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The Whole



Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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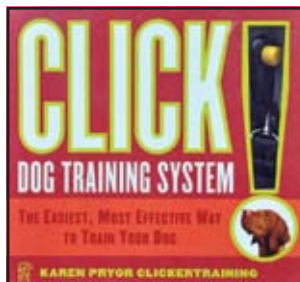
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Fostering Again

Trying to help homeless dogs, one at a time.

BY NANCY KERNS

You may have seen it coming. As I shipped last month's issue to the printer, I was contemplating the fate of the many, many great dogs currently waiting for homes at my local shelter. I didn't mention that I was especially tempted by one particular little dog – one of many, true, but one who stood out to me for some reason as an especially bright diamond in the rough. I'm not sure the shelter staff saw what I saw; every time they saw me take the dog out for a walk they'd sort of shake their heads. "She's a handful," was the most they'd commit to.

I'll admit that the seven-month-old dog is so energetic that it was difficult to slip a collar and leash over her head and get her out of her kennel, and that she ran around like a *maniac* once turned loose in one of the shelter's exercise yards. But the staff members were probably too busy to see what I saw: that in her haste to drag her handler out of the shelter building, she steadfastly tuned out the incredible distraction and din of her fellow inmates' barking and lunging at their kennel doors; that once she stopped zipping around the exercise yard, she was incredibly sweet and affiliative; and that she figured out exactly what you wanted her to do after just one or two treats and words of praise, and repeated her praiseworthy behavior immediately. In other words, she was able to concentrate, even when in a stressful situation; highly friendly to and interested in humans; and quick and easy to train.

Yes, I'm now fostering her.



I'm determined to find her the perfect forever home – and I don't intend for it to be mine! I really do enjoy the ease of a one-dog household, and the close relationship I have with my singleton dog. At the same time, I've been hijacked by a single-minded desire to see this dog in an appropriate and appreciative home.

My husband is perplexed. "We finally have Otto trained to be a really good dog; why on earth would you start all over again with a dog who doesn't know anything?"

I'd be hard-pressed to answer that question as I'm shoring up the flimsy temporary fencing that keeps Otto out of the winter garden – and that Zip (she has a name now) keeps running right through, under, and over. Or when I'm filling the holes she's dug in other places in the yard. Or mopping up the soup she spilled when she jumped up on the kitchen counter to investigate that delicious smell. Or standing outside in freezing weather (even as I'm afflicted with my second winter cold), waiting for Zip to pee, so I can praise and reward her.

But if I find it inconvenient and time-consuming to teach an exuberant, uneducated dog to fit into a human household, how much of a chance does she stand in a home with inexperienced owners, or ones who aren't lucky enough to work at home? We have to do what we can.

Please: Spay, neuter, foster, adopt!

NK

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

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Too Cold to Go?

Five things to do when your dog won't potty outside in bad weather.

BY PAT MILLER

Nasty, cold, blowing, snowing, sleeting, rainy day out and your dog won't go out to potty? I can relate; I don't much like to go out in bad weather either – even if I don't have to poop and pee out there.

Help is on the way. Here are five things you can do to help improve your dog's winter "eliminate outside" outlook:

1 Go out with her. She may be much more willing to brave the elements if her beloved human is with her. If you go with her you can keep her mind on her business, use her potty cue, get her to eliminate more quickly, and you will *know* if she's empty or not. Don't whine; if she has to go out, you can go out too!

2 Condition her to wear a coat and boots. (Go to abronline.org/videos.php to see an excellent video of Jean Donaldson conditioning her Chow, Buffy, to wear a head halter. Then use the same procedure with your dog's coat and boots.)

If she's a short-coated, easily frozen kind of dog (think Chihuahua), you can hardly blame her for not wanting to go out on those wet, windy, or freezing days. When she's happy to wear a coat, select the appropriate one for her from her ample wardrobe – a sweater for cool, blustery, fall days; a raincoat for wet ones; and a comfy down vest over the sweater for the days with real hypothermia potential.

3 Carry a large umbrella. A big golf umbrella can completely protect a small-to-medium-sized dog from rain and snow, and partially protect a large one. While your thick-coated Great Pyrenees and water-resistant Labradors ought to be able to tolerate a little inclement weather, your thin-coated Great Dane might object. Remember to condition your dog to love your umbrella *before* you actually use it for weather purposes.

4 Build a covered potty area outside, and shovel a path to it. Your dog will be happier to do her stuff outside if she has a spot that's sheltered from wind and blowing snow or rain. Make it as close to the house as possible, so she doesn't have to go far to get to it, and *you* don't have to shovel as much snow. Be sure to build the shelter tall enough that you can stand under it, too!

5 Teach her to use an indoor litter box (see "Fine for Littering," WDJ September 2002, for directions on teaching your dog to use a litter box). Or at least put a litter box in your garage, or on your covered porch. The cold-averse part of me thinks this is the best solution of all. If your dog has been really well trained not to go indoors you may need to

start with teaching her to use her litter box outside, and when she'll use it there, bring it indoors. At least you can do the training on warm sunny days, and use one or more of the other options to protect her outside on nasty days, until you're ready to move the box indoors.

Purina makes small litter boxes and "secondnature," a litter especially for dogs (although many dog owners use cat litter in their dog litter boxes). Some pet owners find puppy "pee pads" to be an adequate replacement for a litter box. But there are also a number of products on the market that simulate a bit of lawn for your dog's indoor elimination. The "Porch Potty" (porchpotty.com or 877-787-7339) and the "Pet a Potty" (petapotty.com or 866-738-7297) are both boxes that accommodate the use of either real or artificial grass turf and contain any liquid runoff.

The Ugodog (ugodog.net or 310-748-2599) is a similar system that employs the use of a mesh grating instead of a grass or grass-like surface for the dog to eliminate on. These products are fairly expensive, but may be just the thing for your fair-weather dog.

Happy winter. Stay warm! 🐾

Pat Miller, CPDT, is WDJ's Training Editor. Miller lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. Pat is also author of The Power of Positive Dog Training; Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog; Positive Perspectives II: Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog; and Play with Your Dog. See page 24 for more information.



Thick, waterproof coats for both of you are essential gear for winter potty walks. But you need a BIG umbrella for rainy weather.

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Our favorite dog gear of 2010.



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Available in a wide variety of colors and fabrics.

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Age Is Not a Disease

What an owner thinks of as “just old age” is often a treatable illness.

BY LISA RODIER

Aaron Epstein's 14-year-old Australian Shepherd-mix, Sam, was losing weight and his appetite wasn't the same. “I just thought he was getting old because in addition to not eating with the same vigor, he was slowing down a bit, wasn't able to walk as far, and sleeping a little too much,” Epstein recalls. The once 45-pound dog had shed close to 15 pounds – 30 percent of his body weight – before concerned friends could convince a reluctant Epstein to get Sam to the veterinarian for an exam and blood work, both long overdue.

At the clinic, Sam was found to have an enormous mass growing on his spleen. The pressure from the mass made eating physically uncomfortable for Sam. Epstein followed the veterinarian's recommendation and opted to have Sam's spleen removed, as well as a number of other small tumors around his pancreas. Sadly, the veterinarian also discovered that the cancer was malignant. Although the prognosis for Sam was limited, he was home a few days later, eating like a horse and acting more like his formerly happy-go-lucky self.

From roughly age seven years on, a dog is considered senior, or geriatric, and it's important that owners realize that old age is not a disease! If your senior dog is losing weight, drinking and urinating more than he used to, can't walk as far as he once did, or is exhibiting other changes in behavior, he's not “just getting old” – he's not well! Changes in our geriatric dog friends are usually indicators of early chronic disease.

Aging is a natural process that is the result of the net effect of negative changes in physiology over time. In a chapter of *Geriatrics and Gerontology of the Dog and Cat*, William Fortney, DVM, writes, “A common characteristic of aging body systems is progressive and irreversible change. The effects of disease, stress, malnutrition, lack of exercise, genetics, and environment may hasten this change.”

There are common metabolic and physical effects of aging, but these should not be confused with chronic disease. Older dogs can be expected to experience a decreased metabolic rate, decreased immune competence and greater susceptibility to infection, and reduced thermoregulation. In addition, each organ system undergoes changes as dogs age. Examples of some of the physical changes that naturally occur with age include:

■ **Digestive system:** Gastric mucosa

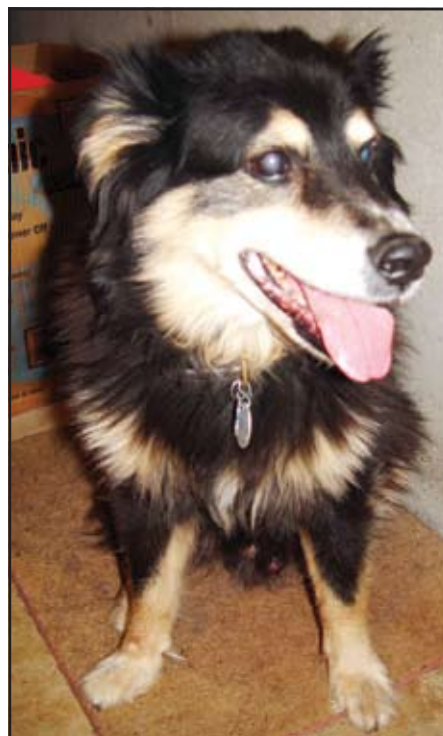


PHOTO BY AARON EPSTEIN

Fourteen-year-old Sam lost a lot of weight in a short time, but it wasn't due to “old age.” A vet found a cancerous tumor on his spleen.

atrophies, hepatocyte (liver cell) numbers decrease.

■ **Endocrine system:** Pancreatic enzyme secretion decreases, hyperplasia of pituitary or adrenal glands.

■ **Integument:** Skin becomes inelastic, footpads hyperkeratinize (get thicker), claws become brittle, muzzle grays.

■ **Cardiovascular system:** Lungs lose elasticity, vital capacity (volume) decreases, cough reflex and expiratory capacity decrease, cardiac output decreases.

■ **Genitourinary system:** Kidney weight decreases, prostate gland enlarges, testes

What you can do . . .

- When your dog turns seven years old, consider instituting a schedule of biannual veterinary wellness exams.
- Pay attention to subtle changes in your dog's appetite; eating less is not a normal behavior for dogs. They are not good self-regulators! Feed separate meals, rather than free feeding. This will allow you to notice changes in his eating habits more easily, including subtle changes in appetite.
- Keep your dog lean, offer mental stimulation and physical exercise, keep her stress levels low, and offer lots of “feel good” care.
- Take your dog to the veterinarian sooner rather than later should you notice any changes in her.



atrophy (intact dogs), prepuce becomes pendulous.

■ **Musculoskeletal system:** percent of body weight represented by fat increases; muscle, bone, and cartilage mass are lost; bones become brittle; bone marrow becomes fatty and hypoplastic.

■ **Nervous system:** number of cells decreases; reduced reaction to stimuli; altered memory; diminished visual acuity, hearing, taste perception, and smell.

Although it is possible that one of these effects might lead to deterioration in body function, each alone is simply a result of the natural aging process. It's when one or more of these changes progresses that we begin to see chronic disease. If even one of these changes occurs in your dog, it's worth mentioning to your dog's veterinarian to confirm whether it's a normal aging change, or a preliminary sign of disease.

Someone to watch over me

"It's easy to list the common signs that indicate a potential problem, such as loss of appetite, increased drinking or urination, unusual bumps or discharges, vomiting or diarrhea, constipation, and lethargy/depression," says holistic veterinarian Susan Wynn, DVM, CVA, CVCH, RH, of Georgia Veterinary Specialists in Atlanta. "But I find that owners frequently miss two of the more common problems. A 'loss of appetite' can be total or partial, but if it's a partial loss, most owners tend to think their dogs have become 'picky.' Many people will try to get their 'picky' dogs to eat better for months while the disease process that caused the appetite change goes on unabated. This is an important message: If your dog has eaten well all of his life and suddenly becomes picky, this is a danger sign.

"The other thing that many owners miss is weight loss. If you think your dog has inadvertently lost weight, make a veterinary appointment *now*, because it means something went awry weeks to months ago."

We need to do our part at home to notice changes in our canine friends. But don't discount the expertise that your dog's veterinarian can offer. Even when we don't suspect a problem, geriatric wellness exams once (or even better, twice a year) are important. Start this practice (if you haven't already) when your dog is

about age seven. Regular senior wellness checks, complete with full blood work and urinalysis, and examination of your dog's liver and kidney values, can be helpful in catching disease early.

"Because people see their dogs every day, sometimes they don't see changes in those dogs. Getting a dog in for an exam twice – or even once – a year can uncover problems," says Nick Berryessa, DVM, DACVIM, who also practices at Georgia Veterinary Specialists in Atlanta. "Put the dog on the scale, for example, and maybe we'll see that he's lost 10 pounds since last year. That's a significant amount, even if it's a 100-pound dog. If a person lost 10 percent of his body weight without changing his diet or exercise, it would be a red flag."

What can go wrong

The geriatric dog can develop multifactorial problems; with an exam, you might be able to see why your dog is eating less, for example. Perhaps his teeth hurt and he has arthritis, both issues that should be individually investigated.

Dr. Berryessa outlined a few of the more common diseases that might be found in our geriatric dogs. Please note that each one, however, can be caused by a number of different disease processes.

■ Osteoarthritis

Leading the pack is osteoarthritis, especially in larger dogs and dogs who are

overweight. One of the most important things we can do to ward off joint problems is to keep our dogs on the thin side; doing so has been proven to extend life expectancy. Nevertheless, with age can come signs such as lameness or slowing down that tell us that joint trouble is setting in. Ask your veterinarian to evaluate your dog and feel his joints, looking for pain in the joints, and consider x-rays to definitively pinpoint the problem.

From there, come up with a holistic plan to add the proper supplements, modalities such as massage and acupuncture, and, if necessary, prescription pain medication to give your dog relief. Dr. Wynn's hierarchy of interventions for dealing with arthritis pain, starts with the basics such as glucosamine/chondroitin and fish oil. Then she suggests advancing, step by step, to include a more powerful glucosamine-type supplement (such as Thorne Research's Arthroplex); massage; acupuncture; chiropractic; anti-inflammatory and analgesic herbs; shockwave, laser, or stem cell therapy; and non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) or other prescription pain medications.

■ Chronic kidney disease

The cause of chronic kidney disease is not always known. Over time, the kidneys lose their ability to do their job, which is to eliminate waste from the body. Left unchecked, kidney disease can lead to other



Graying of the muzzle (or entire face!) is one of the common signs of aging. Age itself is not a disease – but some of the other changes we see in our senior dogs are signs of disease.

problems. One of the first signs of impaired kidney function is increased water intake and output of urine. At the point that the dog becomes unable to concentrate his urine, about two-thirds of his kidney function has already been lost. It's important to provide a dog with kidney disease with ample fresh water and keep him hydrated. Diet also plays a role in managing this condition.

Urinalysis and blood tests conducted during an annual exam for Cathy Maher's 14-year-old Lhasa Apso-mix, Dakota, in May 2007 indicated chronic kidney disease. Only a month earlier, Dakota had been diagnosed with mitral regurgitation (chronic mitral valve disease) after experiencing bouts of reverse sneezing, decreased appetite, increased lethargy, and a heart murmur. When the kidney disease was discovered, Dakota had no obvious symptoms other than some periodic decreased appetite and lethargy; these signs would have been easy to attribute to the mitral valve disease, had Cathy and her vet not been paying attention.

Dakota's veterinarian felt that the chronic kidney disease was the bigger of the two issues for Dakota, and if they were able to get it under control, Dakota could have a quality life for two or three more years. Cathy was disheartened because she knew the condition, although treatable, was not curable. But she and her husband were committed to ensuring that they did everything they could to support Dakota's quality of life.

They changed Dakota's food, began fluid administration as needed at the vet, Calcitriol therapy, and a Vetri-Science Renal Essentials supplement in addition to continuing other supplements that he was already taking. With the intervention, careful treatment plan, and what Cathy describes as a fantastic veterinary team, Dakota did go on to live a high quality life for two more years, nearly reaching the 17 year mark.

■ Hypothyroidism

An underactive thyroid might reveal itself in a dog who has average, or even decreased, appetite, but in spite of that, is gaining weight. Weight gain despite level feeding is often the primary sign of hypothyroidism, but a poor hair coat or loss of energy may also be seen. A full thyroid panel can identify the disorder, and with the proper level of thyroid supplementation and periodic re-testing, your pal should



PHOTO BY CATHY MAHER

Dakota's heart and kidney disease were caught early when his guardian noticed subtle changes in his behavior. With an integrative veterinary approach and an emphasis on quality of life, Dakota lived happily and peacefully for another two years after his initial diagnosis.

be back on track in no time. Because the thyroid gland regulates metabolism of all body cellular functions, left untreated, hypothyroidism can lead to a significantly decreased quality of life for your pet. In most cases, the untreated condition will progress over months and years to result eventually in end-stage disease.

■ Diabetes mellitus

Classic signs of diabetes mellitus include weight loss despite having a good appetite, and increased water intake and urination. In dogs, diabetes is associated with a dysfunction in insulin production. Because the dog cannot utilize the glucose in his bloodstream, it spills over into his urine; the disease is detected via urinalysis.

Dr. Berryessa explains what is going on in the dog, physiologically: "The dog loses weight because insulin is required to drive glucose into the cells. Without insulin, very few of the cells use glucose and as a result, those cells starve. That's why an undiagnosed diabetic dog eats a lot and still loses weight; he can't use the breakdown product of carbohydrates, which is glucose. He's trying to use other things, like fats and other sources of energy, and

so he loses protein and fat stores. It's as if the dog were starving." Typical treatment is administration of insulin injections and proper diet.

■ Cushing's disease

Another endocrine disease is Cushing's (hyperadrenocorticism), which is overproduction of the hormone cortisol. Dogs with Cushing's often experience increased thirst and water intake, increased urination, increased appetite, and lethargy. (Note that these symptoms are similar to those typically seen in a dog who has been subjected to a course of prednisone, a therapeutic corticosteroid).

Cushing's disease is usually due to a tumor on the adrenal glands or a problem with the pituitary gland. A standard blood test might yield unusual results, but usually special endocrine testing is necessary to diagnose Cushing's. Without treatment, the dog's life span might be affected and his quality of life will dramatically worsen. Treatment consists of medication to control the overproduction of cortisol by the adrenal gland or surgery to remove the abnormal adrenal gland. Which treatment is chosen depends on whether the pituitary or adrenal gland is responsible.

■ Liver disease

Typically liver disease in dogs is a chronic condition, caused by autoimmune or inflammatory disease. Few dogs will display clinical signs early in the disease process, or they'll have very non-specific signs: they're not eating very well, losing weight, slowing down, or (sometimes) will have increased water intake.

The only way to detect liver disease early is through blood tests – making another case for testing once or twice a year – in which elevated liver enzymes are revealed. There are other conditions that can cause an increase in liver enzymes, so further diagnostics such as ultrasound might be necessary for a proper diagnosis.

■ Cancer

According to Alice Villalobos, DVM, author of *Canine and Feline Geriatric Oncology: Honoring the Human-Animal Bond*, and a well-known pioneer in the field of cancer care for companion animals, more than half of our senior pets will be diagnosed with cancer. She points out that aging and cancer are closely correlated; as our pets lose their immune ability to fix all the mutations that happen in their bodies every day, they become more susceptible to cancer.

Appetite and weight loss can be caused by cancer. Most of the time, cancer is not detected through blood test results. According to Dr. Berryessa, blood tests won't always indicate whether an animal has cancer, but are valuable for monitoring the dog's overall health.

"People think of canine cancer in terms of lymphomas and leukemia in people. Although we see a lot of lymphoma in dogs, I wouldn't say that a lot of them have cancer cells in their bloodstream. They usually have cancer in lymph nodes or organs, which we wouldn't have any idea of from just a blood panel. A lot of times we have to look a little harder to find those things."

Dr. Wynn adds, "When blood work is normal, and the dog clearly has a problem, that's when we start suspecting cancer." Detection is typically via palpation and imaging (x-rays, ultrasound) of the chest and abdomen to look for any masses or abnormalities in organs. "The dog might have other symptoms, such as losing

weight or maybe drinking or urinating more than normal, or maybe they look distended," Dr. Berryessa says, "but some of these tumors we might find incidentally. Somebody does an x-ray, for example, and finds a mass. The dog might not even be symptomatic for it."

Johnny Hoskins, DVM, PhD, DACVIM, an expert in geriatrics and gerontology of the dog and cat, warns, "The early detection of cancer in geriatric animals is complicated by the presence of concurrent illnesses that mask early clinical signs of neoplastic disease; signs that could draw immediate attention and concern in a young animal are often accepted in an older animal as a consequence of aging." That this disease is one that can be masked in our elderly dogs presents another case for twice-yearly veterinary exams.

Treatable versus terminal

We might want to blame "old age" for any disease in our senior dogs and look the other way for fear of what lies ahead. But keep in mind that not all conditions that can afflict senior dogs are terminal; with early intervention and proper care, your dog might well have a normal life expectancy. Hypothyroidism, for example, need not ever affect lifespan.

Expected survival from any chronic illness depends on the animal's general medical status as well as the stage of the primary disease. "It depends on the caregiver's ability to manage the illness," says Dr. Wynn. "Chronic kidney disease

diagnosed at stage 1 can be managed for three to seven years in my experience, if the owner is really willing to do everything it takes. Osteoarthritis can be managed until death occurs from other causes, but if an owner is unwilling or unable to institute weight loss in an obese animal and administer supplements and drugs, it is conceivable that osteoarthritis could be a cause of euthanasia as pain prevents a pet from functioning."

Detection versus prevention

For Aaron Epstein, it was hard to see Sam – his companion of 13 years, who'd been with him through thick and thin – grow old. But Sam lived another three months after his surgery, and Epstein felt that Sam lived a good and happy last few months, "eating really good food and being spoiled." Did Epstein have any regrets? "I am glad that we did the surgery because the vet said that the tumor could have easily burst and that would have been a very bad end for him. In hindsight, I should have taken him to the vet a few months earlier as the tumor was likely causing the lack of appetite."

Although we continue to do what we can to mitigate the effects of aging through diet, management of our dog's environment, and a holistic veterinary approach, most of the above conditions cannot be prevented. The structural and metabolic changes associated with age, coupled with genetics and environmental stressors, make it possible that any of our canine companions are susceptible to disease.

That said, if we are assiduous about getting our senior dogs to the vet at least once, and preferably twice a year, we may be able to detect these conditions in their earliest stages. And early detection might be almost as good as prevention.

In the next issue: When your senior companion nears the end of his life, your focus shifts from cure to comfort. Next month we'll discuss the nuts and bolts of hospice care, and how to ensure that your beloved friend's quality of life (and yours) remains intact through to his final days. 🐾

Lisa Rodier lives in Alpharetta, Georgia. She is also a volunteer with the American Bouvier Rescue League.



More than half of our senior dogs will be diagnosed with cancer. An at-home lump check on the author's 13-year-old Bouvier revealed this melanoma. Vigilant owners play an important role in observing their dogs' health.

Double Trouble

Why experts warn against adopting two puppies at the same time – and what you can do for your dogs if you did not heed the warning.

BY PAT MILLER

There's no denying it: a new puppy is one of the world's most wonderful things. It's a cold, hard heart that doesn't get all mushy over puppy breath, soft pink puppy pads, and the fun of helping a baby dog discover his new world. So, if one puppy is wonderful, *two* puppies must be *twice* as wonderful, right? Well, not usually.

Most training professionals strongly recommend against adopting two pups at the same time. The biggest challenge of adopting puppy pairs is their tendency to bond very closely with each other, often to the exclusion of a meaningful relationship with their humans. They can become inseparable. Also, owners often underestimate the time commitment required to properly care for and train two puppies; as a result the pups often end up untrained and undersocialized.



Unbearably cute? Yes. A good idea? No. Just because you have two kids and they both want their own puppy doesn't mean you should get two pups. You stand the best chance of raising well-trained and -socialized puppies one at a time.

What you can do . . .

- Think long and hard about getting two puppies at the same time. Make sure you'll be able to give both dogs **everything** they need.
- If you do get two puppies, make a firm commitment to spend social time and training time with them separately, to avoid having them super-bond with each other.
- Consider instead adopting one puppy now and another later, or better yet, one puppy now and an **adult** dog later.



Don't do it

I'm the last person on earth to argue against getting a second dog, or even a third; my husband and I have five. However, there are very good reasons to think long and hard about *not* getting two puppies at once, whether they are siblings or not.

While the majority of new puppy owners seem to recognize that one puppy is enough of a responsibility for them, a certain number fall prey to one of a few common arguments about why two puppies might be better than one. I can rebut every one of them!

Let's take a look at the most common reasons that people say they want to adopt two puppies at the same time – and why they shouldn't be considered.

Two-pup rationale #1: *"I want to get two puppies so they will have someone to play*

with while I'm gone all day at work."

It's a good thing to recognize that your pup could use companionship during the day. However, if you think *one* puppy can get into trouble when you're not there, just think what kinds of mischief *two* pups can cook up when left to their own devices.

Better solutions might include:

- ◆ Adopt your new pup at a time when someone in your family can take a week (or several) off work to stay home and help the puppy adjust gradually to being left alone. A couple of weeks vacation time? Kids home for the summer? Just be sure to use the time wisely, so your pup can learn to happily accept being alone when it's time to go back to work or school.
- ◆ Find a friend, neighbor, or relative who is home much of the time and who

is willing to provide daycare for your pup – and experience the joys of having a puppy to play with during the day, without the long-term responsibilities and costs of having a dog for 15-plus years.

◆ Ask your vet if she has another client with a similar-age puppy, and see if the two of you can mingle your pups at one of your *puppy-proofed* homes for puppy daycare, and send the second baby dog back home after work. Note the emphasis on “puppy-proofed.” Two pups can still get into a heap of trouble, even if one of them isn’t yours.

Two-pup rationale #2: *I have two children and they each want their own puppy.*

What a sweet idea. Just say no. Since when do the kids get to make the rules? Seriously, most families I know have enough trouble getting their kids to fulfill their promise to feed, walk, and clean up after *one* family dog. Mom ends up doing most of it anyway. So now Mom gets to do double-puppy-duty? If there’s a compelling reason for them each to have a dog, consider adopting one puppy now, and an *adult* dog from a shelter or rescue group. Even then, I’d adopt one first and give her at least a month to settle in, if not longer, before adopting the second.

If you *must* adopt two puppies at the same time for the kids, see the second half of this article.

Two-pup rationale #3: *We want to have two dogs eventually anyway, so we might as well get them at the same time so they can grow up together as best friends.*

Well, that’s what you might well get! When you raise two puppies together they usually do grow up to be inseparable best friends, often to the detriment of the dog-human relationship. Inevitably they spend far more time together than they do individually with you, with a likely result that they become very tightly bonded to each other and you are only secondary in their lives. Many owners of adopted-at-the-same-time puppies ultimately find themselves disappointed in their relationships with their dogs, even when they are committed to keeping them for life.

This super-bonding also causes tremendous stress (and stress-related behavior problems) on those occasions when the dogs *do* have to be separated – and sooner or later, something will come up that requires them to be separated: one goes

to training class and the other doesn’t, you want to walk one but not both, or a health-related problem requires one to be hospitalized or otherwise kept separate.

Two-pup rationale #4: *A second puppy will play with the first and keep her occupied when I’m too busy to spend time with her.*

Nice thought, but here’s a heads-up. If you’re too busy to give *one* puppy the time she needs, you’re definitely too busy for *two* puppies!

There are great interactive dog toys on the market that can help occupy your pup when you can’t play with her – and don’t think that either another puppy or a pen full of toys can substitute for social time with *you*. Puppies do take time, and it’s important you give that some serious thought before adding a baby dog to the family. It’s fine to give her playmate-time via arranged play dates with a friend’s healthy and compatible puppy, but don’t think adopting a second pup is an acceptable substitute for your own interaction with your puppy.

Two-pup rationale #5: *If we adopt a second puppy, that’s one fewer that might be euthanized.*

I won’t argue with this, except to say that in many shelters around the country today, puppies aren’t the problem. Of course there are exceptions, but I’d say the majority of shelters in the United States

now have no problems placing most if not all the *puppies* they get. It’s the adult dogs who are most likely to die because of homelessness. If you *really* want to save a life, adopt a grown-up dog instead of a puppy, or at least adopt your puppy now, and come back for an adult dog in a few months.

Two-pup rationale #6: *The breeder we are buying our puppy from thinks it’s best if we take two.*

If you’re buying from a breeder who encourages you to purchase two puppies at once, run away fast. A truly responsible breeder will, in most cases, *refuse* to sell two puppies to one home, except on the rare occasion that a prospective buyer can prove she has the skill, knowledge, time, ability, and monetary resources to provide an excellent environment for two pups at once. Someone who tries to push two puppies on a buyer isn’t a very responsible breeder, and isn’t doing her puppies, or the new owner, any favors.

What to do if you adopt two

Perhaps you’ve already adopted two puppies and are ruefully regretting your error. Or maybe you don’t regret it, but you realize you’ve taken on far more of a responsibility than you realized. Perhaps you’re determined to go ahead and do it anyway, despite my advice above. If you *do* take the bait and find yourself in double trouble, there are things you can do to



Of course you want your dogs to get along. But you probably don’t want them to get along so well with each other that they hardly take notice of the human members of the family – a common result of raising canine siblings together.

minimize problems and maximize your success as the owner of a puppy pair:

■ **Crate them separately.** Your pups are going to have plenty of together time; they don't need to sleep together too. You can certainly leave them together in their puppy-proofed space when you're gone all day, but they should be crated separately at night. You can crate them near each other, but this is the perfect time to start habituating them to not *always* being in close contact with their sibling. (See "Crating Woes," WDJ May 2005.) When they are comfortable in their crates *close* to each other, you can gradually increase distance between crates until they can be crated out of sight of each other, perhaps even in another room.

You can also do the "separate crating" thing cold turkey. If your children are old enough to be responsible for taking their pups out in the middle of the night, start from day one with a pup crated in each kid's room.

In any case, the puppies' separate crates should be in someone's bedroom. This is vitally important so someone hears them when they wake at night and have to go out. The pups also benefit from the eight hours of close contact with you, even though you're all sleeping. And by the way, you can bet if *one* puppy wakes up to go out, the *other* puppy in her nearby crate will wake up, too.

■ **Train them separately.** Your training programs will be much more successful if you take the time to work with your pups individually. If you are using clicker training (and I hope you are!), you'll probably find that it's confusing and difficult to try to click and reward one pup for doing a desired behavior when the other pup is doing an unwanted behavior. When this happens, both pups think they got clicked, which means you're reinforcing the unwanted behavior as well as the desired one. Oops! Not to mention that it's much more difficult to get and keep any semblance of attention from either puppy if the other is present as a distraction.

Training time is a perfect opportunity to give your pups a positive association with being separated. One gets to play (train) with you and get attention, clicks, and yummy treats, while the other gets to hang out in her crate in another room, preferably far enough away she can't hear you clicking, and empty her deliciously stuffed Kong.

If there's a second trainer in your family, that person can work with the second pup in another room at the same time. Eventually you can each work with them at the same time in the *same* room, and sometime in the future one person can have fun working with them *both* at the same time. But that's down the road somewhere, after they've both learned their good manners lessons very well.

■ **Play with them separately.** It's common in puppy pairs for one pup to be more assertive than the other, and take the lead in puppy activities. It's fine to play with them together *some* of the time, and it's also important to play with them separately, so the more assertive pup doesn't always get to make the rules for the other.

For example, if you always play "fetch" with the two together, you're likely to see that one pup repeatedly gets the toy and brings it back, while the other runs happily along behind. If you watch closely, you may even see the more assertive one do a little body language warning if the other *tries* to get the toy – a hard stare and stiffened body, perhaps. The less assertive one defers to her sibling by letting go of the toy and looking away. That's a fine and normal puppy interaction, but it can suppress the "softer" pup's retrieving behavior. Unless you make the effort to give her positive reinforcement for fetching toys when you play with her *alone*, you might find it difficult to get her to retrieve later on in her training.

■ **Walk and socialize them separately.** Just as with your training sessions, you'll need to walk one pup while leaving the other behind with something wonderful, or while someone else walks the other one in the opposite direction around the block. Walking them together with different handlers doesn't work; the less confident pup will come to rely on the presence of the more confident one to be brave in the real world. Then, when the more confident one isn't there, the shyer pup is more likely to be fearful. All the activities you would normally do with one pup, you need to do with each pup individually.

Signing up for puppy training class? Set aside two nights, not one, and take them to separate classes. Going to the groomer? It's two trips, not one. Time for that next set of puppy shots? Make two appointments, not one. Oh okay, I'll give you a break – it doesn't have to be *every time*, but they should go somewhere by themselves at least as often as they go together.

So, are you getting the idea of the "separate but equal" program? Everything you would do with one puppy you need to do with each puppy separately. This is to be sure they're both getting the attention, training, and socialization experiences they need, without the interference of the other pup, and so they're not dependent on the



Unless you train, walk, and socialize them separately, one sibling is likely to emerge as a leader – one whom the other sibling relies on for social cues and direction. Ideally, you want both siblings to become confident and independent.

presence of other pup. Of course you can also do things with them together, but you *must* be sure they are completely relaxed and comfortable about being apart.

For super-bonded dogs, separation becomes a world-class crisis, fraught with life-threatening behaviors such as anorexia (refusal to eat in the other's absence), separation anxiety (barking, destructive behavior, relentless pacing, and howling), and other stress-related behaviors, including aggression.

Inevitably, at some time in their lives super-bonded dogs will have to be separated. One will get sick, or need surgery, when the other doesn't. Most of the time, one will die before the other. I know of cases where the surviving dog of a super-bonded pair has had to be euthanized after the partner died, as he was too stressed by himself to be able to function. This is not a situation any loving dog owner wants to face.

Other things to consider

Behavioral considerations are the reason that most trainers recommend against adopting two puppies at once. But there are other reasons that have nothing to do with the dogs' behavior.

■ **Cost.** Not surprisingly, it costs twice as much for routine feeding and care for two puppies as it does for one. But don't forget the catastrophic care costs! If one pup contracts a deadly disease such as parvovirus, you're on your way to the emergency clinic with two pups, not one. Sure, if one gets injured the other's not likely to have sympathy injuries, but with two pups the chances of one getting injured in some manner double.

■ **Clean up.** Let's not forget puppy pee and poo. One pup produces more than enough waste for any sane human to deal with, and with two pups you naturally double the production.

If that isn't enough, consider this: You leave your pups in an exercise pen when you're not home. One pup is likely to learn to eliminate in a corner of the pen reasonably quickly, and will hopefully avoid tromping through it. *Two* puppies may select two different corners of the pen as



Dogs who are super-bonded may suffer when, inevitably, one has to be separated from the other. Do them a favor and make sure they can tolerate being alone at times.

designated bathroom spots, which doubles the chances of poop tromping. On top of that, if the two pups get to wrestling, as pups do, there's a much greater likelihood of them rolling around in poo than there is if one pup is playing by herself.

Picture yourself coming home from a long, hard day at work, tired, looking forward to a little loving puppy cuddling, to find a pair of poo-covered pups in a pen plastered with the stuff from one side to the other. I'm just sayin'...

■ **Housetraining.** Of course, when you're home, the puppies come out of the pen to be with you. We normally recommend the umbilical cord approach to housetraining: at first keeping your pup on a leash or tether, or with you, under your eagle eye, all the time, and going out to the designated potty spot every hour on the hour.

Now you're tied to *two* puppies who want to wrestle with each other under your feet – or one's tied to you and one to another family member. As the pups mature you lengthen the time between potty breaks and start relaxing supervision, when the pups demonstrate their ability to "hold it."

Oops! There's a puddle. Which pup did it? Oh look, there's a wee puppy pile of poo under the dining room table. Oh no! I see teeth marks on the corner of the antique loveseat! If you have one puppy and you're having a persistent problem, you clearly know who needs more supervision, or a quick trip to the vet to rule out a possible medical issue. With two pups, you have to increase management and supervi-

sion on both of them, and may never know for sure which one is having accidents. Or maybe it's both!

■ **Gender.** Some people say if you're going to have two puppies, get a boy and a girl. Others say get two boys. Some might specifically warn *against* getting two girls, stating that two female adult dogs in the same family will fight. Others will tell you they've had two girl dogs at the same time, no problem.

Here's my take: Plenty of same-sex puppy pairs get along just fine throughout their lives. Plenty of mixed-sex pairs do the same. There are same sex pairs

that end up with conflicts, and there are mixed-sex pairs that end up fighting with each other (despite super-bonding). It does seem to be true (and there are some studies that indicate) that intra-pack conflicts involving two females *tend* to be more intense than intra-pack issues between two males, or opposite sex pairs. That doesn't mean there *will be* conflict if you adopt two girl puppies, only that if there is, it *may* be more difficult to resolve than differences of opinions between two boys, or a boy and a girl.

Think about it

Is the extra fun of having two puppies at one time worth all the extra time, energy, cost, and headaches? I'm warning you not to do it. I'm recommending you adopt one now, and another in six months to a year, when the first has bonded with you, and at least completed her basic good manners training.

But if you decide to do it anyway, and are ready to do all it takes to make it work, then you have my sincere blessings and best wishes. But please, be honest and realistic about whether you and your other human family members really have the resources and commitment to give *both* pups what they need to ensure their lifelong loving home with you. Go find your two wonderful puppies and have an absolutely great life with them. 🐾

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Home Away From Home

What's the best boarding option for your dog?

BY STEPHANIE M. COLMAN

There are many things to consider when choosing to share your life with a dog. Knowing who will care for your dog or dogs when you have to be away from home is just as important as knowing how you'll provide for their everyday needs. Even if overnight travel isn't part of your regular routine, it's wise to think ahead and have a plan for overnight care – just in case it's ever needed. You never know when a family or local emergency may force you and your pets to spend a night or two apart.

Fortunately, today's dog owners have several choices for pet care, ranging from in-home care provided by visiting pet sitters, to a wide range of commercial kenneling options. Each comes with its own unique list of pros and cons and no one choice is right for every dog. It's important to do your homework when considering boarding. After all, you are literally putting your dog's life in the hands of another.

In-home care

Providing care for your dog in your own home is one option, by either recruiting a trusted friend or family member or contracting with a professional pet sitter or sitting service.

Some people choose to have a pet sitter visit several times each day, while others prefer hiring someone to temporarily take up residence in their home. Unless the visiting sitter will make multiple visits throughout the day, this option provides the least amount of supervision for your pet.

In this scenario, your dog is left alone and unsupervised for an unusually long period of time, and for that reason, this option is generally considered to be the most risky.

In contrast, arranging for someone to live in your home while you are gone can provide a greater amount of supervision of your dog with the least amount of disruption to your dog's daily routine. In-home

service providers can bring in the mail, water plants, and give your home a lived-in appearance.

When choosing an in-home pet care provider, it's important to consider the unique needs of your dog and the experience level of the sitter. While a friend or family member may opt to help care for your dog at no charge, and may have a personal history with your pet, they may not be as educated in the fine details of dog care, particularly in things such as recognizing the early signs of stress or distress, or the myriad ways a determined escape artist can find to Houdini his way out of a seemingly secured area.

With a reputable pet sitting service, employees should be screened, professionally trained, bonded, and insured, and pet sitters should be well-versed in all aspects of domestic animal care. As an added bonus, large pet sitting companies generally employ enough personnel to

What you can do . . .

- Research **and tour** prospective boarding facilities well before you need one.
- Conduct a test run of whatever situation you've deemed best on one night when you are available to deal with any problem that might arise.



be able to accommodate last-minute bookings, something not often possible when calling on the aid of a friend, family member, or single-sitter service. This professional training and flexibility comes at a price, however.



You may never find a boarding facility that will make your dog feel *this* comfortable when you have to leave him behind for a vacation or business trip. But it would be nice if the staff members tried!

Similar to recruiting someone to temporarily reside in your home, you may opt to have your dogs stay overnight at the home of a trusted friend, family member, or professional pet sitter. This is slightly more disruptive for your dog than staying in her familiar environment, but it works well for many pet owners, especially when the pet knows the person with whom he'll be staying and/or when the pet is older and not as apt to adjust well to a busy kennel.

Before packing your pup's overnight bag and dropping him off at Aunt Betty's, it's important to be aware of environmental differences that could impact your pet. Does the host have dogs of her own? If so, how do your dogs get along? If they haven't met, be sure to arrange a meet-and-greet prior to travelling so that personality conflicts can surface and be dealt with in advance. Double-check to make sure your pet cannot slip through fencing or other enclosures. Be sure to educate your pet's host on any behavioral quirks that may impact his safety, such as a tendency to door-dart or ingest stray socks! If your host has a swimming pool and your dog has not been taught how to safely swim to the steps, ask that your dog not be left outside unsupervised.

Commercial options

A variety of options exist for owners who prefer to professionally board their dogs. Pet owners can choose from conventional kennel environments to upscale "resort-style" facilities that offer extra services such as group playtime, interactive food puzzles, training time, or grooming and spa services. Many facilities offer "cage-free" boarding where the dogs spend their time roaming with fellow guests and bedding down for the night on dog beds in a common area, while others have dogs confined to their kennels throughout the day except while being exercised by kennel staff.

Keep in mind that what works best for one dog might quickly spell disaster for another. Regardless of the type of service or facility you choose, it's imperative to get to know the ins and outs of the service provider. The following considerations can be helpful in making an educated decision:

■ **Compliance with state and local regulations and adherence to professional standards and practices.** The kenneling industry is unregulated at the Federal level, leaving individual cities and states to implement regulations as they see fit. According to Pet Care Services Asso-

ciation (PCSA), a non-profit organization dedicated to assuring standards of quality and professional care, only about 20 states have adopted any formal regulatory standards for boarding kennels.

As such, many kennel owners operate with little more than a standard business license. When regulations do exist at the city or state level, they are usually minimal and simply address things such as preventing animal cruelty and requiring that adequate food, water, and shelter be available – not exactly standards that put your mind at ease when leaving your pet for the weekend.

"The pet-owning public has expectations when it comes to boarding," says Charlotte Biggs, CKO and board president of PCSA and co-owner of Stay N Play Pet Ranch®, Inc., in Dripping Springs, Texas. "There are so few regulations available. Our mission is to fill that void."

For a fee, membership in PCSA is open to any individual or legally operating business that is actively engaged in the non-veterinary care of pets as a primary service. All active members must agree to adhere to the organization's Code of Ethics and Pet Owner's Bill of Rights, both of which are available for review online

Preparing Your Dog for Boarding

Kennel owner Barb Gibson offers the following tips:

- Expose your dogs to the boarding experience early. Even if you prefer to leave your pet with a trusted family friend, you never know when circumstances might suddenly warrant a stay in a commercial kennel. The older the dog, the harder it is to adjust to the unfamiliar.
- Provide your dog with basic training so that kennel staff can clearly communicate with him. This also provides a sense of stability for him when he sees that they can "speak his language" by asking for behaviors such as sit, down, or wait.
- Continually expose your dog to the world around him. The more new experiences your dog encounters throughout his life, the easier it will be for him to acclimate to the environmental change of being in a kennel.
- Arrange for a "test run" at your facility of choice. It's worth paying for an overnight trial that may reveal any potential issues before you're actually out of town.
- Avoid dietary changes in the days prior to boarding. Clients often worry that their pet will lose weight while kenneled and as a result, over-feed or add extra "treats" to the diet in the

days leading up to kenneling. The added food combined with the initial stress of boarding often leads to digestive upset. For similar reasons, Gibson recommends that dogs arrive with an empty stomach.

- Whenever possible, try to avoid contact with other dogs for 7 to 10 days prior to boarding. This helps prevent the possibility of exposure to disease which could then be introduced into the kennel environment.
- When leaving your dog, avoid dramatic displays. Your intense emotions create undue stress for your dog.
- Be upfront and honest about your dog's habits and quirks. Says Gibson, "I want you to think of me as a friend. I care about your dog. I need you to be open with me. If your dog's a digger, tell me. If he's prone to chewing, tell me. When I know more about him, I can provide better care."
- And we'd like to add: Make sure your dog has at least one, and preferably more, forms of ID when you're away from home. At a minimum, his collar should have an up-to-date, well-secured tag. He should also be implanted with a properly registered microchip ID or tattooed with information that can quickly lead a rescuer to you.

at petcareservices.org. Member facilities may also opt to pursue volunteer PCSA accreditation through the Voluntary Facilities Accreditation (VFA) program.

In order to be considered for accreditation, facilities must be in business for a minimum of six months, must submit a detailed binder of information documenting all of their business and pet care practices and demonstrating that they meet the standards set forth by PCSA, and must pass an on-site inspection. It's a comprehensive process that takes an average of six months to complete. Facilities are subject to random inspections throughout the year and must repeat the accreditation process every three years.

In addition to professional trade organizations, pet owners are wise to look for membership in local Chambers of Commerce and the Better Business Bureau. The more ways in which a professional's reputation may be on the line, the greater the chance he will do everything in his power to ensure a successful boarding experience for his clients.

While professional and civic memberships demonstrate a certain level of professionalism on the part of the business owner, pet owners should not rely on memberships alone. Once you've verified that your prospective pet sitter or boarding kennel is in compliance with local regulations and adheres to a set of professional ethics and practice standards, there's still much research to be done!

■ **Staff requirements and training.** In any business, a well-trained, competent staff is critical to success. In the kennel industry, a well-trained and competent staff is what ensures the health and safety of your pet. A love of dogs or distaste for retail work isn't an adequate job qualification! Kindness, patience, compassion, and an ability to keep one's own emotions in check are all important traits that must be combined with a solid understanding of dog behavior and a natural ability with dogs. This is critical in facilities that allow dog-to-dog interaction among guests.

Ask how employees are trained and how much (if any) continuing education is required. Laurie Zurborg, owner of Wags and Wiggles in Tustin, California, requires that all new employees undergo comprehensive in-house training and that *all* employees participate in retraining every six months. Wags and Wiggles is a daycare facility that provides boarding for

clients, so it's imperative that facility staff be especially skilled in the often subtle nuances of dog body language – such as facial expressions and body posture; how to recognize, prevent, and interrupt bullying; and how to safely break up a dog fight.

Wags and Wiggles also requires that any staff member who interacts with a dog in a training capacity (often available in boarding kennels as an add-on service) should be certified by the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers. Unless you board your dog at your usual, familiar trainer's facility, we suggest that you not authorize training during boarding, unless you have taken the time to thoroughly screen the trainer and her methods.

■ **Where are dogs housed?** When it comes to professional boarding kennels, accommodations come, literally, in all shapes and sizes. Kennels range from high-volume, no-frills facilities with the ability to house upward of 150 dogs to smaller, boutique-style kennels housing a very limited number of dogs – and everything in between!

When choosing a kennel, be sure to make arrangements to visit far in advance. Don't be surprised if the facility requires that you schedule your visit or only visit during certain hours rather than simply popping in unannounced. Barb Gibson, owner of The Pawmer House Pet Hotel in Wilton Center, Illinois, explains that for her, preventing random visitors is all about

reducing stress and ensuring the safety of the dogs in her care. Guests at The Pawmer House participate in mandatory "quiet time" from 11:30 am to 2:00 pm and for at least one hour after each meal.

Unless there's an emergency, no one is allowed inside the kennel area during quiet time. The arrival of a human in the kennel area – especially a new human – sets off a cacophony of barking. Limiting such outbursts is an important part of managing the overall stress level of the dogs. Gibson also advises visitors to be prepared to wait if arriving unannounced because staff may be busy tending to the needs of the dogs, and the needs of the dogs come first.

When visiting a facility, pay attention to the area where your dog will be housed. Is it secure? How tall is the fencing? Are at least some of the kennels enclosed on the top to prevent jumpers and climbers from escaping? Is it clean? How is it sanitized? Does it smell? If housed in kennel runs, can the dogs directly see other dogs on either side and across from them?

If the enclosure has no direct access to an outdoor potty area, ask how frequently dogs are taken outside or if they're expected to eliminate in the enclosure. If the latter, how quickly are messes cleaned up and where is the dog during the process? What, if any, "comforts" are provided (such as beds, blankets, toys, and chews) and how are they sanitized between dogs? What personal items are allowed from home? Does the kennel require that all

Cage Free or Not Cage Free?

The idea of "cage free" boarding sounds nice! And for some dogs, it can help take the emotional sting out of being left behind for their owner's vacation. However, it may not be in the best interest of *your* dog. Not all dogs enjoy the company of other dogs, and asking your dog to endure the constant presence of his peers – for an extended period of time, and in a confined space – can quickly become stressful.

Additionally, dogs who spend 24 hours a day interacting with other dogs spend a tremendous amount of time in an aroused state. Even the "happy arousal" that results from good, clean play can take an emotional and physical toll on a dog over time. For most dogs, as their level of tiredness increases, their tolerance decreases, making them more prone to scuffles or even full-blown fights with other dogs. This ongoing emotional and physical stress frequently manifests as loose stools, extreme physical exhaustion, and a variety of behavior problems.

If considering a cage-free facility, be sure to spend time watching the way dogs interact and are managed. Find out if dogs receive any structured down time and how personality conflicts between dogs are handled. If the dogs are expected to co-exist 24/7, how much supervision is provided, and what is the skill level of the staff? What about overnight? In a cage-free setting, much skilled management can be needed to prevent a canine version of *Lord of the Flies!*

“Red Flags” on a Tour of a Boarding Facility

If you experience the following, experts agree that you should run – don’t walk – to another facility!

- You aren’t allowed to see where your pet will be housed. Some facilities cite insurance reasons for keeping owners out of the kennel area, but at a minimum, you should be allowed to look through a door or window and see the area where your pet will stay.
- Dirty facility. Pet messes should be cleaned up promptly and adequate air circulation (necessary for the good health of your pet) should prevent an overall “doggy” smell. In general, the facility should appear neat and clean and should not have an unpleasant odor.
- Inattentive staff. Their top priority should be the dogs. It’s a bad sign if the one person watching a play group of dogs is suddenly the same person giving you a tour of the facility!
- Excessive barking. It’s reasonable to expect bursts of barking when a human or dog travels through the kennel area. Continued barking likely points toward a bigger problem such as lack of exercise, lack of mental stimulation, inadequate potty opportunities, or an overall high stress/anxiety level.
- Inappropriate handling, such as physical or shouted “corrections.” Experienced, well-educated dog handlers don’t need to hit or “alpha-roll” dogs, ever.

guests eat a facility-provided kibble, or can owners bring their pet’s food from home? Will the kennel accommodate special diets such as home-cooked meals or raw food?

It’s also important to know in advance what vaccinations are required, how they need to be documented and what, if any, exceptions exist. As thoughts regarding vaccination evolve, many kennels now accept titers or statements of vaccine exclusion from a veterinarian in lieu of following a strict vaccination protocol.

■ **Well-managed dog play groups.** Many kennels offer the option of recreational play groups. When considering this option, find out how guests are screened to determine their eligibility for play groups. As with day care and cage-free facilities, play groups must be closely supervised at all times by well-trained staff.

How large are the play groups? How are play pals selected? How much time do dogs spend engaged in off-leash play? What is the procedure for breaking up a dog fight and how are dogs handled immediately following, as well as for the duration of their stay? Are owners notified? If you don’t wish for your dog to participate in a play group, how will your dog be exercised?

■ **Emergency plans.** Accidents happen and an emergency can strike at any time. Make sure the facility has detailed emergency plans in place. Can they safely evacuate guests in the event of a natural disaster? Where are the animals evacuated to? Are client records backed up off-site so that owners can be notified of an evacuation should the facility be compromised? Seventeen dogs were killed when a propane tank exploded at a boarding facility in Pennsylvania in March

2009 (including Martha Stewart’s Chow Chow), and several others were injured or temporarily lost after fleeing in a panic. Many client files were destroyed in the fire, making it difficult to notify owners about the emergency.

Every kennel should maintain excellent working relationships with local veterinarians and 24-hour care facilities. Find out how emergencies or potential emergencies are handled. When vet care is needed, are owners contacted ahead of time? For minor issues, how is the need for vet care decided and by whom? You should feel comfortable knowing that medical issues will be promptly addressed without sending your dog to an after-hours emergency facility at the first sign of soft stool.

Go with your gut

Once you’ve done your homework and thoroughly checked out your list of potential facilities, often the best way to make a selection is to go with your gut instinct. If deciding between two different facilities that seem equal in terms of experience and standards of care, ask yourself if one just simply feels better? On the other hand, if for any reason you feel uncomfortable with a facility, regardless of its memberships or glowing recommendations, trust yourself and your ability to know what’s best for your pet. 🐾

Stephanie Colman is a writer and dog trainer in Los Angeles. She also provides twice-weekly training tips for the local NBC affiliate’s morning show, “Today in L.A.” She shares her life with two dogs and actively competes in obedience and agility. See page 24 for contact information.

Bad Experience With a Kennel?

Should you have a bad experience with a boarding kennel, Pet Care Services Association’s Charlotte Biggs recommends the following course of action:

- Notify the facility manager and/or owner and ask for an explanation. Communication is important.
- Consider taking your dog to the vet so that he can corroborate and document any physical evidence such as injuries or extreme weight loss/gain.
- Contact Pet Care Services Association at (877) 570-7788 to file a report. All complaints against PCSA member facilities are thoroughly investigated by the Ethics Committee.
- Contact your local Better Business Bureau.

Run, Jump, and Fun!

Agility is the perfect sport for canine action junkies.

BY TERRY LONG

Agility is probably the most popular and best known of all the sports for canine athletes. It's easy to see why. Your dog gets to do what dogs *like* to do: move around, jump, run, climb on things, and play!

Agility is a high-speed sport in which the handler directs her dog through an obstacle course of jumps, tunnels, weave poles, teeter-totter, and other obstacles. The goal is for the dog to complete the course without exceeding the "standard course time" and without incurring any "faults." Faults include knocking jump bars, not completing an obstacle, going around a jump instead of over it, and failing to touch "contact zones" – places that the dog must touch as she navigates certain obstacles, to prevent excessive speed and dangerous leaps from the obstacle.

The rules for each level of competition vary; the novice level has more lenient rules and the higher levels of competition are more exacting. At the highest levels of competition no faults are allowed at all in order to "qualify."

Training your dog for agility is fairly complex. Although your dog readily demonstrates how he can jump over the back of the couch in pursuit of the family cat, he might be stymied by your attempts to lure him over an agility hurdle. If you are willing to invest some time and effort in the training, however, agility can be very rewarding for both dog and human. In fact, the more training you put into the project, the more new avenues of communication open up between you and your dog.

There are two types of agility from which to choose: recreational and competitive. Some classes focus distinctly on one while others let you decide later if you want to compete.

History

According to most accounts, agility got its start as a demonstration to entertain the audience at the United Kingdom's Crufts

dog show in 1978. (Although other reports credit a demonstration by the Royal Air Force Police Dog Demonstration Team, it was the Crufts demonstration that caught Britain's attention and led to more widespread interest in agility training for the average dog and dog owner.) By 1979, several dog training clubs were offering agility training and by 1980 Britain's Kennel Club had established rules for competition.

During the 1980s, agility activity picked up in the United States, with several organizations (and varying philosophies and rules) in place by the early 1990s, including the United States Dog Agility Association (USDAA) and the North American Dog Agility Council (NADAC).

Competition

Each of the sanctioning organizations (see list on page 22) has specific requirements for qualifying a dog for a title at each level of competition, i.e., novice, advanced, and masters. At each of these levels there are

a variety of "classes" or games in which you can compete.

For example, USDAA has one "standard" class and four "games" in each of its three levels or "divisions," i.e., novice, advanced, and masters. The standard class is comprised of 15 to 20 obstacles that the judge has arranged into a "course" of obstacles, run in a set sequence. The four games are Jumpers (all jumps and tunnels), Snooker (a strategy game), Gamblers (a distance game), and Pairs Relay (two handlers in a relay race). There are also three "tournament" classes that test advanced handling, i.e., Grand Prix, Steeplechase, and Team (three handlers compete as a team in five classes).

Among the various agility organizations, Canine Performance Events (CPE) and NADAC offer the most agility classes, closely followed by USDAA, with AKC offering the fewest.

SNAPSHOT OF THE SPORT:



- **What is this sport?** In agility, dogs negotiate an obstacle course against the clock.
- **Prior training required?** Basic obedience and the dog's ability to focus and learn complex behaviors in a distracting environment.
- **Physical demands?** On the dog: High. On the handler: High.
- **Best-suited structure?** This is a physically strenuous sport. Dogs should be very fit, carrying no extra weight.
- **Best-suited temperament?** Energetic, physically active dogs who love to play and train.
- **Cost?** High.
- **Training complexity?** High.
- **Mental stimulation?** High.
- **Physical stimulation?** High.
- **Recreational opportunities?** Good; there are many "recreational" agility classes available through cities' public classes and private training schools.
- **Competition opportunities and venues?** Many.

Agility Obstacles

The following obstacles are used in most agility venues. The specifications listed here are based on USDAA requirements for the Championship division. (Lower heights and longer standard course times are allowed for the Performance division.) At the novice level of competition, there are 14 to 16 obstacles in a course, while there are 17 to 20 at the advanced and masters level.



A-frame: Dogs run up one side of this ramp-like “contact” obstacle, which looks like the letter “A,” and down the other. On both the way up and the way down, the dog is required to step on part of a 42-inch “contact zone,” which is painted yellow on the bottom of both sides of the ramp. This rule was created to ensure safety, eliminating the risk of dogs vaulting off the A-frame from higher up. The height of the A-frame is set depending upon the dogs height at the shoulders, with dogs who are less than 16 inches tall running the A-frame at 5'6" and dogs taller than that running it at 5'10".



Dogwalk: This is another “contact” obstacle with sloping ramps up and down – but that also includes a “plank” that the dog must walk across. The dogwalk is 12 feet long and 11 to 12 inches wide. The 36-inch yellow contact zones again appear at the bottom of each ramp. The top horizontal plank of the dogwalk is 48 to 54 inches off the ground; this is a general allowance not affected by a dog’s height.

Teeter-totter: This 12-foot long, 12-inch-wide plank “contact” obstacle resembles the children’s playground staple. The plank is weighted on one side; when the dog runs up the plank and reaches the pivot point in the center, his weight causes the plank to tilt down. A dog runs up the teeter and bangs it down, stopping in the contact zone at the end to wait for his handler’s “release” cue. Since the dog’s weight causes the teeter to shift, small dogs often take longer to tilt it.



Pause table: The dog is required to jump up onto this three-foot-square platform; the height depends on the dog’s height.



He then either sits or lies down (depending on the sanctioning organization) and holds the position for five seconds, waiting for his handler’s release to jump off and continue on the course.



Weave poles: Commonly considered the most difficult obstacle to train, the weave poles consist of a set of 12 PVC poles mounted vertically on a metal base, 18 to 24 inches apart. The dog is required to weave (slalom style) through each of the poles; the first pole (the “entry”) must always be on the dog’s left shoulder.

Tire: A tire is mounted on a frame, and the dog is required to leap through the center of the tire, which is between 17 and 20 inches wide. The “walls” of the tire are 4 inches wide. The height of the tire is determined by the height of the dog.



Jumps: There are a variety of jumps, some more challenging than others based on their depth (double bars, triple bars, etc.). These include jumps with or without “wings” that frame the crossbar and uprights, as well as a variety of “spread” jumps such as the double, triple, broad, etc. The dog’s height determines the height of the jumps.



Pipe tunnel: This is a flexible tube, 24 inches in diameter and from 10 to 20 feet long, that can be bent into a variety of positions. The dog enters the tunnel and runs through it, exiting on the other end.



Chute (tunnel): A 12-foot long obstacle that starts with a 65-inch wooden or plastic barrel that the dog runs into. The barrel leads to a length of cloth through which the dog must blindly push, until reaching the chute’s 96-inch-wide exit.



All of the agility organizations impose a “standard course time” that the team must not exceed for each class, as well as a variety of other rules, such as not knocking bars; touching the yellow “contact zones” on the A-frame, dogwalk, and teeter; and taking only the obstacles indicated on the course. Titles and placements (e.g., 1st place, 2nd place) are awarded at each level; additional, advanced titles are available in each of the agility organizations.

Training

Agility training involves teaching the individual at *each* end of the leash. The human must implement all the obstacle training taught in class, and learn handling skills such as when and how to use verbal and physical cues to direct her dog around the course. The canine must be taught how to perform each obstacle (see page 19).

In addition, the dog must be taught to immediately respond to all those verbal and physical cues in a fast-moving, changing environment. No two courses are ever the same, so the handler must make decisions about handling based on the course in front of her. The dog must closely attend to the handler in order to detect cues that come one after the other.

If you have competed in other dog sports, the learning curve may not be as steep as it is for people who have never trained for a performance sport. That said, the agility world is filled with people who tried agility as their first dog sport and became hooked.

Natalie Reusch of Hacienda Heights, California, is a good example of a dog sports neophyte who was captivated by agility. Reusch was not allowed to have a dog when she was growing up; her first dog didn't come home until Reusch was married. “Go-fer” lived to the ripe old age of 18, and her second dog, Cami, lived to 13. Natalie and her husband, Dave, called Cami their “million dollar dog” because of the costs involved in addressing all her health issues. Dog sports were not even a topic of discussion.

Then came Boxie, a Boxer/Dachshund-mix. “Boxie was my inspiration because even though I knew nothing about agility, I could recognize potential when I saw it. And she definitely had that.”

Reusch started by enrolling Boxie in a class for basic pet manners, and then one for advanced manners. She found that both she and Boxie enjoyed the training process, which she had never done with

her prior dogs. By the time she started agility training, Boxie had the basics under her collar, so to speak. It is difficult, if not impossible, to train your dog in agility if you and your dog have not mastered these prerequisites.

Before enrolling your dog in an agility class, you and your dog should be able to work in a distracting environment (both handler and dog have to be able to focus well!) and have mastered basic pet manners behaviors. These include sit, down, stay, come when called, and leash manners. The most challenging aspect of an agility class is keeping your dog focused on you and able to learn new skills in a group class environment. Dogs that are tremendously motivated by toys and food do the best. Additionally, depending upon your instructor, previous clicker training will be advantageous since that training technique is used more and more in this sport.

Recreational or competitive?

There are two broad categories of agility training: recreational and competitive. Recreational classes often focus on getting dogs on all the agility equipment as quickly as possible, using luring and leash guidance. Handling skills that cue the dog to turn, decelerate, switch to the other side of the handler, etc., are taught later, or, in some cases, not at all. These kinds of recreational classes are best for people who want a weekly class that provides fun and entertainment.

Competition classes tend to focus initially on “foundation” skills, including handling. This means that the instructor spends more time focusing on how to use your body to cue your dog. For example, you will learn the proper footwork for cueing your dog forward, for turning, and for decelerating versus accelerating. Foundation skills also include wobble board training (before allowing your dog to get on the teeter-totter) and target training (used later to teach the A-frame and dogwalk). Instructors who specialize in training for competition tend to offer much more structured classes that require students to do a fair amount of homework to keep up with the class.

Some instructors are adept at teaching students who don't intend to compete at the same time as teaching students with competition goals. Once their dogs become competent on the equipment, however, students who plan to compete in agility require specialized, in-depth instruction.

What to Look for in an Instructor

Here are some tips to help you evaluate whether an instructor is right for you and your dog.

- **Communication skills:** All instruction should be clear and specific. The instructions should be understandable and consistent, not confusing.
- **People skills:** The instructor should use positive reinforcement with the human students as well as the dogs.
- **Experience:** It's best if the instructor actively competes so she can share her experiences and knowledge.
- **Clicker training:** The instructor should be up-to-date on how to use clicker training to break down behaviors and accurately mark and reward behaviors.
- **Behavior knowledge:** The instructor must understand how to use positive reinforcement to increase desired behaviors; she should not use physical or even verbal “corrections.”
- **Safety and comfort:** The facility should be well lit, feature good footing and adequate parking, and make you feel comfortable coming and going.
- **Camaraderie and supportive:** Look for a group culture in which the students are warm and friendly to newcomers, and the instructor does her best to be welcoming and equally attentive to everyone, without “playing favorites.”

If you know from the outset that you want to compete, you will probably benefit more from an instructor who actively competes herself. Also, keep in mind that retraining is always much more difficult than training your dog correctly from the start.

Team attributes

Your dog should be physically fit and enjoy physical and mental stimulation. Agility is a physically demanding sport. If your dog is overweight, her joints are subjected to much more abuse than those belonging to dogs who are in optimum condition. Make sure you exercise your dog appropriately and regularly, so she is fit enough to withstand the demands of a weekly class. Swimming, jogging, and running up and down hills are excellent conditioning exercises. As agility has matured, more information has become available about the benefits of physical

conditioning, massage, and chiropractic care for canine athletes.

Handlers must be able to sprint, stop quickly, accelerate quickly, turn, and twist. This sport can be hard on aging knees and backs. Many students who choose to compete recognize the benefits of a conditioning program for themselves as well as their dogs!

Supplies and equipment

Some agility equipment is heavy, most of it is costly, and there is a lot of it. That said, most people don't buy the more expensive and heavy, space-hogging equipment such as the teeter, A-frame, dogwalk, and competition-grade tunnels; they train on this equipment only at facilities that offer agility instruction.

More frequently they practice at home with the lower cost agility obstacles: jumps, weave poles, and a tunnel. Four

to six jumps and a set of weave poles will cost about \$300 to \$500. A good 15-foot tunnel will cost another \$200 to \$250. With those basic pieces of equipment, you can practice a variety of handling maneuvers, as well as help your dog become proficient in the weave poles. It will take a long time to train your dog to negotiate the weave poles if you practice only once a week in a class; having your own set will drastically reduce your training time.

Expenses

The most expensive part of this sport is investing in the basic equipment listed above and paying for ongoing classes. Beyond that, trial entry fees and travel and lodging are the big-ticket items.

Competition fees run anywhere from \$8 per class to \$20 depending upon the sanctioning organization (AKC fees tend to be the highest) and the type of class. For

Finding the Right Agility Instructor Makes a Huge Difference

PHOTOS BY LAUREL HIROUJI



Natalie Reusch adopted Boxie, a short, muscular Boxer/Dachshund-mix, from a shelter in Southern California where she lives with her husband, Dave. She and Dave had owned only two dogs before Boxie and had never considered participating in formal dog sports. But Boxie changed all that. And Natalie learned that finding an instructor

that would meet her needs, as well as those of her dog's, would not be as easy as she originally thought.

After they took basic and advanced "good manners" classes and Boxie passed her Canine Good Citizen test, Reusch enrolled Boxie in an agility class through her city. "That is where Boxie was exposed to all the equipment and learned that there are 'real' jumps to jump and stuff to climb – not just shrubs, hedges, and couches. Wow, she was excited about that!"

After several months of classes, Reusch decided that she and Boxie were ready for more advanced instruction. The public class had been fun, but she craved in-depth instruction. "I realized very soon that agility was the sport for us, and my next challenge was to actually learn how to do it. I soon became frustrated with the lack of instruction in that first class and began looking elsewhere."

Reusch enrolled at a private training facility, and it was fine at first. After about a year of classes, Reusch and Boxie began competing in agility and did quite well at first. Gradually, though, Boxie began to appear as if she was no longer enjoying the class. Very sensitive to Boxie's temperament, Reusch

realized that her instructor appeared to have class favorites, and she and Boxie were not on the list. The last straw was when the instructor's Border Collie, loose during class, charged at Boxie one night. Boxie refused to come out of her crate after that.

"We stayed in that class too long only because I so desperately wanted to learn and I kept hoping things would get better. They didn't. I thought that would be the end of our agility career." Later, at a local competition, Reusch saw a couple of women who impressed her with their positive, upbeat attitude even when their dogs made a mistake. They were good handlers, looked like they took their handling seriously, but they were having fun. Reusch sought them out and got the name of their instructor.

"The very first time Boxie ran in her new class, the instructor called her a 'little powerhouse.' I was shocked. First, Boxie actually ran. I wasn't sure that she would run because she had been refusing and cowering in her previous class. Second, she had gotten so little positive reinforcement in her other class, I had lost hope that an instructor would see what I saw in Boxie."

Both Boxie and Reusch immediately took to the relaxed, friendly, non-threatening atmosphere of the class and the "low-key" instruction. They were able to relax and begin to actually learn things and put them into practice in class again. Their new instructor taught a specific handling "system" that provided a clear set of guidelines, a plan for approaching course problems, and consistency. Boxie loved the classes so much that Reusch enrolled in an additional class with the same instructor.



example, it costs an average of \$14 for a standard class in USDAA and \$8 to \$10 for each of the four games. The first class you enter in an AKC trial will cost \$20, and the second class will cost \$15.

In all venues except AKC, you will have the opportunity to run three to six classes per day. For example, five classes a day at a CPE trial would cost you about \$50. Enter for both days of a weekend, and there goes \$100.

Gas and lodging will probably be your next biggest expense. However, if you do AKC trials, which are rather plentiful in most areas of the country, you might not have to travel too far. And if you expand your horizons to include several of the different agility venues (USDAA, CPE, ASCA, etc.), you might be able to stay closer to home than if you only compete in one of them.

Agility classes tend to cost more than an average dog training class; they require a lot of expensive equipment, a large space, and the cost of maintaining that space and

equipment. As a result, a weekly agility class that runs for six to eight weeks may cost as much as \$225. Plan on staying enrolled in classes for months or even years; access to all that equipment is what keeps people coming back week after week. Check for public classes through your city/town, private training facilities, and even some larger shelters offer classes. You can also go to the Clean Run website (cleanrun.com) to search for trainers near you.

How to get started

Due to the maturity of this sport, there are many books, DVDs, seminars, and schools available. Try a basic or introductory class, or just go and watch one, to see if agility is something you and your dog might enjoy. Check to see if the class has a waiting list; the popularity of agility has resulted in waiting lists for many classes. While you wait for a class to start, refresh your dog's basic pet manners, enroll in a clicker training class, and start a conditioning program for you and your dog.

If your dog has more mental and physical energy than you know what to do with, and you enjoy physical activities, this is probably your sport.

Reusch aptly describes agility's appeal. "Agility offers a way of bonding with my dog, and working together as a team to develop skills, solve problems, and overcome obstacles. The better we get, the more fun it becomes. We aren't doing this for a championship; we're doing it because it's fun and exhilarating. I enjoy the feeling of connecting with my dog when we're running a course together, everything clicking into place. And then there is the big smile on my dog's face and the excitement in her eyes after she finishes a run. That's priceless." 🐾

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

Further Information Resources

Many excellent websites do not provide phone numbers to contact them for more information, preferring to field inquiries by e-mail. However, vendors of equipment are often happy to field phone calls for more information about their products and how to get started.

SANCTIONING ORGANIZATIONS

American Kennel Club (AKC)
(919) 816-3904; akc.com/events

Australian Shepherd Club of America (ASCA)
(979) 778-1082; asca.org

Canine Performance Events (CPE). k9cpe.com

Dogs on Course in North America (DOCNA). docna.com

North American Dog Agility Council (NADAC)
nadac.com

Teacup Dog Agility of America (TDAA)
(217) 521-7955; K9tdaa.com

United Kennel Club (UKC). (269) 343-9020; ukcdogs.com

United States Dog Agility Association (USDAA)
(972) 487-2200; usdaa.com

VENDORS

The following are just a few of the hundreds of agility supplies and equipment vendors. If you are handy, you can build much of your own practice equipment. See "Books and Videos," below, for construction plans and instruction.

Clean Run, LLC. Probably the most comprehensive site for agility addicts. Books, videos, a magazine, course design software, shoes, equipment, training aids and supplies, and more. (800) 311-6503; cleanrun.com

MAX 200. Agility equipment vendor.
(800) 446-2920; Max200.com

Affordable Agility. Agility equipment vendor.
(800) 254-9441; Affordableagility.com

CyberAgility.com. Online agility classes.

BOOKS AND VIDEOS

Do-It-Yourself Agility Equipment: Constructing Agility Equipment for Training or Competition, by Jim Hutchins, Clean Run Productions, LLC

Flatwork: Foundation for Agility, by Barb Levenson, Clean Run Productions, LLC

In Focus: Developing a Working Relationship with Your Performance Dog, by Deborah Jones, PhD, and Judy Keller, Clean Run Productions, LLC

Crate Games for Self-Control & Motivation, DVD by Susan Garrett, Say Yes! Dog Training

Success with One Jump, DVD by Susan Garrett, Clean Run Productions, LLC

One Jump-Two Jump, DVD by Sandy Rogers, Clean Run Productions, LLC

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- The biggest mistake owners make when crate training (p. 17)
- The safest place to store dry dog food (p. 176)
- The easy fix for boredom barking (p. 41)
- The simple test that could save your dog from unnecessary vaccination (p. 248)
- A natural shampoo formula that can help keep your dog flea-free (p. 201)
- The taboo training technique that can cause aggression (p. 148)

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RESOURCES

HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

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

BOOKS

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

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

Stephanie Colman, CanineStein Dog Training, Los Angeles, CA. Stephanie teaches private lessons and group classes, and provides twice-weekly training tips for the NBC affiliate's morning show, "Today in LA." (818) 989-7996; caninesteintraining.com

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

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

CORRECTIONS

In "Rally Obedient Dogs" in the October issue, we said that three qualifying scores of 100 or higher are needed for an AKC Rally title. Actually, a *perfect* score is 100 and a qualifying score is 70.

In a review of treats in the November issue, we accidentally omitted Organix organic dog cookies from our list of approved treats – despite the fact that the cookies were plainly featured in a photo of treats on our cover! The maker of Organix, Castor and Pollux Pet Works, also makes a number of other treats that meet WDJ's selection criteria. See castorpolluxpet.com or call (800) 875-7518 for more information.

In "CAT Revisited" in the December issue, we made a statement that could be interpreted to suggest that the All About Dogs training facility in Woodbridge, Virginia, did a less-than-exemplary job working with Charlie the Beagle and his owners Melanie and Adam Kornides. All About Dogs is an outstanding positive training facility, Charlie was a star student there, and he and his humans excelled there in his "Relaxing Rowdy Rover" class, as well as all four levels of All About Dogs' regular obedience classes. The Kornides were very pleased with All About Dogs; they just wanted to explore another approach for modifying the vestiges of Charlie's dog-reactive behavior.

Finally, in a caption for the photo on page 19 that accompanied "Put Your Dog Before a Cart" in the December issue, we suggested that the dogs should be in the "down" position for the "long stay" part of a BMDCA novice draft class test. The dogs are actually permitted to be in the stand, sit, or down position.

Our apologies for any confusion or inconvenience our errors may have caused.

WHAT'S AHEAD

Action Plan

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

Top Dry Foods

What's in, and what's out, in our dry food review for 2010.

Disc Dogs!

What sort of sports are available to your disc-dedicated dog?

Hospice Care

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

Alphabet Soup

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

"Conservative Management" for CCL Injuries

Increasing numbers of owners are seeking non-surgical treatment and care options for cruciate ligament injuries.

Canine Assault?

How you can teach your dog to stop going nuts every time someone comes to your door.