



The Whole Dog Journal™

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A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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Take a Class

Learning furthers enjoyment (of anything).

BY NANCY KERNS

Last March, I attended Expo West in Anaheim, California, an enormous “natural products” trade show with a good representation of natural pet product makers. In July, I took a trip to Indiana and Ohio, where I toured a dry pet food manufacturing plant, a poultry processing plant, a high-volume daycare and boarding facility (that also houses foster dogs for a rescue group), and the main research facility for one of the country’s largest pet food makers. In October, I attended the annual conference of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT).

These trips expand my store of knowledge about responsible dog care – in ways that, I hope, enable me to bring you more and better information about products, food, and training methods to benefit your dogs.

They also produce a consistent side-effect: they make me really excited about going home and doing further investigation about what I learned. I find myself spending days reviewing materials that I picked up on my trips, and performing behavior modification experiments on my dog. Each time, my batteries got recharged; I found a new interest and enjoyment in my dog – and my job!

Anyway, I can’t recommend extended learning enough. Especially because there are so many inspiring and fascinating educational opportunities available! Need examples? How about these:

■ The “Well Adjusted Dog Workshop: Secrets to Understanding Canine Behavior,” presented by Dr. Nicholas Dodman, founder and director of the animal behavior clinic at Tufts University. Dr. Dodman will present this two-day workshop for owners, trainers, vets, and vet techs in March (California), April (Illinois), and June (New Jersey). Topics will include canine anxiety, phobias, compulsive behaviors, aggression, and more. For more information, see thepetdocs.com.



■ Safer Vaccination and Pet Health Care, featuring world-renowned vaccination experts Drs. Jean Dodds and Ronald Schultz and benefitting the Rabies Challenge Fund, March 28, San Diego, California. See petseminar.org or call (858) 755-8820 for more info.

■ Holistic Veterinary Medicine Symposium presented by the University of California at Davis Holistic Veterinary Medicine Club, May 22, Davis, California. Send an e-mail to ucdhvmc@gmail.com for details.

■ Introduction to Small Animal Acupressure by Amy Snow and Kim Bauer, April 25-27, Pittstown, New Jersey. Call the Tallgrass Animal Acupressure Institute at (303) 681-3033 or see tallgrasspublishers.com for more information.

Foster dog update

I found a *perfect* home for the little Beagle-mix I fostered for a few weeks in December. She is a bright, fast, and super-sweet dog, and finding her a home should have been a snap, but, due to separation anxiety, she also displays some fairly vexing behavior when left alone. Then I found a family with four boys (ages 5 through 13); Dad has wanted a dog his whole life, and Mom is a full-time, stay-at-home mom. This family was tailor-made for a snuggly but energetic dog with separation anxiety!

Delivering her, freshly bathed and in a new collar, to their home at 6:30 on Christmas morning totally made my day, week, month, and year. And hearing their reports about her

integration into the family has given me a warm glow going into these cold winter months. The mom told me, “The boys argue about who she loves best, which is funny because she really does seem to love them all!”

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A Rising Tide

Enjoy the availability of better dog foods, but beware of the posers.

BY NANCY KERNS

By every measure, the “natural and holistic” segment of the U.S. pet food market has enjoyed spectacular growth over the past decade – far greater than that of the pet food market as a whole. As one example, figures supplied to *Petfood Industry* magazine by industry analyst Packaged Facts show that the U.S. pet food market as a whole grew at a rate of 5.3 percent from 2003 to 2007, but the “natural foods” segment of that market grew 24.6 percent in the same span. And the “organic” segment experienced an astounding 48.1 percent growth rate.

A rising tide lifts all boats. And the success of the “natural and holistic” niche has been lifting the quality of offerings from the pet food industry as a whole. What pet food company owner or wouldn’t look at those numbers and immediately ask his employees to run out and concoct a product to compete in the “natural foods” niche?

The answer is, apparently, none, because just about every pet food maker has rolled out products claiming to be natural and/or holistic, containing organic and/or

“wild” ingredients. That should be a good thing, right? Well, yes. And no!

It’s good because there are more and more better-quality foods available to dog owners. Today, the medium-quality foods have gotten better, and what we would consider true “premium” foods are much more widely available than they used to. They now appear regularly in most independent pet supply stores (historically the leaders in finding and promoting the healthiest products) but also in chain retail stores. In 1998, the year WDJ was launched, the “big box” pet supply stores had little to offer owners who were looking for the very best-quality dog foods; today, they carry a wide variety of good foods. A few premium foods even appear in higher-end supermarkets!

On the other hand, so do what I’d call “posers” – the catch-up products churned out by the pet food industry giants in an effort to grab some of that “natural and holistic” market share. These products beg the question: Can corporate titans produce foods of the same quality as the little “boutique” companies that were founded

What you can do . . .

- First and foremost: Look at the ingredients panel of any food you are considering for your dog.
- Use the “hallmarks of quality” shown on page 4 to identify good foods.
- Buy a one- or two-week supply, and let your dog be the judge. He should not only like it, but also thrive on it (not suddenly develop digestive, skin, or other health problems).



on the concept of producing only the very best, healthiest dog foods?

I’d like to quickly dismiss the idea that any of the giants – Iams and Eukanuba, Purina, Science Diet, et. al. – could possibly make dry dog foods that are as good as the foods that have a regular presence on WDJ’s “approved foods” list. The fact is, though, of course they could; they have all the resources needed to do so. They could *bury* most of the competition in the “natural and holistic” niche . . . *if* they followed through and used only the same high-quality ingredients typically used by the smaller, boutique brands. But they generally stop short – perhaps because they are unaccustomed to paying a *lot* for their raw materials, or marketing the products at a correspondingly high sales price?

Advantages and disadvantages of scale

The sheer size of a company doesn’t disqualify it from making truly premium foods (although we’ve been accused, falsely, we think, of promoting that idea).



Just a few examples of premium-quality foods.

The corporate giants have some amazing advantages over the boutique food producers; they really *shine* at some aspects of food production – not incidentally, the *very* tasks that the smaller companies don't always do very well.

As an important example, economies of scale enable the giants to conduct more frequent and more thorough quality and safety tests, to produce larger batches with greater consistency (fewer production glitches), retain better-paid and more highly trained employees – in short, to do a better job of producing safe, consistent products.

The giants also employ legions of brilliant food scientists, who are able to conduct incredible research into animal nutrition and health. Their products are better-researched and more thoroughly tested than their small competitors' products – some of which were dreamed up by people with very little education or experience in animal nutrition.

But for all that, what the giants can't seem to do – yet – is to formulate foods using the high-quality ingredients that the "little guys" are using. Many of the companies whose products are on our "approved foods" list buy their ingredients

from local farms, ranches, and fishermen. Most source their ingredients themselves; they don't leave procurement to their co-manufacturing partners or ingredient brokers, so they can be absolutely certain of the origin and quality of every ingredient used in their products. We think that the recalls of 2007 proved the critical nature of this sort of rigor.

It's the ingredients

Nutrition experts don't agree on everything, but one thing they generally concede to be true is that *all* animals enjoy the best health when given a balanced and varying diet of fresh, species-appropriate foods. They also generally agree that highly processed foods are not as healthy as lightly processed foods; some of nature's value is always lost to oxidation, heat, pressure, and chemical interactions. Dry food (kibble) is *the* most processed type of food available to dog owners – but foods that are made with already highly processed (and sometimes, as a result, rather aged) ingredients are at a big disadvantage, compared to those that are made with fresh, whole ingredients.

It's bad enough that most pet foods

are made with meats and fats that are far inferior in quality to what's known as "edible" ("human quality") meats and fats. I'm talking about the things that may go into pet food that cannot go into human-edible products, like meats that don't pass inspection and meat from animals that are dead before they can be slaughtered. Also, the handling and storage of ingredients that are diverted at the processing plant for "non-edible use" – in other words, for pet food – is far inferior to the processes used for "edible" ingredients. (In short, edible ingredients are kept clean and cold all the way through the food production chain; pet food ingredients are not.)

We'd certainly like to identify and promote only those products that contain "edible" meat sources. Unfortunately for consumers, there is no reliable way to do this. A company can say they use only edible ingredients, but few (none?) can legally prove it; according to Federal law, any ingredient that is present at a pet food plant is, by definition, "inedible." So, if a truckload of fresh, refrigerated, wholesome chicken headed to your local supermarket pulls over at a pet food plant, and opens the back door of the truck, the contents of the

Hallmarks of quality (what to look for)

■ Animal protein at the top of the ingredients list.

Ingredients are listed by weight, so ideally a food will have one or two animal proteins in the first few ingredients.

■ **Named animal protein source** – chicken, beef, lamb, and so on. "Meat" is an example of a low-quality protein source of dubious origin. Animal protein "meals" (i.e., "chicken meal") should also be from named species.

■ When a fresh meat appears high on the ingredients list, **an animal protein meal in a supporting role, to augment the total protein in the diet.** Fresh or frozen meats do not contain enough protein to be used as the sole protein source in a dry food (they contain as much as 65 to 75 percent water and only 15 to 20 percent protein. In contrast, animal protein "meals" – meat, bone, skin, and connective tissue that's been rendered and dried – contain only about 10 percent moisture, and as much as 65 percent protein.

■ **Whole vegetables, fruits, and grains.** Fresh, unprocessed food ingredients contain wholesome nutrients in all their naturally complex glory, with their fragile vitamins, enzymes, and antioxidants intact. Don't be alarmed by one or two food fragments, especially if they are low on the ingredients list. But if there are several present in the food, and/or they appear high on the ingredients list, the lower-quality the food.

■ **Organic ingredients; locally sourced ingredients.** Both of these things are better for our planet.

Signs of corners cut (what to look out for)

■ **Meat by-products or poultry by-products.** Higher-value ingredients are processed and stored more carefully (kept clean and cold) than low-value ingredients (such as by-products) by the processors. The expense of whole meats and meat meals doesn't *rule out* poor handling and resultant oxidation (rancidity), but it makes it less likely. For these reasons, we suggest avoiding foods that contain by-products or by-product meal.

■ **Added sweeteners.** Sweeteners effectively persuade many dogs to eat foods comprised mainly of grain fragments (and containing little healthy animal protein).

■ **Artificial preservatives, such as BHA, BHT, and ethoxyquin.** Natural preservatives, such as tocopherols (forms of vitamin E), vitamin C, and rosemary extract, can be used instead. Note that natural preservatives do not preserve the food as long as artificial preservatives, so owners should always check the "best by" date on the label and look for relatively fresh products.

■ **Artificial colors.** The color of the food makes no difference to the dog; these nutritionally useless chemicals are used in foods to make them look appealing to *you!*

truck are now “inedible” by law. It’s perfectly fine food, but the food maker is not legally permitted to say that it’s edible.

Only human-food plants – inspected by the USDA – can legally claim they use edible meats, and this is only if *not one single inedible ingredient* is on the premises.

Barring the ability to identify the companies that use edible ingredients, we suggest that you look for other evidence of quality. Will – or can – the company identify the sources of its ingredients? Are the ingredients unprocessed, or lightly processed? Or are they a waste product from the production of human food?

We don’t have studies to prove it, but we regard it as a founding principle of holistic healthcare: A diet made with fresh, whole, species-appropriate ingredients (think animal proteins, rather than plant proteins) is far healthier than one made with cheap fats discarded from restaurants, inexpensive carbohydrates produced as waste from the brewing industry, and plant proteins such as corn gluten meal.

Not that many years ago, the pet food industry became a convenient place for the human food industry to dispose of its waste products, without paying landfill

fees. Pet food makers were pleased to have ready supplies of inexpensive ingredients. Owners were happy to buy something to feed their dogs that was so convenient to store and feed. Dogs, as they have been for centuries, were thrilled to get whatever their humans would share with them. The ingredients panel on a bag of dog food was rarely considered.

But today, we’re putting the pieces together: diet affects health. Consumers are responding to the positive changes they’ve seen in their dogs on improved diets, and many companies are responding to consumers’ feedback. But the only way to distinguish the passionate, committed, knowledgeable food makers from the posers is to start looking at, and understanding, the ingredients panel.

Representative “top foods”

Here is our “approved dry foods” list for 2010. All these products meet our selection criteria – including our newest criterion, that the company discloses the name and location of its manufacturers. It’s by no means a list of the only good foods on the market; it’s meant as a fair representation of the good-quality foods that are available.

Rest assured that any food that you find

that meets our selection criteria is just as good as any of the foods on our list.

What if your favorite dog foods don’t meet our selection criteria? It’s up to you. If you have been feeding what we would consider to be low-quality foods to your dog, and she looks and appears to feel great, good for you! She’s one of those genetically lucky animals who can spin straw into gold, digestively speaking. But if she has allergies, chronic diarrhea, recurrent ear infections, or a poor coat, we’d recommend that you upgrade.

Note that we’ve listed the foods alphabetically, by the name of their manufacturers. Some companies make several product lines. We’ve listed each product line that meets our selection criteria from each manufacturer. We’ve also highlighted *one* product from each company as a representative, to show what sort of ingredients and macro-nutrient levels (protein, fat, fiber, and moisture) are typically found in that maker’s foods. Be aware that some companies offer dozens of different products with varying nutrient levels and ingredients. Check the company’s website or call its toll-free phone number to get information about its other varieties. 🐾

WDJ’S APPROVED DRY FOODS OF 2010

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| ADDICTION FOODS — Te Puke, New Zealand; (65) 6273-8981; addictionfoods.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE Salmon Bleu, Viva La Venison, La Porchetta. | MADE BY Taplow Ventures, Vancouver, British Columbia (salmon); Pied Piper Pet & Wildlife, Inc., Hamlin, TX (venison); and Texas Farm Products, Nacogdoches, TX (pork). |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – La Porchetta formula contains: Pork meal, ground brown rice, chicken fat, ground oats, Menhaden fish meal, dried eggs, flaxseed, rice bran . . . 23% protein; 13% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Salmon and venison foods are grain-free. Venison is free-range; salmon is wild-caught. | |
| ARTEMIS PET FOODS — North Hollywood, CA; (800) 282-5876; artemiscompany.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Fresh Mix (5 varieties) and Osopure (2 varieties, for small breeds). | MADE BY Diamond Pet Products, Lathrop, CA. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Fresh Mix Adult contains: Chicken, chicken meal, turkey, cracked pearled barley, brown rice, oatmeal, millet, peas . . . 23% protein; 14% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Fresh Mix products display what we call “kitchen sink” formulation; example above also contains chicken fat, duck, salmon, egg product, salmon oil, and salmon meal. Osopure has fewer protein sources (chicken, fish meal, egg). | |
| BACK TO BASICS — Meadville, PA; (800) 219-2558; backtobasicspetfood.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Chicken and Pork formulas. | MADE BY CJ Foods, in Pawnee City, NE. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Chicken formula contains: Chicken meal, brown rice, pearled barley, oatmeal, chicken fat, salmon meal, oat fiber, alfalfa . . . 23% protein; 17% fat; 4% fiber; 12% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company was sold to Dad’s Pet Care in 2009. Manufacturing scheduled to move to Dad’s own plant in PA. Company says all ingredients will continue to be USA-sourced and manufactured. | |
| BENCH & FIELD PET FOODS — Grand Rapids, MI; (800) 525-4802; benchandfield.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Holistic Natural Canine. | MADE BY WellPet in Mishawaka, IN. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Holistic Natural Canine contains: Chicken meal, brown rice, white rice, oatmeal, chicken fat, pork meal, dried beet pulp, fish meal . . . 24% protein; 15% fat; 4.9% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company offers direct shipping to your home. | |

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| BLUE BUFFALO COMPANY — Wilton, CT; (800) 919-2833; bluebuff.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Blue Life Protection Formulas (3 puppy varieties, 5 adult, 1 weight control, 1 senior dog); Blue Longevity (puppy, adult, mature); Blue Wilderness (2 varieties); Blue Organics (1 variety). | MADE BY Chenango Valley Pet Foods, Sherburne, NY; CJ Foods, Bern, KS; Dad’s Pet Care, Meadville, PA; Triple T Foods, Frontenac, KS. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Blue Organics contains: Organic deboned chicken, organic brown rice, organic oatmeal, chicken meal, organic ground barley, organic ground millet, salmon meal, chicken fat . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company plans to launch a “limited ingredient” line in February. | |
| BLUE SEAL FEEDS — Londonderry, NH; (800) 367-2730; bynaturepetfoods.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – By Nature (6 varieties); By Nature Organics (1 variety). | MADE BY Blue Seal’s plant in Arcade, NY; organic food is made by Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – By Nature Organics contains: Organic chicken, chicken meal, organic brown rice, organic oats, organic barley, lamb meal, organic chicken hydrolysate, organic peas . . . 28% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – “Bright Life” variety has been discontinued. | |
| BREEDER’S CHOICE PET FOODS — Irwindale, CA; (800) 255-4286; breeders-choice.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – ActiveCare (2 varieties); Advanced Pet Diets Select Choice (6 varieties); AvoDerm Natural (10 varieties); AvoDerm Natural Original Oven-Baked (3 varieties); Health Food for Dogs (1 variety); Pinnacle Holistic (4 varieties). | MADE BY Breeder’s Choice’s plant in Irwindale, CA. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Pinnacle Holistic Trout & Sweet Potato contains: Trout, oatmeal, herring meal, oat flour, canola oil, sweet potato, calcium carbonate, flaxseed . . . 22% protein; 10% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – ActiveCare line contains “natural chicken cartilage with the highest levels of unprocessed chondroitin and glucosamine.” AvoDerm line developed for dogs with skin and coat issues; AvoDerm Baked meant for dogs with “sensitive stomachs.” | |
| BURNS PET HEALTH — Valparaiso, IN; (877) 983-9651; burnspethealth.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Burns offers 3 varieties. | MADE BY By CJ Foods, in Bern, KS |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Brown Rice & Chicken contains: Whole brown rice, chicken meal, peas, oats, chicken fat, sunflower oil, seaweed, calcium carbonate . . . 18.5% protein; 7.5% fat; 2.2% fiber; 9% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company offers direct sales and shipping of fresh product to your home. | |
| CANIDAE CORP. — San Luis Obispo, CA; (800) 398-1600; canidae.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – 7 varieties, including 2 grain-free varieties. | MADE BY Diamond Pet Foods in Lathrop, CA; Meta, MO; and Gaston, SC. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Canidae Grain Free All Life Stages formula contains: Chicken meal, turkey meal, lamb, potatoes, peas, chicken fat, lamb meal, ocean fish meal . . . 34% protein; 18% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – “All Life Stages,” “Platinum,” and “Grain-Free ALS” have multiple animal protein sources; other four varieties have just one or two animal protein sources. | |
| CANINE CAVIAR PET FOODS — Costa Mesa, CA; (800) 392-7898; caninecaviar.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Canine Caviar Holistic Beneficial (5 varieties, including 2 puppy, 2 adult, and 1 “special needs”); Holistic Grain Free (1 variety, venison & split pea). | MADE BY Ohio Pet Foods, Lisbon, OH. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Chicken & Pearl Millet Adult contains: Dehydrated chicken, pearl millet, brown rice, chicken fat, chicken, whitefish, alfalfa, flaxseed . . . 26% protein; 16% fat; 4% fiber; 8% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company says it uses only dehydrated meats – not rendered meat meals – in its 5 Holistic Beneficial varieties. Grain-free variety <i>does</i> use venison meal, said to be from free-range venison. | |
| CASTOR & POLLUX PETWORKS — Clackamas, OR; (800) 875-7518; castorpolluxpet.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Organix (3 varieties); Ultramix (4 varieties). | MADE BY CJ Foods in Bern, KS (Organix); and Crosswinds Petfoods, Inc., Sabetha, KS (Ultramix). |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Organix Adult formula contains: Organic chicken, chicken meal, organic brown rice, organic peas, organic millet, organic oats, salmon meal, chicken fat . . . 26% protein; 14% fat; 4.5% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Organix’s organic certification is by Certified Organic by Organic Crop Improvement Association (OCIA International, Inc.), Lincoln, NE. Foods have been reformulated since we last reviewed them, with only minor changes. Company offers direct shipping to your home. | |
| CHAMPION PETFOODS — Morinville, Alberta, Canada; (877) 939-0006; championpetfoods.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Acana (10 varieties); Acana Grain-Free (3 varieties); Orijen (6 varieties, all grain-free). | MADE BY Champion’s own plant in Alberta, Canada. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Orijen Regional Red formula contains: Deboned wild boar, deboned lamb, lamb meal, potato, deboned pork, peas, salmon meal, whitefish meal . . . 38% protein; 18% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company says all ingredients are fresh (never frozen) and locally sourced. All foods are formulated with higher-protein, lower-carb content than most companies’ offerings. | |

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| DELLA NATURA COMMODITIES — Bayside, NY; (866) 936-2393; dellanaturapet.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Wenaewe (3 beef-based varieties, and 1 vegetarian variety). A senior variety is planned. | MADE BY Erro S.A. in Dolores, Uruguay. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Wenaewe Adult formula contains: Organic beef, organic brown rice, organic canola seed, organic flaxseed meal, organic sunflower seed, organic buckwheat, organic barley, organic millet . . . 20% protein; 12% fat; 5% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Imported from Uruguay. Company says all beef is “beyond organic,” free-range. Vegetarian variety uses soy meal for protein source. Note that we are not fans of vegetarian diets for dogs. | |
| DIAMOND PET PRODUCTS — Meta, MO; (800) 658-0624; chickensoupforthevetloverssoul.com; premiumedgepetfood.com; professionalpetfood.com; tasteofthewildpetfood.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover’s Soul (4 varieties); Premium Edge (6 varieties); Professional Pet Food (7 varieties); Taste of the Wild (3 varieties). | MADE BY Diamond’s own manufacturing facilities in Lathrop, CA; Meta, MO; and Gaston, SC. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Taste of the Wild High Prairie formula contains: Bison, venison, lamb meal, chicken meal, egg product, sweet potatoes, peas, potatoes . . . 32% protein; 18% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Taste of the Wild formulas are grain-free. | |
| DICK VAN PATTEN’S NATURAL BALANCE — Pacoima, CA; (800) 829-4493; naturalbalance.net | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Natural Balance Original Ultra (4 varieties); Natural Balance Limited Ingredient Diets (5 varieties); Natural Balance Vegetarian; and Natural Balance “Organic.” | MADE BY CJ Foods, Bern, KS. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – “Organic” formula contains: Chicken, organic brown rice, chicken meal, organic oats, organic millet, organic barley, organic sorghum, organic potato . . . 22% protein; 13% fat; 4.5% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company tests for contaminants and makes the test results available on its website. | |
| DOGSWELL, LLC — Los Angeles, CA; (888) 559-8833; dogswell.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Happy Hips (with glucosamine and chondroitin); Shape Up (lower fat); Vitality. | MADE BY Tuffy’s Pet Foods in Perham, MN. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Vitality contains: Chicken, chicken meal, oats, barley, brown rice, natural flavors, chicken fat, flaxseed . . . 24% protein; 12% fat; 6% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Will direct ship food to your home. | |
| DRS. FOSTER & SMITH — Rhinelander, WI; (800) 826-7206; drsfostersmith.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Drs. Foster & Smith Dog Food (5 varieties). | MADE BY CJ Foods in Bern, KS and Pawnee City, NE. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Chicken & Brown Rice Adult variety contains: Chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, barley, brewer’s rice, oat groats, chicken fat, beet pulp . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company is a retail catalog company, so it will direct-ship to your home. | |
| EVANGER’S DOG & CAT FOOD COMPANY — Wheeling, IL; (800) 288-6796; evangersdogfood.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Evanger’s Dog Food (3 varieties). | MADE BY Ohio Pet Foods, Lisbon, OH (whitefish and chicken varieties) and Fromm Family Foods, Mequon, WI (pheasant variety). |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Chicken & Brown Rice variety contains: Chicken, brown rice, chicken meal, potato product, pearled barley, chicken fat, carrots, celery . . . 26% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Evanger’s owns its cannery, but has its dry foods made by co-packers, with ingredients it sources. | |
| FIRSTMATE PET FOODS — North Vancouver, BC, Canada; (800) 658-1166; firstmate.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – FirstMate Grain-Free (6 varieties); FirstMate Classic (4 varieties); Skoki Grain-Free (6 varieties); Skoki Classic (4 varieties) | MADE BY FirstMate’s own plant in Chilliwack, BC, Canada. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – FirstMate’s Chicken & Blueberries formula contains: Potato, chicken meal, chicken fat, whole blueberries, and vitamins/minerals (that’s it!). 25% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Skoki formulas cost less than FirstMate, which is the company’s “premium” line. | |
| FROMM FAMILY FOODS — Mequon, WI; (800) 325-6331; frommfamily.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Fromm Four-Star Canine Entrees (6 varieties, including 1 grain-free); Gold Nutritionals (5 varieties); Fromm Classics (2 varieties). | MADE BY Fromm’s own plant in Mequon, WI. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Fromm Classic Adult formula contains: Chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, pearled barley, oatmeal, white rice, chicken fat, fish meal . . . 23% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Four-Star foods contain the most ingredients and variety; Gold line is formulated with multiple animal protein sources; Classics line formulated with chicken as major protein source. | |



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| LAUGHING DOG, INC. — Lodi, CA; (805) 653-7813; laughingdoginc.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Young Dog, Brave Dog, Wise Dog. | MADE BY Taplow Feeds, Chilliwack, BC, Canada. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Brave Dog (adult) variety contains: Chicken meal, fish meal, oats, barley, chicken fat, brown rice, potato, white rice . . . 26% protein; 16% fat; 5% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company says these make Laughing Dog superior: a vacuum infusion process that infuses (rather than just coats) the kibble with enzymes and probiotics, and its use of coconut oil in the formula. | |
| LIFE4K9 PET FOOD CORP. — Dawsonville, GA; (888) 543-3459; life4k9.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – LIFE4K9 (2 varieties). | MADE BY Bio Biscuit in Saint-Hyacinthe, Quebec, Canada, and Hampshire Pet Products, Joplin, MO. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Chicken & Barley formula contains: Chicken, chicken meal, barley, oats, whitefish meal, olive oil, dicalcium phosphate, calcium carbonate . . . 21% protein; 9% fat; 2.5% fiber; 11% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – These are baked foods; company feels strongly that baked foods are superior to extruded foods. | |
| LINCOLN BIOTECH — East Bend, NC; (800) 253-8128; lincolnbiotech.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Zinpro is available in only one formula. | MADE BY Chenango Valley Pet Foods, in Sherburne, NY. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Zinpro contains: Menhaden fishmeal, brown rice, oatmeal, barley, herring meal, oat flour, rice flour, canola oil . . . 22% protein; 12% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company feels that dogs don't get enough zinc, causing skin and coat problems, so Zinpro is formulated with a bioavailable zinc. | |
| MERRICK PET CARE — Amarillo, TX; (800) 664-7387; merrickpetcare.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Merrick Dog Food (7 varieties); Before Grain (3 varieties). | MADE BY Merrick Pet Care, Hereford, TX. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Merrick's Wilderness variety contains: Buffalo, oatmeal, barley, salmon meal, venison, brown rice, canola oil, flaxseed . . . 24% protein; 15% fat; 2.5% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Available via direct shipping with no shipping charges in the U.S. | |
| MULLIGAN STEW PET FOOD — Jackson, WY; (888) 364-7839; mulliganstewpetfood.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Mulligan Stew (3 varieties). | MADE BY Mountain Country Foods, Okeene, OK. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Chicken variety contains: Chicken, brown rice, oats, chicken meal, chicken liver, alfalfa meal, flaxseed meal, eggs . . . 26% protein; 11% fat; 8% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – All dry foods are baked, not extruded. Company says all ingredients are sourced in from U.S. farms and ranches. | |
| NATURA PET PRODUCTS — Santa Clara, CA; (800) 532-7261; naturapet.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – California Natural (8 varieties); Evo (6 varieties); HealthWise (5 varieties); Innova (11 varieties,); Karma (1 variety). | MADE BY Natura's own plants in Fremont, NE and San Leandro, CA. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Innova Adult Red Meat Large Bites variety contains: Beef, lamb meal, barley, brown rice, potatoes, sunflower oil, rice, lamb . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – California Natural foods contain a single animal protein source; Evo foods are grain-free, high in protein and fat; Innova foods contain several sources of animal protein; Karma is Natura's only baked food, and its only organic food. | |
| NATURE'S VARIETY — Lincoln, NE; (888) 519-7387; naturesvariety.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Nature's Variety Instinct Grain-Free (3 varieties); Nature's Variety Prairie (5 varieties). | MADE BY Pied Piper Mills in Hamlin, TX. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Instinct Chicken Meal variety contains: Chicken meal, tapioca, chicken fat, pumpkin seeds, Menhaden fish meal, alfalfa meal, Montmorillonite clay, natural chicken flavor . . . 42% protein; 22% fat; 3.2% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company strongly promotes diet rotation among varieties and types, offering complementary frozen raw and canned foods. | |
| OMNIPRO PET FOODS — Madison, MS; (601) 898-7773; omnipro.net | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – OmniPro Holistic Salmon & Potato. | MADE BY Diamond Pet Products in Lathrop, CA; Meta, MO; and Gaston, SC. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – OmniPro Holistic Salmon & Potato contains: Salmon, fish meal, potatoes, peas, ground barley, millet, egg product, oatmeal, canola oil . . . 25% protein; 14% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – The highlighted variety (in our opinion, OmniPro's sole premium food), may be a toe in the water of this market. | |
| PERFECT HEALTH DIET PRODUCTS — Elmsford, NY; (800) 743-1502; phdproducts.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – PHD Viand (1 variety). | MADE BY Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – PHD Viand contains: Lamb meal, chicken meal, brown rice, corn, Naturox (natural antioxidant mix), barley, oats, chicken liver digest . . . 26% protein; 16% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company suggests using its products to supplement a fresh food diet. | |



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| PET CHEF EXPRESS — New Westminster, BC, Canada; (604) 916-2433; petchefexpress.ca | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Pet Chef Express is the sole variety. | MADE BY Nutreco Canada, Inc., Guelph, Ontario, Canada. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Pet Chef Express contains: Salmon meal, oats, millet, hullless barley, canola oil, salmon oil, carrot, potato . . . 25% protein; 10% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company provides home delivery in parts of Canada. | |
| PET VALU — Markham, Ontario, Canada; (800) 738-8258; performatrinultra.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Permatrin Ultra (3 varieties). | MADE BY Elmira Pet Products, Ontario, Canada. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Permatrin Ultra Lamb & Brown Rice formula contains: Deboned lamb, lamb meal, brown rice, oatmeal, rice, pearled barley, dried egg product, millet . . . 22% protein; 12% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Permatrin Ultra is sold exclusively in PetValu stores in Canada and the northeastern U.S. | |
| PETCUREAN PET NUTRITION — Chilliwack, BC, Canada; (866) 864-6112; petcurean.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Go! Natural (4 varieties, including 1 grain-free); Now! (4 formulas, all grain-free). Summit Holistics (3 varieties). | MADE BY Elmira Pet Products in Elmira, Ontario, Canada. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Summit Australian Lamb variety contains: Australian lamb meal, brown rice, oatmeal, barley, canola oil, natural flavors, dried alfalfa, potassium chloride . . . 21% protein; 10% fat; 2% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Go! Natural grain-free variety was recently reformulated with lower protein and fat; Now! varieties contain no rendered meats. | |
| PRECISE PET PRODUCTS — Nacogdoches, TX; (888) 477-3247; precisepet.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Precise Plus (4 varieties). | MADE BY Texas Farm Products’ own plant in Nacogdoches, TX. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Precise Plus Adult variety contains: Chicken meal, brown rice, chicken, barley, chicken fat, beet pulp, oats, flaxseed . . . 26% protein; 16% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Precise is owned by Texas Farm Products. The company says it expects to update its formulas this year. | |
| SMARTPAK CANINE — Plymouth, MA; (800) 326-0282; smartpakcanine.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – LiveSmart (5 varieties). | MADE BY Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – LiveSmart Chicken & Brown Rice Adult variety contains: Deboned chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, barley, oats, beet pulp, chicken fat, dried eggs . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Direct shipping is available. Food is available sealed in custom-measured single-serving packages for maximum freshness. | |
| SOLID GOLD HEALTH PRODUCTS FOR PETS, INC. — El Cajon, CA; (800) 364-4863; solidgoldhealth.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Solid Gold (8 varieties). | MADE BY Diamond Pet Products in Lathrop, CA and Meta, MO. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – WolfKing Adult Variety contains: Bison, ocean fish meal, brown rice, millet, oatmeal, pearled barley, rice bran, canola oil . . . 22% protein; 9% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Varieties include adult, puppy, and small-bites. Barking at the Moon contains fish and beef and is grain-free. | |
| TUFFY’S PET FOODS, INC. — Perham, MN; (800) 525-9155; nutrisourcedogfood.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Natural Planet Organics (1 variety); NutriSource (10 varieties); PureVita (3 varieties). | MADE BY Tuffy’s own plant in Perham, MN. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Natural Planet Organics formula contains: Organic chicken, chicken meal, organic brown rice, organic oats, organic barley, natural flavors, organic flaxseed, chicken fat . . . 23% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Natural Plant Organics certified by Oregon Tilth. PureVita varieties each contain a single source of animal protein. | |
| VERUS PET FOODS — Abingdon, MD; (888) 828-3787; veruspetfoods.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – VeRUS (5 varieties). | MADE BY Ohio Pet Foods, Lisbon, OH. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – VeRUS Adult Maintenance variety contains: Lamb meal, oats, brown rice, rice bran, flaxseed meal, sorghum, chicken fat, chicory pulp . . . 22% protein; 10% fat; 5% fiber; 12% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Company says all lamb used in foods is free-range, grass-fed, New Zealand lamb. | |
| WELLPET — Tewksbury, MA; (800) 225-0904; wellpet.com | |
| LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE – Holistic Select (10 varieties); Wellness Core (3 grain-free varieties); Wellness Simple Solutions (3 varieties, each with a single source of animal protein and rice); Wellness Super5Mix (9 varieties). | MADE BY Wellpet’s plant in Mishawaka, IN; Hagen Pet Foods in Waverly, NY; CJ Foods in Bern, KS; American Nutrition, Inc., in Ogden, UT; and Diamond Pet Foods in Gaston, SC and Lathrop, CA. |
| REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY – Wellness Super5Mix Complete Health Lamb, Barley & Salmon Meal variety contains: Lamb, Menhaden fish meal, oatmeal, barley, brown rice, rye flour, tomato pomace, canola oil . . . 22% protein; 12% fat; 3% fiber; 11% moisture. | |
| MISC INFO – Formerly known as Old Mother Hubbard and Wellness Pet Care, WellPet now owns and operates a former rival (Eagle Pack). | |



Knock, Knock

Who's there? Cujo or Lassie? Here's how to teach your dog to behave calmly when someone is at the door.

BY PAT MILLER

Unexpected visitors have pulled into your driveway, exited their car, and are walking up the steps to your front door. You brace yourself. You know what's coming next. "Ding-Dong," goes your cheerful doorbell, and your dog charges to the door, unleashing a frenzy of ferocious barking. Frustrated and angry, you yell at her to be quiet – to no avail – while you try to grab onto her collar and open the door to greet your guests. Her doorbell display is so embarrassing that you're becoming more and more reclusive, meeting friends at restaurants rather than inviting anyone to your home for social events.

Don't despair; you're not alone. In fact, doorbell arousal behavior is pretty common. And there is hope.

Why doorbells?

Thousands of dog owners around the country have canine family members who present similar distressing doorbell



Is your dog a nightmare when people come to the door, or a dream? Mostly it depends on what *you* do following the knock or ringing of the doorbell. Running to the door yelling, "I'll get it!" will likely inspire your dog to do the same!

What you can do . . .

- Determine which approach to teaching good doorbell manners appeals to you and is most appropriate for your dog.
- Make sure all family members are on board with the program; enlist friends, too, to help with implementation.
- Remember to have fun with training. You and your dog will be most successful if you enjoy yourselves while you're training!



behaviors. These dogs may be naturally somewhat protective, and quickly come to associate the ringing doorbell with the presence of an intruder on their property. Barking at the bell may send a serious "Go away or I'll eat you" message. Even when there's no aggressive intent, the excessive vocal display serves to announce an event they want the rest of the family to be aware of. "Someone's here! Someone's here!" If a doorbell-aroused dog is very social, his frenetic barking may also signify an excited, "Hurry, hurry, hurry and let 'em in so I can jump all over them and say hi!"

From early puppyhood, dogs realize that the ringing of the doorbell itself is an event – it gets *you* excited. Really. What happens when the doorbell rings? One or more humans in the home jump up and move quickly to the door, usually with human body language arousal signals, including fast movement, alert or excited

facial expression, tension in the muscles, and loud vocalization ("I'll get it!" or "Be right there!"). It's no wonder our dogs learn to get excited right alongside us as *we* dash to the door, "barking" our heads off.

It doesn't even have to be the doorbell. Some dogs are equally aroused by a knock at the door, or the sound of footsteps up the walkway, or even a car pulling in the driveway. These are all things they've come to associate with the excitement of the *event* – someone coming to, and often coming in, the door.

Manage, modify, train

A good doorbell manners program is a combination of management, classical conditioning, and operant conditioning. Ideally, you implement the program *before* your dog learns inappropriate door behavior. If it's too late for that, it's never too late to start *changing* behavior.

If you start by programming appropriate classical and operant responses to door arrivals from day one, your dog will quickly learn incompatible operant behaviors in response to the environmental cues that someone is approaching his home. He will also make a different association with the arrival of guests, and as a result his emotional response will be relaxed and positive. If you're having to undo previously programmed inappropriate behaviors, your training and modification program will take longer, but you can still accomplish your goal of calm instead of chaos when visitors arrive on your doorstep. Here are several options for achieving doorbell calm:

■ **Mostly classical:** Classical conditioning means giving your dog an association between two stimuli. In the case of the doorbell or other "arrival" stimuli, you're going to convince the part of your dog's brain that controls emotion (the amygdala) that someone ringing the doorbell, knocking on the door, or walking up your front steps makes absolutely wonderful stuff happen. For our classical conditioning purposes, "wonderful stuff" likely means very high-value food, such as canned chicken (rinsed and drained), or some other moist, meaty, tasty treat that she doesn't get in the normal course of events.

1. Have your dog on leash, preferably some distance from the door, and a large supply of very high-value treats.

2. Instruct another family member to ring the doorbell. Immediately feed your dog a high-value treat. Or ring the doorbell yourself and feed a treat, if a helper isn't available. Look for a remote battery-powered doorbell at the hardware store or on the Web – one that sounds like your existing doorbell. Alternatively, you could record the doorbell ringing, and play the recording. Or download a recording of a ringing doorbell from the Internet and play that. (You can find doorbells, knocking, and just about any other sounds you can imagine online at findsounds.com/ISAPI/search.dll.) Practice at least twice a day, five minutes per session (more is better) until your dog looks happily to you for a treat when she hears the doorbell ring.

This is called a "conditioned emotional response" or CER. Note: If your dog already goes from zero to 100 the instant she hears the bell, you can reduce the intensity

of stimulus to keep her below threshold by starting as far away from the chime box as possible, by reducing the volume of your chime box if you have that feature, or by using the recorded doorbell sound and turning the volume down low enough that she doesn't go "over threshold" immediately upon hearing it. Part of your program will then also include gradually increasing the volume of the bell, before you move on to Step 4.

3. When you are getting consistent CERs from your dog at the sound of the doorbell, repeat the exercise with your dog off-leash, a short distance away from you. When she looks at you with her "Where's my chicken?" CER and walks the few steps to you, feed her treats. You are adding operant pieces to her behavior now: she has the classical association between doorbell and chicken, but she's *choosing* to come to you. That's operant behavior.

4. When she'll hustle to you from any point in the same room, build in a sit before you feed the chicken – more operant behavior. You may need to cue it at first, but your goal is to create an automatic sit, so that when the doorbell rings she runs to you and sits politely every time. You can encourage your dog to sit with your body language – stand up straight, and move your hand toward your chest if necessary – and eventually fade those cues by minimizing your movements, until she offers sits automatically.

5. Gradually increase the distance between you and your dog, until she comes running to you from any room in the house when she hears the doorbell, and offers a sit.

6. Now practice Steps 1 through 4 with real visitors coming to the house. You may have to bribe your friends with the promise of food; schedule a dinner party but ask your guests to arrive at 5- to 10-minute intervals so you get several practice sessions in a short time. If your friendships are strong you can even ask them to leave and come back a few times during the evening so you get more chances to practice.

When your dog is solid on the Step 5 behavior, you can slowly begin to diminish the frequency of your treat delivery. Make it random; don't just suddenly stop treating, but skip one here and there, and use some other form of reinforcement that your dog loves, such as happy praise, a scratch in her itchy spot, or her favorite toy. Eventually you can phase out treats altogether, but be ready for remedial practice sessions if her door manners start to deteriorate.

Utilize the same process for door knocks, for people coming up the walk to your door, and for cars pulling in the driveway. Associate the stimulus with good stuff in order to give your dog a different behavioral response to the various sounds of visitors arriving.

■ **Mostly operant:** Alternatively, you can choose a training approach that focuses on



In a "mostly operant" approach, you teach your dog to perform a specific behavior – such as go to his bed – using the doorbell as the cue. For this, you'll need a helper to ring the bell.

The Manners Minder is a useful tool for teaching your dog to go to a designated spot on cue. Operated by a remote control, it allows you to dispense a treat (from a dog-proof reservoir) to your dog at a distance from you.



operant behavior from the start, by simply teaching your dog that the doorbell (or knock) is her cue to do a specific behavior, such as lie down on a dog bed you've strategically placed in your foyer, or run to her crate in the living room.

For best results, use backchaining for this exercise, meaning you'll teach the last piece of the behavior first, and build backward until you've completed the entire behavior chain. If you're going to teach your dog to lie down on a dog bed in your foyer, it would look like this:

1. Stand a foot from the bed and either lure or shape your dog to lie on the bed. To lure, say "Go to bed!" or "Doorbell!" or whatever cue you want to use, put a tasty treat in front of her nose and lure her onto the bed, then cue her to lie down. Click and give her a treat.

To shape the behavior, wait for any micro-movement toward the bed: even just a glance or a lean toward it. Then click and toss a treat behind your dog so she has to get up to eat it. When she comes back toward you (and the bed) take advantage of the "reset" to click *while she's moving*, and toss the treat to reset her again – giving her another opportunity to move toward you (and the bed) and get clicked. When you have shaped her to go to the bed and lie down on it, *then* add your cue. (See "The Shape of Things to Come," March 2006.)

2. When your dog will lie down on her bed on cue when you are a foot away, move another foot away from the bed and repeat the exercise (this part should go quickly).

3. Gradually move farther and farther away from the bed, making sure she does the "go to bed" behavior reliably at each

new location before increasing distance. Practice from all different directions, until she will go to her bed on cue from anywhere in the foyer.

4. Now add the doorbell as a new "go to bed" cue. Whenever you add a new cue, you put it in front of the known cue, so you will ring the doorbell, then say "Go to bed," and click and treat when she complies. You are saying to her, "Dog, this 'ding-dong' sound means the *same thing* as your 'go to bed' cue."

5. With repetitions, you will see her start to move to her bed when she hears the doorbell, even before you give the verbal cue. This means she's made the connection between the new doorbell cue and the old verbal cue. Click and jackpot with several treats one after the other when she lies down on her bed. You may need to remind her with the verbal cue few more times, but she's there.

6. Now increase distance until she'll go to her bed upon hearing the doorbell cue from anywhere in the foyer, and then generalize to anywhere in the house. Now when your dog hears the doorbell she'll automatically run to her bed from anywhere in the house, and lie down.

If you prefer the crate in the living room scenario, just substitute "crate" for "dog bed" and follow the same steps. Note that while you were focusing on operant behavior in this training approach, your dog was also getting a positive classical association with the doorbell, because she was getting treats in close proximity to the sound of the chimes. Classical and operant conditioning are always *both* in play, even when we're focusing on one or the other.

■ **Management:** As you work to create associations, modify behavior, and train new operant responses to the doorbell and other "visitors arriving" cues, you'll want to include the always useful management piece of your behavior program.

When your dog has successfully arrived on her bed – either in response to your "in-progress" verbal cue, or to the doorbell itself – you can tether her there to prevent an after-the-fact aroused rush to greet your guests. To reinforce polite greeting as well as appropriate doorbell manners, offer your visitors treats and ask them to walk over to your dog and feed her treats as long as she is sitting or lying down. Tell them that if she stands up, jumps up, or barks, they should step back, wait for her to sit again, then feed her the treat and give her a scratch under the chin. (See "Greetings and Salutations," April 2005.)

Note: If your dog barks aggressively at guests as they approach her on her tether, you'll need a separate behavior modification program for the aggression. Please consult with a qualified positive behavior professional for assistance with this behavior challenge. Meanwhile, teaching your dog to run to her crate may be a better option for her than running to her bed in the foyer.

If you've chosen the crate instead of the dog bed, management is as simple as closing the crate door. When your guests have been greeted and made comfortable, barring aggressive behavior you can let your dog out, on-leash if necessary, for introductions. Depending on the degree of your dog's doorbell arousal, baby gates and closed doors, or even a leash, can also effectively dampen or divert intense guest-arrival behavior.

Other options

There are many other creative options for programming or modifying doorbell behavior. Here are two.

■ Try changing your doorbell sound. If your dog has a very strong emotional response to the existing doorbell, it will be easier to give him a new association with a *new* sound. Don't actually use it as your new doorbell until you've conditioned a very positive response for your dog (or trained him to perform an appropriate operant behavior in response to the new chime). When your training is completed,

(Article continued on page 23)

Saying “No” to Surgery

“Conservative management” is an often overlooked – but frequently effective – option for ligament injuries.

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Dogs go lame for all kinds of reasons. Arthritis, Lyme disease, paw injuries, muscle sprains, bee stings, interdigital dermatitis, and dislocated kneecaps can make any dog limp. But when an active dog suddenly can't put weight on a hind leg, the most common diagnosis – for more than a million American dogs every year – is a torn cruciate ligament. In 2003, according to the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, the cost of treating those injuries exceeded \$1.32 billion, and the price tag keeps rising.

The most common prescription for canine knee injuries is surgery. Unfortunately, operations don't always work and some patients, because of age or other conditions, are not good candidates. In recent years a nonsurgical approach called “conservative management” has helped thousands of dogs recover from ligament injuries, and it is growing in popularity. At the same time, conservative management is not a cure-all. It doesn't always prevent the need for surgery, it is not necessarily less expensive, and it

can require as much time and effort as post-surgical rehabilitation. At its best, conservative management improves the outcome of whatever treatment is needed for full recovery.

“Conservative management consists of any nonsurgical treatment of injuries,” says Faith Rubenstein, who founded an online forum devoted to the subject in 2004, “including physical therapy, chiropractic adjustments, acupuncture, massage, nutrition, the use of a leg brace, nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs, medicinal herbs, prolotherapy, weight loss for overweight dogs, and other noninvasive treatments.”

Rubenstein, who now lives in Austin, Texas, first encountered ligament injuries when her 100-pound Briard, Dakota, then six years old, experienced a partial tear of his cranial (anterior) cruciate ligament. “When our veterinarian recommended that we see an orthopedic surgeon,” she says, “I went looking for answers.” An academic researcher who is now a private investigator, Rubenstein discovered the term “conservative management” in a veterinary textbook.

The orthopedic surgeon diagnosed a partial tear in both of Dakota's knees and recommended immediate TPLO (tibial plateau leveling osteotomy) surgery. In this procedure, the tibia is cut, then rotated and held in place with a metal plate and screws so that after the broken bone heals, weight-bearing exercise stabilizes the knee joint.

“I had misgivings about this method,” she says, “especially because surgeons at the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania don't use

What you can do . . .

- If your dog is limping, bring him to your veterinarian to determine the cause.
- Keep a dog with a ligament injury quiet and confined.
- Understand the risks and benefits of knee surgery so you can make an informed decision about which direction to take.
- Explore physical therapy and other treatments that strengthen joints.
- No matter the treatment, speed your dog's recovery with nutrition, physical therapy, and other support.



Kimber, Debbie Kazsimer's Shiloh Shepherd, recovered fully from a torn cruciate ligament with the help of a brace, physical therapy, swimming, massage, supplements – and without surgery.

it. I spoke with Gail Smith, the head of the University's department of clinical research, and with Amy Kapatkin, a board-certified orthopedic surgeon who was then at Penn. What Dr. Kapatkin said made perfect sense to me. She asked, ‘Why break a bone to fix a ligament?’ My whole interest in conservative management was triggered by my fear of the TPLO.”

The University referred Rubenstein to an orthopedic surgeon who used other methods. He found Dakota to have so few symptoms that he agreed to write a prescription for physical therapy in hopes that it might make surgery of any kind unnecessary.

“Physical therapy and exercise made all the difference,” she says. “Dakota never needed surgery, and neither did



Both of Faith Rubenstein's Briards, Dakota and Aubrey, tore a cruciate ligament at different times – turning Faith into something of an expert on dealing with the injury!

his littermate, Aubrey, who tore his cruciate ligament a few months later. Many veterinarians believe that the only effective treatment for these injuries is surgery – either TPLO or another surgery – but that simply isn't true. Conservative management can help most patients, including those who eventually have surgery, and then recover and lead active, happy lives."

Understanding ligaments

The stifle (knee) connects the femur (thigh bone) and tibia (leg bone) with a patella (kneecap) in front and fabella (a small bean-shaped bone) behind. Cartilage (the medial meniscus and lateral meniscus) cushions the bones, and ligaments hold everything in position.

Two key ligaments, the anterior (front) and posterior (back) cruciate ligaments, cross inside the knee joint. In animals, these ligaments are called cranial and caudal, respectively. The anterior or cranial cruciate ligament prevents the tibia from slipping out of position.

Veterinarians see most ligament patients immediately after their injuries, when symptoms are acute, or weeks or months later, after symptoms become chronic. If not immediately treated, most ligament injuries appear to improve but the knee remains swollen and abnormal wear between bones and meniscal cartilage creates degenerative changes that result in osteophytes (bone spurs), chronic pain, loss of motion, and arthritis. In some patients, osteophytes appear within one to three weeks of a ligament injury. Swelling on the inside of the knee, called a "medial buttress," indicates the development of arthritis in patients with old injuries.

The main diagnostic tools for ligament injuries are X-rays, which can rule out bone cancer as a cause of leg pain, and a procedure called the "drawer test," in which the veterinarian holds the femur with one hand and manipulates the tibia with the other. If the tibia can be moved forward, resembling a drawer being opened, the cruciate ligament has been torn or ruptured.

The drawer test is not necessarily conclusive because the tense muscles of a frightened or apprehensive dog can stabilize the knee temporarily. To produce more accurate results in such cases, patients may be sedated before being tested.

In the tibial compression test, which is another way to check for ligament damage, the femur is held steady with one hand while the other flexes the dog's ankle. A ruptured ligament allows the tibia to move abnormally forward.

"A complete cranial cruciate ligament tear is *always* a surgical case," says Stacey Hershman, DVM, of Hastings-on-Hudson, New York, "since otherwise the knee cannot function as a hinge joint."

Advocates of conservative management recommend that whenever the tear is partial, nonsurgical techniques be given an eight-week try. If symptoms improve during that time, they say, the odds favor nonsurgical recovery. If symptoms don't improve, conservative management techniques can be used as pre- and post-operative conditioning and therapy.

After an injury

If your dog is injured, visit your vet as soon as possible, but be an informed consumer. Many veterinarians consider cruciate ligament surgery necessary, routine, fast, easy, highly effective, and the only treatment that will help. For many dogs this has been the case, but some veterinary research (see "Surgical Options," on page 16) places the ligament surgery success rate at well below 50 percent. If surgery is necessary, your investment in conservative management may pay dividends in faster recovery and better overall health.

Canine health and nutrition researcher Mary Straus recommends simple first-aid strategies for dogs with knee injuries. Straus learned about the benefits of such an approach when her dog, Piglet, had surgery for dysplasia on both elbows before her second birthday, followed by surgery for a ruptured cruciate at age three. "First and most importantly," she says, "exercise must be restricted. No running, no jump-

ing (including on and off furniture), and no stairs. Walk your dog on-leash when going outside to potty. The dog doesn't necessarily have to be crated, which can restrict movement so much that it increases stiffness and limits flexibility, but should be confined to a small room or ex-pen, or kept on-leash while with the owner. Exercise restriction must be continued for at least six to eight weeks."

Second, inflammation needs to be controlled. "I would use nonsteroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs)," she says. "Inflammation contributes to cartilage degeneration and accelerates the development of arthritis. Don't avoid NSAIDs in the hope that pain will keep your dog from overusing the leg. There are natural anti-inflammatories like bromelain, boswellia, quercetin, and turmeric, and I would use those as well, but they may not be strong enough alone. You could use white willow bark, which is comparable to aspirin, but it should not be combined with other NSAIDs. In addition to anti-inflammatories, I would give glucosamine-type supplements to try to protect the cartilage and slow arthritic changes. It's questionable how much these help with cruciate injuries, but they do no harm and I would include them."

Dr. Hershman prescribes Glycoflex, a nutritional supplement that contains freeze-dried *Perna canaliculus* or New Zealand Green Lipped Mussel. This product is recommended for joint and connective tissue support, for geriatric and working dogs, and as a follow-up to orthopedic surgery.

In addition, she gives subcutaneous Adequan® injections or teaches the owners to do so at home. Adequan Canine (polysulfated glycosaminoglycan) is a prescription, water-based, intramuscular, polysulfated glycosaminoglycan that helps prevent cartilage in the dog's joint from wearing away. "I give injections twice a week for two weeks," says Dr. Hershman, "then once a week for maintenance."

She also recommends Wholistic Canine Complete Joint Mobility, which is a powder containing organic vitamins, minerals, digestive enzymes, hydrolyzed whitefish, immune-support ingredients, and pharmaceutical-grade glucosamine, chondroitin and MSM (methyl sulfonyl methane), all of which support healing, speed tissue repair, or help alleviate pain and inflammation.

Standard Process products for improved ligament health include Ligaplex,

which contains organic raw bone, herbs, and minerals, and the veterinary product Canine Musculoskeletal Support, which contains anti-inflammatory herbs, *Perna canaliculus*, and whole-food ingredients that enhance tissue regeneration and improve joint health.

It is important to keep injured dogs from gaining weight, which can easily happen when their exercise routine is interrupted. "Overweight dogs have a harder time recovering from a cruciate ligament injury," says Straus, "and they are more at risk for injuring the other knee. I would feed a high-protein, low-carbohydrate, reduced-fat diet. Fat is high in calories and so should be limited, but too little fat will leave the dog feeling hungry all the time. Protein helps with wound healing and also to create and preserve lean muscle, while carbs are more likely to be stored as fat. For those who feed kibble, I would cut back on the amount fed and add fresh, high-protein foods such as eggs, meat, and dairy. For seriously overweight dogs, this is one situation where I might consider using the drug Slentrol to help speed weight loss."

Physical therapy

Faith Rubenstein's Dakota received physical therapy from Carol Wasmucky, PT, a licensed physical therapist for humans in Herndon, Virginia, who founded Pet Rehab Inc. and works full-time with animals by referral from veterinarians throughout Northern Virginia.

She began Dakota's treatment by measuring his hind legs, one of which had atrophied and was smaller than the other. "Our goal," says Rubenstein, "was to have both legs measure the same. Dakota and I worked with a holistic veterinarian, who put him on nutritional and herbal supplements, and we did acupuncture as well. I restricted his activity so he was not allowed to run off-leash for six months, and during that time he had regular physical therapy. Dakota wasn't a swimming dog but he became one, for swimming was the perfect exercise for him. After six months, both hind legs were the same 17 inches in girth. He was in great shape, his drawer test results improved to nearly normal, and he didn't need surgery."

Dogs who are intermittently lame with a partial tear of the cruciate ligament are ideal physical therapy patients, says Wasmucky. In addition to providing weekly or twice-a-week ultrasound, laser, and electrical stimulation treatments,

she puts patients on a home strengthening program with range-of-motion and stretching exercises. "Every program is different depending on the dog's condition," she says. "The owners are involved every day; I show them what to do. It's just like working with human injuries; if you want the best results, you have to do your homework."

Wasmucky, who has worked with thousands of canine patients over the past 10 years, encourages anyone whose dog has a partial tear to use physical therapy to build muscle so that even if surgery has to be performed, the dog goes in and comes out in better shape. "This means shorter rehab time," she says, "and a faster recovery."

Swimming is such effective exercise for injured dogs that many veterinary clinics have installed swimming pools. "Dogs who can't yet do weight-bearing exercises can start in a pool," she says, "and as they get stronger, they're able to progress through the exercise program. I check their progress in weekly appointments and make adjustments as needed. It takes time to heal from ligament injuries and I like to be sure that dogs are completely well before they resume agility or other demanding sports."

She requires a major commitment from owners. "It's usually an hour or so every

day in twice-a-day sessions," she says, "and this can go on for months. It's a big investment of time and energy, and it requires a motivated dog as well as a motivated owner, but it can make a world of difference in mobility and overall health."

For more about canine rehabilitation, see "Canine Rehab? Go, Go, Go" (WDJ September 2009).

Prolotherapy

Although most veterinary experts agree that there is no way to repair a damaged ligament, one alternative therapy claims to do exactly that. Prolotherapy, also known as proliferative or sclerosing therapy, has been used for over 30 years to treat musculoskeletal pain in humans, including arthritis, sports injuries, and damaged or partially torn ligaments, tendons, and cartilage.

The term "*prolo*" is short for *proliferation*, as this treatment is said to cause the proliferation (growth or formation) of new tissue in weakened areas. Ligaments have a limited blood supply, which slows healing, but in prolotherapy, injections of dextrose (sugar water) or other benign substances cause localized inflammation that increases the supply of blood and nutrients, stimulating tissue repair.

Which Dogs Are at Highest Risk?

Any dog can injure a cruciate ligament, but large breeds are most susceptible. According to one study, Neapolitan Mastiffs, Newfoundlands, Akitas, Saint Bernards, Rottweilers, Chesapeake Bay Retrievers, and American Staffordshire Terriers lead the list. Most veterinary clinics have seen ligament injuries in Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers, German Shepherd Dogs, and other popular large breeds.

Young, athletic dogs playing hard can turn or step the wrong way and suddenly not be able to walk. Cruciate ligament injuries are unfortunately common in dogs who compete in agility, obedience, field trials, and other active sports.

Some veterinarians report progressive lameness in young Labrador Retrievers, Rottweilers, and other large-breed dogs resulting from a partial rupture of the cranial cruciate ligament. This may not be associated with a specific injury but may instead result from poor stifle biomechanics combined with a yet-to-be-defined conformation abnormality.

Older large-breed dogs can develop weakened ligaments that eventually tear, especially in dogs who are overweight. When a weakened ligament is stressed, its rupture can be triggered by activities that are otherwise insignificant, like sitting on cue, stepping over a curb, or jumping off a sofa.

A small dog's size may not prevent a ligament injury, but smaller dogs usually recover faster. One study that compared dogs six months after their cruciate ligament ruptures found that 85 percent of those weighing less than 30 pounds had regained near normal or improved function while only 19 percent of those weighing more than 30 pounds had regained near normal function. Dogs in both groups needed at least six months to show maximum improvement.

Health columnist Jane E. Brody described prolotherapy as “injections to kick-start tissue repair” in the August 7, 2007, *New York Times*, where she wrote that most scientifically designed controlled studies of prolotherapy have shown “a significant improvement in the patients’ level of pain and ability to move the painful joint.” In studies of human knee injuries, she said, patients with ligament laxity and instability experienced a tightening of those ligaments, including the anterior cruciate ligament. Other studies showed a significant improvement in the symptoms of arthritis in the knee one to three years after prolotherapy injections.

In Royal Oak, Michigan, John Simon, DVM, uses prolotherapy to repair damaged cruciate ligaments in dogs. He explains, “Prolotherapy is a way of tightening up loose, unstable, hyper-mobile joints by injecting a ‘sclerosing’ agent in and around the joint. The resulting thickening of the joint capsule and the ligaments surround-

ing it act like scar tissue and eventually contract with time. The thickening and contraction of the ligaments and joint capsule increase joint stability and relieve joint pain.”

Most canine patients receive five sessions at three-week intervals. “Although I tell caregivers not to expect any positive results until at least the third treatment,” he says, “I am occasionally surprised to see improvement after just one. Other modalities that I often recommend in conjunction with prolotherapy are soft laser therapy and pulse magnetic therapy. These treatments reduce pain and help the joint recuperate.”

According to Dr. Simon, the best candidates for prolotherapy ligament repair are dogs whose injuries do not involve torn meniscal cartilage in the joint. During the past three years, he has treated 35 dogs for cruciate ligament problems and estimates that 80 percent experienced significant improvement.

Bracing for recovery

Debbie Kazsimer, who lives in Pennsylvania, knows a lot about cruciate ligaments. Trouble, her Shepherd/Husky mix, had TPLO surgeries at ages six and seven, and her Shepherd/Malamute mix, Fly, had a TPLO when she was two.

In 2005, the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* published the case of a German Shepherd Dog who developed bone cancer after her implant corroded (“Sarcoma of the proximal portion of the tibia in a dog 5.5 years after tibial plateau leveling osteotomy,” *JAVMA*, November 15, 2005, Vol. 227, No. 10). Two years later, Trouble was diagnosed with osteosarcoma, and when his leg was amputated, its metal implant was found to be corroded. The biopsy report linked the cancer to his 2004 TPLO surgery.

As a precaution, Kazsimer had Fly’s implant removed. “But by then five years had passed and it was too late,” she says. “The damage was already done.” Within

Surgical Options

While it is not possible to repair canine ligaments surgically, **lateral suture stabilization** or LSS techniques can stabilize knee joints so that they function well.

In the **extracapsular repair procedure**, torn or partially torn ligament tissue and bone spurs are removed along with the damaged portion of the meniscus. Through a hole drilled in the front of the tibia, a large, strong suture is passed around the fabella behind the knee, which tightens the joint and replaces the cruciate ligament.

The **intracapsular repair method**, which is no longer popular in the United States but still widely used in the United Kingdom, replaces the cruciate ligament with a strip of connective tissue after the damaged meniscus and ligament fragments are removed. This “new ligament” is sewn into place or attached to an implant.

A new ligament repair technique called the **Tightrope procedure** utilizes a fiber tape suture material developed for human ankle and shoulder reconstruction. This material replaces the damaged cruciate ligament and stabilizes the stifle joint.

Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy or TPLO surgery involves breaking and resetting the tibia. The meniscus cartilage is removed and, if badly damaged, the remains of the cruciate ligament may be removed as well. The repositioned bone is held in place with a metal plate and screws. This procedure treats an estimated 50 percent of all cruciate ligament injuries in the U.S. and its popularity helped double the number of American veterinary surgeons in a single decade (1995-2005). TPLO surgery requires a specialist and typically costs twice as much as extracapsular repair.

Tibial Tuberosity Advancement or TTA, which was

developed in 2002 at the University of Zurich, repositions the top of the tibia by separating and then anchoring it with titanium or steel implants. Like TPLO surgery, TTA requires special equipment and expertise.

None of these procedures work for every patient and all carry risks associated with the use of general anesthetics, post-operative infections, and other complications. The TPLO and TTA are most expensive and most invasive.

Which surgical method is best? Every procedure has its advocates and many veterinary surgeons claim high success rates, but the results of research studies can be sobering. In 2005, the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* published a study* comparing the results of lateral suture stabilization (LSS), intracapsular stabilization (ICS), and TPLO surgery on 131 Labrador Retrievers with ruptured cranial cruciate ligaments and injury to the medial meniscus. Limb function was measured before surgery and again two and six months after. Treated dogs were also compared to 17 clinically normal Labrador Retrievers. Compared with the clinically normal dogs, only 14.9 percent of the LSS-treated dogs, 15 percent of ICS-treated dogs, and 10.9 percent of TPLO-treated dogs had normal limb function. Overall improvement was seen in only 15 percent of dogs treated with ICS, 34 percent of those treated with TPLO, and 40 percent of those treated with LSS.

*“Effect of surgical technique on limb function after surgery for rupture of the cranial cruciate ligament in dogs,” by Michael G. Conzemius, DVM, PhD, DVACS, et al. *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association*, January 15, 2005, Vol. 226, No. 2, p. 232-236.

months, both dogs died of osteosarcoma.

Four weeks after Fly's death, Kazsimer's six-year-old 100-pound Shiloh Shepherd, Kimber, tore a cruciate ligament. By then, Kazsimer had learned about conservative management and knew she didn't want to put another dog through a TPLO surgery. Because of her experiences with Fly and Trouble, she was familiar with range-of-motion and physical therapy exercises, and she studied massage with her husband, Ken, an Integrated Touch Therapy canine massage therapist. She spent an hour or two daily on Kimber's rehabilitation.

"I thought a leg brace would be a big help to her," she says, "but my veterinarian refused to fit her for one because he was convinced it wouldn't work. So my husband and son helped me to cast her leg with a casting kit from Orthopets. The brace supports the knee externally, just as surgery supports it internally."

Kimber went from walking on three legs to walking on four, then swimming, then finally bearing full weight on her leg. Eight months after her injury, Kimber's regimen of supplements, physical therapy, massage, swimming, and wearing the brace have enabled her to recover well without surgery. "She runs around like a wild girl!" says Kazsimer, who has posted videos of Kimber online, where you can see her running, swimming, and playing with and without her brace on. "It's wonderful," she says. "Kimber is able to do everything she did before she got hurt."

Holistic therapies

The most popular "hands-on" treatments for injured dogs include acupuncture, acupressure, chiropractic, and massage.

Dr. Hershman, a certified veterinary acupuncturist, treats patients with acupuncture to alleviate pain and enhance healing of the torn ligament. "I do this once or twice per week for the first two weeks," she says, "depending on the dog's level of pain, then once a week for five to six weeks, then once every two weeks, and finally once a month. When the dog is weight-bearing and in less pain, I stop." Dr. Hershman is also a certified veterinary homeopath who prescribes homeopathic remedies according to the patient's symptoms.

In their article "Post-op Acupressure" (August 2006), Nancy Zidonis and Amy Snow describe how stimulating specific acupressure points with a thumb or fingertip can help with pain management, clear the effects of anesthesia, minimize the

building of scar tissue, and reduce swelling. Acupressure can be learned at home and applied whenever needed.

Veterinary chiropractors help speed the healing of injuries and surgeries by making adjustments that improve skeletal alignment and musculoskeletal function. (See "Chiropractors for Canines," March 2008.) Chiropractic adjustments help restore normal nerve activity by gently moving bones, ligaments, and tendons back into alignment, and when ligaments are injured, adjustments help realign the body to improve balance and speed healing.

Canine massage therapists used to be unusual, but now they play an important role in maintaining and improving our dogs' health. Efflurage, passive touch, kneading techniques, and stroking increase circulation, release muscle tension, reduce pain and soreness, relieve stress, and accelerate the repair process. Massage books and how-to videos make it easy for caregivers to apply these same techniques at home.

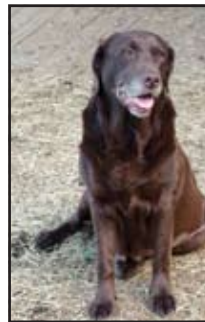
Online support

Thanks to the Internet, anyone whose dog suffers a cruciate ligament injury can find a wealth of information about canine anatomy, surgical options, and alternative therapies online.

The conservative management forum that Faith Rubenstein founded five years ago now has more than 2,000 members around the world. Paola Ferraris, who lives in Italy, is one of its moderators. "What I would like to stress is that conservative management is not an easy (and often not cheap) alternative to surgery," says Ferraris. "Successful conservative management requires just as much commitment as post-op care. It's tough love and careful management. Your work is basically the same as rehabbing a dog who has had surgery; in fact, a number of our members *have* had surgery done on their dogs and use the list for pre-op and post-op support."

When her own dog suffered a ligament injury, Ferraris had to make decisions with little information. "The best way to discuss treatment with your veterinarian is when you understand the available options and their pros and cons," she says. "I had to educate myself by spending nights doing research online, after the fact. I would have appreciated having more available information, which is what we now offer."

Co-moderator Ansley Newton of Pownal, Maine, became interested in conservative management when her chocolate Lab, Dooley, injured his second knee. "The first knee had TPLO surgery," she says, "so I was excited to try conservative management with the second knee. Unfortunately after four months he did not get better and I chose to have a traditional surgery, which was very successful for this 90-pound dog. Then one day my large chocolate Lab, Nutmeg, came inside with that familiar limp. I again decided to try conservative management along with a knee brace, acupuncture, massage, swimming, and some other supportive techniques. Within six months she was back to normal with very little arthritis.



Nutmeg recovered from two ACL tears without surgery.

"After three ligament injuries, I thought I was done. But no, two years later Nutmeg came in limping again. I again went the conservative management route and things were going fine until the second month when Nutmeg had an *oops* moment. She was limping again, so I decided to do surgery but had to postpone it for a couple

of months because I tore my own anterior cruciate ligament and damaged my meniscus at the same time!

"So here I was running a farm by myself on crutches and wearing a knee brace with a dog in a knee brace. What a sight we both were. I wish I had taken a picture. We were forced to stay with conservative management because there was no one to take care of the farm and I couldn't drive Nutmeg to get her surgery. We limped through several months together and lo and behold, we both healed. Nutmeg was good to go in six months and it took me closer to 10. Nutmeg recently passed away from lymphoma. She was 14 years old and despite those two ligament injuries, her legs were still fine." 🐾

For further information on organizations and products mentioned in this article, see page 23.

CJ Puotinen is a long-time contributor to WDJ and author of The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care and Natural Remedies for Dogs and Cats. For more information on her books, see page 24.

Dogs in Flight

"Disc dog" is for those fast, fetching fools!

BY TERRY LONG

The cattle dog-mix races across the turf, his claws digging into the ground, pushing hard into his next stride, building momentum, faster, faster, faster. With a final turbo blast powered by his rear legs, he pushes off the ground and vaults into the air, seemingly weightless as he stretches his neck into the sky. A sudden twist of shoulders propels his torso and hips 180 degrees as he changes direction midair and snatches the prize from the air – a simple, round plastic disc.

Eyes alight with the thrill of the chase and the kill (catch), he lands nimbly and races back to his handler. Can we do it again? Can we, can we? Yeah, we can.

This is the sport of disc dog. It's been around since Frisbees became popular in the early 1970s and the players' dogs chased the players' errant tosses. When a bad toss resulted in a disc rolling on its side, that was fine by Fido. When a disc skimmed the ground, that was fine, too. And when the disc floated, tantalizing in the air, that was simply perfect, allowing Fido to analyze velocity and drift and

match his body's physical prowess to the job at hand. If he got a little too excited at the prospect of a toss and jumped up at his person and ricocheted off his body as the disc sailed away, how cool was that? All of these (and more) eventually made their way into disc dog training and competition.

History

The first disc dog exhibition to grab the public's attention was in 1974 in Los Angeles at a baseball game between the Dodgers and the Cincinnati Reds. Alex Stein, a 19-year-old college student from Ohio, crashed the game with his Whippet, Ashley. In the eight minutes before he was escorted from the field and arrested, Stein and Ashley Whippet wowed the crowd with 35-mph runs and breathtaking vaults and catches. Interest in the sport skyrocketed.

Since then, a multitude of official sanctioning organizations have been created to promote competition and the sport in general. Local and regional clubs sprouted everywhere and in some locales formal group classes are offered to help people and dogs prepare for competition. Some top-flight competitors even turned their hobby into livelihoods, offering exhibitions for hire for public demonstrations to draw crowds to a variety of events.

Competition

As with many of the other sports we have featured in this series, not everyone who trains for a particular sport chooses to compete. This is especially true with disc dogs. Many people love the challenge of training a particular routine, but get as much enjoyment from going to the local

PHOTO BY JEN GREGG



Only athletic, coordinated dogs should be allowed to try moves like this. Even individuals with an aptitude for flight need to be kept in peak fitness.

SNAPSHOT OF THE SPORT:



- **What is this sport?** In disc dog, the human member of the team throws a plastic disc at various heights and distances, and the dog is scored on his ability to chase and catch the disc before it hits the ground.
- **Prior training required?** Minimal. A fixation on chasing and catching the disc is usually enough to keep dogs engaged in training.
- **Physical demands?** On the dog: High. On the handler: Moderate.
- **Best-suited structure?** This is a physically strenuous sport. Dogs should be very fit, carrying no extra weight.
- **Best-suited temperament?** Energetic, physically active dogs who love to retrieve.
- **Cost?** Low.
- **Training complexity?** Moderate to high.
- **Mental stimulation?** High.
- **Physical stimulation?** High.
- **Recreational opportunities?** High. You do not need a lot of equipment to participate in this sport.
- **Competition opportunities and venues?** Moderate.

park and playing with their dogs as some get from competing. Playing in the park, however, can entice some into the competition ring.

That's what happened to Chris Sexton, who got his first dog (Laika, a Border Collie) in 1995. Chris had been playing "disc golf" since 1990 and had a friend whose dog loved to fetch. "This crazy Lab-mix would fetch for hours. We discovered we could wear him out faster with a disc. When we saw an ad in the paper for a local Frisbee contest, we entered him. It was a lot of fun! Then we found out about another, bigger event coming up. I entered Laika in that one, and I was hooked."

Sexton founded a disc dog club in Fort Collins, Colorado, called the Northern Colorado Disc Dogs, which later merged with the Front Range Flyers to form Colorado Disc Dogs. Then, in 2000, he and a few friends started the UFO World Cup Series, an international competition series organized like NASCAR or World Cup Skiing, where teams accumulate points to qualify for the final "World Cup Final" championship event. So, be forewarned: like many dog sports, this one can be addictive!

There are several different events for which teams train and compete. Points are accumulated for titles as well as to qualify for larger, national events.

■ **Toss and fetch:** This is the bread and butter of the sport and the event that most people start with. This short-distance event goes by a variety of names such as "mini distance," "throw and catch," and "distance/accuracy," but the goal is the same: You have a set amount of time – as little as 60 seconds – to throw a disc as many times as you can, with your dog retrieving it before it is thrown again. The field is marked with increasingly longer distances and you are judged on the distance and the number of tosses and catches. The average distance is about 40 to 45 yards.

Dogs are scored on their ability to catch the most discs, but can earn extra points for catching the discs while completely airborne (where the dog's body leaves the ground). Thus, if the handler is good at throwing the disc predictably longer and higher, the team has a better chance of scoring higher than teams whose throws are shorter and lower.



Superstars of the sport: Georgia resident Mark Muir and one of his three disc dog champions, Rocket.

■ **Freestyle:** This event is where some of the most amazing acrobatics happen. Jumping off handler's bodies, vaulting and twisting high in the air, and racing around and/or through the handler's legs are common pieces of increasingly elaborate and complex routines. Each routine is between 30 seconds and 3 minutes long and individually choreographed by the handler. Each piece of the routine (e.g., leg weaving) is trained individually and then linked together into the final routine performed to music selected by the handler.

Teams are judged for creativity, athleticism, difficulty, showmanship, etc. As the sport has matured, routines have become more and more spectacular and have become the most popular event at public exhibitions.

■ **Long distance:** This event is rarer than the two above. It pits teams against each other in an elimination-style event, with the winning teams successfully throwing the longest distances. This event has separate classes for women and for men. Women in this long-distance event typically throw 50 to 60 yards, although some have thrown in excess of 65 yards. For long-distance men, 70 to 80 yards is considered competitive, although throws of 90-plus yards have been recorded.

Some clubs and sanctioning organizations promote a variety of other events in addition to the ones listed above. As with many of the dog sports, dogs should be in

good physical condition and be at least 12 to 18 months of age before competing.

Training

Not all dogs hit the ground running, chasing, and leaping after plastic discs. If yours does, you are one of the lucky ones. Most dogs – and handlers – still need training to perfect the individual pieces of a routine, or to catch a disc in midair instead of waiting for it to hit the ground. Most people learn and train on their own or with local clubs since formal classes are quite rare.

"I learned primarily on my own," remembers Chris Sexton. "There wasn't very much in the way of videos or books, so the way that I learned new throws and tricks was to go to contests and watch, and then go home and try

to replicate what I saw.

"Today, with the Internet, people can watch videos, read training articles, and ask anyone any question. This access to information means that people can get up to speed even if they are isolated. I saw this in action in 2009 on a trip to China. Chinese disc dog people have been watching people in Japan, Europe, and the U.S. on the Internet for years. They copy the moves and read the articles, so the level of talent there is respectable.

"One other aspect that has helped the sport a lot is the proliferation of clubs. The disc dog clubs started in the mid 80s, but took off really big in the mid to late 90s. Having a group of people to practice with and participate with is a really big help. I think the clubs are the source of most ingenuity in the sport, and bring the most people in."

Most training starts with straight tosses to the dog at very short distances. Once the dog catches those with a high degree of success, distances are increased and the height of the toss is increased. Eventually, discs are tossed just over the dog's head and the dog leaps a bit to catch it. The handler has to work hard to ensure that the timing of the disc toss is well timed with his dog's speed.

The websites of disc dog sanctioning organizations and clubs often provide training information and/or links to other sites; see the next page for contact information and Web addresses.

Team attributes

Owners are often motivated by seeing their active dog have a fun outlet for his energy and talents. Although some people search for dogs with the energy for the sport, some gravitate to the sport because they ended up with a dog with too much energy to be expended by walks around the block.

Dave Rosell, a competitor from Huntington Beach, California, remembers when he got his first dog, Hook. “I wanted to get a dog to take on walks, go hiking with, and such. What I ended up with was a high-drive Australian Shepherd. He was full of energy and never seemed to tire even after having him fetch tennis balls or play tug for hours –well, it seemed like hours! So I started looking on the Internet for training and different activities I could do with him. I found Dog Services Unlimited, which offered not only obedience training, but also basic agility, flyball, and disc dog. I took all the classes.”

Energetic dogs who live to chase and retrieve love this sport. Sexton, who competes with two herding dogs, says a variety of dogs do well in disc dog events. “Herding breeds and retrievers are usually naturals. Their instinctive behaviors lend themselves very easily to disc play. Most smart dogs will enjoy the game and the challenge and interaction of the training as well. Border Collies, Aussies, Labs, Poodles, shepherds, some terriers, all do well. But, if there is one group that stands out, it would have to be the *mutt!* These dogs often have several aspects of those desirable qualities. Many mix-breeds excel in the sport.”

People who love this sport tend to love competition and share a love of seeing their dogs thrill at being in action and learn new physical tricks. Some competitors incorporate very physically demanding handler maneuvers, while others do very little, leaving the acrobatics to their dogs.

This sport is physically demanding on the dogs, but Sexton believes that, with care, you can safeguard your dog from injury. “It really depends on the dog and the handler, but in general, it’s no harder on dogs than playing outside and running around like a normal dog. The method to keep it safe is to start low and simple and build up to the more difficult tricks over time. This allows the dog to gradually learn the harder tricks and the body control required, which will make the tricks safer.

“Thankfully, injuries are not common in this sport! But you do see occasional tweaks and twists to legs that might cause a dog to come up lame for a bit. These are usually mild and rare. Another injury is in the form of cumulative damage from excessive height. In addition to normal aging-dog symptoms, I have seen a few dogs that had unusually stiff or arthritic joints when they were older. This can be partly genetic, but I think that the style of play can also be a factor. Excessive height in jumping is not only unnecessary, but even if the dog seems to land clean, he might accumulate long-term damage that could make for a less-pleasant retirement. Like many things, a little common sense goes a long way.”

Steven Donahue is a professional photographer who has taken photos for Purina Incredible Dog Challenge events for a number of years. When people see his photos of disc dog aerial superstars twisting through the air, or even fully upside down in mid-catch, they frequently comment, “Wow! I’ll bet those dogs get hurt a lot!” He replies, “I’ve been following the disc dog sport closely for about five years. I have seen hundreds of dogs who have been in the sport for years. During that time, I only know of a few minor injuries, and one career- (not life-) ending injury.

“With all that said, I would strongly discourage *novice* handlers from attempting advanced moves. First and foremost, know your breed, know your dog, and perform safe maneuvers with those limitations in mind. Secondly, know how to place/throw the disc for a safe flip or small vault before you ever even think about attempting it with a dog. Dogs with high drive will put themselves in danger attempting to catch poorly thrown discs.

“A personal example on knowing the limitations of your breed/dog. I have a Flat-Coated Retriever who is insane for the Frisbee. He would try to do this kind of stuff if I let him. However, he is awkward

Disc Dog: Easy to Start, Difficult to Perfect

Dave Rosell of Huntington Beach, California, trains and competes in three sports with two of his three dogs. When put on the spot and asked to compare his three chosen sports – agility, flyball, and disc dog – he does a good job of highlighting the attraction of each. But he has a soft spot for disc dog.

“Disc dog is great because you can start competing once you are good enough to throw a disc and your dog can catch it. But it also takes a tremendous amount of work and skill to be good enough to compete at the pro freestyle level. You probably have to spend as much time without your dog to learn your throws and routines as you do with your dog.

“I love the excitement that my dogs have when we play discs, but also the camaraderie that you have with the other disc doggers out there. They’re always there to congratulate you, give you advice, or help in any way. Another neat thing about disc dogs is you only need a couple of discs for your dogs to play, whereas with the other sports you usually have to have all kinds of equipment laid out before you can start practicing.

“Disc dog clubs help a lot. If you join a club, you get a lot of help and camaraderie – in addition to discounts on entry fees! Disc Dogs in southern California puts on most of the competition events in that area as well as joint ventures with other clubs. Its website has some training aids, a calendar of events, results of competitions, links, and information about the sport. Periodically it puts on ‘play days’ where the members and prospective members get together and the more experienced members help with some throws, with routines, and maybe even have a mini competition. But the big thing is that the people in the club are just a great bunch of people. We are a bunch of friends that get together with one thing in common: we are all disc dog crazy.”



Dave Rosell, shown with his McNab, Tango, competing in a disc dog event, also does agility and flyball.

in the air compared to these Border Collies and Aussies. He doesn't land safely on all fours if I do anything other than simple toss-and-fetch throws for him. So, that's all we do."

Expenses

The beauty of this sport is that all you need is your dog and a plastic disc and some space to throw it. Many of the websites listed in Resources will direct you to find the best discs (the hardest ones are not good on your dog's mouth) as well as training materials. Entry fees and travel will be your biggest expenses, and these are still modest compared to many of the other dog sports.

If you can find a class, costs are usually modest – from \$35 for classes and seminars to \$80 per hour for private lessons. Competition fees run anywhere from completely free to \$30 per class. Gas

and lodging might be your next biggest expense, but the popularity of disc dogs has made competitions and exhibitions more plentiful than ever so you might not have to travel too far.

How to get started

Even if you don't want to compete, joining a local club will be the fastest way to get up to speed. Club members are typically very helpful to newcomers and have a lot of experience to share. You and your dog can gain competition ring experience by first participating in public demonstrations with the club. Then, just take your dog and disc, smile, and toss! 🐾

Terry Long, CPDT, is a writer, agility instructor, and behavior counselor in Long Beach, CA. She lives with four dogs and a cat and is addicted to agility and animal behavior. See page 24 for contact info.

Further Information Resources

Many excellent websites do not provide phone numbers to contact them for more information, preferring to field inquiries by e-mail.

SANCTIONING ORGANIZATIONS

There are several sanctioning organizations that award titles in disc dog competitions. These are the most well-known.

Ashley Whippet Invitational (AWI). ashleywhippet.com

Flying Disc Dog Open (FDDO). (480) 628-0903; fddo.org

International Disc Dog Handlers Association (IDDHA). iddha.com

Quadruped. thequadruped.com

Skyhoundz. (770) 751-3882; skyhoundz.com

UFO World Cup Series. (720) 980-3472; ufoworldcup.org

US Disc Dog Nationals (USDDN). ussddn.com

CLUBS

These are just a few of the local or regional disc dog clubs that promote the sport, training together and welcoming newcomers to the sport. Many clubs' sites have excellent educational information, including video clips of disc dog routines, where to buy supplies, and information about upcoming competitions, public demonstrations, and practices.

Colorado Disc Dogs. coloradodiscdogs.com

Disc Dogs in Southern California. d2isc.com

Yankee Flyers Dog & Disc Club (Connecticut). yankeeflyers.com

Washington Owners of Flying Disc Dogs. (Washington state): woofd2.com

To find a club near you, see coloradodiscdogs.com/links.html

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To find more past topics, see www.whole-dog-journal.com/search

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**“Knock, Knock” –
Article continued from page 12**

then substitute the new doorbell in place of the current one.

■ **Get a toy:** You can teach your dog that the doorbell is her cue to run to fetch a toy. You can toss the toy for her to fetch (have her offer a sit first!), and thus focus her energies on the toy instead of the doorbell or your guests. You can also teach her to take the toy to your visitors, and construct a polite greeting behavior that includes sitting until they toss the toy for her.

■ **Manners Minder:** This unique remote treat-delivery gadget was developed by veterinary behaviorist Sophia Yin for a variety of training and behavior applications, including door manners!

The concept is simple. When you push a button, the unit beeps and delivers a treat. Your dog makes the classical association between the “beep” and treat, and quickly learns (operantly) to run to the machine when she hears the beep. The beep becomes the cue to run to the machine.

Then add the doorbell as the new cue to run to the machine, as in Step 4 of the “mostly operant” approach, above. Ring the doorbell, beep the beep, and the machine delivers. When the doorbell alone sends your dog to the machine, fade the beep cue by utilizing the “mute” feature of the remote: you press the button to deliver a treat but no beep occurs; the doorbell alone sends your dog to the machine for her treat. Gradually increase your dog’s distance from the machine so the doorbell sends her running to her Manners Minder from anywhere in the house.

It takes work, but it works!

So there you have it: lots of ways to install appropriate doorbell manners in your dog. They work. One of my early clients had an Australian Shepherd with inappropriate doorbell behavior; she would run to the door barking fiercely when the doorbell rang. In a matter of just three weeks, Sasha learned to run to her bed and lie down calmly at the sound of the doorbell. Her owner was amazed and delighted. So was I. 🐾

Purchasing information for the Manners Minder is in “Resources,” page 24.

Pat Miller, CPDT, is WDJ’s Training Editor. Miller lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. See page 24 for contact information for her books and training services.

Conservative Management Resources (for “Saying ‘No’ to Surgery” article on pages 13-17)

Conservative Management Forum. Information files, protocols, member reports, Q&A, photos, rehabilitation exercises, resources. <http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/ConservativeManagement>. (Join through Yahoo groups at groups.yahoo.com.)

HOLISTIC HEALTHCARE RESOURCES

American Academy of Veterinary Acupuncture
(860) 632-9911; aava.org

American Association of Rehabilitation Veterinarians
(952) 224-9354; abvets.evetsites.net

American Canine Sports Medicine Association
acasma.org

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

American Veterinary Chiropractic Association
(918) 784-2231; animalchiropractic.org

Canine Rehabilitation Institute
(888) 651-0760; caninerehabinstitute.com

Integrated Touch Therapy
(800) 251-0007; integratedtouchtherapy.com

International Association of Animal Massage and Bodywork
(800) 903-9350; iaamb.org

International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management
(615) 522-5276; ivapm.org

International Veterinary Acupuncture Society
(970) 266-0666; ivas.org

Veterinary Botanical Medical Association
vbma.org

Stacey Hershman, DVM
Natural Vet for Pets, Hastings-on-Hudson, NY
(914) 478-4100; naturalvetforpets.com

John Simon, DVM
Woodside Animal Hospital, Royal Oak, MI
(248) 545-6630; doc4pets.com/blog

Amy Snow and Nancy Zidonis
Tallgrass Animal Acupressure Institute, Larkspur, CO
(888) 841-7211; animalacupressure.com

Carol Wasmucky, PT
Pet Rehab Inc., Herndon, VA
(571) 213-2624; petrehab.net



Carol Wasmucky gently helps a patient perform a therapeutic, strengthening exercise.

LEG BRACES

At YouTube.com, search for “OrthoPets” and “conservative management” for videos of Kimber and other dogs wearing braces.

OrthoPets. (303) 953-2545; orthopets.com

A-Trac brace from WoundWear. (847) 634-1700; woundwear.com

Canadian Animal Rehab Services
(905) 473-2434; animalrehab.on.ca

NUTRITIONAL SUPPLEMENTS

Adequan. adequancanine.us

Glycoflex. glycoflex.com

Standard Process Ligaplex, SP Canine Musculoskeletal Support
standardprocess.com

Wholistic Canine Complete Joint Mobility
thewholisticpet.com

RESOURCES

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 vets in your area, or search ahvma.org

BOOKS

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

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

MANNERS MINDER

Remote-controlled reward system from Premier Pet Products, premier.com or (800) 933-5595.

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

Terry Long, CPDT, DogPACT, Long Beach, CA. Terry is a writer, agility instructor, and behavior counselor. She provides pre-adoption counseling, behavior modification, and group classes in pet manners and agility. (562) 423-0793; dogpact.com

Pat Miller, CPDT, Peaceable Paws Dog and Puppy Training, Fairplay, 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 local member trainers. Note: not all members employ similar training methods, nor does APDT set standards of skill or competence. APDT encourages (but does not require) its members to use training methods that use reinforcement and rewards, not punishment. (800) 738-3647; apdt.com

WHAT'S AHEAD

Action Plan

Five things to do when your dog guards his toys, or food, or you!

Your Vet, the Internet, and You

A veterinarian has suggestions on how to talk to your vet about things you've read on the 'net.

Hospice Care

How to keep your dog clean and comfortable in his twilight days.

Alphabet Soup

What are all those letters after some trainers' names? Do they make someone a better dog trainer? What should you look for in a trainer?

Scraping Bottom

We hope your dog doesn't have anal sac problems. If he does, though, read this.

Predatory Behavior

It may be as minor as a squirrel obsession or as serious as a cat murder. Either way, predatory behavior can be managed, if you're committed.

Please help!

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