

VOLUME 10
NUMBER 7

The Whole



Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

July 2007

\$5.95

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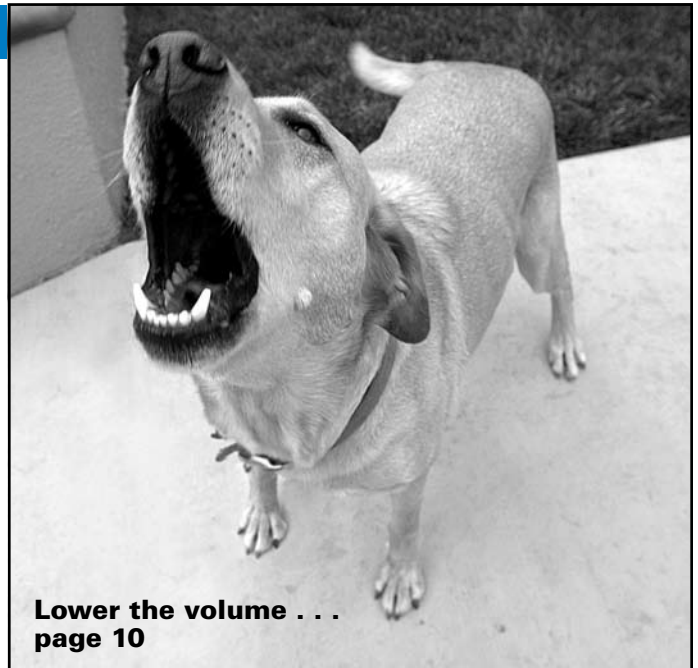
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Photo by / courtesy of
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Near and Dear

Our dogs cost a lot, financially and emotionally.

BY NANCY KERNS

No revelations about commercial pet food in the past few weeks, thank goodness. Still, pet food industry executives are hard at work, making changes to their ingredient sourcing and quality control protocols. I've been interviewing some of these folks about the long-term fallout (positive and negative) of the pet food recalls, and will present excerpts from these interviews in next month's issue.

One preview: Expect higher prices on all pet foods soon, especially top-quality products. Consumers who are paying top dollar for what they expect to be top-quality products have been exerting more and more pressure on the makers of "super-premium" pet foods to disclose their ingredient sources, or at least, prove their purity and quality. One company owner told me ruefully, "Now all the people who *said* they use top-quality ingredients – but, in actuality, don't – are out there trying to find and buy those ingredients, and the supply is small enough that the price just keeps going higher and higher."

I'm sad to report more losses to our canine modeling squad in recent weeks – though of course, the losses to our friends, of their beloved companions, are exponentially more significant.



Tucker

Most recently, training Editor Pat Miller had to say goodbye to Tucker, her cattle dog-mix who had just passed his 14th birthday. I met Tucker only once, but I can say this about him: when Pat shares information about training issues she's had with her dogs, she *never* had the opportunity to talk about Tucker, the benevolent leader of the Miller pack. He was a good, good dog.

We also lost Tater Tot, the little ball of fluff belonging to Sandi Thompson, the Berkeley, California trainer who frequently models for our training articles. Tater, too, passed away in May at the age of 14 years.



Tater Tot

Sandi teaches for Sirius Puppy Train-

ing, and Tater was famous locally as Sandi's assistant in hundreds of classes over the years; Tater would arise from her bed on a table in the classroom to ring a bell at intervals during the classes, alerting students to retake their seats after practicing various behaviors. She "taught" with Sandi for so many years that Sandi didn't have to cue her when the appropriate amount of time had passed; she just knew, and rang the bell.

I photographed Tater many times over the past 10 years and her picture will continue to appear in WDJ's pages for years to come. In fact, that's her howling in delight at a San Francisco Giants baseball game on page 13.

I offer my condolences to both families.

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.

The Whole Dog Journal™

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF – Nancy Kerns
 TRAINING EDITOR – Pat Miller
 PUBLISHER – Timothy H. Cole
 CIRCULATION DIRECTOR – Lisa Evans

EDITORIAL OFFICE

E-MAIL: WholeDogJ@aol.com
 MAIL: PO Box 1349
 Oroville, CA 95965
 PACKAGES: 1655 Robinson Street
 Oroville, CA 95965

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

PHONE: (800) 829-9165
 INTERNET: whole-dog-journal.com/cs
 U.S. MAIL: PO Box 420235
 Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235
 CANADA: Box 7820 STN Main
 London, Ontario N5Y 5W1

BACK ISSUES, WEBSITE INQUIRIES

PHONE: (800) 424-7887
 E-MAIL: customer_service@belvoir.com
 INTERNET: whole-dog-journal.com
 U.S. MAIL: PO Box 5656
 Norwalk, CT 06856-5656

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Lisa Evans, (203) 857-3100

**WHOLE DOG JOURNAL
 DOES NOT ACCEPT
 COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING**

THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL (ISSN #1097-5322) is published monthly by Belvoir Media Group, LLC, 800 Connecticut Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06854-1631. Robert Englander, Chairman and CEO; Timothy H. Cole, Executive Vice President, Editorial Director; Philip L. Penny, Chief Operating Officer; Greg King, Executive Vice President, Marketing Director; Marvin Cweibel, Senior Vice President, Marketing Operations; Ron Goldberg, Chief Financial Officer; Tom Canfield, Vice President, Circulation; Michael N. Pollet, Senior Vice President, General Counsel. Periodicals postage paid at Norwalk, CT and at additional mailing offices. Copyright ©2007, Belvoir Media Group, LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is strictly prohibited. Printed in U.S.A. Revenue Canada GST Account #128044658. Canada Publishing Agreement Number #40016479.

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Subscriptions: \$39 annually (12 issues). Bulk rate subscriptions for organizations and educational institutions available upon request.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL, PO Box 420234, Palm Coast, FL 32142

THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL, PO Box 39, Norwich, ON, N0J 1P0

Reality Cooks

Owners share their home-cooked diet strategies – and recipes!

BY MARY STRAUS

Over the past three months, we've provided rules and guidelines for feeding a homemade diet, but getting started can still seem overwhelming. The recent pet food recalls have left many people wanting to switch their dogs quickly to a homemade diet, at least short-term. Despite their fears about commercial products, however, many have hesitated to start feeding a home-prepared diet, concerned that their diet would be less than perfect.

Our advice? Don't worry about achieving the ideal diet from day one. Adult dogs will do fine on a limited diet for two or three months. If you want to continue to feed a homemade diet for longer than that, or if you are feeding a puppy, it becomes more important to ensure that you are feeding a wide variety of different foods in appropriate proportions to meet all nutritional needs. As you become more experienced with shopping for and preparing your dog's food, and especially as you observe your dog's response to his new diet, you can improve and adjust your recipes as necessary.

This month and next, we'll hear from owners who feed their dogs a homemade diet, and learn from them how they go about it, including tips and tricks for finding, preparing, and storing food.

Since cooked diets are less intimidating than raw diets for most newcomers, we'll start with owners who feed their dogs cooked foods. Next month, owners who feed their dogs raw foods will describe their protocols.

Recall fears spurs switch

Karen Engman, of Murrieta, California, has four Boston Terriers and one Pug, ranging in age from 5 to 12 years old. She decided to switch her dogs to a home-cooked diet due to fears about the recalls. Below, she describes her protocol in detail:

I began feeding my dogs a home-cooked diet a few weeks ago, after reading a number of diet-related books and websites and joining a dog nutrition list. My



Karen Engman feeds a home-cooked diet to four of her five dogs, including 8-year-old Oliver, above. The fifth dog eats a raw commercial diet.

dogs weigh about 25 pounds each, so I feed them each 10 ounces of food (2.5 percent of their body weight) daily divided into two meals. Each day's ration consists of the following:

- 75 to 80 percent animal protein (7½ to 8 oz), consisting of 5½ to 6 oz meat (beef, chicken, turkey, canned salmon, or sardines) and 2 oz yogurt, cottage cheese, kefir, or one egg
- 5 to 10 percent organ meat, consisting of ½ to 1 oz kidney or liver
- 15 percent veggies, consisting of 1½ oz broccoli, spinach, cauliflower, sweet potato, zucchini, carrots, dark leafy greens, and/or cabbage

I also give the following supplements to each dog daily:

- 1 fish oil softgel (EPA 180/DHA 120)
- ¼ tsp Berte's Immune Blend, ½ tsp Berte's Ultra Probiotics, and ½ tablet

What you can do . . .

- Don't be afraid to jump right in and start feeding a homemade diet to an adult dog, but take the time to learn how to do it properly if you want to continue long term.
- Do what works for your dog. There are many different ways to feed, and what is optimal will vary from one dog to another.
- Make sure that you're supplying the proper amount of calcium with any homemade diet.
- No matter what type of diet you feed, be willing to make changes if your dog is not thriving.



Berte's Zyme (digestive enzymes) with each meal

- 500 mg calcium (¼ tsp dried, ground eggshell). Note that I do not add calcium when feeding canned fish with bones.

I cook, mix, and freeze one to two weeks' worth of meat, organ meat, and veggies; I add dairy and supplements right before feeding. I puree the veggies in a food processor, and stay away from white potatoes, tomatoes, eggplant, and peppers, as my older girl has arthritis. I have elected to feed no grains or legumes.

When I make up the food, I cook the meat first, then puree the veggies, and then prepare the organ meat (my dogs will *not* eat raw liver, so I now braise the liver and then puree it in the food processor).

I bought a number of 9½-ounce and 14-ounce stackable plastic containers. I



Engman's freezer contains a few days' worth of home-prepared meals, ingredients bought in bulk for future meals, and commercial frozen raw diets. As she gains confidence, Engman may transition all of her dogs to a homemade raw diet.

put a container on my kitchen scale and start measuring in the different portions of meat, organs, and veggies until it totals 8 ounces. Most meals will fit in the 9½-ounce containers, but occasionally I use the larger ones for the bulkier chopped-meat meals. Each container has one day's food for each dog, which I feed half in the morning and half at night. I store food for two days in the fridge and pop the rest in the freezer.

I buy fresh meat (chicken, turkey, beef) and canned salmon at Costco. I buy veggies at Costco as well, usually splitting whatever I get between the dogs and the humans in the house, so one unexpected benefit is that we are eating a greater variety and quantity of vegetables than we have in the past. I get organ meat from my local Stater Brothers, which has a wonderful butcher department. I've had trouble finding kidney, so I'm just feeding 5 percent liver right now.

Two dogs had some problems with the diet change, despite my doing a slow transition. One developed loose stools for a few days, but is now doing fine on 100 percent home cooked. The other has always had a sensitive stomach and has had problems with regurgitation. She is still on half kibble/half home cooked while I try to figure out what part of the new diet is not agreeing with her.

In the short time I've been doing this, I've noticed less gas and firmer stools,

and my oldest girl's skin seems less flaky (she has had dry, flaky skin since she came into rescue last August). They all love the new food (other than the raw liver!) and "dance" for their dinner now. It really is not that difficult; in fact, once I figured it all out and went through the process of doing it, I thought it was too easy and that I must be doing something wrong!

Our comments on Engman's diet:

Probiotics and digestive enzymes may help prevent digestive problems when switching diets. Probiotics are also helpful for dogs who have been on antibiotics, or have had diarrhea. It's not necessary to continue to give digestive enzymes unless your dog does better with them added. It's better to split the calcium dosage and give half with each meal rather than giving it all at once.

Cooking for big dogs

Brenda and Joe Carriere, of Minneapolis, Minnesota, have been cooking for their two German Shepherds, eight-year-old Sarge and two-year-old Nikki, for about a month due to the recall. Brenda describes her preparations:

I feed a diet that includes both grains and legumes. Here is my basic recipe:

- 3 lbs meat (ground turkey, beef, or

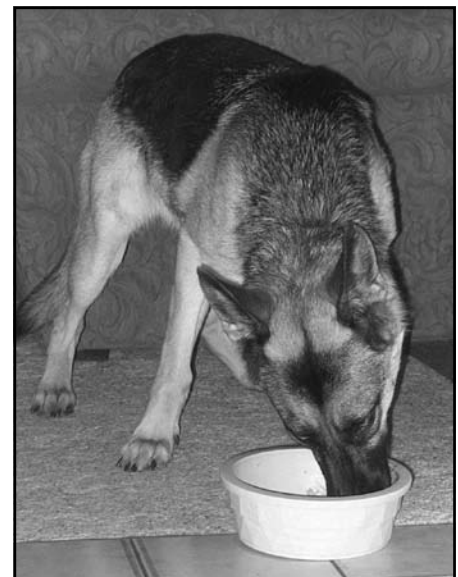
pork; chicken thighs; or jack mackerel and sardines)

- 6 eggs (scrambled)
- 1 or 2 cups whole milk cottage cheese or yogurt
- 6 ounces organ meat (beef liver, pork kidney, chicken hearts, etc.)
- 2 cups cooked brown rice plus 2 cups veggies (carrots, sweet potatoes, yams, broccoli, peas, spinach, etc.), OR 4 cups legumes (2 cups each green beans and either lentils or pinto beans)

I cook everything separately, on the stove or, in case of the chicken thighs, on the grill. After the thighs are cooked, I take the meat off and throw away the bones. I steam the veggies or cook the sweet potato in the microwave.

I prepare food a few times a week, usually in batches of two or three days, then portion them individually for each dog and store them in the fridge. Everything is mixed together and ready to be served. I feed each dog one and a half to two cups twice a day. I microwave it for 30 seconds to take off the chill, and then add supplements at mealtime.

I give each dog 1,000 mg fish oil and 400 IU vitamin E daily, as well as one teaspoon organic apple cider vinegar. When



When two-year-old Nikki was fed a kibble diet, she was picky and unenthusiastic about her meals. Today, on home-prepared fare, she dives right in with gusto!

not feeding canned fish, I add one teaspoon crushed eggshell daily. They occasionally get fruit, such as bananas, strawberries, pineapple, and mangos, in addition to their regular diet. They also get recreational femur bones two or three times a week, and I estimate that at least 10 percent of their calories come from training treats, usually chicken or cheese.

We plan to continue home cooking (there may be a dog *coup d'état* in my house if we go back!). Even in this short time, Sarge's coat has become glossy with no more dandruff, and he no longer scratches and nibbles at himself. He has also lost a few pounds, something we weren't able to accomplish while on kibble because he always seemed hungry. Nikki has become enthusiastic about meals, while before I had to coax her to eat. Both dogs love their new diet: every time we go to the fridge or microwave something, they are right there, waiting expectantly for their new food.

Comments:

Legumes combined with grains provide more complete protein than either does alone, so it is better to feed them together, rather than alternating them between meals. Legumes (including green beans) should always be cooked due to a toxin they contain when raw (though small amounts would not be harmful).

Using a spreadsheet

Lynn Byrd lives outside Marceline, Missouri. She developed her diets with a spreadsheet to ensure that they meet the canine nutrition guidelines established by the National Research Council (NRC). Byrd has fed the following diet to her dogs for 12 years, because, as she says:

I didn't like the idea of processed kibble and my Bull Terrier was really gassy. We now have two Bull Terriers: Teddy, three years old, and Triumph, about 11 years old, a deaf rescue who earned her CGC (Canine Good Citizen) using sign language.

We also foster rescues. These dogs are usually in pretty rough shape and I always switch them to homemade diets as soon as they arrive; none of them have had any problems with the switch. One foster dog, Kobe, had terrible mange and deep secondary infections; he was skinny and terribly



Lynn Byrd's three-year-old Bull Terrier, Teddy, waits politely at the table for his home-cooked dinner.

weak. I doubt he would have made such a complete recovery without his easily digested homemade diet. Another foster, Joe, had terrible teeth when he arrived, but he was also infected with heartworms so the teeth cleaning was put off until the heartworms were treated, and by then his teeth looked great!

The diet I feed combines raw meat with cooked eggs, veggies, and rice. Here is my basic diet for a 65-pound dog; the amounts here are for a three-day supply.

- 1 lb ground turkey
- 1 lb ground beef (80 percent lean)
- 1 can jack mackerel
- 4 large eggs
- 2 oz beef liver
- 1 cup (uncooked) rice
- 4 medium potatoes
- 1 cup/can vegetables (any)
- 2½ Tbsp NOW bone meal (this provides 3,500 mg calcium)
- ½ tsp NOW potassium (provides 1,460 mg potassium) optional
- 2 Tbsp sunflower or safflower oil

For variety, a 24-ounce carton of cottage cheese can be substituted for a can of mackerel or a pound of meat. And of course

other meats such as venison, pork, chicken, etc. can be used instead of the beef or turkey.

This recipe makes enough food for three days. It can be frozen in meal size portions. It's easy to prepare:

1. Cook the rice. Then mix in the oil, potassium, and bone meal.
2. Bake the potatoes and chop them up in their skins.
3. Lightly fry or scramble the eggs.
4. Mix all ingredients and place in a plastic shoe box.
5. Score into six equal portions if feeding twice a day.

To feed the liver, cut it with scissors into several small pieces, freeze, and feed one piece several times a week (it doesn't do well mixed with the other items, as it goes bad quickly). Give a human One-A-Day-type multi-vitamin/mineral daily (I used One Source Advanced Multivitamin & Mineral from Wal-Mart. It provides 15 mg zinc, 3 mg manganese, and 45 IUs vitamin E used to meet NRC guidelines).

Comments:

This diet uses a little less organ meat and a little more carbohydrates than I think is ideal, but it's still a great diet. Increasing the amount of organ or muscle meat just a little would meet zinc requirements without the use of a supplement.

The diet provides the required minimum amount of potassium without the supplement, but Lynn feels that adding more is preferred based on her nutritional studies.

Note that Joe's teeth improved even though his diet did not include bones!

Feeding a thin, picky dog

Jennifer Kuhlman, of Colorado Springs, Colorado, began cooking for Echo, her five-year-old male standard Poodle (50 pounds), and Cayenne, her five-year-old female mixed breed (40 pounds), about a month ago. Here is Kuhlman's home-prepared plan:

Echo has always been quite thin, and a picky eater despite my adding fresh

foods to his kibble, while my rescue dog, Cayenne, is a little chubby, and will eat anything! I had considered feeding homemade several times, but the recall pushed me over the edge. I will definitely continue, as I'm really enjoying it.

In the morning, they each get 4 ounces of ground beef, chicken, or turkey, plus 1 to 2 ounces of chicken liver, and the larger dog gets 6 ounces of cottage cheese, the smaller 4 ounces.

I add an egg about once a week; Echo does not love them, but will eat them occasionally.

In the evening, Echo gets 12 ounces of meat (beef, chicken, turkey, or canned jack mackerel), and Cayenne gets only 4 (due to her weight issues). Then they each get about 4 ounces of a variety of cooked veggies (mostly sweet potatoes, steamed broccoli, and canned green beans, but occasionally whatever we are having for dinner), and a quarter cup of brown rice.

I supplement each dog with a teaspoon of Solgar Bone Meal Powder (1,000 mg calcium) and a fish oil capsule daily. Cayenne gets a teaspoon of Berte's Immune Blend but Echo doesn't like it, so he gets a vitamin E capsule.

All the meats are lightly cooked, either sautéed, or cooked (in patties) on a George Foreman grill. I try to leave a little pink in the center. I prefer to use free-range, antibiotic-free, and usually organic meat.

I cook four or five day's worth of meat patties for breakfast, but usually I cook their evening meal right when I serve it, as Echo gets more interested when he knows his dinner is getting cooked. In the beginning, I tried to prepare a week's worth of meals at once, and he stopped eating it after three days. He is better about eating his breakfast though; he really likes liver and cottage cheese.

It's great to finally see Echo excited by meals, with no need to be coaxed to eat. They are both doing great and I'm having lots of fun cooking for them. Their condition has not changed much in such a short time, but the enjoyment they get from eating has hugely increased.

Comments:

It can be a challenge to get a picky dog to eat a proper diet. It's important not to give in and feed only a few foods. Experiment with different ways of preparing and serving foods in order to learn the tricks that work for your dog, such as Kuhlman has discovered with Echo.

Using a pressure cooker and including bones

Dee Davidson, of Redondo Beach, California, began feeding her 16-month-old, 61-pound Labradoodle a home-cooked diet in early March.

I'm using a pressure cooker for the bony meals and regular pots for the other meat meals. I feed two meals a day, one of meaty bones and one of meat, organs, eggs, dairy, etc. I've also started giving my dog a raw meaty bone three days a week to help keep her teeth clean.

I pressure-cook whole chickens, turkey drums, or wings, or meaty pork necks for about an hour, which results in most of the bones becoming crumbly soft. The large turkey leg and wing bones may still be firm in the center, so I crumble the ends and scoop out the marrow of the firm ones, throwing the rest away. I throw out the part of the pork neck bones that are not soft enough to crumble as well. I also cook other meaty beef or pork bones in the pressure cooker, but most of the bones aren't soft enough to crumble and feed, so I throw out the bones and feed the meat with a half a teaspoon of ground eggshells.

I usually add a cup of either brown rice or barley, along with a can of green beans, a couple of carrots, and leftovers of any other vegetables, plus two chopped cloves of garlic, to the pressure-cooker.

I cook other kinds of meat in a regular pot, including any large cuts of meat, such as those intended for pot roasts, or tongue, heart, and ground meats. I lightly braise liver and boil kidney. Vegetables may be added if the cooking is going to be long enough to make them digestible.

I add a couple of tablespoons of cottage cheese, plain yogurt, or grated cheese four days a week to either her meaty meal, or as an evening snack. I feed one egg scrambled with spinach and cheese four days a week as part of the meaty meal.

I'm giving her about a can of salmon weekly. I give her small amounts in several meaty meals because larger amounts seem to cause a bit of loose stool.

After cooking and cooling, I put the cooked food in 8-ounce portions into sandwich bags. I keep four or five in the refrigerator and put the remainder in the freezer. I have an average-size refrigerator/freezer, but so far this has worked satisfactorily.

I hope this helps someone who is just starting and feels overwhelmed with the process. It's very easy. With the exception of breads, crackers, and desserts, I'm feeding my dog almost exactly what I feed myself.

My dog *loves* this new diet. She knows all the signs and sounds of her food being prepared and does her "perfect doggie" routine so I won't find any excuse to delay feeding her! After three months on the new diet, I took her to a new vet last week and his first comments were, "I've seen other Labradoodles, but she definitely looks the best of them all. She's in perfect health."

Comments:

Remember that when you feed cooked bones, they must be completely soft, and you must be sure there is plenty of meat or other foods added, as otherwise the cooked bone can cause constipation or even impaction.

Cooking for a puppy and an adult dog

Pam Richard, of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, cooks a diet for her two Eurasiers: two-year-old Ruq and five-month-old Tika. She's been cooking for her older dog for about a year and a half, after losing a dog to gastrointestinal cancer and starting to wonder if nutrition might have been a factor. She was hesitant to feed her puppy a homemade diet, but when the recalls started, she decided to jump in:

The "big dog" (55 pounds) gets about 9 ounces of protein per meal (this varies between chicken, turkey, beef, pork, eggs, and fish, mixed with liver and/or kidney), plus calcium (¼ teaspoon



Tika, a five-month-old Eurasier, is another formerly finicky eater who chows down – now that she is given "real" food!

ground eggshell). She gets a vitamin (Thorne Basic Canine Nutrients) and salmon oil with both meals. In the morning, I give her one spoonful each of canned tripe and yogurt with the protein. In the evenings, I add about 3 ounces of veggie mix: sweet potato or carrot, various “above ground” veggies, and herbs (alternating between mint, parsley, and dill). I recently stopped adding grains on a regular basis but previously used brown rice, oatmeal, and pearled barley.

The puppy gets three meals a day, of 6 ounces each. I am slowly adding the same variety of protein sources, along with tripe and yogurt one meal, a tablespoon or so of the veggie mix one meal, and a spoonful of grains one meal. I split a teaspoon of Solid Gold Bonemeal between the three meals. I also supplement with Berte’s Daily Blend and salmon oil at two meals.

The meat is usually boiled, sometimes roasted, then chopped up and frozen in portions that last a couple of days.

Once I really got into home cooking, I bought a chest freezer that has been wonderful both for freezing the cooked food and storing pre-cooked meat. I cook sweet potatoes in the microwave for five minutes, while some of the other veggies are cooked (steamed), and then all are chopped up fine in a food processor. I keep the meat and veggies separate so I can mix and match per meal/dog.

Tika, my puppy, was a slow eater with kibble and needed encouragement to finish. Now she is eager to eat and gobbles it all down! I think that my pup’s eyes look much clearer and brighter after changing from kibble, and I was using high-quality brands. Both dogs just look overall healthy to me, and they certainly eat with great gusto!

Comments:

The amount of calcium added to a puppy’s diet is very important. The teaspoon of bone meal that Pam adds supplies 1,368 mg of calcium to balance out 18 ounces of food, so that’s around 1,200 mg of calcium per pound of food. The vitamin supplement she uses contains vitamin D, which enhances the uptake of calcium, so this amount looks just about right.



Sally Gutierrez’s dogs hit the trail in the San Gabriel Mountains. Prior to receiving a homemade diet (two years ago), CC, the 13-year-old (left), was often stiff and her rear legs were weak; clearly, this is no longer the case!

Help for food intolerances

Sally Gutierrez, of Long Beach, California, has been feeding a homemade diet to her dogs, who have many food intolerances, for almost two years. She started feeding a home-prepared diet when her 15-year-old Dachshund was diagnosed with pancreatitis. He lived another 18 months – well past his veterinarian’s prediction – and the improvements in his health helped him enjoy a good quality of life in his final months. That experience led Gutierrez to home-prepare all of her dogs’ food.

Currently, I have two rescue dogs: Smokey, a 7-year-old Chow/Lab, and CC, a 13-year-old Eskimo/Lab. Smokey gets 16 ounces of food twice a day, and CC gets 14 ounces twice a day.

Typically their meals consist of slow-cooked meat (e.g., pork, turkey, chicken, or beef, cooked in a crockpot for about 12 hours), or Evanger’s canned Game Meats (duck, pheasant, buffalo, rabbit), or canned fish with bones, such as pink salmon and sardines. I try to give them the fish once a week, and rotate the meats as much as possible. Smokey has one poached egg with his food every day. I don’t give CC an egg because, for her, it triggers diarrhea.

Along with the meat I give them about 40 to 50 percent vegetables. I feed a wide variety of veggies: creamed winter squash (their favorite! – I buy it frozen and already cooked and creamed, I just heat it in a microwave), summer squash, broccoli, cauliflower, green beans, peas, carrots,

and occasionally spinach and cucumber.

I usually buy the veggies frozen and nuke them till they are barely warm (to retain most of the nutrients). I then blend them with a meat broth left over from the slow-cooked meat. Occasionally I grate fresh produce and add it to a broth soup.

The only organ meat that they get is beef liver (organic or grass-fed), usually small amounts for about five days, every other week. I give them small amounts to limit the vitamin A that is found in liver. On occasion, I add variety, such as beef marrow gut, chicken hearts, and chicken gizzards. I would like to add more organ meats but have a hard time finding them.

I originally added rice to their meals but discovered that it gave them both diarrhea. I tried wild rice and Minute rice and had the same results. They both appear to be lactose-intolerant, so they get no dairy products.

I provide them a vitamin supplement (rotating between brands) and also add ½ teaspoon Kal Bone Meal Powder per meal. I recently began wrapping their vitamins in a blob of nut butter – it serves as a sneaky treat!

Their diets are almost identical to my diet (I have severe food allergies). CC has several food allergies and may have undiagnosed inflammatory bowel disease (IBD). I have seen about a 95 percent reduction in scratching from my dogs since starting to feed them a homemade diet. CC’s formerly watery stools are now firm, and her stiffness and muscle weakness in the rear are now gone as well.

Comments:

The amount of food these dogs are fed may seem like a lot, but almost half of it is vegetables, which are lower in calories. Both dogs are also quite active, going on hikes in the mountains with their owner regularly. The amount of bone meal in this diet is high, and Gutierrez plans to adjust the amount to provide around 1,000 mg of calcium per pound of food.

A low-fat diet for a dog with health problems

Janet Hughes, of Greenbelt, Maryland, has been feeding a low-fat cooked diet for the



Scampers, a Collie-mix, is an astounding 18 years old! She suffers from pancreatitis, but has improved since starting to receive a low-fat, home-cooked diet. Scampers' food is presented in an elevated bowl because her back legs wobble otherwise.

past 18 months to her elderly Collie-mix, who suffers from chronic pancreatitis.

Scampers is 18 years old and weighs 50 pounds. Here is her typical daily diet, split between breakfast and supper:

- 1 cup chicken breast, boiled, with all visible fat removed
- ¼ cup heart (usually beef, occasionally turkey or chicken), boiled, fat removed
- ¼ cup lean ground meat (beef, pork, or turkey), boiled and rinsed; beef kidney; or chicken gizzards
- ¼ cup liver (pork, chicken, or beef)
- ¼ cup cottage cheese, nonfat or low fat
- ½ cup boiled veggies (approximately one part summer squash to one part collard or turnip greens, kale, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, or spinach)
- ½ cup starchy carb (sweet potato, oat-meal, or barley)
- 1½ Tbsp coconut oil
- ½ tsp ground eggshell

She also gets lunch, which is a scrambled egg with yogurt, or occasionally jack

mackerel (she can't tolerate much of it, and doesn't care for whitefish).

I supplement daily with two or three fish oil softgels, Berte's Digestion Blend, and a geriatric vitamin tablet (Geri-Form), along with 400 IUs vitamin E three or four times a week. She also gets medications for pancreatic insufficiency and arthritis.

I cook, package, and freeze about once a month, using an assembly-line production over a few days. I boil the veggies all at once, then cook the starchy carbs. I package the half-and-half mixture of the two with the coconut oil and eggshell so that her eggshell and coconut oil for one day are in one cup of the veggie/starch mix. I then boil the chicken, cool and chop, then boil the heart and cut it into cubes. I cook the ground meat or gizzard, then the liver, and cube them.

I package each day's ration into a single GladWare container, stacking chicken, other meat, liver, and cottage cheese, with the veggie mix on top.

I've tweaked her diet over several months to suit her. Too much broccoli or too little summer squash in her veggie mix and she gets burpy and spits up, for example. She doesn't care for white potato, and lamb is too fatty for her.

I found the addition of the Digestion Blend keeps her settled. Prior to starting that, she'd have almost monthly flare-ups of inappetence and diarrhea. The coconut oil also was a major boon for maintaining overall bounce. She's been eating this home-cooked diet for over 18 months (after a couple of years of trying to resume a normal diet, then trying Hill's and IVD prescription diets, which she hated).

Comments:

This is a great example of how a homemade diet can be modified to meet an individual dog's needs. Whether specific ingredients need to be avoided, fat levels need to be adjusted, or ratios need to be tweaked, you have complete control and can feed what works for your individual dog. Coconut oil supplies a form of fat that is more easily digested by dogs with fat intolerances.

Just share your own meals

Carol Boyle, of the greater New York City metropolitan area, has cooked for her Great Pyrenees for more than two decades!

I started with Pitcairn (*Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs & Cats*) as my guide, but thought he did not use as much variety as I would like to use, so I began adding more and different vegetables. I realized that I

would make chicken thighs for the dogs one night, and then roast breasts the next night for my family, and the light went on. I began cooking whole chickens and we share them.

When I cook for my husband and myself, we always start with a salad, followed by a protein source, a vegetable, and a

carbohydrate. I serve the same or similar foods to the dogs. I cook as though I am cooking for a large family.

Sunday was a typical meal. I put two 5-pound chickens in the oven to roast. They were lightly sprinkled with garlic salt and lots of dried rosemary. I made rice pilaf and broccoli. The dogs got the giblets (liver and heart, etc.) of the chickens, as well as the dark meat. We ate the breast. We had a salad and the dogs got some shredded



Scampers' supplements.

Resources Mentioned in This Article

SUPPLEMENTS

Berte's Immune Blend, Daily Blend, Ultra Probiotic Powder, Zyme and Digestion Blend
B-Naturals, b-naturals.com, (866) 368-2728

Solid Gold Bonemeal, solidgoldhealth.com, (800) 364-4863

Solgar Bone Meal Powder, solgar.com, (800) 645-2246

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

Vet-a-Mix Geri-Form, lloydinc.com/vetamix.html, (800) 831-0004

BOOKS

Dr. Pitcairn's Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats,
by Richard Pitcairn, DVM. Available from dogwise.com, (800) 776-2665

COMMERCIAL DIETS

The Honest Kitchen, thehonestkitchen.com, (866) 437-9729

Urban Wolf, urbanwolf.cc, (866) 530-0322

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

Evanger's Game Meats, evangersdogfood.com, (847) 537-0102

MORE INFORMATION

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

Lange describes her protocol:

I have fed a mixture of homemade and pre-mixes to my older dog for several years. I currently rotate between The Honest Kitchen Embark (which is approved for all life stages) and Urban Wolf with their Dietary Balancer for Puppies added. I occasionally mix in some Innova EVO dry and use that as training treats. I add ground beef, turkey, or chicken, and rotate oils, using peanut, olive, canola, sunflower, etc. I have a grinder so I do use organ meat occasionally and usually grind chicken myself or just use chunks. I cook the meat, as that is what I am comfortable with. I add salmon oil caps to each meal.

I don't like the idea of using kibble exclusively, but when I got my pup, everyone kept telling me not to risk doing homemade and to use a puppy kibble for the first year. That just seemed wrong. How could it be better than fresh food? I chose

to use pre-mixes as a safe compromise.

I am happy with my dogs' coats and their enthusiasm at mealtime. My vet is happy because the pre-mixes meet AAFCO standards and that makes me feel more comfortable, too.

Comments: Pre-mixes can offer peace of mind for those who worry about the completeness of a home-prepared diet for puppies. Like Lange, be sure to use only those that are specifically formulated for puppies or for "all life stages" according to AAFCO guidelines.

Remember that the right diet for your dog is the one that he does well on, and that you are comfortable with. Each dog is an individual, so what works for one may not work for another. If your dog has problems with what you feed – if he doesn't enjoy his food, or shows signs of digestive upset – then try something else. Just make sure you're feeding a variety of different foods, not just his "favorites." The beauty of a homemade diet is that you can change any part of it to fit your dog's needs. 🐾

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



Spike enjoys a variety of fresh foods and a "fresh" dehydrated diet.

carrots and cucumbers in with their food too. There is one chicken and some rice left for another meal for them.

Last night we had London Broil, baked potato, cauliflower, and some salad.

Sharing meals has taken the drudgery out of feeding something special to the dogs. Basically, we all eat the same food. The dogs get a higher percentage of meat (2/3 meat to 1/3 veggie and carbo combo) than we do, and they do get some meals that are different from ours. Three times a month they get liver; once a week they get canned salmon or sardines. We go out or call out for dinner when they get the different foods (neither of the dogs like Chinese food, but pizza is another story!).

The dogs have done remarkably well on this diet. My old Patou was five years old when I started this diet, and he lived to be almost 15, an unheard-of age for a Great Pyrenees. Our current crew consists of Cajun, 11 years, and my new Patou, three years.

I make certain that everything is as fresh and wholesome as possible. We eat all different kinds of meats and vegetables, cooked simply and seasoned liberally with

herbs and spices (not hot). And that's it: 20 years and three dogs. And lots of roasted chicken, steaks, pork roasts, and all kinds of vegetables. The only supplement I give routinely is calcium in the form of eggshells (1/2 teaspoon ground eggshell per pound of meat). I believe that most of the nutrients we need are best supplied in the variety from a natural diet.

Comments: Dogs don't digest vegetables very well unless they are either cooked or pureed, to break down the cell walls (grating isn't enough), though whole, raw veggies will do no harm (they just won't contribute their full nutritional value). I would feed liver more often than this, simply because it is so nutritionally dense, though you can see that dogs can thrive with less. Oh, and don't assume your dogs won't like something like Chinese food – mine have always loved it!

Using pre-mixes

Dawn Lange, of Duluth, Minnesota, feeds commercial dog food pre-mixes to her senior Sheltie and four-month-old miniature Poodle, Spike.

Positively Quiet

How to achieve an ALMOST bark-free home.

BY PAT MILLER

There's a lot of talk these days about the fact that dogs are primarily body language communicators. It's true, they are. But as anyone who's spent time with them knows, dogs also have a pretty well-developed ability to express themselves vocally. Dogs bark. Some bark more, some bark less, and a few don't bark at all, but most dogs bark at least some of the time.

Why dogs bark

As the owner of four dogs, two of whom are very vocal, with a third quite willing to express himself on occasion, I can testify to the domestic dog's ability to speak. Interestingly, while wild *puppies* bark, wild *adult* dogs rarely do, at least not to the degree our canine companions do.

Genetics plays a large role here, of course. Over the millennia that we humans have been selectively breeding dogs, we've purposely bred some dogs to be loud, others to be quiet.

At the "more" end of the continuum, the scent hounds are programmed to give voice to announce the presence of

their quarry. Thus Beagles, Coonhounds, Foxhounds, and others in this group are quite vocal – although they do tend to bay rather than yap. Most of the herding breeds are easily incited to bark. Skilled at telling a recalcitrant sheep or cow to back off, these Type-A workaholic dogs also delight in playing the role of noisy fun police. Many of the toy breeds also have a well-deserved reputation for barkiness as do the terriers.

In the "less-barking" category, the guarding breeds tend to reserve their formidable vocalizing for serious provocation. Sight hounds also lean toward the quiet side, preferring to chase their quarry rather than bark at it. Then, of course, there's the Basenji – a somewhat primitive African breed of dog who doesn't bark – but he sure can scream!

Another reason wild dogs bark less than our own furry family members is that they are less likely to be subjected to environments that encourage barking, such as fenced yards with potential prey objects (skateboards, joggers, bicycles) speeding tantalizingly past just out of reach; or hu-

What you can do . . .

- Determine what kind of barking your dog is doing, and take appropriate measures to modify the behavior.
- Remember that exercise is an important part of almost all behavior modification programs, including barking.
- Don't yell at your dog, no matter how much you want to! It doesn't teach her anything.
- If a dog in your neighborhood is barking excessively, offer to help your neighbor understand how to change her dog's behavior.



Genetics play a role in your dog's predisposition to barking. If she's a hound or hound mix, you're likely to be treated to a certain amount of baying; Chihuahua owners should accept the likelihood of yapping, and so on.

mans who inadvertently – or intentionally – reinforce barking.

Not all barks are alike

Dogs bark for various reasons. If you want to modify your dog's barking behavior (either decrease it or increase it) it's helpful to know what kind of barking your dog is doing, how the behavior is being reinforced, and what to do about it.

■ **Alert/alarm barking** – This is the dog who saves his family from a fire, tells us that Timmy's in the well, scares off the rapist, barks at the dogs on Animal Planet – and goes bonkers every time someone walks past on the sidewalk outside the picture window. Alarm barkers can save lives – but sometimes their judgment about what constitutes an alarm-appropriate situation can be a little faulty.

You can manage alarm barking by re-

ducing the dog's exposure to the inciting stimuli. Perhaps you can baby gate him out of the front room, move the sofa away from the windows so he can't jump up and see out, or close the drapes.

Outside, you might consider putting slats in the chain link fence to cut down on his visual access to the world surrounding his yard (better yet, install a privacy fence) or put up an interior fence to block his access to the more stimulating parts of the yard. Given that alarm barking will inevitably occur, it's also useful to teach him a positive interrupt – a cue, other than “Shut up!” that you can use to stop him in mid-bark. (See “The Positive Interrupt,” page 12.)

However, your dog might be barking because something really *is* wrong. Before you use that positive interrupt, take a moment to see what your dog is barking at. Perhaps your house really *is* on fire.

■ **Demand barking** – This behavior is more likely to annoy you than your neighbors, but it's annoying nonetheless. A demand barker has learned that he can get what he wants – usually attention or treats – by telling you. It often starts as a gentle,

adorable little grumble, and can quickly turn into insistent, loud barks – your dog's way of saying, “I want it, NOW!”

Demand barking is easiest to extinguish early. The longer a dog successfully demands stuff, the more persistent he'll be if you try to ignore him. However, ignoring him is the best answer to this behavior. No treats, no attention – not even eye contact. The instant the demand behavior starts, utter a cheerful “Oops!” and turn your back on your dog. When he's quiet, say, “Quiet, yes!” and return your attention – and treat – to him.

Watch out for extinction bursts and behavior chains. When you're trying to make a behavior go away by ignoring it, your dog may increase the intensity of his behavior – “I WANT IT NOW!” This is an extinction burst. If you succumb, thinking it's not working, you reinforce the more intense behavior, and your dog is likely to get more intense, sooner, the next time. If you stick it out and wait for the barking to stop, you're well on your way to making it go away. You have to be more persistent – and consistent – than your dog.

A *behavior chain* is a series of behaviors strung together. Your dog may learn

to bark once or twice to get you to turn your back, say quiet, and feed him a treat. His short behavior chain is “bark – then be quiet.” To avoid this, be sure to acknowledge and reward him frequently before he even *starts* barking.

■ **Frustration/arousal barking** – Often confused with anxiety barkers, dogs who have a low tolerance for frustration will bark hysterically when they can't get what they want.

Unlike the separation anxiety panic attack, this is simply an “I WANT IT!” style temper tantrum similar to demand barking, but with more emotion, and directed at the thing he wants, such as a cat strolling by, rather than at you.

You can use the positive interrupt to redirect a frenzy of frustration barking. If you consistently offer high value treats in the presence of frustration-causing stimuli, you can counter-condition your dog to look to you for treats when the cat strolls by (cat = yummy treats) rather than erupt into a barking fit.

■ **Boredom barking** – This is the dog who's left out in the backyard all day, and

The Neighborhood Barker

Sometimes it's not *your* dog barking, it's your neighbor's! This can present a challenge: your neighbor may – or may not – be interested in fixing the problem. How do you handle this?

WHAT TO DO

Your first step is to *gently* inform your neighbor that her dog is barking excessively, and when. This is best done during the day, *not* with an irate phone call when the dog wakes you up at two o'clock in the morning *again*. Assume she's not aware of it, or at least not aware it's disturbing to her neighbors.

If she seems receptive, show her this article to give her some ideas about how to modify her dog's barking behavior. If you're feeling generous, give her a copy of Terry Ryan's book, *The Bark Stops Here*, for more in-depth information on barking.

Even if you've already had some negative interactions with your neighbor over her dog, it may not be too late to try again, and mend fences. Approach her with an apology for any past bad words, and let her know you'd like to help with her dog's barking, if you can. Even short of doing actual behavior modification, offers to let her dog play with yours (if they're compatible) or taking her dog for walks (if you can safely manage the dog) may enrich the dog's environment and provide enough exercise to reduce or eliminate the barking.

If she's not receptive, or if your neighbor is such a threatening presence from the dark side that you're not comfortable

contacting her, you can file a complaint with the animal authorities in your community. Most will not disclose the identity of a complainant, but you should double-check with them to be sure. You may need to make follow-up complaints if their initial contact with the dog owner doesn't effect an adequate change in behavior.

WHAT NOT TO DO

Do *not* attempt to work with a neighbor's dog without the permission of the owner. Even with your best of intentions, you could be bitten, you could be sued, and you could actually intensify the bark rather than reducing it. And do *not* install any electronic anti-barking devices. We are hearing reports that these can be quite aversive, perhaps even painful, for the dogs at which they are directed.



It's annoying (and sad) to hear a neighborhood barker.

The Positive Interrupt

The positive interrupt is a well-programmed, highly reinforced behavior that allows you to redirect your dog's attention back to you when she's doing something inappropriate, like barking. Ideally, you want your dog's response to the "Over here!" cue to be *so* automatic – classically conditioned – that he doesn't stop to think whether what he's doing is more rewarding or interesting than turning his attention toward you and running to you for a treat. He doesn't think – he just does it, the way your foot automatically hits the brake of your car when you see taillights flash in front of you on the highway.

Here's how to program a positive interrupt:

1. Install the cue in a low-distraction environment. Use a phrase such as "Over here!" or "Quiet please!" as your interrupt cue. Say the phrase in a cheerful tone of voice when your dog is paying attention to you, then immediately feed him a morsel of very high value treat, such as a small shred of chicken. Repeat until you see his eyes light up and his ears perk when you say the phrase.

2. Practice with the cue in a low-distraction environment. Wait until your dog is engaged in a low-value activity – wandering around the room, sniffing something mildly interesting – then say your interrupt phrase in the same cheerful tone of voice. You should see an immediate interrupt in his low-value activity, as he dashes to you for his chicken. If he doesn't, return to Step 1.



Use a treat that your dog loves.

major distractions in the low-distraction environment. If you lose his automatic response at any step, return to the previous step.

4. Move your lessons to an environment with real-life distractions. Go for a walk around the block with your dog on leash. Use the interrupt when he's sniffing a bush, or eyeing garbage in the gutter. Start with mild to moderate real-life distractions if possible, but if a major distraction presents itself, including a stimulus that causes him to bark, give it a try!

5. Use the positive cue to interrupt barking. When your dog automatically turns his attention to you in response to your cue when confronted with major real-life distractions, you have a valuable tool for interrupting his barking. Be sure you practice occasionally with mild distractions as well; to keep the cue "tuned up," and remember to thank him and tell him what a wonderful dog he is when he stops barking on your request.

3. **Practice with the cue in a low-distraction environment. Then add distractions.** Still in the low-distraction environment so you can control the distraction level, add moderate distractions – one at a time – and practice the interrupt. Gradually move up to

major distractions in the low-distraction environment. If you lose his automatic response at any step, return to the previous step.

major distractions in the low-distraction environment. If you lose his automatic response at any step, return to the previous step.



Take advantage of distractions.

maybe all night. Dogs are social creatures, and the backyard dog is lonely and bored. Boredom barking is often continuous, with a monotonous quality: "Ho hum, nothing else to do, I may as well just bark." This is the kind of barking that's most annoying to neighbors, and most likely to elicit a knock on your door from a friendly Animal Control officer.

The answer here is obvious, and relatively easy: Bring the dog inside. Many outdoor barkers are perfectly content to lie quietly around the house all day, waiting for you to come home, and sleep peacefully beside your bed at night.

If your dog isn't house-safe, use crates, exercise pens, a professional dog walker (or volunteer one – you'd be amazed at how many people would like to walk a dog, but not own one!), lots of exercise, even doggie daycare to keep him out of trouble, until he earns house privileges. You can also enrich the dog's environment, by giving him interactive toys such as food-stuffed Kong toys that keep his brain engaged and his mouth busy.

■ **Stress barking** – Stress barkers are fearful, anxious, or even panicked about something real or anticipated in the environment, such as the actual approach of a threat, or isolation distress/separation anxiety.

Separation anxiety (SA) is manifested in a number of behaviors, including nonstop hysterical barking and sometimes howling. This is a complex and challenging behavior both to modify *and* to manage, as true SA is a real panic attack in response to being left alone; the dog truly cannot control his behavior. SA usually requires the intervention of a good positive behavior consultant, and sometimes pharmaceuticals.

If your dog is barking due to stress, fear, or anxiety, consult with a qualified professional behavior counselor who uses positive modification methods, and try to manage your dog's environment to minimize his exposure to stressors while you work on a program to counter-condition and desensitize him.

■ **Play barking** – This is a common behavior for herding dogs – the cheerleaders and "fun police" of the canine world. As other dogs (or humans) romp and play, the play-barker runs around the edges, barking, sometimes nipping heels.

If you're in a location where neighbors won't complain and the other dogs toler-

ate the behavior, you might just leave this one alone. With children, however, the behavior's not appropriate, and the dog should be managed by removing him from the play area, rather than risk bites to children.

If you do want to modify play-barking behavior, use *negative punishment* – where the dog's behavior makes the good stuff go away. When the barking starts, use a time-out marker such as “Oops! Too bad!” and gently remove your dog from the playground for one to three minutes. A tab – a short 6 to 12 inch leash left attached to his collar – makes this maneuver easier. Then release him to play again. Over time, as he realizes that barking ends his fun, he may start to get the idea. Or he may not – this

is a pretty hardwired behavior, especially with the herding breeds. You may just resort to finding appropriate times when you allow play-barking to happen.

■ **Greeting barking** – “Yay, Mom's home! Mom's home! Mom's home!” If your dog hails you with hellos when you return after an absence, it's time to shift into ignore mode. Stand outside your door and wait for the cacophony to subside, then enter calmly; no rousing hug-fests or “I love you! I missed you!” sessions. When your dog is quiet, then calmly greet him. If he starts to bark again, mark the barking with an “Oops!” and ignore him again.

You'll need that calm response when his loud greetings are directed toward

arriving guests, too. If you use loud verbal reprimands you add to the chaos and arousal; your dog may even think you're barking along with him!

Instead, use your positive interrupt to invite your dog to you, and calmly put him in another room or on a tether – then greet your visitors. You may want to tape a note to your door advising guests that you are training your dog and it may take you a moment or two to answer the door, so they don't give up and go away.

Uncontrolled barking can be frustrating to humans. I know this all too well, with several vocal dogs in my own personal pack. However, our dogs sometimes have important and interesting things to say.

Some Cheese With That Whine?

Dogs do more than just bark. They whine, they whimper, they grumble and growl, they scream, they howl . . . and each communication can contain messages that help you understand your dog. When your dog is communicating out loud, take a moment to figure out what he's trying to say, and why, and what, if anything, you should do about it.

Whines and whimpers are usually related to stress and/or excitement. Some breeds of dogs seem to whine more than others – German Shepherds, for example, seem especially prone to whining. Often this behavior persists because it's reinforced by the natural human tendency to comfort a whining puppy. Like demand barking, it's best to ignore whining and reinforce quiet. However, because it's often stress-induced, if your dog's a whiner, you might want to evaluate his environment to see if you can reduce the stressors in his world.

Grumbles and growls can have several meanings. Some dogs grumble and growl in enjoyment at a butt-scratch or body massage. More often, a growl is an important warning – “I don't like you (or whatever you're doing); please stop!” (See “The Gift of Growling, WDJ October 2005.)

Do *not* punish your dog for this invaluable communication! It's the most benign means he has of letting you know that something bothers him. Take away his growl, and a snap or bite is likely to happen without warning. Rather, when your dog growls in warning, step back to see what's causing him such discomfort, remove the stressor, and figure out how to give him a more positive association with the thing that's causing the growling. Aggression is not something to fool around with; seek the help of a professional if your dog is growling at everyday stressors such as children, or routine handling. Meanwhile, count your blessings that your dog has the

good sense and inhibition to growl his displeasure rather than sink his teeth into nearby human flesh.

Basenjis are a primitive breed of dog from Africa. They are advertised as “barkless,” but what many people don't know is that while they don't bark, they do scream, a blood curdling sound that evokes images of a woman being murdered. Except for this unusual breed, most dogs are in extreme distress when they scream. Investigate – and rescue.

Who among us hasn't smiled at our dogs howling at the sound of a fire truck siren speeding past? The howl, which sometimes speaks of a dog's distress, is also a communal conversation. Dogs often howl in groups, and some owners delight in teaching their dogs to howl on cue, by howling – or singing – themselves. “Group howl” is a popular activity of wild dogs, and of many humans around the campfire at dog camps. Try it – you and your dog might enjoy it!



This major league baseball park is full of canines. To the puzzlement of the neighboring dogs (and amusement of nearby humans), tiny Tater Tot howls along every time the crowd cheers.

There was the time I was engrossed in writing an article and our dogs were alarm-barking ferociously. Resisting the urge just to tell them to stop, I reluctantly got up to investigate. No, the house wasn't on fire, but I did find our horses running down the driveway toward the road.

You want *some* control over your dog's voice, but don't lose sight of the value of his vocal communications; he may be trying to tell you something important. If you ignore him you might find your horses on the highway, the house burned to the ground, or Timmy in the well. 🐾

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

Teach Your Dog to Bark (and Shush!) on Cue

We tend to think of barking as a generally undesirable behavior. In fact, there may be times when you *want* your dog to bark. If you routinely walk or jog with your dog in areas where you might be accosted by unwelcome strangers, a controlled bark from your dog might serve as a useful deterrent. *You* know your dog is barking on cue, but the potential mugger doesn't, and likely assumes your dog's willing to back up his bark with a bite.

It may also be easier to teach your dog a "quiet!" cue if you teach him to speak when you ask, rather than just waiting for opportunities to present themselves. To teach him to bark on cue, find a way to trigger a bark. Some dogs will bark if you act silly, tease with a toy, or knock on the door.

Find your dog's trigger, give your "Speak!" cue, then elicit the bark. (If you want the bark to eventually ward off potential accosters, select a cue that will make sense in that context, such as "Stop!" or "Leave me alone!")

When your dog barks, "mark" the desired behavior, with the click! of a clicker or a verbal marker, such as the word "Yes!", and feed him a treat. Repeat this until he'll bark on just the cue, without the trigger. Then practice in different environments until the "bark on cue" behavior is well generalized. When his "bark on cue" is well established, you can follow it with a "quiet!" cue, so you'll be able to turn the bark off when you want.

Caveat: Be careful when teaching your dog to bark on cue. Once he learns a bark can make you click! the clicker, he may try demand-barking – and you may get more "speak" than you want. For this reason, I don't teach my dogs to bark on cue unless they already tend to bark too much, in which case it's useful for teaching "quiet!"

Putting "speak" on stimulus control

You may have heard the suggestion that if you put a behavior such as barking on cue and have it under good *stimulus control*, the dog then won't bark unless you give him the cue to speak. Here are the four rules of stimulus control:

1. The dog always offers the behavior when given the cue. (He always barks when you ask him to.)
2. The dog never offers the behavior when you don't give him the cue. (He never speaks when you don't ask him to.)
3. The dog never offers the behavior when you cue a different behavior. (He never speaks when you ask him to sit.)
4. The dog never offers a different behavior when you cue the behavior. (He never sits when you ask him to speak.)

It sounds good in theory, perhaps, but in reality, it doesn't work to stop a behavior. Think about it. Many owners have the "Sit!" cue under good stimulus control – the dog always, or almost always, sits when asked.

However, that doesn't mean the dog never chooses to sit of his own accord. Dogs sit all the time! The above rules apply only *during actual training sessions*. Having a behavior on cue and under stimulus control does *not* mean the dog will never choose to do the behavior on his own, or be triggered to offer the behavior by some other stimulus.

In fact, as mentioned above, teaching your dog to bark on cue by reinforcing the behavior makes it *more* likely your dog will offer to bark, not less. Forewarned is forearmed!



Ruthanna Levy, a trainer from Alameda, California, taught Ziggy to bark on cue so she could teach him a "shush" cue.



Levy uses both verbal ("Shh!") and physical (finger on lips) cues for "shush."



Ziggy's reward is to chase a ball – his favorite activity, and "worth" more to him than even delicious treats.

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Angels Abound

Rescuing an older dog can be the source of much joy.

BY CJ PUOTINEN

The nine-year-old Golden Retriever was a mess. Her nails were so long, they curved around and made walking difficult, her coat was filthy, and her ears were so badly infected that her veterinarian recommended surgery. Now she was being given up for adoption. Would anyone want her?

The odds were against it, but here's a holistic makeover story in which an old dog gets a new name, a new look, a new home, and an exciting new life.

The story begins nine years ago in Rockland County, New York, northwest of New York City, when a man bought a puppy and named her Angel. His wife wasn't happy because she preferred a clean house, so Angel spent most of her life in a crate. After two years, the owner's wife begged a friend to take the dog. The friend didn't want a dog, either, but she felt so sorry for Angel that she agreed to adopt her.

What you can do . . .

- Consider adopting (or fostering) an older dog!
- Take your middle-aged or elderly rescue dog for a thorough veterinary examination and nutrition consultation.
- Use an improved diet, herbs, homeopathy, acupuncture, chiropractic, massage, and gentle exercise to improve the rescued dog's health – and outlook on life.
- Use positive training methods only! Many neglected or abandoned dogs never had the benefit of training – much less dog-friendly training.



Angel (soon to be re-named Angie) and her new owner, on the first day of their new life together. Earlier that week, the dog had her first professional grooming and on the day of her adoption, a veterinary exam. Photo by Stacey Hershman, DVM

Angel received annual vaccinations and treatment for ear infection flare-ups, but trips to the vet were her only outings.

In 2007, circumstances in the owner's life changed and she was no longer able to keep Angel. Through a relative, she turned for help to trainer Nancy Strouss at People Training for Dogs in Nyack, New York.

"People are often judged harshly for giving up a dog, especially an older one," says Strouss. "But in some cases, such as when their own life is in crisis and the dog is neglected, it's the most loving thing a person can do. This was the case with Angel's owner. I give her a lot of credit for wanting to find Angel a better home."

As she often does, Strouss began

making inquiries among her students and acquaintances on behalf of the older dog, whom she had not yet met. She was already trying to find a new home for another rescued Golden Retriever, a two-year-old female.

"The two-year-old was placed by the end of the week," Strouss says. "Calls kept coming in about her and each time I said that she's been placed, I would ask if the caller might be interested in a nine-year-old."

But almost everyone who had called to inquire about the young dog had recently lost an older Golden. After tearfully telling Strouss about their dogs, they declined further information about the older dog,

saying they couldn't deal with the possibility of losing another dog any time soon.

A host of angels

Then a call came in from Mohit SantRam, a 32-year-old computer programmer/designer in New York City. He, too, was inquiring about the two-year-old, but to Strouss's surprise, he said yes, he *would* consider the nine-year-old instead. "We talked on the phone and e-mailed endlessly that week. I needed to be sure he would provide a good home for her and he needed to be sure he was ready for the responsibility and financial commitment."

Angel's veterinarian had recommended surgery at a cost of \$300 per ear, plus post-operative pain medication for several months. However, the financial burden of the veterinary care that Angel needed would not fall completely on the adopter's shoulders. After hearing her endlessly mention Angel in classes, three of Strouss's advanced students offered to sponsor Angel by paying her veterinary bills. They wanted to help make her more adoptable.

Note that neither Strouss (the dog's champion) nor Strouss's students (the benefactors), nor SantRam (the potential owner) had met Angel yet! But there was something about the dog's story that deeply touched them all.

All of Angel's angels came together on Sunday, April 22, 2007.

The owner and a friend brought Angel to Strouss's training facility for an evaluation. "When I saw her, she was filthy – so dirty that I had to wash my hands after petting her," describes Strouss. "Her hair was falling out all over the floor, her coat was very thick from not being brushed, and her undercoat flew all over the place whenever I touched her." The dog's ears were so badly infected, inflamed, swollen, and dirty that in one ear, Strouss couldn't even see into the canal.

Also, Angel's nails were so long that they curved all the way around. "I don't know how she could walk," says Strouss. "It must have been painful."

Within ten minutes of meeting Angel, Strouss was sitting on the floor cutting her nails as the dog lay calmly beside her. "She didn't mind at all," says Strouss. "She just waited while I cut the nails on all four feet."

Angel might not have won a beauty contest, but she had a terrific personality.

"Cutting her nails was certainly a test of temperament," says Strouss, "and then

I noticed how little she interacted with her owner. After I cut her nails, she followed me everywhere I went, always trying to catch my attention with intense eye contact. She obviously longed for attention."

Later that day SantRam arrived, and he and Strouss took Angel for a walk all around Nyack.

"Since Mo lives in New York City," she says, "we wanted to be sure Angel could handle all the noise and activity of city life. It was a beautiful Sunday, so Nyack was alive with all kinds of people and things going on.

"Angel loved every minute of our walk. Noises didn't bother her, she loved people stopping to say hello to her, and she walked confidently through crowds of people on narrow sidewalks. We passed a couple of dogs and she looked at them with interest but nothing more. We also observed how well she walked up and down the steep stairs at our school, which was important because Mo owns a co-op that's a third-floor walk-up in Manhattan's East Village."

Makeover begins

Strouss and SantRam put a plan into place. Strouss made arrangements for Angel to go to a groomer for a thorough makeover, and to be examined by a holistic veterinarian. If all went well, Angel would go straight



Stacey Hershman, DVM, has a holistic veterinary housecall practice in New York and New Jersey, using homeopathy, acupuncture, and other complementary therapies.

home with SantRam.

On April 28, holistic veterinarian Stacey Hershman examined Angel. "At 87 pounds," says Dr. Hershman, "Angel was overweight, and I suspected she had a low thyroid condition. She had a couple of rubbery cysts, one on her back and one behind her right elbow, both the size of an olive, and four lick granulomas, one at the top of each foot. No doubt years of boredom combined with her skin's itchy, oily seborrhea contributed to those raised, brownish red granulomas. She also had some pain in both hips, was slow to get up, and limped slightly."

Dr. Hershman took blood samples for a panel of tests and gave Angel a homeopathic remedy for her ear and skin symptoms pending thyroid test results. She told SantRam about the problems that can result from the combination vaccines Angel had received so often, explaining that many of her symptoms are common in over-vaccinated dogs.

In addition to avoiding future vaccinations, she recommended that Angel be switched from her diet of inexpensive kibble and canned food to a well-balanced raw diet by gradually adding raw food to what she was used to eating. Her improved diet and increased exercise should help the dog lose weight.

Giving Angie an occasional bone to chew would also help remove the plaque on her teeth. Dr. Hershman recommended a teaspoon of Carlson brand cod liver oil in the morning and a tablespoon of organic coconut oil in the evening to support Angel's immune system, skin, and ears.

"Angel's ears looked awful," says Dr. Hershman, "but she definitely did not need surgery. Her right ear was worse than the left. The right pinnae was thickened with scar tissue and filled with a black, tarry, yeasty smelling exudate. The left ear was yeasty and brown."

Dr. Hershman flushed the right ear and filled it with Pellitol ointment, as she described in "A New Old Ear Treatment" (WDJ June 2004). Dr. Hershman prefers Pellitol to other ear cleaners because as the ointment dries and begins to fall out, which takes about a week, it painlessly takes ear debris with it.

"I showed Mo how to clean the ointment out after one week," she says, "and after that he will clean her ears twice a week with Dermapet MalAcetic Otic ear cleanser. I like Dermapet because it's a gentle, hypoallergenic liquid that helps

keep the ear's pH in proper balance, which helps prevent the growth of *Pseudomonas* bacteria as well as yeast and fungi."

For routine ear cleaning, Dr. Hershman does not recommend filling the ear canal with liquid and then having the dog shake it out.

"Shaking the head never removes all of the liquid," she explains, "and you want the ears to be as dry as possible. I show all my clients how to clean their dogs' ears by dampening the end of a cotton swab with cleaning solution and using that to clean the ears. This is the perfect follow-up treatment after Pellitol lifts and removes debris from deep within the ears."

The blood test confirmed Dr. Hershman's suspicion that Angel had an underactive thyroid.

"At our next visit, I'll recheck Angel's skin and ears and start her on Soloxine, a thyroid medication. I also recommend Glycoflex III, a supplement containing glucosamine, MSM (methyl-sulfonyl-methane), green-lipped mussel, and other anti-inflammatory ingredients to help relieve her stiffness and hip pain. If necessary, we'll start her on acupuncture or consider other alternatives."

Fortunately, the laundry list of sug-



When Sue Ann Lesser, DVM, ACAC, CVSMT, is not providing chiropractic care for animals, she shows Dobermans in conformation, obedience, rally, and freestyle.

gested treatments did not discourage SantRam, and following Dr. Hershman's exam, he happily loaded Angel into his car for the drive to her new home.

A whole new world

To make her transformation complete, SantRam changed her name from Angel to Angie – although he sometimes affectionately calls her "Angie McTubbs" – a nickname that will probably fall by the

wayside as she loses excess weight and gains muscle tone.

SantRam works from home, which means that Angie has companionship most of the day. "She seems to be adjusting well to her new surroundings," he says.

"I try to take her out as much as possible. She loves to walk. Yesterday morning we walked about two miles, over the Manhattan Bridge and back. She loved looking out at the river. I can tell she's a water dog. A friend of mine walked her in the afternoon to Washington Square Park, and Angie pulled toward the fountain and rushed into the water."

Like most Golden Retrievers, Angie loves people. "She gets excited when I come home, and she's disappointed when I leave," says SantRam.

"She already has a huge fan club among my friends. Some of them walk her and take care of her when I'm not able to. We're being careful not to overexert her. A friend gave me a water bottle that she drinks from when we go out for walks. Everyone is making Angie feel welcome and looking out for her."

After hearing about the dog from one of Nancy Strouss's students, Lorna Paxton, owner of Happy Tails Canine Spa in Los Angeles, sent Angie a gift of canine aromatherapy product samples, including shampoos and conditioners (these products were featured in "Smell This, You'll Feel Better," December 2004).

Now that she's been groomed, Angie looks and smells much better. SantRam brushed Angie daily for the first ten days, removing a mountain of dead hair. "I bought a new vacuum cleaner to keep all the hair cleaned up," he says. "Now her coat seems to have settled down, and she's just shedding normally."

Any change of diet can trigger symptoms of detoxification, and to help Angie's body adjust to its new fare, SantRam added some of the supplements recommended in "Canine Allergies and Your Dog's Health," May 2007, including:

■ **Seacure**, a deep sea fermented white fish powder that is predigested, repairs tissue, helps improve skin and coat, and speeds the healing of leaky gut syndrome (a common factor in allergies and yeast infections)

Resources Mentioned in This Article

Stacey Joy Hershman, DVM, CVH, CVA, Natural Vet for Pets, PC, New York/New Jersey. (914) 318-8923, naturalvetforpets.com

Sue Ann Lesser, DVM, veterinary chiropractor, runs monthly clinics in NY, NJ, PA, CT, and MD. (631) 423-9223, AR18AR180@msn.com

Nancy Strouss, People Training for Dogs, Nyack, NY. People Training for Dogs is not a rescue group. Strouss helps with the placement of dogs on an individual, selective basis. (845) 358-5121, peopletrainingfordogs.com

HappyTails Canine Spa Line, Los Angeles, CA. Aromatherapy shampoos, conditioners, deodorizers, and more. Lorna Paxton, (866) HAPPY-20 or (310) 476-6314, happytailsspa.com

Pellitol Ointment, manufactured by Veterinary Specialties, Inc., Barrington, IL (888) 838-7732. Sold by ThomasVeterinaryDrug.com, (623) 936-3363, and VetAmerica.com, (866) 838-6337

Dermapet MalAcetic Otic ear cleanser, manufactured by Dermapet, (800) 755-4738, dermapet.com. Sold by VetAmerica.com, (866) 838-6337

Seacure®. Proper Nutrition, Reading, PA. Mention WDJ for a 10-percent discount and free ground shipping. (800) 555-8868, propernutrition.com

Willard Water. Nutrition Coalition, Fargo, ND. Mention WDJ for free samples. (800) 447-4793 or (218) 236-9783, willardswater.com

■ Willard Water concentrate, which can be diluted in a dog's drinking water, and helps improve the digestion and assimilation of nutrients, which (in turn) helps the body heal itself

■ **Probiotics** or "friendly" bacteria, which play an important role in the body's immune system, fending off pathogens and helping to make the body a poor host for yeasts, fungi, viruses, harmful bacteria, and parasites

Angie's checkups

Four weeks after Angie's adoption, she and SantRam returned to People Training for Dogs, where Sue Ann Lesser, DVM, conducts a monthly chiropractic clinic.

"Angie's alignment was off in her front left elbow," reports Dr. Lesser, "and her pelvis on the right side was high, with her hip jammed, and the stifle and femur on her left side turned in.

"Angie required some minor adjustments to bring her body back into balance, but all things considered, especially considering her history, Angie moves remarkably well. She has no major problems. Nothing grated or clunked when I checked her over, she doesn't have serious arthritis, and her coat has a good quality color. She's what horse people call good stock."

To help Angie develop muscle in her thighs, Dr. Lesser encouraged SantRam to continue taking Angie on long walks. She also showed him a simple exercise that would help build Angie's muscle strength and muscular awareness. With the fingertips of each hand over her hip joints, SantRam pushes Angie's hips gently to the left and right and back again for 10 seconds several times a day.

"We call this the hip sway," says Dr. Lesser. "It doesn't look like much, but it's a neurologically powerful exercise that builds both muscle strength and muscle awareness by stimulating mechanoreceptors or proprioceptors, increasing her body awareness. In older dogs, this awareness is especially important, as it helps prevent injury."

Dr. Lesser noted that problems with the first cervical vertebra and ear infections often go together, so she expects that Angie's adjustments will help her ear problems clear up. She also explained that lick granulomas often occur when an area tingles, aches, or is sore or out of alignment.

Dr. Lesser showed SantRam how to

massage Angie's feet daily by working the stiff areas and gently mobilizing the foot. He already massages the area around her ears.

"I'm really happy that Angie is living in Manhattan," says Dr. Lesser, "where she has ample opportunity to exercise and also receive the mental stimulation that the city offers. Both are important for good dog health."

Rescue rewards

Anyone who has ever helped a dog find a new home knows how rewarding the experience can be. In her 30 years as a dog trainer and Golden Retriever owner, Nancy Strouss has helped place more dogs than she can remember. Most were Golden Retrievers, plus a few Labs, other breeds, and mixed breeds.

"I evaluate the dog's temperament, assess any behavioral or health problems, counsel the current owners to see if I can help them keep the dog, and then begin the process of getting the word out," she says. "I return every phone call and answer every e-mail. It's a lot of work, but finding the right home always makes the effort worthwhile.

"I've been fortunate to find some exceptional people to adopt these deserving dogs. One of the Labs that I placed a couple of years ago had been living in a crate in a garage, the result of a divorce, and was being given only two short walks per day. Today she is competing in agility, is titled in the advanced classes, and is one of the dogs to watch at trials! Whenever she sees me at trials, she drags her owner over to me – and I only met her once, when I evaluated her.

"A little mixed breed lived with me for a short time while I taught her obedience commands and good house manners. Eventually she became a hearing dog through special training at Green Chimneys in Brewster, New York, and she was placed with a deaf person."

Strouss receives many photos of newly placed dogs sleeping contentedly in their new owners' beds or favorite chairs, swimming in a pond or the ocean, running on



Trainer Nancy Strouss feels strongly that older rescue dogs can be worth the time, effort, and money that it may take to improve their health or training.

the beach, or playing with other dogs or kids.

"Considering the dreadful lives most of these dogs led before, it feels really good knowing they are enjoying themselves and bringing so much happiness to the new people in their lives. Many of them recently lost a much-loved older dog or in some cases are living with a dog for the first time. This is one of those things in life where feeling good is the best reward."

At the end of her adoption day, Angie, Mo SantRam, and a friend left Nyack for their new life in New York City.

"After lots of hugs and good wishes for all," says Strouss, "the freshly groomed Angie, with her new lead and collar, looked beautiful and happy. I admit there were tears in my eyes as they walked away and I saw Angie turn her head and look up at me. Just for a moment,

it was like she was saying thank you. And I'm sure she was." 🐾

CJ Puotinen is author of The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care, Natural Remedies for Dogs and Cats, and other books (see "Resources," page 24 for purchasing information). She lives in New York with her husband, a Labrador, and a tabby cat.



Off-Leash Angst

Prepare, practice, breathe . . . and then unstrap that leash!

I can empathize with Susan Aceti, author of the article that follows. Prior to becoming a professional dog trainer, I, too, had a dog – a Bull Terrier – who loved to run, and who didn't have a reliable recall (despite high scores in the obedience ring). I, too, recognized the joy my dog experienced when she had the opportunity to run like the wind. I, too, was willing to take the risk of allowing Caper off leash, in an appropriately little-traveled open space. Thankfully, I never had cause to regret it.

Some may be critical of Susan for not working harder at that "perfect recall" before letting her dog off leash, or for her unwillingness to use more coercive methods that might ensure a more prompt response, albeit at the risk to relationship. Not me. I admire her for her commitment to a dog with a difficult start in life, for the tremendous progress she's made with Molly, and for her ability to weigh risks and make difficult but measured choices in order to give her dog the quality of life she deserves.

– Pat Miller, Training Editor, *Whole Dog Journal*

BY SUSAN ACETI

My dog, Molly, runs like the wind. When she sprints at top speed, her normally upright ears flow back against her head and her tail balances her like a rudder on a boat. When I see her run, it is impossible for me not to appreciate the beautiful, graceful way she moves.

Until recently, though, it was not often that I got to see her run. While some people are blessed with dogs who wiggle with happiness at meeting strangers and other dogs, Molly is different. At six months,

she was rescued from being locked in a basement with no food. As a first time owner, I was blissfully unaware of the behavior problems that a severely neglected dog can have. Some dogs can overcome a difficult beginning, but for Molly the combination of a bad environment and a fearful temperament created a dog who protects herself by aggressively warning off any stranger.

During the past three years, Molly has overcome some of her fear. I use positive reinforcement for calm behavior and I

What you can do . . .

- See "Come to Me, Run to Me," WDJ December 2005 and "Building Off-Leash Reliability," March 2002. And look for a new article on off-leash work in WDJ this fall.
- Follow all rules regarding dogs when hiking in open space areas.
- Reward your dog with high-value treats and praise when she returns to you after running off leash – but understand that running off leash is more valuable to most dogs than any treat.



make sure I don't put her into situations she can't handle.

That management means staying away from off-leash dog parks and most other off-leash areas. During the rare times I let her off leash in small wooded areas in the past, I was tormented by the fear that she would encounter someone and act aggressively or even bite.

Molly has never bitten anyone and off leash, is much more likely to run away than bite – but I still worry. In addition, Molly's desire to chase prey can easily trump staying with her loving owner. I could be holding a raw, bloody steak and Molly would still dash after a deer with scarcely a look in my direction.

Since I don't believe in hurting my dog, using a shock collar to keep her with me is out of the question. And, if she began to associate shocks with strangers it would quickly undo all of the tremendous progress she's made.

So without a fenced yard, we walk – miles and miles of walking – as I try to



Molly crosses the ridgetop, jogging parallel to her owner's path, in canine bliss.

give my high-energy dog enough exercise. But even several hours of walking leaves her ready for several hours more. Molly rarely has the opportunity to run like the wind. I know that adequate exercise is part of the prescription for helping a reactive dog like Molly but her reactivity is precisely the factor that limits where and how I can exercise her.

A wild place

About a year ago, though, one thing changed. A co-worker at a new job invited Molly and me to visit the local nature conservancy where my co-worker rents a house. The conservancy's 200-plus acres are open to the public but most of the time there are few visitors around. The conservancy is unfenced but far bigger than the other areas I had been to before and on one side it abuts a state forest.

After working on a reliable recall for many months and walking the conservancy grounds with Molly on leash for several more months, the day finally came when I took her leash off. At first, it was nerve-racking for me. Molly sometimes stayed in my general vicinity as we walked, but also took off to explore. Those minutes she was gone seemed like torturous hours to me. Was she lost, out of ear shot, injured in some way? I'd call and call her, cursing myself for being a horrible, irresponsible owner. Each time she'd come back – maybe not right away – but she'd come back. She would be galloping towards me with her tongue hanging out – sometimes running so fast she'd overshoot where I was standing and she'd have to skid around and come back.

And then, one day, watching her with her nose to the ground, tracking some creature, I had an epiphany. I am more vulnerable in this environment than she is. She is equipped with incredible hearing, an amazing sense of smell, an extraordinarily agile body, and really big, sharp teeth. Really, really big teeth. My nephew – a star on the football field – pointed out recently that Molly is always equipped with cleats and never has to change in or out of warmer clothes.

In this environment, my physical abilities pale compared to hers. I'm not terribly clumsy, but I'm far more likely to stumble over a rock or log than she is. Sometimes, without the telltale jingle of her tags, I'd have a hard time locating her. And getting lost? I always figured I was the one looking for her if she went out of my sight. I soon

learned that standing still and having her find me was far more successful than crashing through the woods trying to find her.

Perhaps most significantly, I came to realize that off leash there is a different tenor in our interaction. When she's on leash, I choose which way to walk, when I would like her to stop sniffing, and whether to turn around if there's something I think she might find threatening. As gently as I use the leash, there's still a sense of control and containment about it. In a pinch, I can get her away from some place or some thing with nothing other than the leash.

But with her off leash, there is a more genuine sense of partnership. I learned slowly to trust Molly to come back to me. She now checks in with me during off-leash romps for a "Hey, how ya doing?" and a treat. She will also periodically simply turn to see where I am, which I take as part checking *on* me, and part "Hurry up, slowpoke!"

I feel a keen sense of companionship with Molly at these times that I imagine cowboys out West must have felt riding on their horses with a dog trotting by their side. I also feel like she's watching out for me – and I'm perfectly fine with the non-anthropomorphic thought that she's guarding me because I'm a resource for her.

This companionship and security belies the idea that so many people seem to have that cooperation between human and dog can only be forced through punitive measures – "If my dog doesn't come back when I call, I'm going to shock her until she does." My co-worker once noted that I seemed surprised every time Molly chose to come back and check in with me. I guess I also used to think that she wouldn't offer her cooperation voluntarily. Well, she does offer it and it is incredibly satisfying.

I know that there is danger in letting her off leash and I take every precaution I can to avoid it. But when I see Molly in the woods, her joy is absolutely undeniable. The delight in her eyes and in her body language is overwhelming. She is a fish in water, a bird in the sky, a pig in mud. This can be a tough world, for humans *and* animals, and joy can be hard to come by. Despite the risks, I will continue to let her run off leash, because my dog, Molly, runs like the wind. 🐾

Susan Aceti lives in Maryland with Molly and two cats who put up with Molly. When not exercising the dog, Susan works for a nonprofit that promotes healthy homes.

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Catching Up

Time to acknowledge some compliments and answer questions.

Thank you for saving my dog's life. I had read "What Promotes Bloat?" in the January 2005 issue. The article made a huge impact on me because it described the alarming way that a perfectly healthy dog would die within minutes/hours from a seemingly random act. With bloat (also known as GDV, for "gastric dilation and volvulus"), instead of passing gas normally, the dog's stomach twists, cutting off blood supply to the entire area.

In subsequent issues, there have been occasional letters to the editor thanking WDJ for the article and for saving a dog's life. Those letters kept the memory of the disorder fresh in my mind.

So, when my dog Nick came back from his post-dinner walk gagging up foam, I touched his belly and it was as tight as a drum, I thought, "He's got that thing!" I called the vet, grabbed my purse and my back issues of WDJ, loaded Nick in the car and raced off.

I found the article on GDV while my

friend drove, confirmed my suspicions, canceled the vet appointment, and instead went to an animal emergency hospital where they had a surgeon ready.

When the surgeon warned me of the slim likelihood of success, I had an overwhelming feeling that Nick was going to be okay. During the operation, I visualized great things about Nick's recovery and I mentally drafted my letter of thanks to you.

The surgeon was exceedingly surprised that Nick's surgery was so successful. She said that my prompt diagnosis and action saved Nick's life, but I couldn't have done it without you. So again, I thank you, and I hope my letter reminds WDJ readers about GDV and saves another life.

Maureen Ragan
Baltimore, MD

Sheesh! That's a letter I have to print! I'm so glad Nick is well.

Every dog owner should be familiar with the classic symptoms of bloat/GDV,

which include the following:

- *Unproductive vomiting*
- *Apparent distress*
- *Distended abdomen, which may or may not be visible*
- *Restlessness*
- *Excessive salivation/drooling*
- *Panting*
- *The dog's stomach feels taut to the touch, like a drum*
- *Pacing*
- *Repeated turning to look at flank and/or abdomen*
- *Owner feels like something just isn't right!*

Don't forget that many owners of large-breed dogs (the most frequent victims of GDV) swear by an over-the-counter anti-gas product called Phazyme for emergency (and interim) use when bloat is suspected – to be given on the way to the veterinarian's office. Phazyme is the brand name of gelcaps containing simethicone, a gas remedy for humans.

While some veterinarians demur, worried that the dog's consumption of anything could be aspirated (enter into the lungs) when the dog is bloated, others agree that anything the dog can be given to reduce the build-up of gas in his stomach will help. Talk to your veterinarian about using this remedy as an interim treatment for a suspected case of bloat.

I decided to try coconut oil for my Olde English Bulldog after reading "Crazy About Coconut Oil" (October 2005). Since we rescued him, my dog has had terrible dandruff that did not respond to several different dandruff shampoos. His shedding was worse than my Frenchie and American Bulldogs, combined.

I began including one, then two, teaspoons of virgin coconut oil in his food daily, about one month ago. He *loves* it. His dandruff has completely disappeared, and his shedding is about 10 percent of what it



Bloat, also known as GDV (gastric dilation and volvulus), is more common in big dogs and in deep-chested dogs – but it can strike dogs of any breed or size.

used to be. I wouldn't have believed such a quick response if I hadn't seen it with my own eyes.

Bulldogs have so many health problems I'm not sure it's fair to keep breeding them, but anything that helps is really appreciated. Thanks to your magazine for intelligent suggestions!

Ellen Cooper
Via e-mail

The April issue devoted a whole article to the potential benefits of lemon balm for dogs ("It's the Balm!"), but I was dismayed to discover that the invasiveness of this popular herb was mentioned only in a brief aside. As a botanist, I am pleased about your efforts to promote your readers' interest in plants, but I am hoping you will also pass on detailed instructions on how to prevent these same plants from becoming a danger to the native plant communities across the U.S.

Readers who choose to grow lemon balm should be encouraged to keep it in a pot, rather than transplanting it to the yard, and they should never allow it to flower. Keep an eagle eye on the plant and give it a severe "haircut" as soon as you notice any buds. As a member of the mint family, it will grow back quickly even if you cut it to the ground.

Rather than putting flowering lemon balm branches or plants on the compost, these should go into the garbage or be burned. Once your lemon balm sets seeds, young lemon balm plants will spring up across the neighborhood in the most unlikely (and often undetected) locations, and from there it is just about impossible to put this genie back into the bottle.

Just as responsible pet owners will not allow their pets to populate the neighborhood with feral offspring, we need to keep invasive plants safely under control. Readers who can't closely supervise their lemon balm should be advised to buy their supply from responsible growers instead.

Catharina Coenen
Pennsylvania

CJ Puotinen, who authored our article on lemon balm, agrees. "Lemon balm grows so well, that where conditions favor its

growth, it can take over. In parts of Oregon, it has been listed as a medium-impact invasive weed. Lemon balm enthusiasts should keep their plants spayed, neutered, and on a short leash by planting lemon balm in pots rather than in the ground (to prevent spreading roots), prevent it from flowering by keeping it cut back, and by disposing of flowering stalks that may contain seeds instead of composting them."

Your editorial in the April issue was really interesting. My dog has been yelping occasionally as well, and sometimes limps and walks gingerly and other times seems fine and peppy. Since this behavior is recent, I took her to the vet to get checked out, but the x-ray showed no fractures or arthritis. The vet thought she showed sensitivity in her lower back when she was pressing down on it, but had no further recommendation than to keep an eye on her. I'd be really interested in a chiropractic exam; would you be able to name the practitioner you mentioned in the article?

Lana Martin
Sacramento, CA

Since the chiropractor who helped Mokie already has a very busy practice, and does not see small animals out of her immediate area, I didn't want to list her number and unleash a torrent of calls on her. There are many talented veterinary chiropractors; you can contact the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association (AVCA) for information about practitioners near you. Call (918) 784-2231 or see animalchiropractic.org.

I was surprised to read "Don't Bite on the Veggie Dog" in the April issue. My daughter's Collie has been on a vegan diet for more than three years. She is seven years old and healthy. Our vet is amazed and has done bloodwork, etc. It is common knowledge that if you choose a vegetarian diet you need to supplement.

Nancy Bersani
Milton, MA

In our opinion, and that of the nutrition experts we most respect, dogs should eat biologically appropriate diets. There is no such thing as a vegetarian or vegan wild dog. We don't think that dogs who can eat

animal products should be denied them for reasons relating to the owner's ethical or philosophical values. Formulating a "complete and balanced" vegan diet for dogs is far more difficult than feeding an animal-based diet, partly because there is a great deal more research and anecdotal evidence about "what works" regarding animal-based diets for dogs than there is for vegan diets.

That said, we are aware that a very few dogs are allergic to or intolerant of animal proteins and fats; these dogs can clearly benefit from a diet that excludes the problematic ingredients, yet contains appropriate and balanced amounts of the protein, fat, vitamins, and minerals that dogs require.

I just received the May issue and wanted to respond to the letter complaining that you don't provide your "top foods" lists for free on your website. As you pointed out, you don't sell advertising – a practice I applaud.

I couldn't disagree more with the writer's opinion that WDJ cares "more about profits than saving the lives of dogs." From your in-depth articles about wholesome foods to the excellent articles on humane, joyful training, it is clear that you put dogs at the very top of your priority list. Anyone with an ounce of sense would understand that in order to gather this information and make it available to dog owners, you need to have financial support.

Like most of your readers, I want to do the best I can for my dogs so that they enjoy long, healthy lives. Other dog publications, while at times informative, include too many articles about irrelevant topics such as dresses and jewelry for dogs and the majority are at least 50 percent ads.

I've been a subscriber for five years and keep every issue. I've always deeply appreciated the information in WDJ but with the recent, widespread pet food recalls, I feel more than ever that WDJ is a potential lifesaver.

I'm sure that you don't crumble in the face of the occasional criticism – this is obvious by your publishing that letter – but I wanted to take a moment to let you know that your efforts *are* appreciated and the price of a subscription is well worth it.

Yogi Cutitta
Salem, MA

I really appreciate your warm words; thanks so much. – Editor 🐾



RESOURCES

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

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

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

Please note: APDT is dedicated to building better trainers through education, promoting dog-friendly methods, and encouraging their use. APDT's membership is composed of trainers from across the spectrum of training philosophies. Membership does not necessarily ensure all members employ similar training methods, nor does APDT set standards of skill or competence. APDT encourages (but does not require) its members to use training methods that use reinforcement and rewards, not punishment, to achieve desired behavior.

BOOKS

WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of two books: *The Power of Positive Dog Training* and *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog*. Both books are available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com

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

HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

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

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WHAT'S AHEAD

Keeping It Raw

The fifth installment of our series on home-prepared diets is about raw diets: where real owners buy ingredients, how they make the food, and what they feed.

What a Dog's Gotta Chew

Why dogs chew on things, and how to properly manage this behavior to your advantage.

Cool Customers

A review of the most effective coats and vests that can chill out your hot dog this summer.

Go to the Top of Your Class

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

Energy Healing

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

The Word On Her Lipomas

Many dogs, especially older dogs, develop fatty tumors. Most of the time, they cause no harm. Here's how to know when you **should** deal with them, and how.