, and physical collapse.

The symptoms of heat stroke or heat prostration can include a warm nose and foot pads, glazed eyes, heavy panting, rapid pulse, a dark red tongue, fever, dizziness, vomiting or diarrhea, immobility, and unconsciousness. Brain damage occurs when the body's temperature reaches 106° to 107°F. A dog's normal temperature is 100.5° to 101.5°F

If your dog experiences any of the above symptoms, provide immediate first aid. Your rapid response may save your dog's life.

Reduce your dog's temperature by moving her into shade and immersing her gradually into cool water, such as in a stream, pond, fountain, horse trough, bath tub, or wading pool. Otherwise, wet the dog thoroughly, pouring a continuous stream of cool water over her body, beginning with the head and extremities, from a hose, watering can, bottle, or pan. If possible, apply ice packs to her head and neck. Apply wet towels to her abdomen, groin, legs, head, and neck.

If you can, take your dog's temperature and continue applying cool wet towels until it returns to normal.

As soon as possible, take your dog to a veterinary clinic. Even if she seems to have recovered, her body temperature could increase again; heat stress always carries a risk of brain damage; and depending on

the dog's age, physical condition, and the amount of time spent with an elevated temperature, complications can occur.

Cool equipment

There's no shortage of special equipment to help keep dogs cool. Pet supply catalogs and websites sell everything from cooling crate pads to water-retaining scarves, battery operated or solar powered fans, mesh beds, solar shade sheets, special hats, and cooling mats.

Now cooling vests are becoming popular. Made from different materials and operating on different cooling principles, these garments are designed to keep dogs from overheating.

Do they work? To help us find out, we recruited Bridgeport, Connecticut, dog trainer Deborah Lee Miller-Riley and her Portuguese Water Dog, Skyler, to test some popular models. Miller-Riley competes with her dogs in water sports and runs Splash Camps and Splash Workshops across the country (see k9watersports.com for more information).

Skyler is an 11-year-old male who weighs 61 pounds and had a 3-inch-thick wavy coat until we finished our tests, when he got a short, cooling summer cut.

Each vest was tested on a sunny, warm day with some cloud cover, in temperatures ranging from 83 to 85° F, humidity near 45 percent, and very mild winds. The walks lasted 30 to 35 minutes for each vest tested, ending at a stream where Skyler cooled his legs before returning by the same route.

All of the vests come in different sizes, with size charts based on weight and measurements such as girth (chest at its widest part), neck, back length, or length from front leg to back leg. Skyler's correct size, depending on the manufacturer, was medium, large, or extra large. Because his

measurements often fell near a size change, we supplied all of his statistics when ordering, asking the seller to send his best size. Two had to be returned for size replacement, and one more should have been.

Miller-Riley's observations apply to Skyler's experiences with the vests. Several of the vests reviewed here were designed for or are used by military, search and rescue, police, and working dogs. Results may vary for smaller or larger dogs, dogs of different breeds, engaged in different activities, or in other climates.

Canine Cool Vest

50 Degree Company fills its products with a blend of nontoxic, noncarcinogenic crystalline alkanes – materials that can be “charged” with a cool temperature quickly, but release this coolness very slowly. Its “Canine Cool Vest” is “charged” by a brief soak in ice water or a few hours in the refrigerator, after which, the manufacturer claims, it maintains a stable 80°F temperature for four to five hours. The 20-degree difference between the vest and the dog's body keeps the dog cool. The material solidifies when cool and becomes clear and pliable when it warms up, making it easy to determine when it needs to be recharged.

50 Degree makes a “Cool Pad” for lying on, as well as vests and other cooling products for humans.

The Cool Vest comes in seven colors and four sizes. Size is determined by neck/yoke, chest girth, and side body length measurements. Skyler wore a woodland camo vest (green and black) in size large, which cost \$120. Velcro tabs close the vest around the dog's belly and back. Two cold panels slip inside the vest and cover the lower rib cage.

“This product was cut too long for

Resources Mentioned in This Article

Canine Cool Vest

50 Degree Company, West Melbourne, FL
(321) 956-0050, 50degree.com
sizes small to large, \$90 to \$140

Hawaiian Cool Coat

Cocojor Hawaii, Honolulu, HI
(808) 394-2162, cocojorhawaii.com
sizes XX small to XX large, \$42 to \$50

Cool Vest by Radic

Gramercy Distribution, New York NY
(212) 505-0320, gramercydistribution.com
sizes extra small to large, \$48 to \$59

Canine Cool Coat

SmartPak, Plymouth, MA
(800) 326-0282, shopsmartpak.com
sizes 10 to 36 (dog's back length), \$25

RPCM Cooling Vest

Glacier Tek, Inc., distributed by Helping Udders, Belle Plaine, KS
(620) 488-5448, helpingudders.com
Chilly Dog, \$130; Chilly Pup \$99

Chillybuddy

PT Bofabs, Rockville, MD
(888) 762-8149, chillybuddy.com
sizes petite to XX-large, \$33

Canine Cool Vest



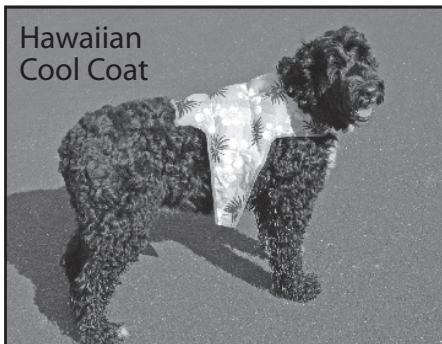
my slightly off-square male dog,” reports Miller-Riley. “The coat cut into his groin and pressed on his penis, which seemed to be uncomfortable for him when he lifted his leg. The panels, which were chilled in the refrigerator overnight, remained solid throughout the walk. Skyler’s chest was cold where it came in contact with the pack. But he did not appear cool; in fact, he panted during the entire walk. When we reached the stream, he not only cooled his legs but went for a swim to cool off more. Despite being a water dog, he is not fond of swimming unless he is really hot.

“I thought I would like this vest. The Velcro panels were easy to use, and I thought the wrap-around design would act as insulation to keep coolness next to the dog. Instead, it appeared to make him warmer, even while it chilled the skin next to his ribs.”

Hawaiian Cool Coat

Fashion is the hallmark of Cocoloj Hawaii, which makes tank tops, muu muus, sundresses, bandanas, sun caps, raincoats, cooling vests, and other attire – all for dogs – in a variety of beach-appropriate colors and patterns.

Cocoloj Hawaii says its Hawaiian Cool Coat is filled with nontoxic crystals that absorb and retain water to help keep dogs cool. “Just soak the vest in cold water and let it sun dry,” say the product instructions. “It stays cool for three to seven days and can be reactivated many times.”



Skyler tested a cotton green floral vest in size extra large, costing \$42.

“This colorful coat had quilted sections that contained the beads that absorb water,” says Miller-Riley. “Absorb is just what they did. Once soaked, the coat weighed close to five pounds. Try as I might, I could not get the coat to stay on my dog. The Velcro patches on the end of the body strap were not large enough to remain closed; the weight of the coat kept pulling the fastener apart, and the coat would slide off.

“We were not able to complete our test walk. This coat requires extra care (sun drying) to prevent mold growth, and it still got moldy. It remained swollen for a week, even in the sun, and was heavy, bulky, and a bother to maintain.”

Cool Vest by Radic

The Cool Vest is made with a special water-retaining fabric that helps cool the dog through simple evaporation. Place the vest in cool running water, gently squeeze out the excess so it doesn’t drip, and then place it over the dog’s head and fasten it with Velcro behind the dog’s front legs. According to its distributor, the vest’s cooling action remains effective for up to two hours and can be reactivated with additional water. To prevent mold, hang dry after each use; to clean, hand wash in warm water with mild detergent and hang dry.

The vest comes in five sizes (extra small to large) and two colors, orange or blue. Skyler wore a blue size large, which cost \$59.

Miller-Riley reports, “This design was very light weight even after being soaked in cold water and refrigerated. The coat has a liner that protects the dog from getting wet, so it might work well for dogs waiting to go into a show ring where wet coats are undesirable.

“The vest was simple, easy to use, and packed up nicely. It did need care after use to prevent mold growth, but it dried within the day mold-free. This style fit my dog the



best of all the vests we tried. The panel over Skyler’s back was still cool underneath at the end of the walk, and his skin under the vest was cool, while his head and rump, which were not protected, were hot to the touch. He began the walk with light panting and ended the same way. At the stream, he walked in to wet his feet.”

Canine Cool Coat

Made with “Oasis fabric,” a soft, durable, breathable polyester mesh that reflects sunlight, the Canine Cool Coat is worn after being soaked in water and wrung out. Its heat-reducing action is said to continue even after the coat dries out.

The coat’s size is the dog’s back length measured from top of shoulders to base of tail, with 14 sizes ranging from 10 to 36 inches. Skyler wore size 22. All sizes cost \$25.

“This coat was very light, easy to use, and easy to pack,” says Miller-Riley. “But I think my dog was cooled more by the stream than by the coat. Once it dried, it didn’t make much sense to use it further. Just soaking my dog with water before and during our walk worked just as well as this coat and I didn’t have to buy anything.”

SmartPak also sells cage cooler fans, a “cool cot” (portable crate with elevated floor for cooling air circulation), and solar shade sheets.

RPCM Cooling Vest

RPCM stands for Glacier Tek’s Renewable Phase Change Material, which is made from food-grade fats and oils. RPCM cool packs recharge in 20 minutes in ice water. Inserted into the Vest, they are said to maintain a steady 59°F temperature for two to three hours, even in 100-degree weather. Glacier Tek also offers a Chilly Pad for dogs to lie on.

According to its manufacturer, the vest was developed for firefighters and adapted for military working dogs in Iraq. The black nylon vest comes in two sizes,



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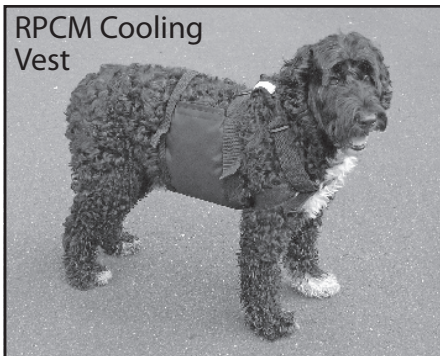
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RPCM Cooling
Vest



Chilly Dog (\$130) and Chilly Pup (\$99).
Skyler wore the larger size, which adjusts
for chest girths of 28 to 46 inches.

Miller-Riley reports, “We tested this
vest when the temperature was 82 degrees
and the humidity 56 percent. The cool
packs cover the abdomen, and the vest is
held in place with straps over the chest
and back. There was no change in Skyler’s
panting from start to finish. He did not go
for a swim, just got his feet wet. His skin
stayed cool under the rib cage covered by
the vest.

“This product, which seems to be
designed only for large dogs, is medium-
weight and simple to use, but you have
to cool or refrigerate the gel-like cells. I
didn’t like its large plastic snaps resting
on my dog’s spine, though he didn’t seem
to care.”

Chillybuddy

A light-weight mesh jacket made of woven
plastic with an aluminized finish (a fabric
originally designed for greenhouse shade
cloths), this highly reflective vest is lined
with breathable cotton mesh.

Chillybuddy comes in seven sizes, from
petite to extra-extra large. Using Skyler’s
neck and girth measurements, we ordered
size medium, which cost \$33. We *should*
have used the third measurement that
Chillybuddy uses to determine size; the
length of the dog’s back. As you can see
in the photo above, the size we ordered
was too short to cover Skyler’s back, and
we ran out of time to return this and order
the correct size. A company representative
belatedly suggested using the back length
as the critical measurement, as the neck
and girth straps are highly adjustable.

According to Chillybuddy’s maker, the
vest can reduce a dog’s coat temperature
almost 30 percent on a 90-degree day.
Soaking it before use dampens the cotton
lining, which holds water for evaporative
cooling. Miller-Riley says, “It was slightly

Chillybuddy



cooler (72 degrees) when we tested this
product, so we walked for an hour rather
than our usual 30 minutes. Skyler stayed
comfortable throughout.

“This coat is easy to use, lightweight,
and it folds up and packs well. The shade
cloths I use for my tent and car are made
of the same kind of fabric, which really
reflects heat, and the mesh circulates air
well. A full strap goes around the belly,
anchored with belt loops, and Velcro strips
allow further adjustment.

“However, both the front and back
kept flipping up and always seemed to
need adjusting. Perhaps this would not be
the case if we had ordered the correctly
sized coat.”

Conclusions

At the end of their research, Miller-Riley
concluded, “All in all, Skyler seems to
be cooled best by jumping into a body
of water or having a gallon jug of water
poured over him. I am not sure I would
put my money down for any of these coats.
However, the Radic vest from Japan was
affordable, easy to use, provided some
cooling, and my dog didn’t have to get wet
for it to be effective.

“Most wild canines do not venture forth
in the hottest part of the day. They seek
cool spots in the earth or under vegetation
until the sun goes down. It’s wonderful that
so many products are being developed to
help working dogs in adverse conditions,
but where pets are concerned, keeping
them cool involves a certain amount of
common sense. Why drag a dog out into
the heat unless it’s to go for a swim or a
wade?” 🐾

*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 in-
formation). She lives in New York with her
husband, a Labrador, and a tabby cat.*

The Word on Her Lipomas

Fatty tumors are rarely problematic – but some practitioners believe they signal an underlying problem.

BY DENISE FLAIM

Lumps, bumps, fatty tumors – call them what you will, but nobody likes to see her dog develop lipomas, those persistent little foothills that can sprout up on older dogs – and sometimes, not so-old ones.

Often soft and squishy to the touch, benign fatty tumors are not a threat to your dog's health. (The exception is infiltrative lipomas, which can invade muscle tissue, but these are relatively rare.) While lipomas can be unsightly, many vets opt not to remove them unless they are in a location where their growth impedes a dog's mobility.

But many holistic veterinarians see lipomas as far from innocuous. Instead, they stress, lipomas are symptoms of a bigger problem.

Holistic view

“For conventional veterinarians, lipomas



This middle-aged Lab has at least one lipoma (behind his elbow, on the chest wall). Unless it grows until it impedes the free movement of his leg or the ability of his chest to expand to breathe, veterinarians will likely decline to remove it.

What you can do . . .

Check your dog for swellings or masses when you pet, massage, or bathe your dog.

Note any lumps and bumps, and direct your veterinarian to them at your dog's annual health examination. (If they are growing quickly, schedule a prompt exam.)

Have your vet surgically remove your dog's lipomas only if they are making your dog uncomfortable.

Improve your dog's diet. Consider a low- or no-carb plan.



are just something that happens, just like cancer happens,” says Marty Goldstein, DVM, of Smith Ridge Veterinary Center in South Salem, New York, author of *The Nature of Animal Healing: The Definitive Holistic Medicine Guide to Caring for Your Dog and Cat*. “What they don't get is that lipomas are a result of what we've done to depress the metabolic functions and immune system of the animal.”

Dr. Goldstein believes that lipomas are a sign of improper fat digestion and a haywire metabolism, and that they often result from the unnatural commercial diets that have become the norm today. “We've laden dog food with 50 to 65 percent carbohydrates, even though in nature wolves eat perhaps 1 to 3 percent grains.”

While few (if any) conventional veterinary practitioners would agree with this assessment (see “Conventional Medical Opinion,” next page), consider the case of Tembo, a Rhodesian Ridgeback who had his first lipoma before the tender age

of one. Fed kibble and then a homemade diet heavy in grains and carbs, Tembo had constant allergies – corn gave him hives, and wheat summoned forth blistering yeast infections on his feet and in his ears.

“For the first seven years, the lipomas popped up like mushrooms,” remembers his owner, Elizabeth Akers of Concord, California, who had about 20 lipomas surgically removed from Tembo's rib cage, legs, and chest. Some of the growths were small, others were tangerine-sized. “One on his groin was growing faster than the speed of light.”

Then, at age 7, Akers switched Tembo to a raw diet – and the lipomas responded as if she had flipped an “off” switch. “By the time he died at age 12, the only lipomas he had were in four places where they had been removed and had grown back again,” she remembers. “He had no new ones.”

Holistic veterinarians are quick to note that diet changes are not miracle cures: As in Tembo's case, they may slow or even

stop the growth of existing lipomas, or cause them to “organize,” or shrink. But expecting a wholesale disappearance of them is likely unrealistic.

Success is relative, Dr. Goldstein says. “If a lump is growing three inches every six months,” and after you make modifications in your dog’s diet and lifestyle, “it still gets bigger but it’s only growing one inch in that time frame, then you’re moving in the right direction.”

Holistic medicine doesn’t see diseases as unrelated entities that swoop in to disrupt health like so many flying monkeys at Oz. Instead, disease – or any disruption of the body’s functioning, no matter how seemingly mild, like lipomas – is a manifestation of a weakness with the body itself. In other words, there’s a Wicked Witch of the West lurking in the backdrop acting as dispatcher. Simply put, lipomas are a sign that there are deeper issues behind the scenes.

Many systems of healing have a name for the life energy that flows through the body and maintains good health. In homeopathy, for example, it is called the vital force. But no matter what you label it, what’s clear to holistic vets is that lipomas are evidence of the fact that the vital force is weakened and perhaps blocked – and likely has been for some time.

“One sign of vitality is the expression of symptoms, because that’s the body’s attempt to bring itself into balance,” explains

classically trained homeopathic vet Michael Dym, VMD, of Morristown, New Jersey. By contrast, “lipoma patients have very weak symptoms,” as the body struggles to externalize its internal conflict in a kind of slow boil. In this scenario, “the patient has been ill on a deeper level for some time – it’s just that they don’t have adequate reactions, and have a very weak development of symptoms.”

For that reason, lipomas are not easy to treat, because making changes on that deep and profound a level doesn’t happen overnight.

“From a homeopathic perspective, any sort of lump or growth is generally thought to be an outcome of vaccinosis,” or the adverse effects of vaccination on the body, Dr. Dym continues. “Animals that are ill from prior vaccinations can have chronic warts, skin tags – and fatty tumors and lipomas.”

That’s not to say that you will be able to draw a direct line from last month’s rabies vaccine to your dog’s new growths. Instead, “we look at them as an outcome of weakness in a patient who’s not in the best health,” Dr. Dym says, because the



This German Wirehaired Pointer also has a large lipoma on his right side behind his elbow; it makes lying on this side of his body uncomfortable.

life force has been affected by vaccines or toxins such as pesticides.

You’re outta here – not!

Lipomas can be unsightly, and some owners might be tempted to remove them for pure aesthetics. But because surgery only treats the symptom of the problem, not its root, most holistic veterinarians avoid it, except for lipomas that are so large or awkwardly placed that they impede a dog’s quality of life.

“The risk of removing the growth surgically is that it leaves the uncured disease to manifest at a deeper level, in a different form,” Dr. Dym warns. And from a homeopathic perspective, “when you remove a growth, you stimulate the vital force to greater activity. You can’t cure an apple tree of growing apples by cutting off its branches.” In fact, you might spur it to blossom even more profusely. And most lipomas tend to recur anyway.

While Dr. Goldstein agrees, he has had to remove lipomas that were in a compromising position, such as behind the nasal cavity, where they could obstruct breathing.

“Lipomas have their own finite capsule – you just scoop them out,” he says. A technique he employs during such surgeries is to roughen the tissue area around the lipoma, creating an inflammatory response. “This creates scar tissue that prevents the lipoma from growing back” – on that spot, at least.

Individualistic treatment

The classic homeopathic remedy used to treat tumors – and, while they are benign, lipomas are tumors – is Thuja, which is also often used for vaccine reactions. But

Conventional Medical Opinion

Lipomas happen.

That’s pretty much the conventional opinion about these benign swellings, which often pop up on middle-aged and older dogs.

“Lipomas are abnormal fat-cell growth,” says Lori Corriveau, DVM, a wellness clinician in the small-animal community practice at Purdue University’s veterinary teaching hospital in West Lafayette, Indiana. “What starts any kind of growth or cancer? We just don’t know.”

Dr. Corriveau notes that the most important thing is to make sure that the growth is indeed a lipoma, as opposed to a malignant liposarcoma. Even though the latter are far less common, it’s still important to check by aspirating the growth, she says. (Once a lipoma has been confirmed, the worry ends there: Lipomas cannot “turn” cancerous.)

Though many holistic veterinarians are reluctant to surgically remove lipomas, Dr. Corriveau notes that those located in “areas of mobility” such as the armpit or elbow might be removed when they are still small and manageable. Also, for “cosmetic” reasons, some veterinarians opt to remove lipomas if the dog is already under general anesthesia for another reason, such as teeth cleaning.

As for the suggestion that high-carbohydrate diets might predispose a dog to lipomas, “There has been no literature at all to support that statement,” states Dr. Corriveau.

Dr. Dym cautions against such a paint-by-number approach: Because lipomas are a symptom of a deep-seated imbalance in the body, he suggests a consultation with a homeopath to find the proper constitutional remedy – one that takes into account your dog’s own individuality – and treat the dog over time. Taking the wrong remedy – even one that might seem to fit the picture – “might stimulate a reaction that could highlight or activate” the very things you are trying to resolve, he warns.

Traditional Chinese medicine has a different name for this life force that animates us all: *chi*. But that ancient modality also interprets lipomas as symptoms of a deeper imbalance.

“In Traditional Chinese veterinary medicine, lipomas are a type of ‘dampness’ called ‘phlegm’ that has stagnated in a particular area, usually an acupuncture channel such as the Gallbladder channel,” explains veterinarian Bruce Ferguson, DVM, MS, a practitioner and instructor in traditional Chinese veterinary medicine based in Perth, Australia. “Issues of ‘damp’ are usually, in the case of lipomas, caused by improper diet leading to a damage to the gastrointestinal system,” which is governed by the Spleen/Stomach meridian.

In traditional Chinese medicine, this channel “is responsible for moving a type of post-ingestive fluid around the body,” Ferguson continues. When a dog is fed a grain-based diet high in refined carbohydrates – as opposed to a more natural, meat-based diet – the channel gets clogged, and “goeey.”

In addition to dietary change, Dr. Ferguson says lipomas can be addressed with herbal formulas that tonify the spleen and resolve phlegm and dampness; acupuncture to help restore the movement of *chi* through the body, particularly the Spleen, and reverse stagnation; and occasionally gentle, non-traumatic massage such as *Tui Na*.



Homeopathic remedies, including one often used for lipomas, are available in health food stores – but don’t buy and administer them without the guidance of a veterinary homeopath. Your dog needs to be properly diagnosed, treated for the totality of his symptoms as an individual, and evaluated on an ongoing basis.

Lofty Aspirations

How do you know if that swelling on your dog’s chest is a lipoma, as opposed to something more sinister, like a cancerous tumor?

Pathologists have a mantra, Ferguson says: *If it swells, stick it.*

Aspiration – removing cells from the growth with a needle to determine whether they are benign or not – is the tried-and-true method for diagnosing lipomas. Veterinarians are divided, however, about whether aspiration is necessary in every single case.

“The classic, soft fatty lipomas are easy to identify on physical exam,” says Dr. Dym, noting that he doesn’t usually aspirate those growths. But if the mass has a hardness to it, then there is a chance it can be a mast cell tumor, a decidedly aggressive form of skin cancer. And in those cases, he may choose to aspirate.

“The growths certainly can be something more serious, and I have been surprised before to aspirate what I certainly predicted to be a lipoma and found mast cells,” Dr. Ferguson says. “For most clinicians, aspiration is the only way to know with certainty.”

But that doesn’t mean one you should automatically stick it to Rex’s every lump and bump. As with most things in life – and medicine – there is a flip side.

“Aspiration can be, in skilled hands, a superb diagnostic technique,” Dr. Ferguson says. But he notes that there are also many false negatives associated with fine-needle aspiration biopsy due to sucking up surrounding cells. And, he reminds dog owners, “Aspiration is also a type of tissue trauma, and traumatizing some masses can perhaps induce them to undergo differentiation into worse things, or spread them accidentally.”

For his part, Goldstein sometimes prescribes *Chi-Ko/Curcuma*, a Chinese-herb formula indicated for resolving masses, specifically lipomas.

He also considers nutritional supplements such as L-carnitine and chromium picolinate, which assist in fat metabolism, as well as a product called Mega Lipotropic, which helps digest and burn fat. Ditto for digestives enzymes that contain ox bile, a powerful fat emulsifier.

Improve basic health

No matter what modality you choose to deal with the underlying imbalances that might cause your dog’s lipomas, all dogs will benefit from these commonsense basics: good nutrition in the form of a

biologically appropriate diet; good mental health, with a lifestyle that provides stimulating play, problem-solving, and social interaction; and no exposure to unnecessary vaccinations or toxins such as pesticides. And don’t forget exercise, Goldstein adds. “The only way to burn fat is to get your body – and your dog’s – up to its aerobic potential,” he says.

In the end, then, the good news about lipomas is that they aren’t life-threatening. But they are a signal that something is askew in your dog’s body.

“When I was in veterinary college, lipomas were described as benign masses that merely had a statistical rate of occurrence and did not ‘mean anything,’” Dr. Ferguson says. By contrast, traditional Chinese medicine teaches that “anything out of the ordinary has meaning, and usually indicates some type of imbalance.”

The task of the practitioner – and the observant, committed owner – is to discover and correct it. 🐾

Denise Flaim is the companion-animal columnist at Newsday on Long Island, New York. She owns four raw-fed Rhodesian Ridgebacks and is the author of The Holistic Dog Book: Canine Care for the 21st Century. See “Resources,” page 24.



RESOURCES

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

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) has references to member trainers in your area. Call (800) 738-3647 or see apdt.com.

Please note: APDT is dedicated to building better trainers through education, promoting dog-friendly methods, and encouraging their use. Membership does not necessarily ensure all members employ similar training methods, nor does APDT set standards of skill or competence.

BOOKS

The Holistic Dog Book: Canine Care for the 21st Century, by Denise Flaim, is available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com.

WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of two books: *The Power of Positive Dog Training* and *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog*. Both 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

WHAT'S AHEAD

Any Questions?

In the final installment of our series on home-prepared diets, we'll answer a number of common questions from owners who are new to whipping up the dog's chow.

Go to the Top of Your Class

How to get the most out of a dog or puppy training class.

Energy Healing

What it is, who does it, where to go for information, and what you can do to heal your own dog.

What the Recalls Did to the Pet Food Industry

Company executives tell WDJ about some changes that the recalls prompted in the industry – and in their own companies.

Looking at the Whole Picture

Solving your dog's problem – whether behavioral or physical – requires consideration of his whole little world.

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