

VOLUME 10  
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# The Whole



# Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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# Time Flies!

*A decade of progress for dog training and care.*

BY NANCY KERNS

This issue represents the end of our tenth year of publication; I can barely believe it. Time has flown by.

When WDJ was new, many trainers (much less dog owners) were just beginning to learn about positive training. Thanks to guidance from trainer (and monthly contributor) Pat Miller, who was an early adopter of these methods, WDJ burst from the publishing gate as an avid and informed proponent of the most effective dog-friendly training techniques.

Fortunately for our dogs, these popular methods have become common. Today, it's a bigger challenge to detect and avoid the trainers who use new-age, positive descriptions of their old-fashioned, force-based methods. As always, we encourage you to seek out and support the training professionals who are experts in animal behavior and learning. That's because it's our ongoing mission to educate our readers about the easiest and fastest ways to teach their canine companions to behave well, while preserving and protecting their loving, trusting bonds.

Holistic veterinary medicine is more popular than it was a decade ago, too. However, it's still an ongoing challenge for owners in many parts of the country to find competent practitioners of complementary and alternative modalities. Our goal here is to offer concrete, complete, and concise information about alternative and complementary therapies so that owners can put it to immediate use to benefit their dogs.

Nutrition is an area of special interest to WDJ, and to many dog owners. We've offered annual reviews of dry and wet foods since

WDJ's inception, with less-frequent reviews of raw frozen diets and treats. We plan to increase the frequency of our reviews of less-conventional diets, treats, and chews.

We've also offered frequent analysis of breaking news about the pet food industry, and documented many changes in this market; when we began publishing, there was but a handful of "super-premium" dog foods on the market, and none that included organic or other verifiably top-shelf ingredients. We like to think our scrutiny and promotion of this sector of the market has contributed to its spectacular growth; today, there are hundreds of truly top-quality foods to choose from, and terrific, healthy products being introduced daily. We look forward to continuing to introduce these products to our readers.

Many dog-care and -training products have also been reviewed in WDJ over the past decade, including a number of innovative products we can't imagine living without today, such as the Buddy Bowl (a no-spill water bowl), head halters and front-clip harnesses, any number of dog ID products, and top-quality dog beds. It's time-consuming to track down and test products, but it's also one of the most rewarding things we do!

Thanks so much for your support throughout these past 10 years! I look forward to bringing you much more in-depth and high-quality dog-care information in the next decade.



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**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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# There's No Play Like Snow Play

*Cold outside? No worries! Try these winter sports with your dog.*

BY KATHRYN SOCIE

All right!" I shout and we take off down the trail. The dogs' heads are down and they are kicking up snow as they lean into their harnesses, pulling hard and running fast. On the other end of the leash, behind them, I begin skate-skiing, using my poles for stability and doing my best to create more speed. Through the woods, down hills, around corners, we fly. We are out skijoring on a blustery, cold, Montana winter day, under grey skies and on slick, fast snow. The day is filled with whoops, hollers, laughter, hot cocoa for me, and jerky for the dogs. By the end of the day, we all pile into the truck, exhausted, and oh-so-happy.

When the weather outside gets frightful and the snow begins to fly, getting out in

it with your dog can be delightful. From winter sports such as skijoring, kicksledding, and mushing to mellower activities like snowshoeing or even a casual stroll, there is no need for you and your dog to be cooped up indoors all winter. With some knowledge, a bit of training, and the right gear, winter is easily transformed into an exciting time of year.

## Winter dog sports

Most people have heard of mushing, but say "skijor" or "kicksled" and chances are you will get a blank stare. That is, unless you're speaking with someone from a Northern European country or Alaska, where dogs were historically, and in some cases still are, used in everyday life for survival in harsh climates.

## What you can do . . .

- If you live in a snow zone, try a snow-based recreational activity with your dog!
- Contact other canine winter sports enthusiasts and ask to tag along on their outings. Most people are eager to share their knowledge and even gear with enthusiastic newcomers.
- Use caution when you and your dog are around frozen creeks or lakes. Staying dry is vital in extremely cold weather.



Skijoring can be enjoyed with any type of dogs and regular cross country skis. Those who get hooked on the sport can participate in informal "fun runs" or highly competitive races. Photo by R. Briggles, courtesy of skijornow.com.

Literally meaning "ski-driving" in Norwegian, **skijoring** originated in Scandinavia and is a hybrid sport combining cross-country skiing and dog mushing. Perfect for the equipment minimalist, skijoring requires cross-country ski gear, a skijoring belt, a harness for your dog, and a towline to connect you to your dog.

Nordic breeds and multiple dogs are not required; any dog that loves to run can participate. Dogs weighing over 30 pounds with enough height to negotiate running in snow can skijor with ease and a single dog is all that is necessary. A thin coat does not eliminate a dog from the sport either; some of the top competing skijor teams include German Shorthaired Pointers (often donning outerwear, of course). An exhilarating sport, skijoring allows you and your dog to exercise together while enjoying the winter landscape.

First developed more than 150 years ago, **kicksleds** are prevalent today in small towns throughout Finland, Norway, and Sweden, and are used to get around

slick side streets. Operating like a scooter, kicksleds glide swiftly on ice or compacted snow. Your dog is easily attached to a kicksled with a harness and towline for increased speed and great exercise. This sport is also less physically demanding for the driver.

Best for flat, icy surfaces, kicksleds don't do well in deep, soft snow, or on steep terrain, so if hills are on your planned route, you'll need to wear some good cleats or crampons, because the sleds have no brakes beyond foot dragging. Steering the kicksled is simple; you just twist the handlebars in the direction you want to go. Be aware, though, that your control is limited; your dog must respond to your voice commands for safety's sake. The next time the streets are snow packed and you need to drop off last night's movie at your neighborhood store, imagine grabbing your dog, your kicksled, and heading outside!

If you are looking for more adventure than can be had from scooting around the streets with your dog, and being pulled behind a team in the wilderness sounds more appealing, perhaps it's time to give **mushing** a try. A team of 20 dogs averaging 75 pounds can exceed 20 miles an hour

(or more on shorter sprints) and is capable of maintaining an average speed of 10 miles an hour.

In January 1925, an outbreak of diphtheria threatened to become a fatal epidemic in Nome, Alaska, prompting the recruitment of 20 drivers and 100 dogs to deliver a package of antitoxin serum from Anchorage to Nome. Due to temperatures averaging 50° below 0°, planes were ruled out for the expedition, but mushers made a heroic effort, with a relay of teams delivering the serum to Nome in less than five and a half days, ultimately saving the town. The 1,150-mile Iditarod race was created to commemorate that feat.

Mushing with your current team of dogs, which is perhaps smaller than 20, will require the most preparation of all the canine winter sports; mushing requires a great deal of equipment and know-how to get started. Fortunately, there are numerous books, websites, and magazines available to assist the beginning musher in locating the right equipment, supplies, and training materials.

**Snowshoeing** with your dog is an easier activity to enjoy on the slower end of the winter season spectrum. Picking up a pair of snowshoes can make an outing

on a favorite trail or around your local park easier and more fun during the snowy months. Doing so with a belt, harness, and towline, connecting you to your dog, will increase your ability to negotiate the terrain and with greater speed. Aside from making sure that both you and your dog are physically fit to begin, snowshoeing requires no extra training time, very little equipment, and allows you and your dog to get a great workout. Many people progress from casual walks on snowshoes, to faster hikes, to snowshoe runs with their dogs over the course of a single season.

## Preparing for winter outings

As with any athletic pursuit, the key to preparing a dog for winter sports is to start out slowly, preventing injury and/or burnout. There are any number of training programs available (in books and DVDs) that offer guidance on building your dog's strength and endurance. It particularly helps if you start teaching your dog to be comfortable with being attached to you and pulling a bit of weight *before* the ground gets slippery with ice or snow! Training should be positive, encouraging any desired behavior that your canine partner offers, since you and your dog work together as a team in most winter sports. The prerequisites, however, include teaching your dog to "gee" (turn right), "haw" (turn left), and "whoa" (that's obvious!).

Once your dog has learned cues for turning and slowing, and is comfortable with pulling as a canine-human team, you can start working on physical conditioning. Vary your pace, following a fast workout with a slow fun run. Or do a long distance run followed by shorter, faster outings.

Vary training areas as well to reinforce your verbal cues, since dogs often tire of the same trail and come to anticipate turns. If you use the same trail every time you go out, start in the middle, run it backward, or stop in a different spot every time and reverse direction. Once your dog anticipates a turn and he "haws," for instance, without your cue to do so, it's time to change your route. Plus, taking a different route keeps training more mentally stimulating for both you and your dog.

Putting on miles is important, but so is rest. Spending quality time together without physical or mental requirements can go a long way in improving enthusiasm for a sport, while maintaining a close bond. Always keep an eye on your dog's movement, and stop if he shows any sign of



**The author and her dogs, geared up and getting started for a day of skijoring. Don't expect everything to go perfectly on the first dozen or so outings! It takes time to acquaint yourself and your dog with what it's like to be hooked together.**

lameness, injury, or reluctance to go. Also monitor his joints (for range of motion and swelling) and appetite. If his attitude or aptitude ever begins to wane, take him to your veterinarian for a thorough health examination.

When asking your dog to perform at a more demanding physical level, a high quality diet is incredibly important. All athletes need more calories when in training and competition, especially in cold conditions, and your dog is no exception. Increasing the amount of calories and fat in the diet will probably be required; discuss specifics with your veterinarian to maintain the long-term health of your canine athlete. Making sure that your dog is adequately hydrated is just as important. Snow is not a sufficient substitute for water; bringing a supply of water along with you on your outings is a necessity.

## Gearing up to get out

While training is important for your dog, so, too, is finding the right gear to safely and comfortably enjoy the outdoors in winter. Snow between your dog's foot pads can cause frostbite and lameness, and crusted snow and ice can easily cut his feet. Trim the excess hair from the footpads and toes of longhaired dogs; this will make it easier to remove ice and snow.

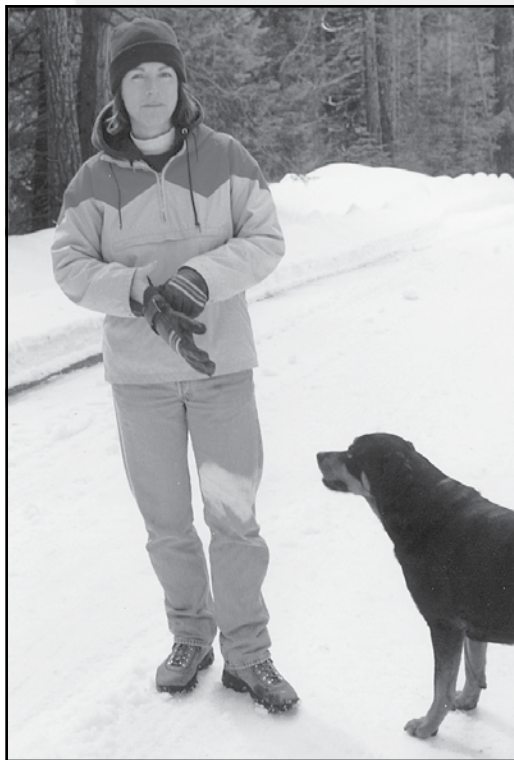
Better yet, use booties for the best foot protection. Don't be disappointed if your dog high-steps around in protest when you put them on; most dogs resist booties at first, but they typically quickly desensitize to the footwear when a fun outing is on the horizon. A variety of windproof and waterproof coats for your dog are available on the market and worth looking into if your dog has a very short coat, doesn't do well in cold temperatures, or you plan on making frequent stops during your outing.

Rather than your local pet supply store, look for active canine winter gear on skijoring or mushing websites, or in magazines and catalogs. I recommend shopping at outlets that specialize in equipment for human-canine athletic teams who participate in winter sports. Their equipment is usually field-tested in severe conditions – a good testimony to the durability and function of the products.

## Safety First

Exercising out-of-doors in the winter can pose certain risks. Keep your dog and yourself safe by observing common sense, cold-weather guidelines:

- Dogs, like people, are susceptible to hypothermia. Hypothermic animals should be warmed slowly. You can wrap a hypothermic dog in warm blankets or place towel-wrapped bottles filled with warm water next to his armpit and groin.
- Watch for frostbite, especially in vulnerable areas such as ears, paw pads, tail, and groin. Signs include flushed and reddened tissues, white or grayish tissues, scaliness and possible shedding of dead skin, and evidence of shock.
- Add heat packs and an emergency blanket to your first-aid kit.
- Make sure your dog is wearing proper ID and/or a microchip identifier in case he gets separated from you on the trail.



**Special clothing is not required – but it sure helps you stay comfortable for longer periods. Waterproof “snow pants” may be the best initial investment you can make.**

Due to the fringe nature of most of these sports, most companies that sell such specialized equipment are small businesses owned and operated by enthusiasts of these sports; these folks tend to welcome interest in the products they offer and will be incredibly helpful in guiding you to what you need. A few good sites to explore include:

skijornow.com  
scandiakicksled.com  
sleddogcentral.com  
ruffwear.com

■ Use caution if you and your dog are around frozen creeks, rivers, lakes, or streams. Staying dry is vital in extremely cold weather.

■ After your return home from a stroll on frozen city streets and sidewalks, rinse your dog's paw pads to remove salt and any other de-icing agents that he may have encountered. You may also choose to apply a salve prior to and after your outing to protect against these substances, but keep in mind that it must be non-toxic and consumable, because chances are high it will be licked off.

## No dog left inside

Whatever winter activity you choose, before you head out, make sure that the destination area of your choice welcomes dogs. Be respectful of other users and wildlife, keeping your dog under physical or voice control at all times. This prevents conflict with other dogs and recreationists, while protecting wildlife, who have little reserve in winter for the added stress of being chased.

Whether you swoosh down the trail with your dog pulling ahead, or head out on your city street for a casual stroll, winter truly is a wonderful time of year for both you and your dog. 🐾

*Kathryn Socie is a freelance writer in Missoula, Montana. When she is not writing, she is out on the trail hiking, running, and when the snow is flying, skijoring with her dogs. This is her first article for WDJ.*

# Senior Moments

*Training an older dog requires accommodations, but it can be done!*

BY PAT MILLER

**Y**ou've no doubt heard the adage, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks." If you have an older dog, you'll be relieved to know that for the most part it's false. Older dogs are perfectly capable of learning. The oldest dog ever to enroll in one of my training classes was an 11-year-old Labrador Retriever, and she performed admirably. Positive trainers like to say "it's all tricks." Any new behaviors your senior dog can learn count as new tricks, even if he's no longer jumping through hoops.

There are a number of factors that influence how much and what your mature canine pal can learn, including:

■ **Your dog's training and behavior history.** If your dog has learned how to enjoy learning and is engaged in an ongoing training program, he will continue to learn easily. Studies show that humans who continue to exercise their brains stay more mentally alert than those who do not. We have every reason to believe the same is true of dogs.



**The old-timer in your pack may not be able to respond to your cues as quickly as the younger dogs, due to muscle stiffness or arthritic joints. Be patient – and alert to the possibility that she may be physically unable to perform certain movements.**

## What you can do . . .

- Make a commitment to continue providing your aging dog with learning and training opportunities as long as he can enjoy them.
- Be realistic in your expectations about what your senior dog can learn. Don't ask him to perform beyond his physical capabilities.
- Consult with your veterinarian if you see signs of canine cognitive disorder (mental aging) in your dog.



■ **Physical conditions that limit his mobility.** It seems obvious but we'll say it anyway: If your dog has physical limitations, he may not be able to perform new behaviors that require physical exertion. Joint or muscle pain, arthritis, hip dysplasia, obesity, and heart problems are some of the more common physical conditions that can interfere with your elder dog's willingness to try *some* new "tricks."

Also, get an okay from your veterinarian before enrolling your senior dog in a physically vigorous training program.

■ **Your skill as a trainer and commitment to your dog's training program.** They can't do it on their own. The better you are at communicating to your dog – reinforcing appropriately and in a timely manner for desired behaviors – the easier

it is for him to learn new behaviors at *any* age. The more consistent you are about working regularly with your dog, the easier it is for him to learn, no matter how much grey hair he has.

■ **What you are trying to teach him.** If your goal is to change behaviors that your dog has been practicing successfully (getting reinforced for) for a decade, your challenge will be greater than if you're simply teaching new behaviors. Changing long-held classically conditioned (emotional) responses is likely to be more challenging than teaching new operantly conditioned responses, where the dog deliberately chooses behaviors in anticipation of reinforcement.

■ **What methods you have used – and are using – to teach him.** There is over-

whelming anecdotal evidence that dogs trained with positive methods are quite willing to keep on learning – while those trained with physical and/or verbal punishment are more likely to shut down and less willing to offer new behaviors. If you want your dog to be an eager participant in the learning process well into his sunset years, be sure to stick with a positive training program.

■ **Mental conditions that limit his cognitive abilities.** Canine cognitive disorder, sometimes referred to as “Doggie Alzheimer’s” is a very real phenomenon. Clinical signs include those changes owners often refer to as “senility” such as: disorientation, “acting old,” increased sleep (especially during the day), altered interactions with family members, loss of houstraining, decreased ability to recognize familiar people and surroundings, decreased hearing, restlessness, decreased desire to perform favorite tasks (such as walking), standing in the corner, and barking aimlessly at inanimate objects.

Canine cognitive disorder can significantly limit a dog’s ability to learn, although there is a medication approved for this condition (Anapril) that can often alleviate symptoms.

### The Miller’s senior dogs

My husband and I currently have three dogs in our pack that could be qualified as seniors. Their mental and physical abilities and the adaptations we have had to make to train and manage them are classically representative of most older dogs.

**Dubhy** is the youngest of our seniors. At age seven, the 25-pound Scottish Terrier barely qualifies as aged, although he has long had a generally calm, reserved demeanor – and grey hair in his coat – which



**Dubhy is getting ready to roll himself up into a blanket, one of our favorite tricks. He is still as ready to learn new tricks now, at age seven, as he was when he was a youngster.**

## Who’s a Senior?

The point at which a dog qualifies as “aged” varies. Maria M. Glowaski, DVM, of the Ohio State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital, published these guidelines for defining a senior dog: “Veterinarians generally consider small dogs to be senior citizens at about 12 years of age, while large dogs reach the senior stage at 6 to 8 years of age. This roughly corresponds to the 55-plus category in people.”

The larger your dog, the earlier he is likely to show physical signs of aging, with small dogs (under 20 pounds) often not showing obvious signs of age until they are over 12, medium-sized dogs (20-80 pounds) at around age 10, and large dogs as early as age 8.

Less-well documented are signs of mental aging. The Sydney (Australia) University Veterinary Faculty, in conjunction with New South Wales University’s School of Psychiatry, is currently conducting a PhD research project into aging and mental decline in older dogs (see “Senior Dog Research Project,” next page). Until we have the results of this study and others like it, we must settle for anecdotal evidence regarding our senior dogs’ mental capacity. The good news is that anecdotes tell us that barring serious mental deterioration, dogs are ready and willing to learn at almost any age, even if their learning at some point must be restricted to games that can be played lying down.



**Terriers and other small dogs often don’t show signs of aging until they are 10 or 12 years old.**

causes people (including our veterinarian) to perceive him as older than he is.

Dubhy has been trained with positive (clicker) methods since we first found him as a six-month-old adolescent stray and took him to our house until we could find him a home (hah). He loves to train, and his trick repertoire includes such delightful behaviors as pushing a toy grocery cart, saying his prayers, rolling himself up in a blanket, and sitting upright in a chair to play his electronic keyboard.

Although I tend to let his training slide in favor of the younger, rowdier members of the Miller pack, I recently picked up Dubhy’s clicker and leash – to his delight – and started teaching him a couple of new tricks: “Superdog” and “Put Away Your Toys.”

Not surprisingly, he learned new be-

haviors as quickly at age seven as he did when he was a young’un. In just three sessions he added “Superdog” to the list of tricks he can perform on cue – lying on the floor with his hind legs stretched out straight behind him (dubbed “Superdog” because I envision him wearing a cape with wires to make it “fly” out behind him, and photoshopping his image onto a blue sky). This was an easy behavior for him, as he tends to assume this position on his own. It was simply a matter of capturing it with the clicker and reinforcing it with high value treats until he began offering the behavior in hopes of earning reinforcement. Ah, the joy of a clicker-trained dog!

Putting his toys away was a tad more challenging, as he’s not a natural retriever. But he was fascinated by the “Cuz” dog toy (a rubber squeaky ball with feet), and it took just a week of focused work to get him to pick it up and drop it in the basket. I shaped this behavior by holding the toy over the center of a wicker basket, encouraging him to mouth the toy. I clicked every time he mouthed the toy over the center of the basket; when I clicked, he’d let the toy drop into the wicker receptacle,

in anticipation of getting a treat.

When Dubhy could do that easily and consistently, I gradually moved the toy toward the edge of the basket, only clicking if it dropped into the basket when he let it go. As he grasped the concept of moving it back toward the center of the basket I made it more challenging for him by holding the Cuz further from the basket, and eventually lowering it to the ground so he had to pick it up and bring it back to the toy basket.

Our next task is to generalize the behavior to all his toys. I expect Dubhy to be an active training partner for many years to come.

**Missy** is the newest addition to the Miller family, but at age eight, the red merle Australian Shepherd easily qualifies as a senior, at least physically. Radiographs taken by our vet just today pinpoint an old injury/fracture to her right hip as the explanation for hind-end weakness and some minor lameness that we've noted in the month we've had her. An apparent lifetime of itchiness and chewing has worn her lower incisors down to the gums. Combined with a dull, lifeless coat, probably from a less-than-optimum diet, these conditions all make her look and act even older than she is.

Missy is well housetrained, but seems to not have had much else asked of her. She sits occasionally when cued, but not consistently. She bonded to me like superglue in less than 24 hours, giving rise to some minor isolation distress issues (and making "come when called" a non-issue), and is markedly slower to learn new behaviors than our younger dogs, who all have a history of positive reinforcement training.



**Eight-year-old Missy lacks a foundation of positive training and has some physical problems – which make her slow to offer new behaviors.**

Unlike our other dogs, Missy has been slow to grasp the novel (to her) concept that her behavior can make good things happen. Interestingly, since she's a mature girl, I find myself expecting her to respond to cues that I know she doesn't know. I am constantly reminding myself that she is like a puppy in terms of learning; I have to teach her what all the cues mean.

She's also made me aware that I use the "Wait" cue more than any other with our pack (see May 2001, "Wait a Bit, Stay a While"). I routinely use it on the stairs, at doors, in the barn, in the car, and at meal-times. I use it to manage the pack, asking some of our dogs to wait at the door, while inviting others to walk through.

While Bonnie, our youngest, learned to wait for her food bowl with just a few lessons when she came to us at age six months, it took Missy a full two weeks to understand why the food bowl went away every time she got up to eat, why the door kept closing when she stood up, and why the rest of the dogs paused on the stair landing and didn't continue down until I reached the bottom of the stairway and invited them.

She's mentally sharp enough, and is learning the basic cues (sit and down) – much more slowly than a new pup whose educational level would be similar to hers. Although to be fair, not totally similar, since part of Missy's slowness may be due to a history of being punished for offering behaviors, making her slower to try new things than a "blank slate" puppy would be.

We'll have to limit Missy's high-activity physical "new tricks" because of her aforementioned medical condition, but look forward to her continuing progress with basic good manners cues and other low impact "tricks." With patience, I'm confident we can help her understand how much fun learning can be.

**Katie** was the matriarch of the Miller pack, until just a month ago when she had aged to the point that we painfully decided it was time to let her go. At age 15, suffering from advancing arthritis, she was clearly limited in her activities. I no longer asked her to "Sit" and "Wait" for her dinner, and no longer expected her to fold her aging bones to the floor in response to a "Down" cue. She pretty much could do whatever she wanted, which was mostly sleep on her magnetic bed and bark as the more active dogs chased Frisbees in the backyard.

However, Katie still had some lessons to learn in the last year of her life. Her "new tricks" consisted in large part of classical conditioning to convince her to allow me to help her negotiate stairs that she could no longer manage on her own.

At one time comfortable with all the normal handling and grooming, Katie had grown irritable about being touched and handled as she aged and became more arthritic. She reached a point where she wouldn't hesitate to snap if she thought you were about to do something, like reach for her collar, that might cause her pain.

We took management steps, eventually

## Senior Dog Research Project

The Sydney University Veterinary Faculty, in conjunction with NSW University's School of Psychiatry is currently conducting a PhD research project into aging and mental decline in older dogs. As part of this research they have developed a survey for owners of dogs eight years old or more. By collecting information on the behavior of as many senior dogs as possible, they hope to quantify the aging process and determine any possible breed differences. This research will not only contribute to the welfare and knowledge of our canine companions but will be instrumental to research into human Alzheimer's disease.

If you have an older dog and would be interested in participating in this groundbreaking research, please consider spending 15 minutes filling out the survey. The most difficult part of this task is typing the following URL into your browser: [www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=G3aD7sRrSFzyHjllx7yzA\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=G3aD7sRrSFzyHjllx7yzA_3d_3d)





**Like Katie, many dogs experience some hearing loss late in life. Teach your younger dog some hand signals for basic behavior cues. Or use an ultra-loud whistle as a cue.**

allowing her to sleep downstairs – which she seemed not to mind – rather than urge her to climb the stairs to our bedroom on the second floor. However, nails needed occasional trimming, I had to brush her shedding coat at least once in a while, and when she could no longer even climb the three steps up to our porch from the back-

yard, it was imperative that she accept my physical assistance.

So we counter-conditioned. Throughout the day I reached for her collar, fed her a treat. Reached for her collar, fed her a treat. Touched a paw, fed her a treat. Touched her with the brush, fed her a treat. Reached for her collar, fed her a treat, and helped her up the stairs. Took a stroke with the brush, fed her a treat. Clipped a nail, fed her a treat. All very carefully, to avoid causing her any more discomfort than necessary.

Katie also learned a new recall (come) cue in the last months of her life. She had become almost totally deaf in her last year, and could no longer hear me call her in from the backyard. She tended to go out of sight around the corner of the garage to sleep in her favorite sunspot, which mandated that I trudge across the yard to fetch her in. Not an insurmountable task, but still . . .

My husband purchased a Storm Whistle – so shrill I had to plug my ears when I blew it – and it took only a few repeated associations between whistle and treats for Katie to learn to come galloping when she heard it. Another new trick! Knowing we

had an effective way to call her also eased my mind about her possibly wandering off, as senior dogs sometimes do. Fortunately, Katie was quite food motivated to her very last days, and her ability to learn new associations – new tricks – even as a very senior dog, extended her life and her quality of life for many months longer than we had anticipated.

Most positively trained dogs are highly reinforced by the opportunity to learn. Taking this opportunity away from them in their senior years can be an unintended cruelty. Training keeps their minds and bodies active, and enriches their lives, even as other opportunities for enrichment diminish with advancing age and frailty. Training and learning with you should be one of your dog's greatest joys in life – one that he can enjoy to the very end of his days. 🐾

*Pat Miller, CPDT, is WDJ's Training Editor. Miller lives in Hagerstown, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. Pat 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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# How Homeopathy Works

*This energy-based medicine is difficult to comprehend . . . but can spark powerful and lasting results.*

BY CJ PUOTINEN

**T**wo dogs have itchy skin and small open sores on their legs. Or they both have a fever or a trauma injury or infected ears.

One goes to a conventional veterinarian and receives antibiotics, steroids, or other symptom-suppressing drugs.

The other goes to a veterinary homeopath, who studies the dog's symptoms and asks all kinds of questions about his behavior and actions while looking things up in a book or computer. The homeopath selects a remedy, gives the dog a single dose, and instructs the owner to wait, watch, and report back.

The remedy is chosen not because it reduces or eliminates the dog's symptoms but because by itself, when given to a healthy patient, it actually produces those same symptoms. And the remedy is so dilute that it contains not a single molecule of the substance on the label.

Welcome to the world of homeopathy, one of the most interesting and contro-



**Homeopathic remedies come in a variety of "potencies," with the strongest effects resulting from the most diluted remedies. This runs counter to the usual higher-the-dose, bigger-the-response effect seen with most conventional drugs.**

## What you can do . . .

- Read up on homeopathy so you understand how it works and what to expect.
- Carefully consider whether your dog and you are good candidates for homeopathic patient and caregiver.
- Look for a local veterinary homeopath or consult with one by phone or email.
- Observe your dog carefully to document symptoms and responses.



The Whole Dog Journal

versial alternative therapies and forms of "energy medicine." Does it work? Is it a fraud? Is it safe? Are you and your dog good candidates for this approach to healing?

### "Like cures like"

Homeopathy was developed in the early 1800s by Samuel Hahnemann, a German physician. He wrote, "If a medicine administered to a healthy person causes a certain syndrome of symptoms, that medicine will cure a sick person who presents similar symptoms."

Dr. Hahnemann discovered this principle when he experimented with quinine from the bark of the Peruvian cinchona tree, which was widely used to treat malaria. Dr. Hahnemann, who did not have malaria, was startled when he developed malaria symptoms each time he took quinine. He then experimented with different medications that he administered to him-

self and healthy volunteers, documenting their responses.

Because several of the preparations were toxic, Dr. Hahnemann tried to reduce adverse effects by giving the drugs in very small doses, but in many cases, this made the reactions worse. Diluting the preparations in stages, he found, maintained their effect while eliminating their toxicity. In fact, he discovered that a greater dilution coupled with agitation of the mixture (his first solutions were jostled as he traveled in a horse-drawn carriage) seemed to enhance the medicine's effect.

Homeopathic remedies are made from vegetable, mineral, and animal sources. With each step, the substance is diluted by a factor of 10 or 100, and the mixture is subjected to a series of "succussions," shakes, or poundings. In Dr. Hahnemann's day, this work was all done by hand. Today it is partly mechanized.

Homeopathic remedies are gener-

ally made into tiny round pills, tablets, or granules, or presented as liquid remedies in dropper bottles.

## Potent differences

The potency of homeopathic medicines is measured according to the number of dilutions and successions they have undergone. The *centesimal* scale, which is commonly used in the United States, measures dilution by 100 and uses the abbreviation “c.” One drop of the original or “mother” tincture diluted in 99 drops of water is a 1c preparation (1 in 100). One drop of 1c solution in 99 drops of water is a 2c preparation (1 in 10,000). One drop of 2c solution in 99 drops of water is a 3c preparation (1 in 1,000,000); and so on.

The decimal scale measures dilution by 10 and uses the abbreviation “x.”

While the most common potencies (6x, 3c, 6c, 12c, and 30c) are available over the counter in homeopathic pharmacies, health food stores, drugstores, mail order catalogs, and online, higher potencies are reserved for professional use. Very high homeopathic potencies, such as 1M strength (1M equals 1,000c), are considered the most powerful and usually require a written prescription.

The alleged strength of extremely dilute solutions is one of the paradoxes of homeopathic medicine. Critics argue that a solution so dilute that it contains no chemically measurable trace of the ingredient on the label can't have an effect on anything and that homeopathy must be a hoax, or its cures are caused by the placebo effect, or its satisfied patients are under the spell of a mass delusion. Homeopathy's basic premise simply doesn't make sense to Western physicians.

But it does make sense to many biophysicists and other research scientists.

Medical journalist Lynne McTaggart is author of *The Field: The Quest for the Secret Force of the Universe*, a review of recent scientific investigations of energy. She learned that conservative medical researchers studying the behavior of water had, without realizing it, discovered that homeopathy's underlying premise that dilution increases a solution's strength is not science fiction but a fact of nature.

In studies conducted between 1985 and 1989, Dr. Jacques Benveniste, a French

physician and allergy researcher who knew nothing about homeopathy, repeatedly found that when antibodies (anti-IgE molecules) were diluted in water, the resulting solutions inhibited dye absorption just as full-strength solutions did, even when there was no possibility of a single molecule of the original substance in the solution.

Although the potency of the anti-IgE molecules was at its highest in early stage dilutions and then fell through successive dilutions, the experiment's results changed abruptly at the ninth dilution. From then on, the IgE's effects increased with each dilution. “As homeopathy had always claimed,” McTaggart writes, “the weaker the solution, the more powerful its effect.”

Dr. Benveniste and his staff then worked with five different laboratories in France, Israel, Italy, and Canada, all of which replicated his results. The 13 scientists who conducted the experiments jointly published the results of their four-year collaboration in a 1988 edition of *Nature*, a prestigious scientific journal. Their article described how when solutions of antibodies were repeatedly diluted until they no longer contained a single molecule of the antibody, they still produced a response from immune cells.

The authors concluded that none of the original molecules were present in certain dilutions and that “specific information must have been transmitted during the dilution/shaking process. Water could act as a template for the molecule, for example, by an infinite hydrogen-bonded network, or electric and magnetic fields....

The precise nature of this phenomenon remains unexplained.”

The editor of *Nature* found this so incredible that he appended an editorial questioning the results.

There followed a firestorm of controversy, including investigations by a scientific “fraud squad” led by a professional magician (not by scientists familiar with the research methods) who accused Dr. Benveniste and his fellow researchers of not following scientific protocols and concluded that their findings were without merit. But in the 20 years since the article's publication, research at laboratories around the world has only

confirmed its original findings.

Practically no one today knows that in the 19th century, homeopathy was widely practiced in the U.S. and Canada and that it was in fact the preferred system of medicine, being more effective and far safer than the techniques and drugs used by allopathic physicians. During yellow fever and cholera epidemics, patients treated by homeopaths had much higher survival rates than those treated allopathically.

When allopathic physicians gained a medical monopoly, homeopathy's popularity in North America declined, but it remains mainstream medicine in India, Europe, and other parts of the world. Meanwhile, in the U.S. and Canada, homeopathy is being rediscovered. About 200 veterinary homeopaths are listed at the websites of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association and the Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy.

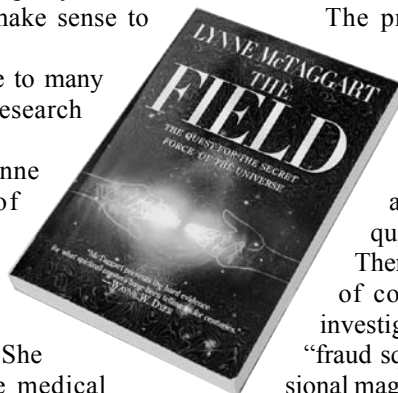
Members of the Academy are trained in Dr. Hahnemann's methods, called “classical” homeopathy. In classical homeopathy, a single remedy is given alone, not in combination with other remedies, and it is usually given once, not repeatedly. Remedies are selected according to the patient's unique symptoms, not his or her disease, which is why two puppies with kennel cough could be treated with entirely different remedies.

Even the word “symptom” has special meaning in homeopathy. You might think that kennel cough is kennel cough, but to a classically trained homeopath, the symptoms that matter include whether your dog wants attention or avoids it, prefers to lie on her right or left side, or seeks warm or cool surfaces. Classical homeopaths train their clients to observe and document all changes in behavior, even those that ordinarily seem insignificant.

## Homeopathy in action

Judith Herman, DVM, practiced conventional veterinary medicine in Augusta, Maine, for 15 years until, in the early 1990s, she watched a horse die from a vaccine reaction. Alternatives to by-the-book conventional care suddenly seemed more interesting. At about the same time, two of her canine patients responded well to homeopathic remedies and their owners suggested she look into the subject.

Dr. Herman joined a homeopathic study group and liked what she found. “It made sense,” she says, “and most importantly, it worked.” In 1993, she enrolled in the



Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy and studied with its founder, Richard Pitcairn, DVM, PhD. Today her practice focuses almost exclusively on homeopathy, and she heads the AVH certification committee.

The most common conditions Dr. Herman treats include fevers, urinary tract infections, whelping problems, irritable bowel disease, pancreatitis, ACL (anterior cruciate ligament) injuries, kennel cough, chronic skin diseases such as sarcoptic mange, autoimmune disorders, and cancers.

Sometimes the results are immediate and dramatic. This summer, Dr. Herman's veterinary technician raced to the clinic with her puppy and the toxic brown mushroom the puppy had just bitten. "The puppy had excruciating cramps, projectile vomiting, and diarrhea," she says. "This type of poisoning usually requires hospitalization, but within 10 to 15 minutes of being dosed with homeopathic arsenicum, which was the remedy that best matched her symptoms, she was fine and needed no other treatment."

Even a dog hit by a car and suffering multiple fractures can be treated with homeopathy. In that situation, Dr. Herman gives a remedy to help with the immediate problem, then sets the bones or sends the dog to another veterinarian for treatment, and follows up with a remedy that speeds healing. "If a dog undergoes surgery," she says, "homeopathy cuts the recovery time by half or more. I truly can't think of any condition or situation where I wouldn't try homeopathy first."

## Dosing and antidoting

Homeopathic remedies are different from conventional drugs in several ways. Because they preserve the "energy" or "vibration" of the substances they're made from, it's important to preserve their energy signature by storing and using them correctly.

Don't store homeopathic remedies in kitchen cupboards or bathroom medicine cabinets. Instead, keep them in a cool, dark, quiet, dry linen closet, dresser drawer, or basement shelf. Be sure their storage area is far from sunny windows, fluorescent light fixtures, power lines, electrical appliances, cell phones, computers, microwave ovens, and fuse boxes. Keep remedy containers tightly closed when not in use.

Whether you're treating your pet with tiny pellets from a glass or plastic vial or a small brown envelope, or administering

a liquid remedy from a dropper bottle, the number of pellets or drops generally doesn't matter. More isn't better, especially in sensitive patients where the number of pellets or drops administered is more significant. For best results, get at least some of the remedy into the dog's mouth and hold the mouth closed for three seconds.

Don't touch the remedy with your hands, and discard any pellets that fall to the floor. Don't expose remedies to strong fragrances, cigarette or incense smoke, or anything containing camphor, tea tree oil, eucalyptus, peppermint, or other strong scents. Keep your pet away from these items as well, because they can "antidote" or neutralize the remedy, even hours or days after treatment.

Give the remedy at least 30 to 60 minutes before or after feeding the dog any meal or treat. Wait at least five to ten minutes before letting the dog drink plain water.

In classical homeopathy, a single remedy is given by itself, and if it's the correct remedy, it stimulates a cure. But in some cases, a remedy may have to be repeated, or a different remedy is needed. Homeopathy is such a complex subject that an experienced veterinary homeopath is your best guide to the selection of remedies, correct remedy strength, and the timing of use.

## What to watch for

Homeopaths need detailed descriptions in order to match your dog's symptoms to

the best remedy. To provide this information, get in the habit of writing down any unusual behaviors or actions.

For example, what is your dog's energy level? Is she more or less active than usual?

Does he have any obvious symptoms, like vomiting, diarrhea, fever, discharges, stiffness, or changes in ear position, posture, or facial expression?

Do any symptoms get better or worse with changes in weather, after rest or exercise, at a particular time of day or night, after eating, or in response to touch or pressure?

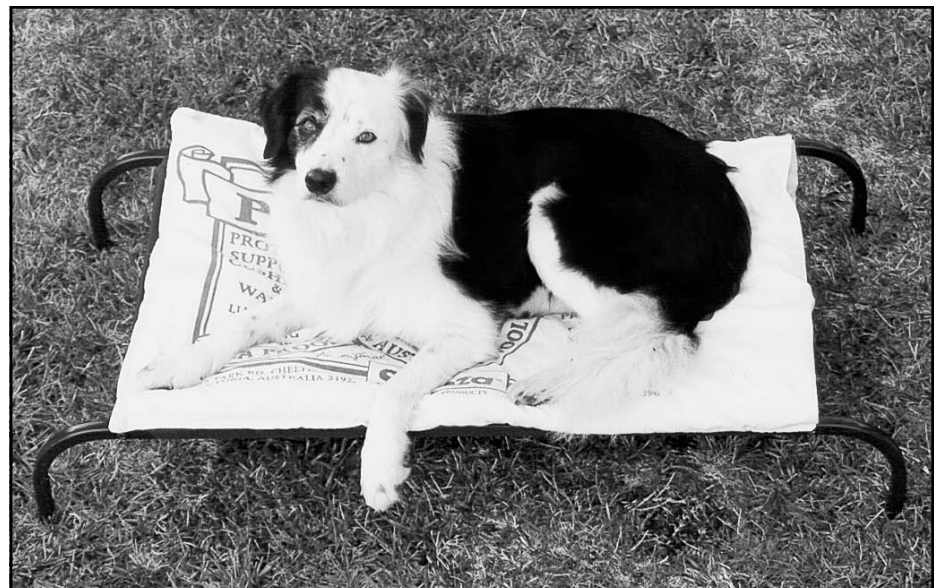
When you pet, stroke, or massage your dog, do you notice anything different, like swollen lymph nodes or muscle spasms?

Does your dog prefer warm or cool surfaces? Lying on her left or right side? Is she more or less thirsty? More or less hungry? Having more or fewer bowel movements? Changes in urination?

Has your dog's behavior changed? Does your independent dog suddenly want to sit on your lap? Does your snuggle puppy want to go off by herself?

Keep careful track of homeopathic remedies that you administer, noting the date and time as well as any changes in your dog's condition or behavior in the hours and days that follow.

Whether you work with a homeopath in person or by phone or e-mail, have this information handy so you can answer questions and provide accurate descriptions.



**WDJ Editor Nancy Kerns consulted a veterinary homeopath to treat allergy symptoms suffered by her Border Collie, Rupert. The remedy triggered a reaction, dramatic enough to prompt Kerns to rule out further homeopathic treatment. Interestingly, however, Rupert's allergic symptoms did lessen over time.**

## The “healing crisis”

Homeopathic treatment often includes a “healing crisis,” in which the patient gets worse before getting better. Just how much worse the patient becomes is a subject fraught with confusion and controversy.

The healing crisis, if it occurs, usually manifests within a week or two of treatment, but it can take place within a day. And sometimes, it can give rise to symptoms that seem far more dramatic than the dog’s original health problem – although, homeopaths suggest, these symptoms should resolve quickly.

Some caregivers have followed their homeopath’s instructions only to watch in horror as the dog’s minor symptoms become incredibly painful. If they aren’t able to reach their homeopath for further instructions, they may turn to a conventional veterinarian for help. Because conventional treatment interferes with homeopathy, the emergency care becomes a cause of strife between client and homeopath, and in memorable cases, homeopaths have “fired” clients who resorted to conventional care, refusing to ever see their dogs again.

In July 2000, WDJ editor Nancy Kerns took her then-10-year-old Border Collie, Rupert, to a veterinary homeopath, with the goal of finding some lasting relief for Rupert’s chronic allergies. After taking a lengthy history and conducting a physical exam, the homeopath prescribed a remedy.

About 12 hours after being given the remedy, Rupert experienced a dramatic crisis. His ears became inflamed and filled with pus, and, in an apparent effort to find relief, he shook his head so hard, he broke a blood vessel in one ear flap. The flap quickly filled with blood and fluid and stood out from his head in a rigid and clearly painful fashion. He staggered sideways and whimpered in pain.

“I was frantic,” says Kerns. “The first thing I did was call the homeopath. But her voicemail indicated she was out of town for a few days. She did leave contact information for another veterinary homeopath who could help with emergencies, but this vet was far away, and Rupert was in agony. I felt I had to take him to a veterinarian who could see and respond to his new symptoms, and I took him to a conventional emergency vet clinic.”

Kerns knew that the conventional medical response to such a dramatic ear infection would be a prescription for antibiotics, and that the hematoma would

## Resources Mentioned in This Article

**ABC Homeopathy**, London, United Kingdom. [abchomeopathy.com](http://abchomeopathy.com)

**Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy**, Wilmington, DE. (866) 652-1590  
[theavh.org](http://theavh.org) (click on “referral search”)

**American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association**, Bel Air, MD. (410) 569-0795  
[holisticvetlist.com](http://holisticvetlist.com)

***The Field: The Quest for the Secret Force of the Universe***, by Lynne McTaggart. Harper Paperbacks, 2003

***Homeopathic Care for Cats and Dogs: Small Doses for Small Animals***, by Don Hamilton, DVM. North Atlantic Books, 1999

**Natural Rearing**, Marina Zacharias, Jacksonville, OR. (541) 899-2080, [naturalrearing.com](http://naturalrearing.com)

***Dr. Pitcairn’s Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs & Cats***, by Richard H. Pitcairn, DVM, PhD, and Susan Hubble Pitcairn. Third Edition. Rodale Books, 2005. Dr. Pitcairn is the founder and former president of the Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy.

**Judith Herman, DVM**, Animal Wellness Center, Augusta, ME. (207) 623-1177

have to be lanced, stitched, and bandaged. She also learned that steroids would be prescribed to reduce the inflammation.

“I knew from reading and writing about homeopathy that steroids and antibiotics are anathema to many homeopaths; I guessed that the practitioner I saw would be upset about these developments. But Rupert was suffering acutely; I would have done anything that would help him feel better fast.”

When the homeopath returned, Kerns steeled herself for a lecture. “Sure enough, she was furious with me,” says Kerns. “She told me that the dramatic reaction had been evidence that the remedy had worked; it was moving the problem from the inside of my dog to the outside, which is supposed to be a good thing. She told me that the steroids and antibiotics had probably set back Rupert’s healing process by weeks or months, and it would be far more difficult to stimulate his body to deal with all the chronic and now acute wreckage. And she said that if I were anyone else, she would have fired me as a client on the spot. Well, I didn’t expect or want special treatment, and I didn’t have to be asked to leave; I didn’t consult this practitioner again.

“I have heard hundreds of stories from dog owners who say that homeopathy has cured their dogs. It does seem to be a powerful tool, and sometimes succeeds where other treatments do not. But the experience I had with Rupert made me concerned about the whole process. If maintaining the purity of the treatment in hopes of a future

cure is more important than alleviating my dog’s immediate suffering – well, that doesn’t fit my definition of compassionate medicine. I would try homeopathy again, but only if the practitioner understood that I would also use conventional medicine if I thought the situation warranted its use.”

Dr. Herman sympathizes. “When the dog’s condition is accurately diagnosed and the correct remedy is used,” she says, “the healing crisis, if there is one at all, should be minor. We try not to disturb it because it’s like a skirmish, a small battle, between the patient’s vital force and the disease. The remedy comes in and triggers a reaction from the vital force, and that’s when you see a temporary worsening of symptoms.”

Last week Dr. Herman treated a young dog for kennel cough. The next day he was better, but the day after that he was suddenly worse. She reassured the owner and asked her to wait and watch a little longer, and by the following day, the dog was completely fine.

Dr. Herman’s first patient was her own Golden Retriever, Patrick. When she first took up homeopathy, she gave him a remedy for a skin condition. He improved for 24 hours, then his eyes began to tear and water. He was eating normally and was active and playful but his face was drenched. The next day his eyes were dry. That evening, he started itching and he scratched all night.

“I was definitely worried,” she says, “but he acted like himself when I called

him, so I waited and hoped for the best.”

By the next day, he was better and his itching and scratching decreased until those symptoms disappeared as well.

“These are examples of how a healing crisis should work,” says Dr. Herman. “The patient’s vital force is activated and healing begins from within.

“But if the patient gets dramatically worse and is in terrible pain, that’s an indication that the homeopath didn’t choose the right remedy or potency. There are over a thousand remedies and each one corresponds to a specific set of symptoms. It’s

impossible to keep all this information in your head, so you have to look things up, and because several remedies treat similar combinations of symptoms, it takes time and patience to find the perfect match. Whenever I hear about a homeopathic remedy triggering an extreme healing crisis, I know it wasn’t the right remedy or potency.”

Dr. Herman appreciates the frustration of both homeopath and client when animals suffer. “The antidote to the painful effects of a wrong remedy is finding and using the right remedy or potency,”

she says. “This works best if the case isn’t complicated by the administration of symptom-suppressing drugs.”

At the same time, Dr. Herman acknowledges, “We never want our dogs to suffer. I respect my clients’ decisions about treatment even when I would prefer to do something different, and so do most of the veterinary homeopaths I know. Conventional care can interrupt homeopathic treatment, but it isn’t necessarily true that it interferes to such an extent that the dog can’t ever be successfully treated with homeopathy in the future.”

## The “Other” Homeopathy

Classically trained homeopaths use single remedies and single potencies. They never combine one remedy or potency with another. But a large part of the homeopathy market is devoted to combination remedies, over-the-counter preparations with names that refer to specific conditions like joint pain, coughs, itchy skin, anxiety, or digestive problems.

In most cases, these combinations consist of two or more single remedies and/or potencies that have successfully treated patients with the labeled condition.

According to British homeopath Simon Broadley at ABC Homeopathy in the U.K., one of the world’s largest homeopathic information sources and remedy stores, “The practice of combining remedies has been met with mixed opinions in the homeopathic community. What is generally agreed is that combination remedies may work for you, but you have a much greater chance of success if you use single remedies that are chosen for your specific ailments, as other remedies contained along with the ‘right’ one in a combination may complicate a condition or prevent the right remedy from working.”

He notes that even some makers of combination remedies add the caveat that single remedies are more effective when the right one is prescribed.

Combinations are popular because they are easy to select and convenient for those not familiar with homeopathy. Unlike single remedies, they don’t require the careful study that goes into matching symptoms and remedies.

“We would all like the easiest answer to be the right one,” says Broadley, “but in practice, this is rarely the case. Traditional or classical homeopathy is more difficult than using

combination remedies because of the extra effort and time required.”

At the same time, combination remedies have their defenders, for in many cases the remedies *have* made a difference.

Some products combine more than single remedies. Canine health consultant Marina Zacharias in Jacksonville, Oregon, has used Homotoxicology combination remedies for more than 17 years. “These scientifically based formulas combine organ, gland, and draining support that help the body process the effect of the homeopathy completely,” she says. “With all the

toxins in our world today, the body often needs such extra support. These remedies have produced excellent results for dogs with all kinds of conditions.”

Several combination remedies are labeled specifically for pet use, addressing common problems in dogs, cats, and other animals.

Classical homeopaths like Judith Herman, DVM, say that while combination remedies may temporarily improve symptoms or relieve pain, they can at the same time complicate future treatment by suppressing some symptoms, especially if the remedies are given repeatedly over weeks or months. “In addition,” she says, “combination remedies don’t cure problems

the way single remedies do. When the right single remedy is given, not only do symptoms resolve but they don’t return. The patient is truly cured.”

Whatever side one takes in the controversy, it’s safe to say that combination remedies are easy to find, easy to select, and easy to use – and that they are not part of classical homeopathy.



**Pet owners can find combination remedies intended for a variety of general conditions; some also contain herbs or nutrients.**

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## Finding the right homeopath

Searching for the right veterinary homeopath is like searching for the perfect dentist, hairdresser, or dog trainer. You want someone with the right combination of technical skill, patience, and personality. Some conventional veterinarians consult with and recommend veterinary homeopaths. Trainers, groomers, dog clubs, health food stores, and pet supply stores may be able to refer you to a local homeopath. Some homeopaths maintain websites that explain the subject in detail.

One of the best ways to find a veterinary homeopath, Dr. Herman advises, is to go to the website for the Academy of Veterinary Homeopathy (see “Resources Mentioned in This Article,” page 13). “Here the veterinarians who are certified have gone through a long process of evaluation and testing,” she explains. “They use a standard of practice that follows the *Organon*, the teachings of Hahnemann. They must maintain continuing education credits. Certification stands for a proven level of understanding and competence in these practitioners. The dog’s guardian will feel more confidence in the abilities of a certified veterinary homeopath than someone of unknown credentials.”

A veterinary homeopath who is always available for follow-up questions is a blessing, especially for new clients. “I’m on call for my clients 24/7,” says Dr. Herman. “They want to know whether they should repeat a remedy, give a new remedy, or go to the emergency room. Much of my work is a combination of education and hand-holding.”

Sometimes the homeopath is a considerable distance away, working with clients or conventional veterinarians by phone or email. Long-distance consultations are common.

“When I travel in North America,” says Dr. Herman, “I’m in phone contact with my clients, but when I go to Europe, a veterinary homeopath in Louisiana covers for me, and I do the same for her when she travels.”

## Is your dog a candidate?

Although most homeopaths believe that homeopathy can help any dog in any condition, some dogs are better candidates for success than others.

“The most challenging cases,” says Dr. Herman, “are older dogs with long-standing chronic conditions, especially those who are fed a supermarket kibble and have

received annual vaccinations along with conventional symptom-suppressing drugs. I feed a raw diet and recommend it to my clients because, in my experience, dogs on raw food respond better and faster to homeopathy. Younger dogs who are otherwise in good health, physically active, and on a raw diet usually respond quickly to remedies.”

For those who aren’t able to feed raw, Dr. Herman recommends upgrading the commercial diet and adding raw meat whenever possible. “And even those who switch to raw may have to experiment,” she says. “We have a few dogs who do best on a raw diet that includes some grains, while most do better on a grain-free diet. My own dog hates vegetables. There isn’t a single diet that’s perfect for all dogs, but the more you feed fresh, raw, high-quality ingredients, the more likely it is that your dog will respond well to homeopathy.”

Some veterinary homeopaths report that the patient’s response to homeopathy can be enhanced by supplements that improve digestion and assimilation, including probiotics and digestive enzymes.

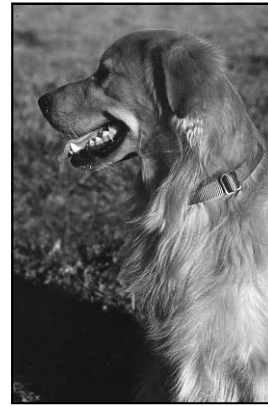
## Are you a candidate?

Healthcare is so strongly affected by cultural conditioning that many people will never consider trying homeopathy. It’s just too different from what they’re used to.

Others may be interested but are so used to suppressing symptoms that the thought of letting a fever run its course or waiting through a day of discomfort raises their own stress levels.

The clients most likely to obtain good results are those who learn the basics of homeopathy, know how to administer remedies, carefully observe their pets, and record symptoms. These clients understand that homeopathy isn’t necessarily a quick fix and that problems a conventional veterinarian might diagnose as acute or new, like ear infections, usually aren’t acute at all – they’re chronic problems that just got worse.

“Yes, you can suppress the symptoms with drugs,” says Dr. Herman, “but the symptoms will come back and will be harder to cure. That’s what most people have trouble grasping. They’re used to thinking that once symptoms disappear, the patient



**Patrick, Dr. Herman’s Golden Retriever, was 14 years old when he passed away, twice the age his littermates were when they died.**

is cured forever. But we all know dogs who get treated with symptom-suppressing drugs and whose problems keep coming back. In truth, the symptoms never went away, they just got buried for a while.

“In the end,” she says, “everything depends on the caregiver. That includes the person’s interest in the healing process and his or her expectations. My job is to make the animal as comfortable as I can while respecting the owner’s decisions.”

Dr. Herman’s first patient, her own Patrick, convinced her of the value of homeopathy. “Most Golden Retrievers have inherited health problems,” she says, “and he was no exception. His mother died of lymphoma 10 months after giving birth. His father died at seven of hemangiosarcoma. I removed a precancerous tumor from Patrick when he was one year old. His hips popped out for the first year of his life, and he had chronic hip problems.”

Patrick was three when Dr. Herman discovered homeopathy. “Thanks to the right remedy, his skin improved every year, becoming less and less of a problem as he got older,” she says. “He didn’t begin limping until he was 11, and he was still active and enjoying life. At age 14, he suffered a seizure and I realized he had a brain tumor. We had four more months together, and then he passed on.

“When I told his breeder, she was amazed that he lived so long because every other dog in his line had died by age eight. I was the only one who fed a raw diet and used homeopathy. Everyone in his line – aunts, uncles, parents, grandparents, siblings, nieces, and nephews – died at age seven or eight, and Patrick lived almost twice that long with so few problems. He’s a big reason why you I am convinced that homeopathy, even in a worst case, can always do something to help a dog.” 🐾

*CJ Puotinen, a frequent contributor to WDJ, is the author of The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care, which describes several energy healing techniques. See “Resources,” page 24, for more information.*

# Keep Them Warm and Dry

*The warmest, best-fitting, easy-on dog coats on the market.*

BY NANCY KERNS

**W**ell, I'll start off by admitting that there is no single perfect dog coat. Or, I should say, if there is a perfect coat, I haven't seen it. Fortunately, there are plenty of very good coats that can suit *most* of any dog owner's selection criteria.

We actually started our quest by looking for two different coat types: a super-warm coat, and a garment that would keep a dog dry in the hardest rainfall. We tried (but didn't think it would be possible) to find a coat that provided extraordinary insulation *and* the ability to keep a dog dry (and we were right; we did not find such a coat).

When we started rounding up dog coats to test and review, we looked for products with the following features:

- **Ability to keep the dog warm, dry, or both.**
- **Good, comfortable, secure fit.** We looked for coats that stayed on the dog without constant adjusting and straightening, and that didn't rub hairless or raw spots on the wearer's shoulders or neck.
- **Easy to put on, take off, and adjust for fit.** We wouldn't promote a coat that requires instructions to put on the dog. Neither are we fans of coats that can't be adjusted, or that offer only a very small range of adjustment.
- **Ability to survive laundering in good shape.**
- **Quality of workmanship and materials.** A good dog coat, like a good coat for humans, should be able to survive more than one winter!
- **Visual appeal.** This is last on our list of requirements, but first (and seemingly the only criterion) on some manufacturers'

lists. There are an extraordinary number of cute, trendy, and even striking outfits available for dogs. Unfortunately, most of them just don't meet the most important performance requirements (keeping the dog warm, dry, or both).

After finding coats that appeared to meet our selection criteria, we ordered the products for testing. We used four different thin-coated dogs for testing: two Greyhounds (with very different measurements), an elderly German Shorthaired Pointer, and a senior Catahoula/Greyhound-mix.

Not all of the coats we tested are available in sizes to fit dogs of any and all sizes. All of our test dogs required medium to large sizes, which were readily available. Giant and tiny sizes are harder to find from every coat maker.

Each manufacturer uses different criteria for determining the appropriately sized coat – weight, in some cases, and neck, girth, or back measurements in others – and we ordered coats with a specific test-dog recipient in mind. In some cases, though, the coats fit one of the other test dogs better than the intended recipient. Had we used just one dog to test the coats, we would have had to return some of the products and ask for a different size.

Don't count on being able to return coats that you try on your dog and then return due to poor fit. Although none of the companies we ordered coats from told us this in advance, we found that many will not accept returns of products that have dog hair on them! It's understandable, but regrettable. Before you place an order or hand over your plastic, ask about the seller's return and replacement policy.

## Reality bites

As I mentioned, we didn't find a perfect product. We found coats that were warm and exquisitely made, but which fit our

WHOLE DOG JOURNAL'S 0-4 PAWS PRODUCT RATING:	
	AS GOOD AS IT GETS! PRODUCT IS FULLY APPROVED BY WDJ.
	A GOOD PRODUCT, BUT WITH ONE OR TWO SIGNIFICANT FLAWS.
	THE PRODUCT HAS SOME VALUE, BUT ALSO SOME FLAWS; BUYER BEWARE.
	WE INCLUDE THE PRODUCT ONLY BECAUSE OF ITS POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT.
THE PRODUCT HAS NO REDEEMING VALUE – AT LEAST, NONE THAT WDJ CAN APPRECIATE.	

test dogs poorly. We found coats that fit beautifully, but were not very warm. We found raincoats that kept dogs dry, but were a nightmare to put on and take off.

Although we like all the coats that we feature in the following pages, we appreciate them for different reasons. Your dog and his special needs will have to inform your choice, based on the features of each coat. Each is ideally suited for a different climate, purpose, and type of dog.

Some fabrics will best protect a dog from a dry, windy cold; others are better suited for damp weather. Some coats were designed with active, exercising dogs in mind, with large "arm holes" that facilitate movement or a hole sewn in where the leash can attach to the collar without displacing the coat. Others are better suited to keeping a sedentary dog warm and may even discourage his full range of motion. Still others have large buckles that would be quite uncomfortable if a dog were to lie down while wearing the coat.

Finally, some designs are clearly intended for deep-chested, narrow-waisted dogs like our Greyhound testers. Others would better suit block-bodied dogs such as Golden Retrievers.

With these considerations in mind, take a look at the high-quality coats we did find. We'll start with the coats intended for cold and mildly wet (but not super-rainy) weather, and look at the raincoats last.





\$50 - \$100  
Smallest size: Italian Greyhound  
Largest size: Great Dane

#### WINTER COAT

Voyagers K9 Apparel, Deerfield, WI  
(877) 423-7345; k9apparel.com



\$40 - \$90  
Smallest size: 10"  
Largest size: 30"

#### BELTED COAT

Mutttopia Coats, by Muttluks, Toronto, Canada  
(888) 688-8585; muttluks.com

The two coats on this page came closer than any others to meeting all of our selection criteria. This coat's biggest drawback? Its maker designed all their coats for long, narrow, deep-chested dogs like Greyhounds. Owners should lobby them to design for dogs of other shapes, because this coat offers some great features.

**What we like:** Its outer shell is waterproof, with a soft fleece inner layer; note, however, that the chest and neck section is fleece for maximum comfort (but this section is *not* waterproof). The turtleneck can be rolled down when it's warm, or pulled over the dog's ears in extremely cold weather. A leash opening is sewed in, and a reflective patch is sewn across the rump. The coat is easily put on and taken off the dog, and has a wide span of adjustment. Three Velcro straps fasten the coat on one side, with another, single band of Velcro on the other side to help keep the coat from slipping. The coat fits long dogs well and securely. We love it.

**What we like:** Waterproof shell, an insulating middle layer, and thick, fleecy material inner layer. The dog's chest is well covered. The front has large buttons, which are decorative but can be fastened and unfastened if your dog objects when you pull a coat over his head. The design suited our deep-chested Greyhounds as well as the blockier Catahoula-mix, and didn't impair the dogs' ability to move well and stride out. The collar can be folded up for slightly more warmth and protection, without getting in the way of the dog's collar and a leash. The coat fastens with a large plastic snap/buckle, which rides on a wide strap that allows for a wide range of adjustment. Elastic loops are sewn on the inside of the back leg area, to help prevent the rear end of the coat from tipping off the dog to one side.

**A minor criticism:** The elastic rear leg loops are narrow and easily stretched out.

## Do Dogs Really NEED Coats?

Not *all* dogs need coats, but some do benefit from wearing a coat in cold weather.

A dog's natural protection against cold varies from breed to breed. Labradors and certain Northern dogs (Huskies and Malamutes, for example) have developed with special physiological responses for coping with cold. However, many other breeds (and certain individual dogs) benefit from extra warming layers in cold weather, including:

- Older dogs, especially those in poor health
- Immune-compromised dogs (keeping themselves warm is a major stress on their bodies' limited resources)
- Extremely thin dogs, who may not have adequate fat stores to keep themselves warm
- Extremely short-haired dogs and/or breeds accustomed to extremely cold or wet climates

Warming up these dogs actually helps them stay healthy, by sparing the dog's body from the task of generating as much heat as it would have to otherwise. By simply slipping an extra layer on these dogs, you can help them preserve their physiological resources for the maintenance of general health and vitality.



**Pay attention! If your dog starts panting in the coat, he's probably too warm.**

Make sure you monitor your dog's response to his coat and pay attention to the weather. A coat can make your dog uncomfortably warm if temperatures rise or if he exercises in the coat.



\$22 - \$93  
Smallest size: 8"  
Largest size: 28"

**NYLON TURNOUT**

Foggy Mountain Dog Coats, Knoxville, MD  
(301) 834-9696; dogcoat.com



\$80 - \$110  
Smallest size: 12"  
Largest size: 40"

**POLARCOAT**

Dogs & Their People, Waukesha, WI  
(262) 548-3979; dogcoats.com

The above coat and the one to its right are very similar, even down to the companies' website addresses. We like this coat a tad better. **What we like:** Water-repellent shell, an insulating layer, and fleece inner layer. Fits all body shapes well. Rear end of coat has darts sewn in to make the coat wrap around the dog's rump nicely. Front fastens with Velcro and a buckle. Wide range of adjustment. Free repairs for a lifetime. **What we don't like:** The dog's chest is not covered. Drip dry only.

As you can see, this coat just isn't designed or sewn to fit the dog as nicely as the previous coat. **What we like:** Water- and wind-resistant nylon shell, Polartec insulating layer, and fleece inner layer. Fits all body shapes. Wide range of adjustment. **What we don't like:** The dog's chest is not covered. Large plastic buckles would be uncomfortable for a sleeping dog. Front closes with Velcro only.



\$42 - \$83  
Smallest size: 8"  
Largest size: 34"

**APACHE RIVER DOG COAT**

Norman Equine Design, Subiaco, AR  
(800) 348-5673; horse-blankets.com/dog.html



\$42 - \$66  
Smallest size: 8"  
Largest size: 30"


**PANACHE POLARFLEECE COAT**

PC Panache, Douglassville, PA  
(610) 689-3829; pcpanache.com

These two coats (above and above right) are comparable in terms of their features, too. We like this one a little more. Both are made with fleece, pull over the dog's head, and are intended to keep the dog toasty in cold but not windy or wet weather. **What we like:** This coat is lined with a smooth Lycra Spandex layer. Fastens with a wide swath of Velcro on both sides, resulting in a large range of adjustment. The dog's chest is well-covered. Back leg straps keep coat from slipping to one side.

**What we like:** Elegant cut, nice fit. You can't tell from this photos, but the dog's chest is covered by a section that goes between the dog's front legs. High turtleneck can fold down. Fastens with a single strap that has a wide range of adjustment; fits all body types well. **What we don't like:** For ultra-cold weather (our goal for this review), this coat is a little light. For mild winters, it would be perfect.




**CLOUD CHASER SOFT SHELL JACKET**  
 Ruffwear, Bend, OR  
 (888) 783-3932; ruffwear.com  
 \$75  
 Smallest size: XXS  
 Largest size: XL




**THE SLICKER**  
 Teckelklub, Vancouver, Canada  
 (866) 688-7802; teckelklub.com  
 \$34 - \$100  
 Smallest size: 0 (Toy Poodle)  
 Largest size: 8 (Weimaraner)

This is a really unique product, unlike any seen elsewhere. It's meant to work kind of like a lightweight, breathable wetsuit, fitting close to the dog's skin and trapping core heat, even if the dog and the coat get wet. Consider it as a light, comfortable, no-slip insulating layer for a very active dog. **What we like:** Dog's belly and tummy are well-covered. Reflective stripe sewn along each side. **What we don't like:** No adjustment; you have to get the right size. Fastens with a zipper along one side.

**What we like:** Waterproof shell with a seamless fleece inner layer. Very well-made in Canada. Reflective piping on every seam. Nice fit on our block-shaped test dog; did not shift or rub. **What we don't like:** The dog's chest is not covered. Range of adjustment is not wide. Only Velcro fasteners in front and belly.




**RAIN COAT**  
 Voyagers K9 Apparel, Deerfield, WI  
 (877) 423-7345; k9apparel.com  
 \$48 - \$88  
 Smallest size: Italian Greyhound  
 Largest size: Great Dane




**FIDO WIND AND RAIN GEAR**  
 Premier Pet Products, Midlothian, VA  
 (888) 640-8840; fidofleece.com  
 \$19 - \$46  
 Smallest size: 11"  
 Largest size: 32"

These two (above and above right) are the only two non-insulating raincoats we tested. Again, this maker designed all its coats for long, narrow, deep-chested dogs like Greyhounds.

**What we like:** Coat is completely lined with a lightweight mesh material. A leash opening is sewed in, and a reflective patch is sewn across the rump. Attached hood, pleated front, and fitted sides and rump help water run off your dog! Hood can be folded back if preferred. The coat is easily put on and taken off, and has a wide span of adjustment. Two Velcro straps fasten the coat, one on either side; strap position allows for easy movement.

**What we like:** Detachable hood (with Velcro). Coat covers chest and tummy well, and can be tucked up close to the body with an elastic drawstring just behind the dog's ribcage. Covers dog's front legs, too. Comparatively inexpensive. **What we don't like:** Fastens with long Velcro strip down spine, which can be difficult to fasten on a wiggly dog and leaks water in a driving rain. Dog's front legs must be threaded through sleeves. 🐾

# Quackery? Or Life-Saving?

*Articles on energy medicine elicit divergent views.*

Reading WDJ is one of the most frustrating experiences I have each month. Side-by-side with the outstanding training articles by Pat Miller and Editor Nancy Kerns' excellent series on dog food and diet, you publish the most mind-numbing foolishness about alleged alternative healing and medicine. Your training as a journalist was seriously deficient if it didn't teach you to investigate all such claims before your implicit endorsement by printing them.

For me the final straw was how you fell for the equivalent of a party trick, convincing you of the effectiveness of kinesiology, as related in your Editor's Note in the November issue. That, plus the ridiculous comment by Wendy Volhard, "If you can accept Einstein's theory that all matter has energy, sooner or later you will believe in kinesiology, too." I challenge Ms. Volhard to site the reference for this ridiculous reduction of Einstein's world-changing ideas, as well as the fairy tale logic that a therapy works, if only you believe in it.

In the 1980s thousands of people believed quartz crystals could cure diseases, including cancer. Why aren't they used today at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center? Belief is the enemy of analysis. In science and medicine, you either have the data that supports your position or you do not.

If people wish to waste their time and money on alt-med for themselves instead of pursuing evidence-based medicine, that's their mistake (and it can be quite costly). Delaying proper medical treatment by pursuing the magical thinking of alternative and complementary medicine can seriously degrade the outcome when these therapies fail. I believe we owe it to our canine companions to rely on proven medical treatment by qualified doctors and technicians.

In support of my position I would encourage readers to explore Robert Todd Carroll's Sceptic's Dictionary site

at [skeptdic.com](http://skeptdic.com); the Quackwatch site of Stephen Barrett, MD, at [quackwatch.com](http://quackwatch.com); and the wonderful podcast, Quackcast, at [quackcast.com](http://quackcast.com).

Joe Pedoto  
Stratford, CT

*Thanks, Joe, for that view. I very much appreciate that you find some value in WDJ's training and nutrition articles, even if you are uninterested in (or aggravated by!) the information we publish about alternative and complementary healthcare.*

*I wouldn't expect anyone to agree with or have a use for everything we discuss. Our goal is to provide readers with good information about as many healthcare options as possible. In our experience, informed owners, armed with a wide variety of healthcare tools—from conventional and unconventional medical schools—are best equipped to avoid wasting time and money on treatments that don't work.*

I have been reading WDJ for the past year and have enjoyed it tremendously. It offers a nice balance of numerous subjects and approaches to those subjects that I find refreshing.

I'm excited about your recent series on energy modalities and wanted to mention another one: Healing Touch for Animals (HTA; see [healingtouchforanimals.com](http://healingtouchforanimals.com)).

I used energy modalities in conjunction with conventional medicine for years but never thought about using energy modalities on animals (other than acupuncture by our vet). I enrolled in HTA and started the program to help my dogs, who

suffered from allergies and other minor ailments. Not long after I started the program, both of my dogs were diagnosed with thrombocytopenia (the only common link was a rabies vaccine they had received). Simon was able to fight it on his own. However, Daisuki was critical. The vet explained we needed to start chemo and a bone marrow medication immediately. If Daisuki responded to the drugs, she would be on them for at least six to eight months.

By the end of the third week it became clear that she was not responding. She had a horrific reaction to the bone marrow medication, which resulted in six more drugs for the side effects. Also, her blood counts were not responding. The vet said he would give her one more week and if her red blood cells reduced by even 0.5 percent she would need an emergency transfusion, probably spleen removal, possibly bone marrow transplant, etc.

I told him about HTA the first week and he asked me not to do it because he didn't know enough about it and didn't want me stimulating her immune system while he was trying to destroy it with chemo. The third week I explained it would regulate her immune system so her body could start the



**The owner of Simon (left) and Daisuki credits energy medicine and conventional veterinary medicine for their recoveries from a serious blood disorder.**

healing process. He said to go ahead and try it; "Why not?" were his specific words at that time, since she wasn't responding to the drugs.

I did four treatments on her that next week and two on Simon. We returned for their blood work the following week (week 4). Simon's results were back in the normal range, which was understandable, since he was not that far out of range. However, every blood count on Daisuki was back in normal range – not just improved, but in range. We were all stunned.

My vet started weaning Daisuki off

the drugs that day and she was completely done with all medications by the end of the second month. At this point I knew I wanted to get certified in HTA. I'm currently through the program and have about six months to go with my certification.

HTA is taught as a complementary method in conjunction with conventional care. The founder of HTA came from the veterinary world and realizes this is not a replacement for conventional medicine. It is an amazing modality.

Shelley Wallen  
Highlands Ranch, Colorado 🐾

## Addendum: Pilates and More for Canine Athletes

Last month's "Canine Sports and Proper Canine Injury Prevention Through Conditioning" introduced readers to core conditioning exercises.

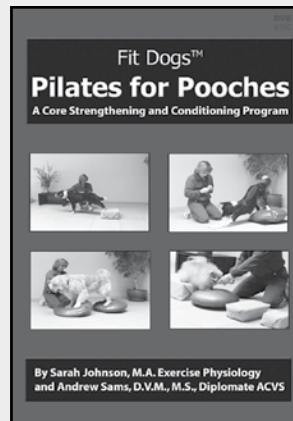
Those interested in starting their dogs on such an exercise program will find everything they need in "Pilates for Pooches: A Core Strengthening and Conditioning Program," a DVD by human Pilates instructor/agility competitor Sarah Johnson, MA, and veterinarian Andrew Sams, DVM. No special equipment needed – you'll create your own exercise boxes and wobble devices for an effective progressive program thanks to excellent step-by-step instructions, printable PDF files for easy reference, and a log for keeping track of your dog's progress. Bonus section: getting started with puppies. 1 hour 4 minutes, \$40. Agility in Motion, [agilityinmotion.com](http://agilityinmotion.com).

"Get on the Ball," a new DVD from canine physical rehabilitation therapist Debbie Gross Sanders, uses a large exercise ball or TheraBall, the kind used by humans, to build the strength, endurance, flexibility, balance, muscle tone, and kinesthetic awareness of canine athletes. Your dog's height determines the right size TheraBall. The program features beginner, intermediate, and advanced workouts and an introductory program for pups. 1 hour 16 minutes, \$30. Clean Run Productions, [cleanrun.com](http://cleanrun.com).

"Strengthening the Performance Dog," another DVD from Debbie Gross Sanders, demonstrates a cross-training program that helps dogs competing in agility and other canine sports prevent injury and improve performance. The exercises strengthen front and back legs while enhancing jumping, turning, hind-end awareness, and balance. 37 minutes, \$25. Clean Run Productions, [cleanrun.com](http://cleanrun.com).

The book *Peak Performance: Conditioning the Canine Athlete*, second edition, by M. Christine Zink, DVM, PhD, is a natural companion to the DVD "Building the Canine Athlete: Strength, Stretch, Endurance, and Body Awareness Exercises" by Dr. Zink and Laurie McCauley, DVM. *Peak Performance* describes and illustrates structure, locomotion, and other factors that affect the health of canine competitors. 228 pages, \$25. Canine Sports Productions, [caninesports.com](http://caninesports.com).

*The Agility Advantage: Health and Fitness for the Canine Athlete* is Dr. Zink's newest book. It combines exercise and cross training with nutrition, the identification and treatment of common injuries, and helpful information regarding all phases of an agility dog's life, from puppy selection to competition to old age. 220 pages, \$25, Clean Run Productions, [cleanrun.com](http://cleanrun.com).



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### A Word to Our Readers: Whole Dog Journal's Mailing List Policy

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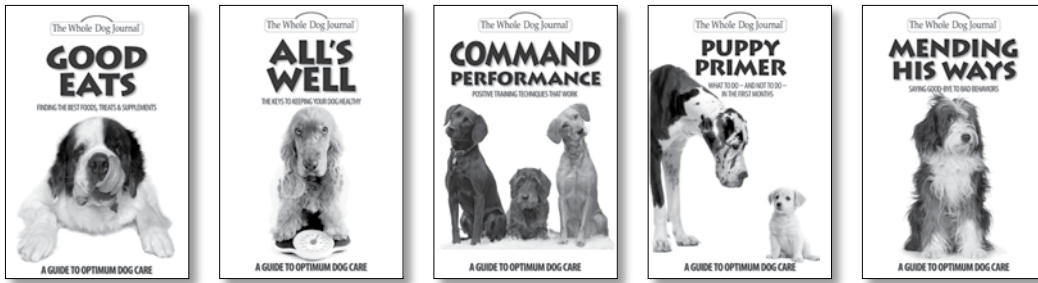
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*The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care* and *Natural Remedies for Dogs and Cats*, by WDJ contributor CJ Puotinen, are available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com. Puotinen is also author of several books about human health, including *Natural 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](http://ahvma.org)

### TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

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

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