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The Whole Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training



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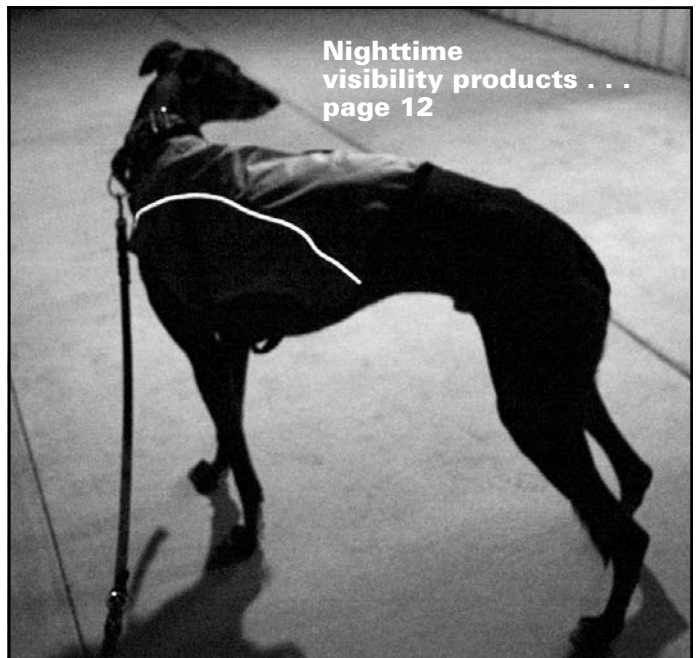
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Make a Difference

Support research of The Rabies Challenge Fund.

BY NANCY KERNS

Never before have ordinary owners had the opportunity to make such a difference in the health of *all* dogs. I'm talking about the canine rabies vaccine challenge study that just got underway at the University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine in Madison. Dr. Ronald Schultz, a leading authority on veterinary vaccines and chair of the Department of Pathobiological Sciences there, has begun concurrent five- and seven-year challenge studies to determine the long-term duration of immunity of the canine rabies vaccine, with the goal of extending the state-mandated interval for boosters. These will be the *first* long-term challenge studies on the vaccine to be published in the U.S.

"Because the USDA does not require vaccine manufacturers to provide long-term duration of immunity studies documenting maximum effectiveness when licensing their products, concerned dog owners have contributed the money to fund this research themselves," explains Kris. L. Christine, co-trustee of The Rabies Challenge Fund, a charitable trust organized to fund the studies. "We want to ensure that rabies immunization laws are based upon independent, long-term scientific data."

Yes, I've previously pleaded for your support of for this project. You see, while the canine rabies vaccine has undoubtedly saved countless lives, many attentive owners have observed its ability to cause serious side effects and trigger lifelong health problems in their dogs. Adverse reactions include autoimmune diseases affecting the thyroid, joints, blood, eyes, skin, kidney, liver, bowel, and

central nervous system; anaphylactic shock; aggression; seizures; epilepsy; and fibrosarcomas at injection sites. I've seen it myself; the formerly stable health of my own dog, Rupert (now deceased), took a sudden dive after receiving a legally mandated rabies booster (required for licensing) at age 10.

Scientific data published in 1992 demonstrated that dogs were immune to a rabies challenge five years after vaccination. Dr. Schultz's serological studies have documented antibody titer counts at levels known to confer immunity to rabies *seven* years post-vaccination. This data strongly suggests that state laws requiring annual or triennial rabies boosters for dogs are redundant.

W. Jean Dodds, DVM, a world-renowned veterinary research scientist and practicing clinician, serves as co-trustee of The Rabies Challenge Fund. "This is the first time in my 43 years of involvement in veterinary issues that what started as a grass-roots effort to change an outmoded regulation affecting animals will be addressed scientifically by an acknowledged expert to benefit all canines in the future," says Dr. Dodds.

The Fund recently met its goal to fund the studies' first year. However, *annual* budget goals of \$150,000 for the studies must be met. See rabieschallengefund.org or call the Fund at (714) 891-2022 to learn how you can

support this research – and all dogs who are legally required to receive the rabies vaccine.



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Great Introductions

How to take the tension out of dog-dog greetings.

BY PAT MILLER

You're contemplating the addition of another canine family member to your pack. You've thought it through and are convinced that it's the right time. Perhaps you have your eye on a homeless dog at your local shelter or a rescue dog staying temporarily in a foster home. Maybe the long-awaited puppy from that carefully researched breeder is due soon, or a friend or family member has asked you to take in a dog that they must rehome. However you plan to acquire your new canine companion, if you already have dogs in your home, you'll need to prepare for the potentially stressful process known as "new dog introduction."

Such was the case for us recently when my husband Paul, director of the Humane Society of Washington County, Maryland, warned me that he was falling for Missy, an eight-year-old red merle Australian Shepherd who had been surrendered by her owner to the shelter. Even before our decision to bring her home was final, knowing the importance of dog-dog introductions, I began planning the introduction process.



You may not always have the luxury of a safe fenced yard for introductions. Do on-leash greetings this way – with leashes loose. Both dogs appear reasonably relaxed about the greeting, although the Border Collie is a little worried.

There are a number of factors to keep in mind that can increase the likelihood of a positive outcome when introducing a new dog into your home. A peaceful first introduction sets the stage for long term relationships. The more heavily you can weigh the odds in your favor for that first encounter, the greater your chance for lifelong peace in the pack. The factors to keep in mind include:

- Timing
- Location
- Number of skilled handlers available
- Knowing and understanding – to the greatest extent possible – the personalities and histories of all the dogs involved

With four dogs already in our family, including Dubhy, our dog-reactive Scottish Terrier, new-dog introductions aren't simple. Fortunately, we've done it enough

to know where the high-risk danger zones are with our pack, how best to avoid or overcome them, and how to make optimum use of the above factors.

Timing

It's best to add a new dog to your home when things are otherwise calm and reasonably stress-free. Allow ample time for a leisurely introduction process and a low-key adjustment period with adequate supervision. You'll also need time to be able to iron out any wrinkles that may appear. This may mean taking time off work, in case your dogs don't hit it off instantly. Holidays are generally *not* the ideal time for introductions unless, for you, "home for the holidays," means lots of quiet time spent alone with your fur-family.

Of course, you can't always control the timing. Many breeders and adopters have a fairly inflexible preconceived idea of the appropriate age at which a puppy should be transferred to his forever home. A friend or family member may be under personal

What you can do . . .

- Evaluate your own dogs and make wise choices about new canine family members.
- Plan your introductions – time, place, and process – to optimize your potential for success.
- Enlist the aid of a professional behavior consultant, or knowledgeable friend, to help handle dogs and ensure the safety of all participants.



The Whole Dog Journal

pressures – landlord dictums, relationship issues, risks to children in the home, or municipal limit laws or breed bans – that require prompt rehoming.

Introducing Missy

A shelter or rescue dog may be facing a ticking clock that dictates a speedy adoption. An outbreak of parvovirus at Paul's shelter meant that Missy had to come home posthaste, to avoid her exposure to the very contagious disease.

The timing *could* have been better. I was two days away from hosting a Reactive Rover Camp at my home. This meant that it would be out of the question to temporarily keep the barking Aussie in a stall in the barn – where my training center is located – in order to facilitate slow introductions over a several day period with Paul in attendance. I knew Missy's barking would render the training environment too stressful for reactive dogs to stay sub-threshold and respond well to our counter-conditioning and desensitization program. We had to get the job done quickly, in order to transition the new girl into our family and our house.

Location, location, location

It's best to introduce dogs in neutral territory – ideally outdoors, in a large, open, safely fenced space. The more trapped a dog feels, the more her stress will push her toward defensive aggression. Plus, when you do introductions in one dog's territory, it gives him the home-field advantage, and you risk displays of territorial aggression.

Optimum options include a fenced yard other than your own, an off-leash dog park

at low-use time (as in *no* other dogs present), a tennis court (caution – many tennis courts understandably prohibit dogs), or a large, open, uncluttered indoor area such as someone's unfinished basement.

Introducing Missy

Our only large, fenced, outdoor open space is our backyard, to which our dogs had, naturally, already staked a territorial claim. Our next best choice for introductions was the training center – a 20' x 80' space with very little furniture. We opted for that space for Missy to meet three of our dogs, and the backyard for the fourth.

Number of skilled handlers

Ideally, you'll want one handler per dog. One *skilled* handler, that is. Someone who panics and intervenes unnecessarily can botch the whole job by adding stress to dogs who are still sorting out relationships.

Barring skilled handlers, at least find handlers who are good at following instructions and don't succumb easily to hysterical behavior. If you can't find those, you're better off with fewer handlers, although you should have at least one other person present, if for no other reason than to help you if the situation gets out of hand.

Introducing Missy

Life is rarely ideal. Because of our truncated time frame for introductions with Missy, our options for multiple handlers were limited. Paul had to work, my other trainers weren't available, so it was up to me and my full-time associate, Shirley, to play referee for our pack introductions. I

was only really worried about Dubhy's reaction to Missy; it's difficult to predict how he'll respond to a new dog, but we have added two canines to our family successfully since the emergence of his dog reactive/aggressive behavior, so my hopes were high.

Personalities and histories

You may not know much about the newcomer, especially if she's a rescue or shelter dog. You should, however, have a pretty good sense of your own dogs' canine social skills. Do they play well with others at the dog park? During playtime at good manners class? With their own packmates? How do they act with doggie visitors to their home? During chance encounters with other canines on the streets?

If you have reason to believe that your dogs are anything less than gregarious with *conspicifics* (others of their own species) due to a history of aggressive behavior with other dogs, or if you just aren't confident about refereeing the introductions yourself, you might do well to engage the services of a qualified behavior professional. She will be able to help you read and understand your dogs' body language, and optimize the potential for success. (For more information about translating canine body language, see "Say What?" WDJ November 2005, and "Can We All Just Get Along?" December 2005.)

I hope you've already given great consideration to good personality matches when you selected your new dog. If you have a dog in your pack who likes to assert himself, you're wise to choose a new dog who's happy to maintain a lower profile in the hierarchy. If your current dog is a



Two-on-one is not such a good idea: The Border Collie is looking more nervous and offering appeasement behaviors, with her ears pinned back and a hind leg lifted.



This is an appropriate on-leash greeting: While the Aussie pup is nervous about the introduction, the loose leash allows him to approach (or not!) at his own comfort level.

shrinking violet, she'll be happiest with a new companion who doesn't bully her mercilessly. If you have one of those canine gems who gets along with everyone, then you have more adoption options.

If you want your gem to be able to be "top dog," then look for a soft, appeasing-type dog. If you don't care where your easygoing dog ends up in the new hierarchy, then you have the entire canine personality continuum to choose from.

Introducing Missy

We knew our personal canine characters would present some challenges. A quick analysis revealed the following about the dogs we wanted to mingle with Missy:

- Fifteen-year-old Katie, a very geriatric, arthritic, spayed, 45-pound Australian Kelpie, with a long history of asserting herself with the other members of the Miller pack. Literally on her last legs, Katie was approaching the last few weeks of her life, and had difficulty getting around. Her crankiness was exacerbated by her physical problems, but her mobility was so limited that she presented a low-level threat.

- Seven-year-old Dubhy, an assertive, neutered, 25-pound Scottish Terrier, the loner of the group. He gets along well with the rest of the pack, but rarely engages in play with them. His reactivity developed when he was about 18 months old. I've worked with him to reduce his reactivity threshold distance to about three feet, although he's better with small dogs.

- Three-year-old Lucy, a lively, assertive, spayed, 35-pound Cardigan Welsh Corgi, who is the only one of the group who challenges Katie (regularly). She tends to act submissive when meeting a new dog, but guards certain places, objects, and me.

- Two-year-old Bonnie, a soft, appeasing, spayed, 35-pound Scottie/Corgi mix who gets along with absolutely everyone.

- Eight-year-old Missy, an appeasing, 40-pound female Australian Shepherd, possibly intact (not spayed), mild to moderate lameness in her right hind leg/hip. Missy had lived with other dogs before and has had at least four prior homes.

Introduction process

I prefer introducing a new dog to the easier dogs first, one at a time. Assuming all goes

A Book That Can Help With Introductions

Off-Leash Dog Play: A Complete Guide to Safety & Fun
By Robin Bennett, CPDT, and Susan Briggs, CKO
C&R Publishing, LLC. Softcover, 150 pages; \$20



The observations and analyses of canine body language that are second nature to dog behavior professionals are sometimes a mystery to the owner trying to interpret the meaning of her own dogs' body signals. This just-published book joins a growing list of excellent resources to help the dedicated owner learn more about what her dogs are communicating. The information in *Off-Leash* is comprehensible yet attainable, and the cost is within the budget of most dog owners.

The book is liberally illustrated with excellent well-annotated photographs that clearly show and explain the rich variation of expressions that our dogs use as they meet, greet, and interact with each other. The text is science-based but very readable, with a clear bias toward positive training and management techniques in dog-human interactions.

Although the intended audience for this book is comprised of professionals who work with canine playgroups, most of the information is hugely useful to anyone who has the opportunity to live in a multi-dog environment, including those who are looking to introduce a new canine family member to the home-pack.

well with the one-on-ones, I try a three-some, adding an additional dog as their behavior allows.

The process I use and recommend to clients is to start with dogs on leashes on opposite sides of an enclosed space. Try to keep leashes loose, if possible. Watch the dogs' behavior. They should seem interested in each other, alert without excessive arousal. Ideally you'll see tails wagging at half-mast; soft, wriggling body postures; play bows; ears back; squinty eyes; no direct eye contact. These are clear expressions of non-aggressive social invitation.

Warning signs include stiffness in the body; standing tall; ears pricked hard forward; growling; hard direct eye contact; stiffly raised, fast-wagging tails; lunging on the leash; and aggressive barking.

If you see social behavior, proceed with an approach until the dogs are about 10 feet apart. If they continue to show unambiguous signs of friendliness, drop the leashes and let them meet. I prefer to let dogs meet and greet off-leash; leashes tend to interfere with the dogs' ability to greet normally, and can actually induce dogs to give false body language signals.

For example, a tight leash can stiffen and raise a dog's front end, causing her to look more tense and provocative than she means to be, which in turn can cause the other dog to react on the offensive. A defensive dog who wants to retreat may feel

trapped because of the leash and act aggressively because she can't move away.

Initially, leave the leashes on, dragging freely on the floor, so you can grab them and separate the dogs easily if necessary. Monitor the greeting. You are likely to see some normal jockeying for position and some tension, as they sniff and circle, and then erupt into play. As soon as you can tell that they're getting along, remove leashes and let them play unencumbered. Watch them! You want to ensure that the play doesn't escalate into excessive arousal (which can lead to aggression), but remember that it's normal and acceptable for dogs to growl and bite each other in play. As long as both dogs are enjoying the action, it's a good thing.

If you see warning signs as you approach with the dogs on leash, you'll need to proceed more slowly. Most commonly you'll see behavior ranging somewhere between completely relaxed and friendly and outright aggressive. You'll need to judge whether the intensity of the behavior is high enough that you need to stop and seek professional assistance, or low enough that you can proceed with caution.

If you do decide to proceed, interrupt any of the dogs' prolonged, hard eye contact by having the handlers divert their dog's attention with bits of tasty treats. Continue to work with the dogs in the others' presence, watching for signs of de-

creasing arousal. Keeping the dogs as far apart as possible in the enclosed area, walk them around on loose leashes, gradually bringing them closer together until they are walking parallel to each other.

Stay calm!

It's important that you stay calm and relaxed during this process. If you jerk or tighten the leash or yell at the dogs, you'll add stress to the situation and make it more difficult for them to relax.

Say you see signs that the dogs have relaxed with each other; this is where your experience and instincts come into play. You may decide to proceed with dropped-leash greetings. Or you may choose to end the introduction for the time being. It's better to err on the side of caution, and do several more on-leash sessions to make sure the dogs are comfortable with each other. Meanwhile, you'll need to manage the dogs so they don't have free access to each other. If you're not confident in your judgment about body language, you may choose to enlist the help of a professional at this point in the process.

If tensions between the dogs escalate or maintain at the same level of intensity despite your on-leash work over several sessions, the wise choice may be to look for a different dog to adopt into your home. Alternatively, you may want to do ongoing work with a behavior professional to try to make the relationship work, knowing that management may be a large part of your life for the foreseeable future.

Be careful if you see *no* interaction between the two dogs you're introducing. What appears to be calm acceptance of each other may in fact be avoidance, where neither dog is comfortable with the other and they deal with it by not dealing with it. The problem with this is that sooner or later the dogs *will* interact if they're both living in your home, and the discomfort may well develop into aggression. I really want to see *some* interaction between dogs in order to make a decision about adoption.

Introducing Missy

I chose to introduce Lucy and Missy first. Shirley held Lucy on-leash at one end of the training center, while I entered with Missy on-leash at the other end. Both dogs appeared relaxed and interested in each other. We approached to a distance of 10



Don't introduce dogs in a spot where one dog might guard or feel trapped, such as his car, crate, or even his home; he may be anxious, defensive, or territorial in these high-value locations.

feet and dropped leashes. The two dogs sniffed and circled, with Lucy offering appeasement behaviors: ears back, lowered body posture, corners of mouth slightly pulled back, and squinty eyes.

After a moment we removed the leashes, and the two engaged in some half-hearted play. Then Lucy walked over to the rack that holds dog toys, asking for me to throw her ball. I complied, and she happily chased the ball while Missy stayed at my feet. When Lucy raced back with the ball, Missy growled at her. *Note to self: Missy has been here less than 24 hours and she's already resource-guarding me. This could be problematic, especially since Lucy also displays owner-guarding and space-guarding behaviors. Hmmm.*

Missy continued to display occasional mild guarding behavior while Lucy played. Her behavior didn't escalate and Lucy didn't take offense. I decided to table my concerns for the time being and proceed with the next introduction.

Bonnie was next. I was pretty unconcerned about this introduction; Bonnie gets along with *everyone*. My lack of concern was justified. We quickly proceeded to off-leash play, and Bonnie's very appeasing attitude elicited no owner-guarding response whatsoever from Missy.

I then reintroduced Lucy to the pair, and all went reasonably well. Missy seemed less concerned with Lucy's proximity to me with Bonnie in the mix, perhaps because her attention was divided.

We decided that Missy had probably had enough for one day, and put off the introductions to the two more difficult Miller dogs to the next day. The start of

Reactive Rover Camp the day after that loomed large on the horizon. We had to get Missy out of the barn and into the house!

Missy's introduction to Dubhy was my greatest concern. I proceeded with caution, and my fears were quickly justified. When I entered the training center with Dubhy, I had a pressurized can of citronella spray (Direct Stop/Spray Shield) in my pocket, high value treats in one hand, Dubhy's leash in the other. As soon as he spotted Missy at the far end of the training center, Dubhy "turned on." His head and tail went up, and his normally soft mouth got hard – I could feel his teeth on my fingers as he took treats from me. Happily,

he remembered his "Reactive Rover" lessons, and quickly looked from Missy to me for the treats, but there was still tension in his body and arousal in his brain.

Shirley and I walked the two dogs around the training center, gradually bringing the dogs closer together. Dubhy's mouth softened and his tail lowered as he grew accustomed to Missy's presence. We eventually brought the dogs within three feet of each other, and Dubhy continued to be reasonably relaxed. I could see that he was still somewhat on alert, but I decided to make the leap, and told Shirley to drop Missy's leash. Shirley looked at me as if I was nuts, but dropped the leash as requested. I dropped Dubhy's, and he immediately lunged at Missy's face with a ferocious snarl.

My heart sank as I leaped forward and sprayed Dubhy with a long blast of citronella to halt his attack. Missy had turned her face away from her attacker, and the spray shoots a very direct, narrow stream, so I could avoid punishing Missy for Dubhy's aggression.

This was a deal breaker; I wasn't willing to live with a lifetime of management between these two. If I hadn't been on a tight schedule for integrating Missy into the household, I would have separated them with their leashes instead of using the spray, and reverted to a gradual introduction process. In fact, I wouldn't even have gotten so close, given Dubhy's tension and past history of dog-related aggression. I knew I was pushing the agenda already, by bringing them together quickly.

Dubhy stopped in his tracks and gave me a surprised look. The tension imme-

diately vanished from his body and he glanced at Missy, then looked back at me. He stepped forward and sniffed Missy. She avoided eye contact by turning her head away, then stepped away from him.

Her response to him was so appropriate, and his changed body language so remarkable, that I stifled my first impulse to stop the introduction, and let them continue. Good thing! The interaction proceeded without any more aggression, and Dubhy has been perfect with Missy ever since; go figure! I don't recommend using an aversive to try to make dog-dog relationships work. Any time an aversive is used there is a significant risk of increasing the negative association with the other dog: Dubhy could have been angrier with Missy if he perceived her as the cause of the spray. I was lucky that it had the opposite effect in this case.

My intent in using the spray with Dubhy was simply to interrupt the aggression to protect Missy. I fully expected that his behavior would preclude our adopting Missy into our home. I was surprised and grateful that it served to modify his behavior, apparently permanently – a happy accidental outcome of my crisis intervention.

As expected, Missy's introduction to Katie in our backyard was uneventful, due to Katie's mobility challenges. The aged Kelpie snarked at Missy briefly as the Aussie passed her on the back porch, but Missy, bless her, just ignored Katie's rude behavior and headed out to the yard to play in the grass. One by one I released the other dogs to join Missy in the yard, all without incident. Missy was home.

Now, a few months later, Missy is doing well. She no longer has to deal with Katie, who passed away a few weeks after Missy's arrival. Missy and Lucy occasionally posture over favored spaces in the house, but these incidents are minor and manageable. We've not had a whisper of inappropriate behavior from Dubhy toward Missy since his citronella experience – in fact, the two of them occasionally play together. Bonnie, as always, is no trouble at all. I hope all of your new family introductions go as well as ours did. 🐾

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

More Tips for Successful Introductions

There are some additional things you can do to increase your potential for successful introductions. Here are some general suggestions:

- Exercise the dogs before initiating introductions. Happily tired dogs are more likely to interact well than those who are bursting with energy.

- Have tools within easy reach in case you need to interrupt an aggressive interaction (for more on breaking up dog fights, see "Break It Up!" December 2002).

- Be sure to remove toys and other high value chew objects from the introduction area to minimize potential for guarding incidents.

- Use extra caution when introducing a puppy to adult dogs to avoid physical injury or psychological trauma to your pup. While many adult dogs recognize the importance of being gentle with baby dogs, some do not. Some will play too roughly, and some will be actively aggressive. A bad experience with an overly exuberant playmate or an aggressive dog can have a significant negative influence on a pup's future social behavior.

- Be careful, too, when introducing a new dog to senior members of your pack, especially if the new dog is an adolescent or a puppy. Protect your senior dog from being physically damaged – bumped, bruised, body-slammed, or knocked over by a rambunctious pup. Keep your pup on leash in the presence of Granny or use a baby gate to keep them separated until he learns to modulate his behavior around your fragile, sometimes grumpy senior. Your geriatric dogs shouldn't have to defend themselves from the overwhelming attention of fractious youngsters.

- Consider size. Jean Donaldson, director of the San Francisco SPCA's Academy for Dog Trainers, recommends no more than a 25-pound difference in size between dogs in a household or playgroup. More than that, she warns, and you risk *predatory drift*, where the larger dog suddenly perceives a small running dog as a prey object, such as a bunny or squirrel, and shifts from play to food-acquisition mode, sometimes with tragic results. Know that if you choose to introduce a new dog to a situation where there is a large size disparity, you may be taking additional risks with your dogs' safety during introductions and thereafter.

- Be sure to reinforce both/all dogs for calm, appropriate behavior in each other's presence. Your reinforcers should be calming: treats, massage, and verbal praise are good choices; tug and fetch are not. You can use tethers, if necessary, to create calm, and follow Norwegian dog trainer Turid Rugaas' suggestions to have dogs approach each other in a curving line rather than directly, allowing them to sniff the ground and do other displacement and appeasement behaviors such as looking away, as they choose.

Note: Turid Rugaas coined the term "calming signals" for many of the social behaviors dogs display when interacting with each other and with us. You can learn more about her work through her book, *On Talking Terms With Dogs: Calming Signals*, and her "Calming Signals" DVD.



The two leashed dogs are at a definite disadvantage in this hectic dog park encounter. Dogs should be unleashed in an attached, fenced area (or separate leashes dropped as soon as they enter), and a second person would call the other dogs away from the gate.

Defeating the Resistance

Antibiotic-resistant Staph can be spread between dogs and humans.

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Can the same drug-resistant illness that has been killing people in record numbers infect your dog? Can drug-resistant *Staph* infections be passed between dogs and humans? Is your dog at risk? Might your dog be a health hazard to others?

The answers are yes, yes, and maybe. Fortunately, there are many ways to prevent the spread of bacterial infections, including the drug-resistant kind.

Understanding MRSA

For decades, public health officials warned that the overuse of prescription antibiotics and antibacterial soap and hand wipes could lead to the growth of “supergerms,” drug-resistant bacteria that are difficult if not impossible to control.

They were right. In fact, just four years after penicillin became available in 1943, scientists documented microbes that could resist it. The first was *Staphylococcus aureus*, a ubiquitous bacterium that is usually harmless but which in susceptible

patients can cause pneumonia, severe skin infections, or toxic shock syndrome.

By the 1990s, one strain became especially problematic. MRSA (pronounced MER-sa), or Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*, got its name because the drug most commonly used to control it no longer worked.

Since then, MRSA outbreaks have been increasing in the United States, England, and other countries. In the U.S., infection rates tripled between 2000 and 2005. According to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, an estimated 95,000 Americans contracted MRSA in 2005, resulting in 18,650 deaths, a number that surpassed that year’s HIV/AIDS death rate. In most cases, patients who died were elderly, already ill, or at risk because of compromised immunity, but MRSA has also killed the young and healthy, including, last October, teenagers in Virginia and New York.

Staph bacteria live on the skin or in the nose of about one-third of the world’s population. Those who harbor the bacteria

What you can do . . .

- Protect yourself and your dog from MRSA with frequent hand washing and good hygiene.
- Consult your physician or veterinarian about any wound on you or your dog that does not heal quickly.
- Have skin infections tested for MRSA.
- Boost your dog’s immunity with probiotics, coconut oil, and natural infection fighters.
- Take extra precautions before and after therapy dog visits.



It’s sadly common for dogs who become infected with MRSA to be treated with a number of antibiotics, without success – and without anyone testing for MRSA. Photo courtesy of The Bella Moss Foundation, pets-MRSA.com.



If your dog’s skin problem has persisted despite treatment with one or more antibiotics, ask your vet to test the dog for MRSA, since a targeted treatment protocol will be needed to defeat the condition if it exists. Photo courtesy of The Bella Moss Foundation, pets-MRSA.com.

but don't have symptoms are "colonized" but not infected. They are carriers of the illness and can infect others.

Fortunately, *Staph* bacteria are usually harmless because the immune systems of most dogs and humans successfully keep the bacteria in check. Even if they enter the body, they cause only minor skin problems in most cases. In susceptible individuals, however, the bacterial population can suddenly increase and sicken its host.

Physicians check for MRSA by sending tissue samples or nasal secretions to diagnostic laboratories. Because bacterial culture tests take 48 hours and time is of the essence, tests that quickly detect *Staph* DNA are becoming widespread.

There are two types of MRSA: Hospital-Acquired (HA) and Community-Associated (CA).

HA-MRSA is alive and well in health-care facilities, its original breeding ground. This strain, which is highly resistant to treatment with conventional drugs, causes internal infections in vulnerable patients, usually after gaining access to the body through catheters, surgical wounds, feeding tubes, invasive medical procedures, or lung infections. Those most at risk are the elderly, ill, and immune-compromised.

CA-MRSA is less resistant to treatment but more dangerous because it grows rapidly in otherwise healthy patients. Its initial symptom looks like a red pimple, boil, insect bite, or spider bite. If left untreated, the swelling develops into abscesses that cause fever, pus, swelling, and pain.

Those most at risk of acquiring CA-MRSA include children, people of all ages who have weakened immune systems, those who live in crowded or unsanitary conditions, people who are in close contact with healthcare workers, and professional and amateur athletes who participate in contact sports. Sharing towels, razors, uniforms, and athletic equipment has spread MRSA among sports teams.

Dogs at risk

There have been many disturbing reports about MRSA, but the most alarming to dog lovers is the news that humans can infect dogs with this disease and vice-versa.

Michelle Rivera, who lives in North



British actress Jill Moss and her Samoyed, Bella, who succumbed to MRSA. Bella contracted the disease during surgery for a ruptured cruciate ligament; the infection progressed too far to be successfully treated before it was diagnosed. Photo courtesy of The Bella Moss Foundation.

Palm Beach, Florida, contracted MRSA in 2005, the same year that 64 residents of Palm Beach County died of the disease. "I never once heard that my pets could be at risk because of my infection," she says. "I was in a drug-induced coma for three weeks and bedridden for six months. This is one nasty superbug."

Last October, the New York newspaper *Newsday* reported that MRSA cases are increasing among pets and that many pets have contracted the disease from their owners. *Newsday* quoted Patrick McDonough, PhD, an assistant professor at Cornell University's veterinary college: "This is what we call reverse zoonosis. The organism is moving from people to animals. Once animals colonize it, we don't know how long they maintain it, but this is one case where they are sharing what we have."

In the same article, veterinarian Lewis Gelfand, DVM, of Long Beach, New York, reported that he has seen 19 cases of MRSA in dogs during the past year. "I believe it is a significantly underdiagnosed and rapidly expanding problem," he said. "We have been seeing dermatological cases as well as open sores."

On November 9, 2007, Fox News Channel 40 in Binghamton, New York, reported that Cooper, a 100-pound Italian Spinoni belonging to Andrea Irwin, had been diagnosed with MRSA, which caused

sores all over the dog's stomach and legs.

"He had recurrent *Staph* infections since the fall of 2004," Irwin told reporters. "He had been treated on and off for those infections, but they never cleared up totally. This July the vet decided it was time to take some skin cultures and send them to Cornell University, where Cooper tested positive for the human strain of MRSA." Following successful treatment, he made a full recovery.

When Cooper was diagnosed, Irwin felt frustrated by the lack of information available about MRSA's effect on dogs. "The only information I could find was from a website for the Bella Moss Foundation," she said.

English actress Jill Moss created the foundation in memory of her Samoyed, Bella, who ruptured a cruciate ligament in July 2004 while chasing squirrels in

a London park. What should have been a routine repair turned into a nightmare when Bella's leg swelled with pus. Because the veterinarians who treated her didn't recognize MRSA, Bella became the world's first documented canine fatality from the disease. *Pets-MRSA.com*, the foundation's website, is a leading information resource about MRSA's effects on animals.

Preventing MRSA

Public health officials agree that the best way to prevent MRSA is with frequent hand washing. Scrub hands briskly with soapy water for at least 15 seconds before rinsing, then dry them with a paper towel and use a second paper towel to turn off the faucet and open the bathroom door.

When you don't have soap and water, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 62 percent alcohol or a small amount of disinfecting essential oils. The chemicals used in antibacterial soaps and hand wipes have been blamed by public health officials for the mutation of drug-resistant bacteria, so consider alternatives to soaps and wipes containing antibacterial chemicals.

Clean and disinfect all cuts, wounds, bites, stings, and open sores. Keep wounds clean and covered with sterile, dry bandages until they heal. Sanitize linens if you or your dog have any cut or sore by washing sheets, towels, and bedding in hot water and drying them in a hot dryer.

If you or your dog have a persistent skin infection, have it tested for MRSA to be sure you receive an antibiotic that is targeted to wipe out the bacteria, without promoting the resistant population.

Last, use antibiotics appropriately. Follow label instructions and don't share or save unfinished antibiotics. Because antibiotics are not effective against viruses, don't insist on getting a prescription for a cold or other viral infection.

Holistic care and prevention

Keeping colonized dogs from spreading MRSA and keeping at-risk dogs safe requires frequent hand washing, dog bathing, and keeping wounds and bedding clean.

Dogs that are MRSA carriers or who have close contact with someone infected with MRSA can pose a risk to small children, pregnant women, the elderly, and anyone with an active illness or open sore. Commonsense precautions include keeping your dog clean and not letting your dog lick everyone.

Probiotic supplements are recommended for MRSA prevention because beneficial bacteria are the immune system's first line of defense. Products containing *Lactobacillus* bacteria, especially *L. sporogenes*, or other beneficial bacteria can be given before meals or according to label directions.

According to Mary G. Enig, PhD, one of the world's leading experts on fats and oils, coconut oil's medium-chain fatty acids inhibit the growth of many pathogenic microorganisms, including *Staph* bacteria. She cites research on two strains of *S. aureus* showing that monolaurin from coconut oil combined with the essential

oil of oregano, which is itself a powerful disinfectant, worked better than the most potent antibiotic.

"This research showed," she writes, "that these safe antimicrobial agents could be useful for prevention and therapy of *Staphylococcus aureus* and numerous other infections. It is now clear and scientifically validated that the inclusion of coconut oil in the diet could and should be utilized for its preventive and healing properties."

The recommended amount of coconut oil for dogs is 1 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight per day, or up to twice that amount in divided doses if the dog is a carrier, has an active infection, or is exposed to someone with MRSA. Start with small amounts and increase gradually. (See "Crazy About Coconut Oil," WDJ October 2005.)

Many essential oils kill harmful bacteria, including cinnamon bark, clove bud, savory, thyme, lavender, tea tree, and the previously mentioned oregano.

Oregano essential oil (be sure the label says *Origanum vulgare*, preferably wildcrafted or organic) can be given to dogs internally by placing drops in an empty two-part gel cap (available at health food stores), closing the cap, and placing it in a small amount of food so that the dog swallows it whole. Dogs do not like the taste! Use 1 drop of oregano oil per 50 pounds body weight once or twice per day. For small dogs, dilute 1 drop essential oil in ½ teaspoon vegetable oil and give ¼ teaspoon per 10-15 pounds.

Cinnamon bark oil is a powerful skin irritant and should not be applied externally, but it can be added to laundry water

to disinfect towels or bedding. All of the essential oils mentioned here, including cinnamon, can be dispersed in an aromatherapy diffuser or mixed with water (20 drops per quart or 5 drops per cup) and sprayed in the air, avoiding furniture and pets, or on kitchen and bathroom surfaces, doorknobs, crates, and pet bedding.

Manuka honey, mentioned in "Bee Products" (September 2007), is a proven *Staph* killer. A teaspoon to a tablespoon of honey, fed to a dog twice a day, can help him fend off harmful bacteria.

Colloidal silver is another disinfectant that has been proven to kill *S. aureus*. It can be applied externally to cuts and wounds, sprayed directly on a dog's coat (including the face, nose, and groin areas, where *Staph* bacteria tend to colonize), and taken internally.

For best results, use a product like Sovereign Silver, which contains very small silver particles in a base of pure water. For maintenance, give ¼ teaspoon per 20 pounds of body weight between meals every other day. If your dog is exposed to MRSA or any other contagious illness, give the same dose three times per day. Larger doses (consult the manufacturer) can be used to treat active infection.

One of the easiest ways to keep your dog clean is with microfiber cleaning cloths. These rough-textured polyester-polyamide cloths were originally developed for "clean room" applications in the semi-conductor industry. Used wet or dry, they attract and trap dust, dander, loose hair, and other particles, even fleas and unattached ticks. Microfiber fabric does not disinfect, but it picks up and removes bacteria. The cloths can be washed in hot water (add a few drops of cinnamon or tea tree oil or a blend of disinfecting essential oils) and dried in a hot dryer to kill microorganisms. Don't use fabric softeners and dryer sheets when laundering microfiber cleaning cloths.

MRSA may be a frightening illness, but by following the simple prevention steps described here, you can help ensure that you and your dog enjoy an active, happy, MRSA-free life. 🐾

CJ Puotinen, a frequent contributor to WDJ, is co-director of the Hudson Valley Humane Society Visiting Pet Program in Rockland County, New York, and its annual Therapy Dog Camp. The organization's members include therapy dogs and other animals. See HudsonValleyVisitingPets.com for more information.

Resources Mentioned in This Article

Bella Moss Foundation. Information about dogs, cats, and MRSA. Phone (011-44) 78-6087-9079; pets-MRSA.com, thebellamossfoundation.com

Nature's Gift, Madison, TN. Essential oils, organic and wildcrafted, plus Germ Beater disinfecting blends for household use. naturesgift.com

AromaDog, Leicester, MA. Essential oils for dogs, including Quick Fix Antiseptic Blend for wound treatment and Lickety Spritzer (which contains Sovereign Silver) for protecting against infection. (508) 892-9330, aromadog.com

Manuka Honey USA. Honey from New Zealand. (800) 395-2196, manukahoneyusa.com

Terry Magic, microfiber cleaning cloths. magicmicrocloth.com

Tergo cleaning cloths, ultramicrofibers.com

Sovereign Silver, a colloidal silver product, from Natural-Immunogenics Corp., Pompano Beach, FL. (888) 328-8840, natural-immunogenics.com

Therapy Dogs: Therapeutic Visitors or Typhoid Mary?

Wherever they go, therapy dogs brighten lives. In hospitals, dog/handler teams participating in animal-assisted therapy work with healthcare professionals toward specific goals in documented sessions with individual patients. In nursing homes and other facilities, animal-assisted activity in a relaxed, informal setting gives visiting dogs and people a chance to interact. In schools and libraries, reading programs and classroom visits provide animal-assisted education.

These volunteer activities are usually praised for their positive results. But now researchers are looking at therapy dogs not as tail-wagging ambassadors of good health and good will but as moving bundles of contagious germs.



With appropriate precautions, therapy dogs can visit without posing a health threat to anyone.

In 2005, the *Journal of Hospital Infection* reported that an 11-year-old Border Collie acquired MRSA in a general hospital in the United Kingdom after visiting a ward for elderly patients. Both dog and owner were asymptomatic and had no apparent source of MRSA, but swabs collected after the visit tested positive for MRSA. The report concluded, "It is suggested that pet therapy dogs can acquire and spread MRSA . . . Further studies are required to assess carriage sites and prevalence of MRSA in pet therapy dogs and the potential risk to patients."

The following year, the medical journal *Infection Control and Hospital Epidemiology* published a report on canine visits to hospital patients in Ontario, Canada. Dr. Sandra Lefebvre, a veterinarian and PhD candidate in population medicine at the University of Guelph in Ontario, led a research team that conducted a cross-sectional survey of 231 hospitals, 223 of which allowed dogs to visit. Some were registered therapy dogs and others belonged to hospital visitors.

Of the 90 dog owners included in the study, 18 said they did not practice any infection control, 66 allowed their dogs on patients' beds, 71 let their dogs lick patients, and 36 were unable to name any zoonotic diseases that may be transmitted by dogs. The study concluded, "Although canine-visitation programs have become standard practice in non-acute human healthcare facilities, infection control and dog-screening practices are highly variable and potentially deficient. Hospital staff, visitation groups, pet owners, and veterinarians need to work together to protect both people and pets."

In May 2006, Dr. Lefebvre announced the results of a separate study in which 102 visitation dogs from across Ontario were checked for 18 specific pathogens. None of the dogs carried *S. aureus* or MRSA, but 58 percent carried *Clostridium*

difficile bacteria, and some tested positive for *Salmonella*, multidrug-resistant *E. coli*, and *Pasteurella spp.*

"The problem lies in the fact that dogs can carry disease-causing germs and still look healthy," said Dr. Lefebvre. "Dogs can also pick up bacterial strains that originate in hospitals and transfer them to people in the community on a day-to-day basis. Hand washing before and after handling dogs is probably the best way to avoid contacting a zoonotic organism. Hand sanitizers are readily available in hospitals and nursing homes, and since dogs can't do anything it just makes sense that people should take extra precautions. Placing a sheet on patients' beds or laps to protect them from direct contact with the dog is also a good way to protect both patients and dogs."

She added that what is just as likely as a dog transmitting a disease to a patient is a dog carrying bacteria from one patient to another. "If there is any indication that a patient is infectious," she said, "that patient shouldn't visit with a therapy dog in order to protect the people who handle the dog afterwards and to protect the dog itself."

Simple precautions

Until more research is done, ensuring that visiting pet programs continue to spread benefits instead of germs comes down to common sense, Dr. Lefebvre concluded. "All participants, whether they're healthcare personnel, patients, or visitation dog owners, need to start thinking seriously about making infection control an integral part of their interactions to preserve the popularity of pet-visiting programs."

Fortunately, *Staphylococcus aureus* remains rare in dogs, and the MRSA strain even rarer. The *Staph* bacteria does not adhere well to dog hair, and most dogs are able to resolve MRSA spontaneously over time.

Some veterinarians recommend bathing therapy dogs in Chlorhexidine-based shampoo before visits. The recommendations listed here for MRSA prevention also work well.

Despite the accelerating MRSA scare and the impressive list of illnesses that can be transmitted directly or indirectly from dogs to humans, health officials and facility administrators are in no hurry to ban pet visits. As Heidi DiSalvo and fellow researchers concluded in their report, "Utility of dogs in healthcare settings and infection control aspects" (Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology, 2005), with careful planning and well-constructed policy guidelines, well-trained and healthy dogs can safely perform useful functions in therapy programs.

Researchers Sarah Brodie, Francis Biley, and Michael Shewring came to a similar conclusion in their 2002 article, "Exploration of the potential risks associated with using pet therapy in healthcare settings," in the *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. "A search of the literature has assessed potential and actual risk and concludes that the hazards are minimal," they wrote. "The potential to suffer harm does exist but it can be minimized by taking simple measures, including careful selection of animal and client, thorough planning and allocation of responsibility, rigorous healthcare of the animal, and informed practices by all involved."

Light Up the Night

Nighttime visibility products help you walk your dog after dark.

BY NANCY KERNS

Walking with a dog in the dark can present a number of challenges for many dog owners. You may not be able to see well in the dark; this can make you take a hard step off a curb or trip on a rise in the sidewalk. Finding your dog's poop at night (so you can pick it up and dispose of it properly) is also a problem.

Although definitely in the minority, some people walk their dogs off-leash at night. I've met a number of people at night who were walking off-leash dogs on the wide trail that tops the river levee that parallels my town's main street. If I wasn't a dog person, I would probably be unnerved by the fast approach of a strange dog in the dark. And as it is, if the dogs were mine, I'd be worried that one of them would wander off or get lost if I couldn't keep sight of them.

The most potentially dangerous and most common problem with nighttime dog walking, though, is that other people – people driving cars, especially – can't readily see you or your dog. Whether you are crossing a street, or just walking across a driveway "safely" on the sidewalk, if a driver can't see you, you are at risk of being hit.

Products for every problem – but none for *all* problems

We rounded up a wide array of products that are intended to make nighttime dog-walking brighter. However, we found that most of them addressed only one of the various night visibility issues.

For example, we found a number of collars, leashes, harnesses, bandannas, and vests that sported varying amounts of reflective material – the stuff that seems to shine brightly back at the source of the light. These products are *matchless* for helping a driver see you and your dog in his headlights, but they can't help you see in the dark or help you or other lightless pedestrians see your dog.



We put a bunch of light-up products on our model, attracting quite a bit of attention from passers-by. Only one of these products (the PupLight) drastically increases the dog's visibility and helps a dog walker see at night – incredibly helpful for cleaning up at night, if you know what we mean!

We also found a lot of products that light up – including collars and leashes that twinkle, glow, and/or flash, and battery-operated lights that can be hung on a dog's collar or harness. Many of these shine very impressively (and festively!) in the dark – but we found that their light is lost in the comparative glare of car headlights, making them suitable for some applications but not for safety from drivers.

For these reasons, you'll want to choose a product that best suits your needs; we'll describe what each product can and cannot do.

If walking at night in the rain is your dog's favorite thing to do, and the battery-powered light-up products tickle your fancy, consider the product's ability to withstand moisture. We tested the products only once in the rain, and it was a light, brief shower. We've quoted the makers' claims regarding the water-resistance of

their products, but did not put these claims to a serious test. If no claim of "waterproof" or "water-resistant" is made for a battery-powered product, we wouldn't use the product in even a light rain, due to the risk of shocking the dog. For the same reason, never leave a battery-powered product on or within reach of an unattended dog.

WHOLE DOG JOURNAL'S 0-4 PAWS PRODUCT RATING:

AS GOOD AS IT GETS! PRODUCT IS FULLY APPROVED BY WDJ.

A GOOD PRODUCT, BUT WITH ONE OR TWO SIGNIFICANT FLAWS.

THE PRODUCT HAS SOME VALUE, BUT ALSO SOME FLAWS; BUYER BEWARE.

WE INCLUDE THE PRODUCT ONLY BECAUSE OF ITS POTENTIAL FOR IMPROVEMENT.

THE PRODUCT HAS NO REDEEMING VALUE – AT LEAST, NONE THAT WDJ CAN APPRECIATE.

Purchasing notes

Most of the products we reviewed were not made in the U.S. The only exceptions are products made by Glow Dog, Ultra Paws, and Sellwood Dog Supply.

Many of these companies sell directly to consumers as well as through retailers, so you might find their products in pet supply stores but can also purchase them from the maker. In a few cases, products we tested are not sold directly by their makers. The smart companies will direct you to an online or local retailer where you can buy their products. If this was the case, we included the maker's contact information below.

Rarely, however, the maker neither sells the product directly nor provides consumers with the name of local or even online retailers where the products can be bought. Instead, they suggest that you "ask

your local retailer for these products." This was the case with one company whose products we liked: CMI Pets, maker of PetStrobe and Mini PetStrobe (pendant lights that hang from a dog collar).

We are loathe to include a glowing (sorry!) review of a product unless we can direct you to a specific place where the products can be purchased.

For this reason, you won't see the products named above in our review, even though they had certain attributes we liked. For example, the PetStrobe lights made by CMI Pets, which contain four LEDs, can flash in different colors and at two different speeds (or just stay on) and are waterproof to boot. We can't include them in this review since we can't tell people where to buy them! Oh well, the metal clips were tiny and difficult to open and close anyway.

We tested about another half-dozen nighttime visibility products that didn't meet our satisfaction; the wouldn't have even earned one paw on our rating scale (on page 12). One light-up collar we rejected was weighted down with a cucumber-sized battery pack. One could plug the collar into a charger to recharge this large battery, which is a cool feature, but you'd have to overlook the fact that a dog wearing such a device could get a sore neck from the weight of the thing!

We rejected other products that contained blinking lights. Some turned off spontaneously, due to a faulty design or workmanship. Another contained batteries that could not be replaced.

See the charts on page 15 and 16 for more details, including price and purchasing information, about each product we reviewed.

PUPLIGHT



Every dog owner who helped us test this product asked if they could keep it after our trial was completed. There really isn't any better testament to a product's ease of use and usefulness.

What we like: The PupLight hangs from a specially designed clip that helps hold the light away from the dog's coat (in case of an especially shaggy dog) and allows the owner to change the angle of the beam of light to his or her preference. The clip can be strapped to the wide, adjustable, elastic collar provided by the manufacturer or to a regular flat collar. All of our testers liked using the light on the collar provided, so they could quickly pull it off over the dog's head to use as a flashlight when needed, without turning the dog loose.

We really like the fact that the PupLight uses AAA batteries, so we can use environmentally friendly rechargeables. Single-use batteries are a major source of toxins in landfills and waste disposal incinerators.



LIGHTED LAB COAT



In terms of sheer attractiveness at night, this product takes the cake. RuffWear used two strips of "electroluminescent wire" – one going down the length of each side of the coat – powered by two AAA batteries (and RuffWear encourages owners to use rechargeables, which we appreciate). The flexible wire is cool to the touch but glows with a light similar to that produced by neon, in a pretty shade of blue. Please note that the light does *not* provide the *brightest* light of the products here. The wire is stitched in place over a narrow strip of Scotchlite reflective material.

What we like: The vest makes it easy to see the dog in pitch black *and* in headlights. It can be set to blink on and off or stay lighted. If you remove the battery pack from its pocket in the back of the vest, you can hand-wash and line-dry the vest.

What we don't like: It's pricey compared to other products here. We wish the lighted and reflective strips were wider, for even greater visibility.

VISIGLO COLLARS AND LEASHES



Visiglo makes three different types of battery-powered light-up collars and leashes. “Sport” models feature “pulsating electroluminescence” – similar to the neon-looking strip of light used in RuffWear’s Lighted Lab Coat, but, um . . . pulsating. “Fashion” models are not quite as bright, but feature a flashing “electroluminescent animation” with bones or pawprints. Brightest of all are the “LED” models – which utilize “cascading light-emitting diodes” – extremely small but extremely bright flashing lights.

What we like: If we were looking to make our dogs as stylish as possible in a low-light situation, or as highly visible as possible in a super-dark environment, we’d use Visiglo products. They are bright and frenetic. The lights in the “Sport” and “LED” models are visible from either side of the flat leashes (the lights on the “Fashion” models are visible from only one side of the leash). Each type of model is available in several colors and patterns.

What we don’t like: As someone who suffers migraine headaches, which are often aggravated by bright light, I could barely stand to test these products in an extremely dark environment; they are just *too* bright and frenetic, especially the models that use LED lights. In fact, their packages warn that they are not appropriate for use by people who suffer from photosensitive epilepsy! It seemed to me that the leashes even put off some of our more sensitive test dogs (the light of their own collars doesn’t shine right in their eyes, of course). They are less offensive in low-light (rather than pitch-black) situations. A “constant light” mode is not available.

As a minor point, I’m not crazy about the type of metal snaps used on the leashes, and I found the plastic clips used on the collars to be rather unwieldy. (This last feature is a necessary evil, since the snap also houses the collar’s batteries and on/off button. But it’s not like these products are meant to be any dog’s everyday collar or leash.) Finally, the Sport and Fashion models make tiny beeping noises when turned on – which went unnoticed by all but our most sensitive and noise-phobic test dog.

DOG E LITES



Dog e Lites makes a wide range of products featuring twinkling LED lights. Again, though these lights are tiny, they can be seen from a great distance in the dark, though their shine can be lost in low-light situations. Fortunately, Dog e Lites also includes a strip of reflective material on each collar, leash, and harness, to provide visibility in the glare of car headlights.

What we like: We especially liked the step-in harness, which has reflective material on each strap, and lights across the front. We put this harness on a black dog to illustrate how much more visible it makes him at night.

What we don’t like: The lights and reflective material appear on only one side of the leash, which is also a little narrow, making it less comfortable in the hand.



From top to bottom: A Visiglo Fashion collar; the end of a Visiglo Sport leash (with the snap we are not crazy about); section of a Visiglo LED leash (these lights in these latter two products are visible from both sides of the flat leashes); and a Visiglo Fashion leash.



The flashing patterns made by the products above. More lights are contained than appear in this photo in the third product, an LED leash, but they blink on and off in turns, not all at the same time.



Harness by Dog e Lites, with blinking lights on the front strap.

THE BEACON



The Beacon is the first of several pendant-style lights, meant for hanging on a dog's collar or harness, that we tested. This type of light is meant to help the dog be seen, but doesn't do anything to help a dog owner see where she is going.

The Beacon is a very sturdy, compact, bright light. It contains four LED lights inside a red plastic lens, and is made to fasten in any number of ways to a dog or dog handler. It comes equipped with a ring (for hanging like an ID tag on a dog's collar ring) and a plastic clip, which can be used to clip the light onto the dog's collar, harness, leash, or coat – or to his owner's pocket or bait bag. The light can blink slowly or fast, or burn steadily.



SPOTLIT



We gave this pendant-style light a slightly lower rating for a couple reasons. First, it's more difficult to turn on and off; you have to press the button *really* hard sometimes to get it to work. This made us think, several times, that the batteries were dead. Also its metal clip is difficult to open and close.

On the plus side, it is available in red or white; we like the white light. When pressed into service as a miniature flashlight, it helps an owner see better than the red light. With its rounded shape, we suspect that this light is also more comfortable for the dog to wear, as it bobs against his chest as he moves. The light can blink or burn steadily.



Battery-Powered Light-Up Products

Product, contact info	Description	Battery	Waterproof?	Other features (good and bad)	Price
Puplight CPA Systems, Inc. (866) 787-5444 puplight.com 🐾🐾🐾	Bright, steady (does not blink) white light containing three LEDs. About the size of a chicken egg. Hangs from a special elastic collar.	Uses three AAA batteries; rechargeable batteries can be used.	"Water-resistant."	One year warranty Collar is easily removed so you can use light as a flashlight.	\$20
Lighted Lab Coat RuffWear (888) 783-3932 ruffwear.com 🐾🐾	An adjustable vest that contains strips of "distinctive blue light" – AND narrow strips of reflective material.	Uses three AAA batteries; rechargeable batteries can be used.	"Water-resistant."	Comes in three highly adjustable sizes. Light-up and reflective strips could be wider. Blinks or lights steadily. Guaranteed against defects. Very pretty light!	\$60
Visiglo Safety Collars and Leashes Atomic Products (203) 345-1234 visiglo.com 🐾🐾🐾	Nylon leashes and collars that contain different types of brightly flashing and blinking lights. Available in many colors and patterns. Rechargeable batteries may be used in leash.	Collars use two lithium coin cell batteries; leashes use two AA batteries.	Not water-proof.	Very bright; can be seen at a great distance. However, these products can't be set to light steadily, and the blinking can be intolerable in very dark settings; they are more tolerable in low-light.	\$20-\$25
Dog e Lites Collars, Leashes, Harness Dog e Lites (514) 708-3224 dog-e-lites.com 🐾🐾🐾	Nylon/polyester collars, leashes, and harness contain flashing LED lights. Some products also have a strip of reflective material, providing two types of nighttime safety protection.	All products use lithium coin cell batteries.	"Water-resistant."	Lights and reflective material appear on only one side of leash. Some collars have only LED lights, without reflective material; we prefer collars with both. Harness has LED lights across the chest and reflective material on <u>each</u> strap.	\$20-\$28
LED Nylon Leash Can be purchased from blinke.com; (415) 261-0679 🐾🐾🐾	Nylon leash that contains LED lights and a strip of reflective material, providing two types of nighttime safety protection.	Uses lithium coin cell batteries.	"Waterproof switch box."	LED lights are tiny but bright. Lights and reflective material appears on BOTH sides of leash. Leash is thicker than product above.	\$10
The Beacon RuffWear (888) 783-3932 ruffwear.com 🐾🐾🐾	Four LED lights shine through a red lens. Light is a bit larger than a walnut. Can blink in two patterns or burn steadily.	Uses two lithium coin cell batteries.	"Water-tight."	Can hang from a ring or be clipped onto a collar, harness, or vest. Guaranteed against defects. Very sturdy.	\$13
SpotLit Nite Ize Inc. (800) 678-6483 Can be purchased online from keepdoggiesafe.com 🐾🐾🐾	A sturdy single-LED light encased in a plastic pendant that hangs from a small clip. Blinks or burns steadily. Light is available in white or red.	Uses two small lithium batteries.	"Water-resistant."	Metal clip is small and difficult to open and close, but is secure! Light can be difficult to turn on and off. Maker does not sell directly but can direct you to online or local retailers.	\$10

GLOW DOG PRODUCTS

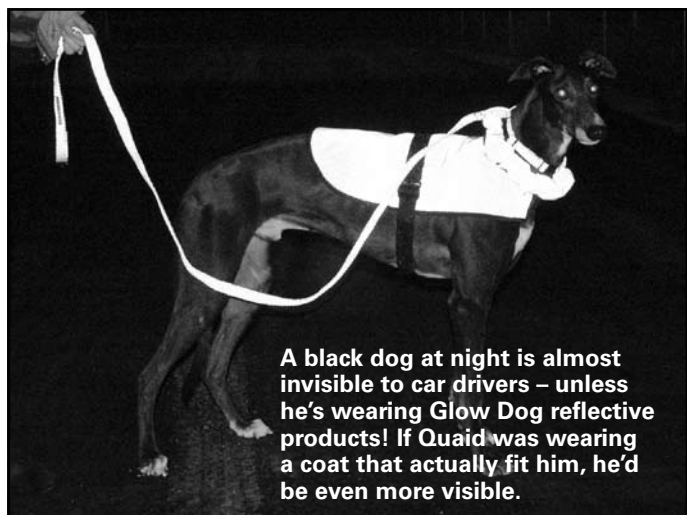


We tested five different Glow Dog reflective products: a vest (they call it a “jacket,” but it really provides only reflection, not warmth), a six-foot leash, a collar, a bandanna, and what Glow Dog calls a “Bunchie” – kind of a dog-neck-sized scrunchie. Each of these products is made with fabrics that have been completely covered with a “patented retro-reflective technology” the maker calls “Illuminite.” When a light shines on this material, the entire surface reflects brightly. All of the products show up extremely well, but the jacket provides an entire dog-shaped reflective silhouette that is instantly recognizable to a driver.

Once again, we found that our testers did not want to return these products – a great testimonial.

What we like: Glow Dog products are made with nice, light-weight but strong materials. They are available in several colors; all reflect at night in a bright white color. The maker also offers dozens of products for human use; see illuminite.com.

What we don't like: There isn't much to say here, except to note that the Glow Dog collar is for visibility only; it lacks a ring to clip a leash onto.



A black dog at night is almost invisible to car drivers – unless he's wearing Glow Dog reflective products! If Quaid was wearing a coat that actually fit him, he'd be even more visible.

ULTRA PAWS COAT AND VEST



Ultra Paws offers two perfectly nice reflective safety products for dogs: a lightweight vest and a medium-weight, fleece-lined coat. Each has two ¾-inch-wide strips of reflective material sewn to each side of the garment. The products provide more reflective material than many competitors we saw advertised, but not nearly as much as Glow Dog's products.

We purposely photographed these products on a black dog to show how much more visible a dog is when wearing a reflective product when walking near cars at night.



Ultra Paws Coat



Ultra Paws Vest

THE REFLECTOR



There is nothing fancy about this reflective collar (see photo below), which is made by Sellwood Dog Supply as part of its made-in-the-USA Gold Paw Series. But there is nothing shoddy about it, either! And, in contrast to Glow Dog's collar, it *is* made with a sturdy ring to fasten a leash to. It's a well-made, attractive collar that reflects well at night, and could work well as a dog's everyday collar, too. 🐾

Reflective Products

Product, contact info	Description	Other features (good and bad)	Price
Glow Dog Jacket, Leash, Collar, Bandanna, Bunchie Glow Dog (888) 456-9364 glowdog.com 🐾🐾🐾🐾	Glow Dog is the clear-cut leader in reflective products. It makes a wide variety of products that are comprised entirely of reflective fabric (as opposed to products with strips of reflective fabric sewn on them). When wearing the Glow Dog Jacket, the dog's entire body lights up in headlights. Very cool-looking!	Fabric is light-weight but strong. Compared to every other product we reviewed, the leash is very comfortable in the hand.	\$9- \$28
Reflective Dog Vest Ultra Paws Dog Coat Ultra Paws (800) 355-5575 ultrapaws.com 🐾🐾🐾	Vest that adjusts in two places, with a vertical and a horizontal strip of reflective material (¾-inch wide) sewn to it. Coat is fleece-lined, with a water-repellent outer shell. Adjusts (with wide Velcro strips) at the neck and belly; has two strips (¾-inch wide) of reflective material sewn to it	Vest is available in four sizes. Bright orange color improves visibility of dog during the daytime. Coat is available in eight sizes. A nice, warm, simple coat. We wish there was more reflective material on it.	Vest: \$19- \$21 Coat: \$30- \$50
Reflector Collar Sellwood Dog Supply, Gold Paw Series (503) 239-1517 goldpawseries.com 🐾🐾🐾	Simplicity itself: An attractive, strong, light fabric collar with a wide strip of reflective material sewn on the outside. Strong plastic snap-together buckle. May be used as dog's regular collar.	Available in several adjustable sizes and colors.	\$18



Earth Energy

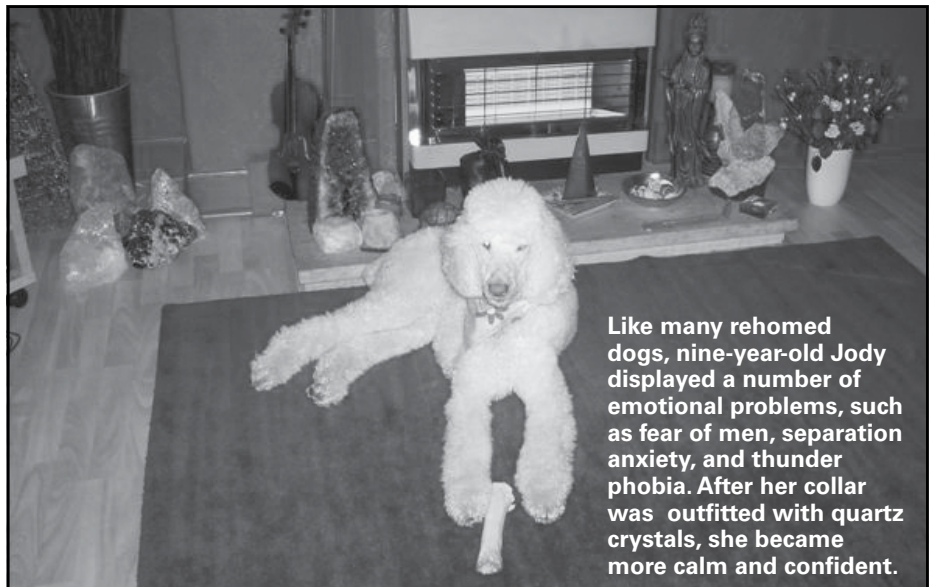
Energy healing with crystals and energy balancing with Mother Earth.

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Who doesn't have at least one quartz crystal, turquoise pendant, jade figurine, or amethyst geode? You probably have a strand of beads, too, maybe aventurine, bloodstone, citrine, coral, garnet, or sodalite. What you may not realize is that, according to crystal enthusiasts, these items can help both you and your dog improve your health, balance your emotions, and enhance your quality of life.

Whether they're novelty items or elegant jewelry, crystals – precious and semiprecious gems as well as humble stones and river rocks – have been valued for thousands of years for their healing and aesthetic properties. The more people explore the use of crystals, stones, and gems, the more their dogs, cats, horses, and other animals are likely to benefit from this branch of energy medicine. Your pets can sleep near crystals, wear them, drink water that has been “charged” by crystals, and in other ways receive the energy that is said to be unique to each type of stone.

Crystal healing is especially popular in the United Kingdom, where practitioners match human and animal clients with stones that best support their conditions. Sara Hope Brown, who lives in Fife, Scotland, designs clip-on crystals that attach



Like many rehomed dogs, nine-year-old Jody displayed a number of emotional problems, such as fear of men, separation anxiety, and thunder phobia. After her collar was outfitted with quartz crystals, she became more calm and confident.

to a dog's collar. Her own white Standard Poodle, Jody, was a rescued dog with many emotional problems until Brown fitted her with quartz clip-ons. She reports that as a result of wearing the crystals, Jody is now calm and self-confident.

“Rose quartz is the crystal that balances the emotions,” she says. “I recommend it for rescued pets, pets who are on their own a lot, and animals who are nervous or worried. Amethyst crystals help animals deal with physical problems such as illness, skin conditions, arthritis, and the slowing down that accompanies old age. Clear quartz crystals produce positive changes in pets that improve behavioral problems like excessive barking or aggression.”

Do the crystals work? Brown's satisfied clients think so. Consider Cleo, a three-year-old German Shepherd mix who was nervous and aggressive. According to her owner, Jean Beveridge, “One week after wearing the rose and clear quartz crystals, she has become much calmer and more at peace with those around her.”

Many users report that after wearing crystals, their dogs became relaxed, more

amenable to training, and even friendlier. Angela White says that her dog, Jasmine, refused to go out for walks, didn't like strangers, and never seemed to have much fun. That all changed when she began wearing a rose quartz crystal. “Now she happily goes for walks and even wanders over to people,” says White. “She often runs about playing, which she rarely did before. I was very skeptical about these crystals working, but they have made a difference to Jasmine.”

Christine Waddell bought an amethyst crystal for her 11-year-old Bichon, Biggles, who suffered from aching joints in his legs and hips. “Since putting the crystal on his collar,” she says, “his pain and discomfort have improved dramatically and he is moving much more comfortably. Recently the crystal fell off and within a short period I noticed that Biggles' discomfort and pain had returned, though not so badly as previously. Needless to say, I had the crystal replaced and now have a happier dog because of it.”

Other guardians report improvements in eczema, rough skin, dry flakey skin,

What you can do . . .

- Choose a crystal recommended for dogs and try it out.
- Increase your dog's exposure to unfiltered natural light.
- Help your dog spend more time outdoors, in direct contact with the earth.



The Whole Dog Journal

abscesses, sores, allergic reactions; and stress and anxiety.

“Energy healing works upon the electromagnetic field that surrounds us,” explains Brown, “which includes the emotional, mental, and physical bodies. Disruptions in the normal flow of energy eventually lead to physical illness and psychological symptoms. Pets who wear all three of my clip-on crystals are kept emotionally, physically, and mentally balanced, and results are seen in a short time.”

Using crystals

Hundreds of stones and crystals are used to improve health and happiness, so it makes sense to consult a reference book or crystal healing practitioner for help in selecting the right one for your pet.

One way to impart crystal energy to your dog is by attaching or placing a stone or crystal in a corner of her crate, on top of the crate, under her bedding (be sure that any sharp crystal points are padded so they don't irritate), or on a sunny window sill. Stones can also be placed on the floor near your sleeping dog.

“Simply placing crystals in your home environment can help you and your pet reduce stress and fear, balance emotions, energize the physical body, clear energy blockages, calm the mind, and reach expanded states of consciousness,” says lapidary artist Michelle Buckler of Lewes, Delaware, who uses gold and silver wire to wrap or frame stones and crystals, making them easy to hang from or attach to crates, walls, windows, or furniture.

Because dogs are so sensitive to energy, she says, it's important to be balanced, centered, and grounded yourself before positioning crystals. Introduce crystals in a quiet, comfortable environment, take some deep breaths, relax, and enjoy the experience. Watch for signs of stress in your dog, such as changes in ear or tail position, rising hackles, or turning away.

“Crystal healing can sometimes be too fast for the animal to integrate, or so intense that it causes pain and other discomfort,” she explains. “As crystal energy promotes rapid healing, easing off can help alleviate the stress caused by a healing crisis. When the healing is going well, the dog will show signs of comfort and affection, such as eyelids drooping, sighing, and a general softening of muscle tissues.”

An easy way to apply crystal energy to your pet, Buckler suggests, is to warm a crystal in the sun, then hold it a few inches

from the injured or affected area and rotate the crystal clockwise. “Take your time,” she says. “Go slowly and breathe gently and evenly. If you are using an ice bag to reduce swelling, try adding a few tumbled smoky quartz crystals to the ice to help unblock over-active or inflamed areas.”

Vibrational animal healer Chris Anderson of Kittridge, Colorado, prefers river stones, which are often called balsamic stones when they are used in spas for “hot stone” massage therapy. “I warm the stones in hot water and then use them as an extension of my hand to massage the dog,” she says. “These stones have their own healing energy, and by going in deep with that extra warmth, you can really help sore muscles and arthritic conditions. Look for your own smooth, flat river stones or buy them from a massage supply store.”

Another way to use crystals is to leave them in your dog's water bowl or bucket, making sure they can't be swallowed. The crystals are said to leave their energy signature in the water so that when the water is ingested, the energy goes where it is most needed.

Note that some crystals, such as malachite, are for external use only; they are toxic if swallowed. Use only stones that are known to be safe in your dog's water dish. Consult an expert if you aren't sure.

As mentioned in “Canine Energy Healing Techniques” (WDJ November 2007), gem elixirs or crystal essences can be made and used the same way as flower essences.

Clearing and charging

It's easy to think of stones and crystals as static and unchanging, but according to energy experts, rocks and minerals are alive in their own way. Stones can transmit or give off energy, absorb energy, channel and redirect energy, or simply support other stones.

Over time – in some cases a very short time – crystals that absorb or give off energy can lose their effectiveness or wear out. As a result of exposure to electromagnetic pollution, physical pain, negative emotional energy, or other imbalances, they may become darker, feel sticky to the touch, change color, or develop cracks, fissures, bubbles, cloudiness, or spots. On an energetic level, crystals feel weaker and less lively as these changes occur.

Fortunately, there are ways to cleanse or “clear” crystals, stones, and river rocks. Any of these methods can be used when

you first obtain the item and again whenever needed. They include holding a crystal in both hands under cold running water for half a minute or more, burning dried sage leaves in a bowl or shell and passing the crystal through its fragrant smoke, soaking or dipping crystals in sage tea or salt water, breathing on crystals by exhaling slowly through the nose, leaving them out in the rain or sun, burying them in the earth for a few days or weeks, gently washing them with soap (not harsh detergent) and warm (not hot) water, or simply leaving them in the open air. To prevent damage to crystals that might be adversely affected by salt water or long-term soaking, try a brief soak or dip followed by a plain water rinse and air drying.

Crystals worn by dogs should be cleared often, such as every day, and stones used in massage or healing sessions should be cleared after every use to maintain their effectiveness.

To “charge” crystals with positive energies, clear them first and then repeatedly exhale on the crystals, leave them in direct sun for several hours, place them under a pyramid for a day or two, leave them outdoors in snowstorms, thunderstorms, or other dynamic weather conditions, or simply charge the stones with your concentrated intention, affirming that they are filled with love and a positive life force. Sara Brown charges her clip-on crystals with positive energy before sending them to clients, then recharges them daily by sending healing thoughts to animals wearing them.

Crystal collars

In Minneapolis, Minnesota, Mary Ann Field, a canine massage therapist, craniosacral therapist for humans, and Master of Crystalogy, has turned crystal collars for pets into a thriving business.

“The whole idea started 10 years ago with one of my Australian Shepherds,” she says. “She had so many physical problems that I wanted to find a way to help reduce her chronic pain. I knew a crystal expert and had already gotten good results for my own pain by using stones, so I thought crystals might help.”

Her husband, Brink, helped Field make crystal collars by stringing beads on cotton cord attached to copper wire clasps. Their two Aussies tested collars until the results were sturdy enough for daily wear.

“Both dogs were rescues,” she says, “and this gave us a chance to experiment

with stones that addressed their emotional issues. We worked with our own dogs until we got the results we wanted, and then we started sharing the collars with friends.”

Now the Fields’ business, Pelli’s Castle Works, sells a variety of collars made for dogs of all sizes. These collars typically contain two or three types of stones that work well together, she says, sometimes using the dogs’ birth month as a guide.

“It’s interesting how at dog shows, people who pick up the different collars can feel their differences, even when they are new to crystals. Some of the collars feel calming, some are energizing, some are serious, and some just feel fun. Moss agate and blue lace agate are both soothing as well as pretty. Some of the heavier dark stones, like hematite or jasper, are grounding. Others, like tiger’s eye and citrine, are happy stones that channel positive energy. Whenever possible, we suggest showing different collars to dogs so they can select the one they want. You can also do this at home with individual stones.”

In addition to making birth month collars, Field custom-designs collars for dogs with specific issues.

For dogs with separation anxiety, for example, she favors agates for their calming influence, red tiger’s eye for increased confidence, tiger iron for a feeling of safety and security, and lapis lazuli for the instantaneous release of stress.

“I’d use a lot of the same stones that people use when meditating,” she says, “like kyanite and chrysoprase. Then I’d add jasper. There are many kinds and colors of jasper, and they each have their own application, but they all support and strengthen the physical body. Because anxiety is often linked to blocked energy in the body, I’d finish with bloodstone to help clear the blocks.”

For dogs competing in agility or other sports, Field emphasizes howlite, a stone associated with communication. “It helps dogs concentrate and focus,” she says, “plus it helps them work well with their handlers, and it reduces the goofiness and distractibility that can interfere with competition. I’d put fluorite in there, too,

because fluorite is called the IQ stone. It really assists the thought processes. Zebra stone is great for athletes because it helps with stamina, endurance, and support of the physical body. I’d probably add some protective stones like black onyx and hematite to help prevent injury.”

Field’s goal is to include as many appropriate stones as possible without making the collar overwhelming. “That’s why I check intuitively with the animals, to know what they’re comfortable with and what they can take,” she says.

She advises humans to keep an open mind when it comes to energy medicine.



Pelli (left) and Oakley, Mary Ann Field’s Australian Shepherds. Both dogs regularly wear therapeutic crystal collars.



“Our attitude toward energy healing affects how it works.

Dogs are extremely sensitive, and if you disapprove of this technique or know that it isn’t going to work, your dog will pick up on that and it will change the outcome.”

When dogs don’t like crystals

While most dogs take to crystals right away, not all of them do. Some dogs turn away from crystals and don’t want anything to do with them; some become restless and uncomfortable if a crystal is attached to their collar or they are fitted with a crystal collar.

“The first time this happened with one of our collars,” says Field, “the dog responded with extreme fatigue. Within five minutes, she laid down and couldn’t raise her head. It was as though the collar became extremely heavy. This dog was diagnosed with cancer a short time later;

I assume her illness contributed to this extreme reaction.”

When a second dog showed a similar response, Field was ready. “What I learned was that when the stones absorb so much negative energy so quickly, the best way to use the collar is to put it on for a few minutes, then clear the stones for 24 hours or so, then put it on again for a few minutes, and clear them again.”

The second dog had serious health problems, but by following this strategy, he was able to wear the collar for a few more minutes each time. After two months, he was comfortable wearing it all day.

Field notes that in some cases, crystals trigger physical symptoms similar to homeopathy’s healing crisis – for example, a dog with a history of ear infections or hot spots might suddenly show these symptoms – in which case the crystals should be removed, cleansed, and reintroduced gradually.

“Best crystals” for dogs

If you’d like to experiment with crystals, consider these eight stones, which are highly recommended for dogs.

“Rose quartz is number one,” says Field. “It’s all about love and balance, and it’s very powerful. If you have five or six dogs and there are territorial issues, put rose quartz in their water dish.”

Amethyst, she says, is the second most powerful

healing stone. “It’s very protective, soothes the emotions, and stimulates physical healing.”

Field’s third choice is fluorite, the IQ stone. “It helps with focus and concentration and it also absorbs and dissipates electromagnetic stress from our indoor and outdoor environments.”

Quartz is next on the list. “There are several kinds of quartz and all of them protect, rejuvenate, energize, balance energy, boost immunity, and support the animal,” says Field. “I like quartz clusters rather than individual crystals because they’re more concentrated and effective.”

Citrine belongs in your dog’s crystal collection, says Field, because it gives off positive energy. “It’s all about happiness, well-being, prosperity, and everything that’s fun and upbeat.”

Her next recommendation is blue lace agate, a soothing, calming stone that quickly releases stress. "Blue lace agate belongs in any house with multiple animals or wherever conditions are stressful. Like most of the stones on this list, it works wonders in the dog's water bowl."

Rhodochrosite, she says, is important for those with rescued animals. "It helps heal emotional and physical trauma."

Her final recommendation is malachite. "This is especially good for dogs with physical injuries," she says. "It helps relieve physical pain. Place it on the sore area and hold it there for a few minutes,

then clear it, then reapply. It works almost like icing an injury. Do this for five or ten minutes at a time two or three times per day. Just remember that malachite is toxic if swallowed, so don't leave it in your dog's water bowl and never let your dog play with malachite crystals."

Healing with Mother Earth

Since time began, animals have lived in direct contact with the earth. Their feet were always on the ground, they always breathed open air, and the sun and moon illuminated their days and nights.

Even after their human companions

moved into houses, most dogs lived outdoors. Now people and their pets are indoor creatures. Sure, dogs go for walks and enjoy other outdoor activities, but, like most of us, our dogs often spend more than 20 hours a day inside.

According to energy experts, indoor living takes a toll. For one thing, it disrupts our exposure to unfiltered natural light, which is needed by the hypothalamus and other glands for endocrine balance and optimum health. Whenever possible, give your dog access to natural light by letting him stay outdoors or near an open window or on a screened porch. The location doesn't have to be sunny; in fact, shade is preferable. What matters is that nothing interfere with the full spectrum of natural light, such as glass windows or patio doors.

For a fascinating look at the health benefits of unfiltered light, see *Health and Light: The Effects of Natural and Artificial Light on Man and Other Living Things* by John Ott. A pioneer of time-lapse photography, Ott discovered the vital role that natural light plays in the lives of plants and animals. Without it, plants can't set fruit, animals have reproductive problems, and humans and animals develop a variety of modern illnesses, including cancer.

Indoor lighting adds to the problem. Glass windows screen out ultraviolet light, which is a crucial part of the spectrum, but fluorescent and incandescent bulbs are incomplete in other ways. Any lights that change the appearance of colors, so that red lipstick looks black or other colors look distorted, are an extreme example, but even "sunlight" bulbs that look white because the yellow part of the spectrum has been removed can adversely affect the body. It's ironic that the fluorescent lights being touted for their energy efficiency may, according to light researchers, create a host of new health problems, while none of the bulbs labeled "full spectrum" include the complete spectrum of natural light.

For your dog's continuing or improved health, outdoor natural light is best, followed by indoor window light, followed by standard incandescent bulbs, followed by "natural light" or "full-spectrum" fluorescent tubes or incandescent bulbs, followed by tinted fluorescent or incandescent lights, with energy-efficient fluorescents last on your shopping list.

Earthing

Another way in which 21st century people

Resources Mentioned in This Article

RECOMMENDED CRYSTAL READING

Animal Healing and Vibrational Medicine, by Sage Holloway. Blue Dolphin Publishing, 2001. \$16

Crystal Healing for Animals, by Martin J. Scott and Gael Mariani. Findhorn Press, 2002, \$15

The Crystal User's Handbook, by Judy Hall. Sterling, 2002. \$15

The Encyclopedia of Crystals, by Judy Hall. Fair Winds Press, 2006. \$22

Healing with Crystals, by Pamela Louise Chase and Jonathan Pawlik. New Page Books, 2001. \$12

CRYSTAL RESOURCES

Chris Anderson, Kittridge, CO. Vibrational healing and river stone massage. (303) 674-7050

Essential Essences, St. Petersburg, FL. Gemstone essences. essentialessences4you.com

Hope Brown, Fife, Scotland. Sara Hope Brown ships crystals to dogs around the world. Prices range from £11 for people pendants to £18 (\$23 to \$37 US) for clip-on crystals for pets, plus a £7 (\$14.50) shipping fee. hopebrown.co.uk

Just For You Unique Gifts, Lewes, DE. Michelle Buckler's wire-wrapped crystals. (302) 645-0576, gemwrap.com.

Pelli's Castle Works, Minneapolis, MN. MaryAnn Field's crystal collars are priced by length and the cost of materials, with 14- to 17-inch collars averaging \$80 to \$85. The price of larger collars increases \$5 for every 2 inches. All collars are fully guaranteed. pelliscastleworks.com

Star Flower Essences, Santa Barbara, CA. Flower and gemstone essences. (888) 277-4955, staressence.com

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

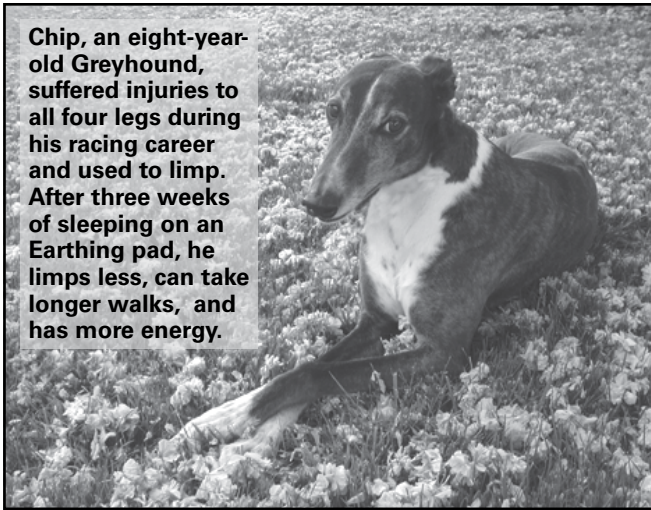
Health and Light: The Effects of Natural and Artificial Light on Man and Other Living Things, by John Ott. Ariel Press, 2000. \$18

Light: Medicine of the Future: How We Can Use It to Heal Ourselves Now, by Jacob Lieberman. Bear & Company, 1991. \$20

"Going Barefoot May Be the Most Important Health Discovery Ever," by Dale Teplitz, MA. *The Price-Pottenger Nutrition Foundation Journal*, Spring 2006 (Vol. 30, No. 1), ppnf.org

Earthing™ bed products. For information about future clinical trials of pet prototype pads, contact Dale Teplitz at barefootbedpad@hotmail.com. barefoothealth.net, (800) 620-9912

Chip, an eight-year-old Greyhound, suffered injuries to all four legs during his racing career and used to limp. After three weeks of sleeping on an Earthing pad, he limps less, can take longer walks, and has more energy.



and dogs are disconnected from Mother Earth is by modern building materials. When we stand barefoot on bare earth, grass, sand, gravel, or concrete, our bodies absorb a constant flow of free electrons. When we're indoors, in our cars, or walking on rubber-soled shoes, we're insulated from the earth's energy flow.

"Disrupting the natural flow of energy from the earth may have negative biological effects," says health researcher Dale Teplitz of San Diego. "That's because the earth's free electrons are essential for synchronizing biological clocks, hormone cycles, and physiological rhythms."

There may be a link between our lack of direct contact with the earth and common inflammatory conditions like arthritis, allergies, heart disease, diabetes, digestive disorders, hormone imbalances, and others.

If your dog spends most of the day and all of the night indoors, do what you can to increase his time outside. Resting or playing in a fenced yard is perfect, as are long walks, hikes, and swims. Direct contact with the earth may be especially important at night, when the earth's effects on human and animal health is said to be most powerful.

For those not able to sleep on the ground, Earthing™ technology products provide contact with the earth even when you're indoors. Bedding products containing conductive materials are connected to the earth by a wire that transmits the earth's free electrons. Medical thermal imaging has shown in before-and-after photos of human subjects that Earthing significantly reduces inflammation in painful joints and increases blood flow to circulation-impaired hands and feet.

Earthing bed pads fit across a bed's bottom sheet so that the sleeper's bare feet rest on the pad, which plugs into a grounded outlet. Many who have used these washable bed pads report reduced pain and muscle tension along with improved sleep.

While a pet version of the Earthing bed pad is not yet commercially available, in the summer of 2007

Teplitz conducted an eight-week preliminary clinical trial of a prototype pad for pets. Questionnaires completed by caregivers showed that in most cases, indoor dogs with arthritis, back pain, fatigue, anxiety, hip dysplasia, chronic coughs, old injuries, or other common problems experienced improvements in energy, stamina, flexibility, muscle tone, calmness, pain levels, and sleep.

One trial participant is Chip, an eight-year-old retired racing Greyhound belonging to Roberta Mikkelsen of Pearl River, New York. Chip limped because of old racing injuries to all four legs and he was anxious and afraid of thunder, fireworks, and other loud noises.

After three weeks of sleeping on an Earthing pad, Chip stopped panting, pacing, shaking, and hiding during storms. Instead, he calmly walked into the bedroom and fell asleep. He even slept through Fourth of July fireworks. Because of leg pain, Chip couldn't get into the car or jump onto the couch for an entire year. "Now, thanks to the Earthing pad, he does both all the time," says Mikkelsen. "He's more playful, jumps and runs more, limps much less, tolerates longer walks, and has far more energy than before."

"Earthing is a new technology," says Teplitz, "so we're still collecting information, but it's safe to suggest that any dog will feel better if he or she spends more time walking, playing, or resting on the bare earth." 🐾

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

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Details, Details

We correct info about a good book, and satisfy frustration over a link.

On page 21 of the December 2007 issue, you promote a book by M. Christine Zink as titled *Peak Performance: Conditioning the Canine Athlete*. Shouldn't it be *Peak Performance: Coaching the Canine Athlete*?

Is there a typo, or is it a separate book with nearly the same title?

Robbins Church
via e-mail

Thanks for the correction! If there was another book by Chris, we'd promote that, too! Sorry about the confusion.

My husband and I love the magazine and were especially interested in your December article about training older dogs. We would love to participate in the Senior Dog Research Project but can't seem to get the link to work for us so that we can do the survey.

Linda Cushman
via e-mail

We checked out the problem and found this reply from a study organizer:

"Thank you for your interest in this research. We received more than 800

responses from all over the world. As we now have sufficient responses we have closed this survey to begin analysis. Please direct any further inquiry to h.salvin@usyd.edu.au."

I guess they didn't realize that WDJ readers could have given them case reports for thousands more senior dogs! We'll try to follow this project and keep you apprised of any interesting developments.

Between the senior dog project, the Rabies Challenge Fund (mentioned on page 2), and the study below, WDJ readers are being given many opportunities to improve dog care and training – too cool!

Opportunity for Owners of Aggressive Dogs

Canine behavioral problems are believed by some authorities to be associated with hypothyroidism (low thyroid levels). For example, in a study involving 1,500 dogs with behavior problems, 62 percent of them were found to have low or low-normal thyroid function.

Probably there are many ways in which low thyroid levels contribute to aggression and other behavioral problems. Thyroid hormones are involved in regulating the levels of neurotransmitters in the brain, most notably serotonin, a brain chemical associated with mood, attention, emotion and sleep. In addition, levels of the stress hormone cortisol increase in hypothyroid animals, mimicking a stress-like state.

Psychiatrists have noted a link between aggression and hypothyroidism since the 1940s and thyroid hormone replacement therapy has been used in human psychiatric medicine for many years. More recently, Drs. Nicholas Dodman and Linda Aronson, of Tufts Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine (TCSVM), with the diagnostic help of Dr. W. Jean Dodds of Hemopet/Hemolife Laboratories in Garden Grove, California, began treating dogs with behavior problems for low, or borderline-low, thyroid levels and noting an improvement in

a variety of behavior problems, including aggression.

While case studies are helpful to point the way, more conclusive evidence - in the form of placebo-controlled, double blinded studies - is ultimately needed to demonstrate the therapeutic value of thyroid replacement therapy in the treatment of canine behavior problems. To address this need, researchers at TCSVM are currently enrolling dogs with low or borderline low thyroid levels that also exhibit owner-directed

aggression, into an eight-week clinical trial.

If you own a dog that growls, lifts a lip, snaps at, or otherwise "bites the hand that feeds," please contact Ms. Nicole Cottam, Animal Behavior Service Coordinator at TCSVM, at (508) 887-4802 or nicole.cottam@tufts.edu for more information about enrolling your dog. Owners of behaviorally qualified dogs will receive a free



thyroid test and free behavior modification advice. A visit to TCSVM is not necessary if your local veterinarian is involved. However, owners must be aware that if their dog is assigned to the placebo group, treatment will not begin for eight weeks.

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

HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association (AHVMA), 2214 Old Emmorton Road, Bel Air, MD 21015. (410) 569-0795. Send a self-addressed,

stamped envelope for a list of holistic veterinarians in your area, or search ahvma.org

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

The Association of Pet Dog Trainers (APDT) has references to member trainers in your area. Not all members employ similar training methods, nor does APDT set standards of skill or competence. Please note that APDT encourages (but does not require) its members to use training methods that use reinforcement and rewards, not punishment. (800) 738-3647; apdt.com

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For example?

"Your dog jumps up because he's dominant." Not!

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Our annual review of the best dry foods available in a post-recall world.

Energy Healing

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Someone Old, Someone New

Things to consider when you have a senior dog and a puppy in the house at the same time.

A Sudden Loss of Balance

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