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# The Whole



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# Be a Hair-o

*Pet hair is needed to aid in oil disaster cleanup.*

BY STEPHANIE COLMAN

One man's trash is another man's ecological disaster recovery tactic. Local hair salons and pet grooming centers are saving hair and fur clippings to help with the cleanup of the British Petroleum oil spill that's been polluting the Gulf Coast since April.

Matter of Trust, a San Francisco-based nonprofit organization, gathers the clippings and turns them into oil-collection tools. Hair is stuffed into recycled nylon stockings that are tied together to surround and contain a spill, or constructed into mats placed on top the spill. In mat form, each cubic foot can collect up to eight gallons of oil in less than three minutes.

Alabama stylist and inventor, Phil McCrory, is credited with discovering the practical use for hair clippings after viewing news footage of the Exxon Valdez spill in 1989 and seeing how the fur of Alaskan otters became saturated with oil.

"You shampoo hair because hair collects oil," McCrory said. "Hair is very efficient at gathering oil out of the water."

As news of the organization's effort spreads, hair and grooming salon owners and customers from across the country have been eager to participate. "As soon as clients hear what we're doing, they want to know more about how they can help," said Paul McKay, owner of Salon P/F in Studio City. "Everyone has been very supportive. If they aren't ready for a hair cut, they're donating stockings."

The salon collected more than three pounds of human hair in its first week of participation.

Pet grooming salon owners are equally supportive of the cause. Laurie Bliss, owner of A' La Muttt in Studio City, started collecting as soon as she heard about the opportunity.

"Choosing to participate was easy," Bliss says. "We're very excited to be able to do our small part in the clean up effort. It's heart-breaking to think of all the wildlife that's affected by the spill. Saving and sending clippings is good for the environment and such an easy thing to."



**Some would be embarrassed to be caught without a coat. But if you donate your dog's hair for helping clean up the oil spill in the Gulf, we'd call you a hair-o.**

Bliss estimates that a busy day of grooming heavily coated breeds such as Huskies, Chow Chows, and Newfoundlands can generate up to 25 pounds of fur, adding that regardless of the breed of dog, every little bit helps. "Even our lightly-coated customers like Chihuahuas and their owners are happy to know they're contributing to a good cause," she said.

Matter of Trust reports that it has received hundreds of thousands of pounds of hair and fibers from around the world. Hair and fur not used as part of the current Gulf Coast clean up project will be warehoused and used for future spills.

To donate, individuals and salon owners must register at [matteroftrust.org](http://matteroftrust.org) to receive routinely updated mailing instructions. 🐾

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

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# Crowd Control

*Five things to do when your dog goes bonkers over other dogs.*

BY PAT MILLER, CPDT-KA

**D**og-reactive behavior can be alarming and frustrating for a dog owner, as well as damaging to the canine-human relationship. Most of us adopt our dogs with the hope of sharing them with the rest of the world – on walks, at family picnics, at events around town, and sometimes at canine competitions. It's not quite as much fun when you have to leave your canine family member at home because he barks, leaps around, lunges at, maybe even tries to bite other dogs. Here are five things you can do when your reactive rover goes bonkers in public places:

**1 Stay calm.** If you become angry, hysterical, loud, or violent, you only add to the stress that has put him over his emotional threshold. As horrifying as his display may be, your emotion only makes it worse for him. Try “square breathing”: breathe in for three seconds; hold it for three seconds; breathe out for three seconds; hold it for three seconds; repeat.

**2 Leave.** When your dog is having a huge emotional outburst, the best thing you can do in that moment is take him away. He is emotionally out of control, and all your pleas to “sit” or “lie down” are fruitless; he literally is unable to process your cues. The thought-process part of his brain isn't working.

**3 Create distance.** If you can't leave for some reason, at least put distance between your dog and any other dogs in the area. Most dogs have a “threshold distance” – a distance at which they are able to maintain self-control. It may be as close as 20 feet or as far as 100 yards – and it may vary somewhat from one

day to the next. Find your dog's threshold distance and try to stay at least that far away from other dogs.

**4 Use a visual barrier.** Most dog-reactive dogs are most stimulated by the *sight* of another dog. Try putting a visual barrier between your dog and whatever causes him to become aroused. You can use your own body, stepping between him and the others. Or, train him to step behind you and sit when he sees another dog at a distance. Look for a hedge you can step behind with your dog, or a wall, fence, or building that will block his sight. You can even carry an umbrella to pop open, to place in front of him to block his visual access to other dogs.

If his arousal is a reaction to the *sound* of other dogs, try MuttMuffs, available at [safeandsoundpets.com](http://safeandsoundpets.com), to dampen the volume of sounds he can hear. (Be careful! Neither will he be able to hear

approaching vehicles, or other sounds that help to keep him safe).

**5 Teach him an emergency exit.** Make this a fun game that you play when there aren't other dogs present. Your cue should be something that lends itself to happy play, such as “Whee!” or “Run awaaaay!” Teach it when your dog is walking with you on leash by saying the cue in a loud, happy, high voice and then making a 180-degree turn and running as fast as you can in the opposite direction for at least 20 feet. Your dog should be galloping happily after you.

When you stop, toss yummy treats, play tug, throw a ball for him to catch, or engage him in some other favorite play activity. The goal is to give him such a positive association with his “run away” cue that he doesn't think about getting aroused by the sight of the dog who just popped out from behind a parked car. After you've taught him the game, you can use it when a dog suddenly appears inside his threshold distance.

Of course, the best solution of all for a seriously dog-reactive dog is to modify his behavior, either using classical counter-conditioning (See “Nuclear Reactors,” WDJ November 2003), or operant conditioning (See “Build Better Behavior,” May 2008 and “CAT Revisited,” June 2009). Then you'll be able to go to that family picnic or agility trial, no worries! 🐾

*Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, is WDJ's Training Editor. Miller lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. Pat is also author of many books on positive dog training. See page 24 for contact and book purchasing information.*



**This dog is reacting to the sight and proximity of other dogs; time to move him farther away!**

# Predatory Ending

*Living with a highly predatory dog.*

BY MARDI RICHMOND, CPDT-KA

I remember a day when I was waiting in the vet's office for my dog's appointment. The man sitting next to us started telling me, with beaming pride, about how his little white Westie had caught seven barn rats in the past week.

I couldn't help but admire this cute, fluffy dog's superior hunting skills. Predatory behavior in dogs is something I respect. From following a scent trail, to stalking a bird, chasing a ball, or herding sheep, I am intrigued with the many forms predatory behavior manifests in our dogs; it is part of what makes dogs so amazing!

But, predatory behavior is not so admirable (and much less socially acceptable), when, instead of it being a country terrier ridding a barn of rats or an Aussie herding sheep, it is your city dog chasing a skateboarder or the neighbor's cat. Predatory behavior in our dogs can be admirable, but it's also something to understand, respect, and channel into appropriate activities.

## What is predatory behavior?

This may seem obvious. Predatory behavior, commonly called "prey drive" in

our pet dogs, is an instinctive or natural desire to chase, capture, and kill prey. It is, in the most fundamental sense, about acquiring food.

Predatory behaviors are generally triggered by something in the environment (for example, an animal running or a ball flying through the air) and happen as a reflexive or automatic response. When an object moves or an animal runs, a puppy or dog may reflexively chase. Because predatory behavior is instinctive, a dog does not need to be taught how to do this; it comes naturally.

Predatory behavior takes many forms, including searching, stalking, chasing, catching, killing, carrying, dissecting, and eating behaviors. Wild canids, like wolves and coyotes, need and use all behaviors in the sequence to hunt and survive. Our domestic dogs no longer need to hunt for food, yet they still have active predatory behaviors.

All dogs are born with different levels of prey drive. Some enjoy chasing a ball or even a cat, but would never hurt the kitty (or the ball). Others are literally fixated on

## What you can do . . .

- Learn about your dog's breed and what it was developed to do. Many dogs are predisposed to predatory behavior thanks to their genetic heritage.
- Channel your dog's predatory behavior into acceptable activities that you can control, such as fetch or flyball.
- Restrict your dog's opportunity to practice predatory behaviors that you don't like (such as chasing cats) or that are dangerous to him.
- Condition your dog to respond to a call off signal – and practice!



Many dogs exhibit predatory behavior when playing. Though we can't see the German Shepherd Dog's face, his low, tense posture – and the posture of the concerned Australian Shepherd! – clearly tell us that he's stalking the smaller dog and about to pounce.

movement. Still others will seek out and kill mice, rats, gophers, or squirrels.

Breed type is a major predictor of a dog's predatory behavior. Because of selective breeding, certain predatory behaviors have remained strong in certain breeds, while other behaviors may be diminished. For example, retrievers may have the search and carry pieces of the predatory sequence, but the dissecting piece may be suppressed. Border Collies are famous for their eye-stalk and chase skills, but the bite and kill aspects are often absent. Many terriers have been bred so that all aspects of the predatory sequence remain strong.

Experience and opportunity are other factors that determine how predatory a dog will be. From scenting to chasing to catching and killing, predatory actions can be extremely rewarding for dogs. If a

dog has the opportunity to chase or hunt, she is much more likely to do it again in the future.

## When is predatory behavior a problem?

Because the extent and intensity of a dog's predatory behavior can vary dramatically, there is no single answer to when it may be a problem. "Some dogs are meant for critter control," said Daphne Robert-Hamilton, a certified trainer and aggression specialist in Morgan Hill, California. As long as the dog is focused on her critter control job, and doing that job doesn't hurt the dog, then the predatory behavior may not be a problem at all.

Predatory behavior is most often a problem when a dog focuses it on an unacceptable target. For example:

- Chasing cars, bicyclists, or skateboarders or "herding" running children
- Nipping people in the heels, calves, or thighs as they run or move away
- Chasing cats or other small animals (including small dogs)

In addition, predatory behavior can be problematic if a dog puts himself in danger, or is so obsessed that she cannot focus on other things. Robert-Hamilton also emphasizes that intense or aroused chase – especially toward humans, cats, or things that can hurt the dog – is almost always a serious problem.

## Can predatory behavior be eliminated?

As someone who has shared my home with dogs who exhibit very strong predatory behaviors, I know they can be some of the most difficult behaviors for *people* to live with. And problematic predatory behaviors can be some of the hardest to modify. Even the most wonderful treats in the world are not likely to compete with the reward of predatory behavior.

You may ask at this point, "Why not try to stop a dog from chasing or hunting altogether? Isn't this one of the rare times to use punishment?" I've learned through experience that when a dog's instinctive behavior kicks in, punishment may not work – at least not with any consistency. I have known dogs who would run right through the shock of an electric collar in hot pursuit of a rabbit.

I do not believe you can reliably "control" predatory behavior by suppressing it or correcting it. But I *know* you can channel your dog's predatory behavior, and that with a combination of management, providing appropriate outlets, and training, even dogs with the strongest predatory inclinations can be well-behaved.

## Manage first

Management is a useful tool for controlling or modifying most of your dog's behaviors, but it may be even more critical with predatory behaviors. Why? Because predatory behavior is *extremely* self-rewarding. If your dog is inclined to hunt and given the opportunity to hunt, he'll do it!

Consider this: Dogs will chase squirrels even if they've *never* caught one. They don't need to actually get the reward of catching the squirrel; the act of chasing is its own reward. Predatory chasing causes the release of certain feel-good chemicals in his body. Going after the squirrel is more than just fun. It creates a sort of natural high that makes a dog want to do it more and more.

If your dog enjoys chasing squirrels

on a regular basis, it may be much harder to stop her from chasing squirrels when you'd rather she was focusing on other things, such as running agility or coming when called. When you limit access to undesired hunting or chasing, you prevent the dog from practicing the behavior, and from getting the self-reward.

## Channel it!

But while limiting a dog's opportunity to practice predatory behaviors is an important first step, and may curb the dog's desire to chase one particular target, it will not squelch the dog's need to chase *something*. That is why channeling the drive is so important. It may be difficult (or impossible!) to teach a dog to stop wanting to scent, stalk, or chase, but you can easily teach him *what* to scent, stalk, or chase.

For example, dogs who love to chase things can be taught to chase a certain object, like a ball or a Frisbee. Dogs who need to stalk may be good candidates for herding. Scenting activities can provide an outlet for dogs for whom sniffing and finding is extremely rewarding. Dog sports like flyball and agility engage aspects of

## Channel Your Dog's Predatory Instincts

Here are some fun ways to channel your dog's predatory instincts at home:

- Hide and seek games
- "Find it" games with toys or treats
- Food-stuffed toys such as Kongs
- Digging pits with hidden bones or food-stuffed toys
- "Retrieve and carry" games with a ball, Frisbee, or other fetch toys
- Tug games

Dog sports that engage a dog's predatory instincts include:

- Scent work or tracking
- Agility
- Flyball
- Herding
- Lure coursing\*
- Go to ground\*

\*In some predatory games, the reward of the game is controlled by the environment rather than the handler. I believe these are activities that should be approached with caution. This caution is echoed by Daphne Robert-Hamilton, a trainer in Morgan Hill, California, who has worked with her own dogs as well as clients' dogs to deal with problem chase and predation behaviors. "This is a case for 'be careful what you teach,'" says Robert-Hamilton. For example, lure coursing or go to ground can be fun activities for certain breeds of dogs. However, you do encourage a highly desirable and self-reinforcing behavior. "I don't do lure coursing with my Ridgebacks. I live on 3.5 acres with limited fencing. So when the dogs aren't contained, they have freedom to chase the rabbits, deer, cats, and coyotes – not something I want."

predatory behavior and can provide an excellent channel for active and athletic dogs. Games like tug and playing with food toys such as stuffed Kongs can be part of focusing a dog's desire to dissect.

For many dogs, a little management and providing appropriate outlets will be enough to stop them from problematic predatory behavior. But for some dogs, those who are truly driven to search, chase, and catch, these steps will be only the beginning.

## Harnessing the drive

Harnessing predatory behaviors and using them in training can have a big payoff. By using the need to chase, grab, and bite as a reward, you can develop reliable responses in dogs with even the strongest predatory instincts. In fact, strong predatory inclination is one of the most sought-after features in many types of working dogs and those who participate in dog sports. The stronger the search, chase, and grab behaviors, the better the dog may be at agility, flyball, search and rescue, and drug scenting. And predatory behavior is the obvious force behind every great herding dog, pointer, and retriever.

The key to harnessing predatory behavior is to teach your dog to fixate on something that is within your control (like a toy or tug item), instead of something that is not within your control (such as squirrels, bunnies, or cats). Basically, you can teach a dog that a tug toy or a retrieve item is their "prey" and that you are in control of the prey. Developing a strong interest in playing a game that provides an outlet for her predatory behavior can redirect her formerly problematic predatory behavior into a dog focused on working with you.

The more you succeed at getting your dog to focus on working with you for her play/prey object, the more important you are in the game and the less significant the environment around you becomes. Focusing a dog with strong predatory instincts is easiest to do with a puppy or young dog who hasn't already enjoyed hunting, but it is possible to refocus a dog who has had practice fixating on the wrong target, too.

## Teach self-control

Self-control is another critical skill for dogs with a high prey drive. One of the best ways to help dogs learn self-control is by teaching a sort of on/off switch. Help your dog learn to switch between being in an excited state (like when playing tug) to



**Here's a dog who was bred for hunting and who is showing very strong predatory behavior – the raised forepaw, stalking, intense concentration on the "prey." The predatory behavior, however, has been completely channeled into a perfectly harmless activity: chasing tennis balls.**

a thinking, focused state (like when heeling calmly beside you). Frequently interrupting tug or other exciting games by asking for calm behaviors like sit, down, or heel can help a dog learn to quickly move from excited to calm.

While it may seem that playing tug and chasing squirrels have little in common, the ability to switch from an excited state to a calmer state will improve a dog's ability to think, instead of simply react, when predatory instincts kick in.

Another critical behavior for developing self-control in dogs is teaching a strong "leave it" or "off." Teaching "leave it" helps a dog learn to disengage from whatever he is interested in, whether it is an interesting smell on the ground or a squirrel in a tree above.

When teaching "leave it" with predatory dogs, the reward must be proportional

to what you are asking the dog to leave. For example, a dog who is asked to leave a running squirrel will not be satisfied with a bland biscuit for a reward. A super high-value food item *might* work, but an intense game of chase and tug is likely to work better.

The third self-control exercise that I find particularly helpful with predatory dogs is a strong "wait." Different than a stay exercise, I use "wait" to mean "Hold on, you will get to go do what you want, but you must pause a minute first." For dogs who are excited to run or chase, waiting a moment can help them learn that good things come when you listen to and hear what your person is saying. Practicing "wait" before being allowed to chase a ball, running off-leash with dog pals, or going to a food bowl for dinner can be great self-control exercises.

## Teaching a “call off”

Teaching a dog with a strong predatory instinct to quit or leave a predatory chase is a difficult training challenge, but you can be successful. Perhaps you’ve had the experience of calling your dog when he is in the midst of chasing something; did he seem to not even hear your call? Dogs who are mid-chase may be so intensely focused that they really *cannot* hear anything else.

Keep in mind that every dog is different; the strategy described here may need to be tweaked to fit your dog or your unique set of circumstances. It’s okay to experiment and find the approach that works best for you and your dog.

■ **The foundation: Developing a valuable reward.** First, you’ll need to identify and/or develop a reward or reinforcement that your dog is passionate about. For dogs who are obsessive about retrieving, a chance to retrieve will work well as a reward because you will reward a “call off” of chasing with an equally exciting game of fetch. (Most dogs who do predatory chasing enjoy chasing any moving object!) An obsessive retrieve means your dog will chase and bring back a ball, Frisbee, tug toy, Kong, or other item enthusiastically and every time.

It may take a few weeks or months to build that intense toy drive in dogs who are less obsessive about retrieving. But the results – getting a dog really passionate about retrieving – will be worth the effort. Start slowly and enthusiastically and always stop the game while your dog still wants to play. I’ve found that short, excit-

ing tosses (rather than long throws) get a dog super-excited and eager to continue the game. In addition, combining the retrieve with a rousing game of tug can increase the value of the game for many dogs.

■ **Choose a word or sound for your “call off” signal or cue.** Make it different than your usual cue for coming when called. It should be something that you can say fast and loud in an emergency, so pick something that will roll off of your tongue naturally. It could be a whistle or something like “Hey!” or “Ready?”

■ **Teach your dog that your sound or word means a retrieving game is about to begin.** Give your signal (“Ready?”); throw his favorite toy; and when your dog brings it back, play a great game (for example, throw it again quickly or play tug). You will know your dog understands the signal when you say it and your dog starts looking for the toy before it is tossed. You are conditioning your dog to know that the “Ready?” signal is a powerful indicator that a chase game is about to begin.

■ **First part of the “call off” exercise: an easy choice.** Ask your dog to wait (if he’s familiar with that behavior) or have a friend hold his collar while you place (not toss) a low-value toy about 20 feet from your dog. Then release your dog to get the toy. If you usually release him from a “wait” behavior with a cue – such as “Okay!” or “Free!” – you can use that word; if you had a friend holding his collar, she can simply release it.

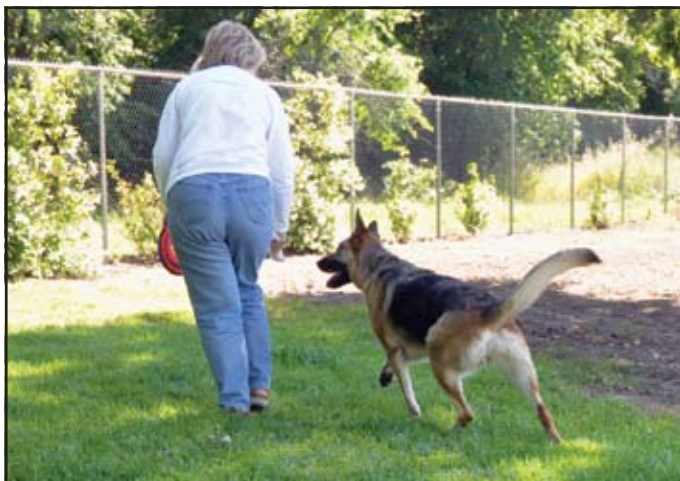
*Before he takes even a step, say “Ready?” and throw your dog’s favorite retrieve toy right in front of him. If your dog is faced with a low-value toy not moving in the grass, and a high-value toy flying through the air, he’ll likely chase the exciting, flying toy and ignore the low-value toy.*

Timing is everything; you will need to be fast enough to throw the exciting toy before your dog gets to the less-interesting toy. Don’t worry if your dog doesn’t bring back the exciting toy, or stops to investigate the low-value toy. At first, all you want is for your dog to orient to the moving toy instead of the stationary toy.

■ **Gradually make the game harder** by having the less-interesting toy move slowly, then faster, until you can release your dog while the less-exciting toy is in motion. For example, roll the low-value toy slowly away, wait for it to almost stop, and then release your dog. Once your dog can easily resist going toward a moving low-value toy and opt for chasing the exciting toy, you can start to change your criteria even more.

■ **Change your criteria in several ways.** First, teach your dog to turn away from the less-interesting toy. Start again with the less-interesting toy in a stationary position, release your dog, say “Ready?”, and then throw the exciting toy in a different direction, so your dog has to *turn away from* the less interesting toy toward the more exciting toy to engage in the chase.

Another way to increase criteria is to



Choose a signal (such as “Hey!” or “Ready?”) to alert your dog that a game with his favorite toy is starting. Use the signal each time before you throw the toy, until he looks expectantly at you or the toy each time you say it.



The first, easy “call off” exercise: A low-interest toy (in this case, a ball) is placed in the grass; the handler releases the dog and almost simultaneously uses the call off signal (“Ready?”) and throws another, high-value toy.

change the less-interesting toy, and gradually make it more interesting until your dog will call off of toys of equal value.

■ **Take your time.** Your goal is to be able to throw a high-value toy for your dog, say “Ready?” (or your own unique signal) when your dog is an mid-chase, so that he will whip around and run toward you to chase *a different* high-value toy that you throw in the opposite direction. Eventually you may be able to ask your dog for a quick “sit” in front of you before the second throw.

Getting to this point takes a lot of practice. It may take some dogs a few weeks, and others many *months* to get to this level of response.

Note: I prefer to train all of the previous steps totally off-leash and raise the criteria very slowly to ensure success. I feel this will best translate to off-leash work later on. But if you need to practice in places where you are not sure of your dog’s safety, use a long line. In addition, if you are having trouble at any step along the way, you can use a long line to help you over the problems at that stage.

■ **“Proof” your dog** on “call offs” by making the game varied and more realistic. Call him off of increasingly interesting (and increasingly prey-like) things, such as a remote control toy or car (with a plastic bag attached to the antenna to simulate a tail), a fuzzy toy attached to a stick with a

string (like a fishing pole), or other props that you can move in random ways. (Be careful though, not to set him up to fail, by making the item *too* irresistible.) This will help your dog learn that the game is the same no matter what moving object is used.

■ **Real-life exercises.** Once you are able to call off your dog from a variety of moving objects, you will need to help your dog learn to call off of whatever your dog is usually hot to pursue. Start by going near a place with squirrels or bunnies or bicycles or whatever usually triggers your dog’s predatory behavior. *Don’t go too close* to the actual animals or objects; you want to set up your dog for success. At this point,



You may have to use a variety of toys to find the right combination of “interesting but not TOO interesting” for the toy from which you want to “call off” the dog and a VERY interesting toy he won’t be able to resist.

Trainer Sarah Richardson, of The Canine Connection in Chico, California, gives the “call off” signal. Her dog, Tanner, hears the signal and turns away from the stationary toy, having been conditioned to anticipate the chance to chase a more exciting toy.



Sarah throws Tanner’s favorite toy – a soft, flying disk – in the opposite direction. This opportunity to run fast and hard excites Tanner; for less energetic dogs, throwing the toy closer to the dog might be more motivating.

To make this exercise more challenging, Sarah could toss (or have a helper toss) the first toy, then give the “call off” signal and immediately throw the more-exciting toy. She could also use two toys of equal value to Tanner.



you *do* want to have your dog on a long line so if you make a mistake, he cannot chase that bunny or squirrel. Use the previous exercises to practice the call off. Your dog will be able to smell and sense the animals, and will be learning that the game is the same, even when his former “prey” are nearby.

What happens if your dog does take off and chase? Your dog is on the long line, so you can stop the chase, but you will end your session for the day and try again another day. Review the previous exercises in a low-distraction environment. And when you try to return to the area where your dog failed, start much farther away from the “prey.”

If you’ve practiced a lot, and all your work has gone well, you may be able to work up to doing these exercises in the same area as the prey, with your dog off-leash. Please be careful. Some dogs may never get to the point where they can be off-leash around the animals or activities that stimulate their predatory behavior. Your call off work will help if ever, by accident, he gets into a chase, but a truly prey-obsessed dog or one with a long history of predatory chasing may always have to be kept on a long line.

### Things to remember

While you are teaching the call off, you need to control access to whatever your dog chases; you are essentially redirecting your dog’s desire to chase into a more acceptable target. This will not work as well if your dog can chase those squirrels at will.

Make sure you work on regular obedience and self-control exercises, too. The



**Tanner is chasing one of his packmates, and even though he looks very predatory, he’s just playing. Calling him away from a game that is clearly very rewarding for him – or from chasing a bird or squirrel – would be a very advanced exercise. It will take many repetitions of the exercises below before he could be expected to succeed. Calling him without that foundation would be setting him up for failure.**

more responsive to you that your dog is, the better he will respond in arousing situations.

Have your dog practice coming when called in lots of less-exciting situations. It will help strengthen your ability to control your dog. But don’t expect him to come out of a chase using your everyday recall.

Make sure your dog has plenty of access to predatory games (like your retrieve game) that do not involve actually hunting. This will give your dog an outlet for the need to chase.

### How successful can you expect to be?

For most dogs, developing a new “chase” obsession in the form of a retrieve and teaching a call off can be extremely successful. For a few dogs, especially those who have a history of chasing and/or killing other animals, you may never be able to fully trust your dog to resist the opportunity to chase.

Be aware that *when* you call will also have a big impact on the odds that he will respond to you. Think about what happens when a dog chases an animal (such as a rabbit or squirrel):

- He notices the animal. You may have the best success of calling your dog away at this point.
- He “locks on” – intently focusing on the animal. You may be able break his focus at this point, but it will be more difficult.
- He starts to chase. This will be very difficult to call a dog out of; remember, he may not even hear you call. However, even in mid-chase there are moments when a dog’s focus is broken and a call off will have a higher likelihood of success. For example, if the object of the chase goes out of sight, or up a tree, or gets a good distance away, you may have a better shot at a call off. 🐾

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*Thanks to Daphne Robert-Hamilton, CPDT-KA, of K-9 Partnership in Morgan Hill, CA, for her contributions to this article; see k9partnership.com. Thanks to members of the Santa Cruz Monday Night Training Club for sharing their experiences with their dogs’ predatory behavior. And thanks for Sarah Richardson of The Canine Connection, Chico, CA, for modeling for this article; see thecanineconnection.com.*

## What About Premack?

The “Premack principle” has been described in other WDJ articles (such as “higher Education,” April 2004, and “Come to Me, Run to Me,” December 2005). It is commonly called “grandma’s rule” – if you eat your veggies, you can have your dessert. This principle works wonders to help dogs learn self-control and can be an asset in training a dog to come when called.

For example, you can teach your dog to come away from something he wants, give him a big reward, then let him go back to it as an additional reward (come equals veggies, going back equals dessert). This is a great technique for strengthening most recalls. It can also work for dogs who like to chase, but may be best to use only if the dog’s desire to chase is mild, not intense. For dogs who are intense about chasing (sometimes described as having a “high prey drive”), allowing them go back into a chase as a reward may backfire, amplifying your dog’s desire to chase even more.

# Are Raw-Fed Dogs a Risk?

*A major therapy dog registry has banned raw-fed pets.*

BY CJ PUOTINEN

**D**elta Society is one of the largest and best-known organizations that registers and insures “pet therapy” volunteers and their companion animals. Pet/handler teams – known as Pet Partners – brighten lives in hospitals, nursing homes, group homes, schools, pre-kindergarten programs, libraries, jails, women’s shelters, homeless shelters, senior centers, adult day programs, and a host of other facilities.

But on May 19, Delta Society triggered a firestorm of controversy, complete with conspiracy theories, angry denunciations, frustration, and confusion, when it announced that effective June 30, “any dog or cat from a household where raw protein food is fed is not eligible to be a Delta Society Pet Partner.”

Delta’s Raw Protein Diet Policy raises serious questions about the safety of feeding raw food



PHOTO BY STEPHEN S. NAGY, MD

**Author CJ Puotinen’s six-year-old Labrador Retriever, Chloe, has been a Delta Society Pet Partner since her first birthday. She can no longer participate in the Pet Partners program due to her raw diet.**

regardless of an animal’s pet-therapy status. Are raw-protein diets truly dangerous for dogs and the people who touch them? We think not. Should responsible owners reconsider their feeding plans? We say no. Here’s why.

Delta suggests that even a dog or cat who eats a conventional commercial diet and shares a household with a raw-fed dog or cat may be ineligible to be a Pet Partner. “If a Pet Partner has access to the food or bowl used, it would be best to NOT feed any of the other pets raw meats. Inadvertent eating of raw meat or cross-contamination is very real.”

Delta’s board of directors believes that raw-fed animals pose a serious risk of infecting clients with zoonotic pathogens. Its new policy statement concerning raw-fed Pet Partners asserts, “It is well known that animals fed raw diets (BARF or other) shed significant amounts of pathogenic bacteria, which studies have indicated may put some people at risk, as compared to pets being fed commercially prepared or cooked, home-made diets . . .

“Even healthy animals can shed pathogenic bacteria that can affect the human companion team member and others. Certain individuals are at increased risk of disease if they encounter various pathogens, particularly people that are immune-compromised, very young, or elderly. This basically describes most of the individuals Delta Society Pet Partners visit: Patients in hospitals, senior centers, nursing facilities, hospice care, rehabilitation facilities, and schools involving young children, among others.”

Delta acknowledges that dogs fed commercial or home-cooked diets can shed pathogenic bacteria, but believes these dogs pose a lower risk of bacterial shedding. Delta Society volunteers who feed

## What you can do . . .

- Familiarize yourself with the symptoms and causes of food-borne and infectious diseases, and guard against them.
- Keep kitchen surfaces and food bowls clean, wash hands frequently, and practice good hygiene.
- Boost your dog’s immunity with coconut oil and natural infection fighters.
- If you feed a raw diet, use grass- or pasture-fed ingredients whenever possible.
- If your dog is a therapy dog, take infection-control precautions before, during, and after visits.



commercial pet food or a home-cooked diet are unaffected by the organization’s new policy – but those who feed their animal companions raw protein must either change those diets or leave their Delta Society-sponsored volunteer work. If a Pet Partner does switch to a cooked or commercial diet, Delta suggests suspending therapeutic visits for a minimum of four weeks, because dogs can shed pathogenic bacteria for a variable amount of time.

## The new policy

Delta’s policy change caught its many raw-feeding volunteers by surprise. How did Delta Society decide that raw-fed animals pose a health risk to the clients served by its program?

On its website, Delta Society explains

the rationale for its policy change: “Over the past few years, the increasing use of raw protein diets and the health concerns and controversy generated have grown, not only between the public and veterinarians, but often within the veterinary profession itself. After careful consideration of all of the known scientific facts, and on the unanimous advice of the Delta Society Medical Advisory Board, made up of internal medicine and public health experts from North America, the board of directors voted to preclude animals eating raw protein foods from participating in Delta Society Pet Partners program.”

Some raw feeders see an ominous connection between the development of the policy and the fact that Delta Society receives financial support from Purina. One of its Medical Advisory Group members, Deborah S. Greco, DVM, PhD, DACVIM, works for Nestle Purina Petcare in St. Louis, Missouri. Delta acknowledges Purina on its website, displaying the Purina logo under the statement, “Thank you to our incredible partner, the passionate pet lovers at Purina!”

Apparently anticipating that some would blame Delta’s link to Purina as the cause of its ban on raw-fed animal partners, Delta clarified:

#### **What was the role of pet food manufacturers in the adoption of the Raw Protein Diet Policy?**

No pet food manufacturer representatives contacted, encouraged, lobbied, or influenced the Delta Society Medical Advisory Group in recommending to the board that they approve a Raw Protein Diet Policy. . . . As board members learned of medical professionals’ concerns about the increased risk of the spread of pathogenic bacteria to humans by animals fed raw protein diets, it was determined that this was an issue that needed review. . . . As many of our Pet Partners visit in hospitals, assisted-living centers, and other places where people’s immune systems are compromised, it was decided that implementing this new policy was the responsible action.

#### **A look at the pathogens**

Delta Society’s Raw Protein Diet Policy explains, “Since many studies have shown pets fed such diets shed a significantly higher number of pathogenic bacteria,

the risk is too great for inadvertent, but avoidable infection.” Here’s a look at the bacteria of concern.

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia, food-borne diseases cause approximately 76 million illnesses, 325,000 hospitalizations, and 5,000 deaths in the U.S. each year.

*Salmonella*, which causes nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever, chills, headache, and blood in the stools, is the most common bacterial cause of foodborne outbreaks.

About half of all *Salmonella* infections occur in restaurant settings. According to the CDC, 1.4 million Americans contract *Salmonella* each year, but because mild cases are often dismissed as “stomach flu” and go unreported, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) estimates that the annual number is more likely 2 to 4 million. About 1,000 people in the U.S. die of *Salmonella* infections each year.

In a series of articles published in 2008 about *Salmonella* outbreaks, the *Journal of Food Protection* reported that infections traced to specific restaurants are often linked to carriers (people who are infected but not symptomatic) who prepare food. No one knows how many Americans are asymptomatic carriers at any given time, but the number discovered by fecal testing is significant.

“Contamination most frequently occurs via the fecal-oral route when pathogens are present in the feces of ill, convalescent, or otherwise colonized persons,” says report author E.C. Todd. “It is difficult for managers of food operations to identify food workers who may be excreting pathogens, even when these workers report their illnesses, because workers can shed pathogens during the prodrome phase of illness or can be long-term excretors or asymptomatic carriers. Some convalescing individuals excreted *Salmonella* for 102 days. . . . Regardless of the origin of the contamination, pathogens are most likely to be transmitted through the hands touching a variety of surfaces, highlighting the need for effective hand hygiene and the use of barriers [such as plastic gloves] throughout the work shift.”

*Salmonella* can contaminate meat, poultry, eggs, and milk, but it can also occur in fruits and vegetables, especially those that grow close to the ground or fall from trees to the ground (like nuts). Contaminated food manufacturing plants can spread the bacteria to all types of

processed foods. Major *Salmonella*-related food recalls during the past six years involved almonds, Hershey and Cadbury chocolate bars, serrano peppers from Mexico, pistachio nuts, peanuts, peanut butter, Italian salami, and numerous products containing hydrolyzed vegetable protein (a flavor enhancer).

Some pets are notorious carriers of *Salmonella*, especially snakes, turtles, and other reptiles.

*Salmonella*-contaminated pet food has also sickened humans who handled the food. In 2006, 79 human cases of *Salmonella* in 21 states, most involving very young children, were traced to a Mars Petcare plant in Pennsylvania. Mars recalled 23,109 tons of *Salmonella*-contaminated dry dog and cat food, sold under 105 brand names. Other recent pet food recalls involved *Salmonella* in pig ears, cow hooves, beef treats, and dog treats made with peanut butter.

In 2008, when eight additional human cases of *Salmonella* were traced to dry pet foods, Dr. Pascal James Imperato, dean and distinguished service professor of the graduate program in public health at State University of New York Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, told reporters, “There is greater industrialization of the production of food products, both for humans and animals, and these are complex processing systems. Therefore, there is greater opportunity for contamination. We are likely to see many more of these problems in the future.”

To help prevent infection, Dr. Imperato recommends regular washing of pet food bowls to prevent bacterial growth; the thorough washing of hands with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds after handling dry pet foods, including pet treats; and scrupulously avoiding contact between dry pet foods and foods consumed by humans as well as food preparation surfaces and utensils. Keep infants away from pet feeding areas and prevent children younger than age five from touching or eating pet foods, treats, or supplements.

*Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) bacteria cause severe cramps and are a leading cause of bloody diarrhea. Most *E. coli* infections come from ingesting contaminated meat, water, or dairy products, or working with cattle, but dangerous strains of *E. coli* can be present in fruits, vegetables, nuts, and processed foods. In 2006, *E. coli* in packaged fresh spinach killed three people and hospitalized more than 100. More recently,

Consumers Union (publisher of *Consumer Reports*) announced that nearly half of the water and soda dispensers it tested at fast-food restaurants and 39 percent of the pre-washed, packaged salad greens it examined contained “unacceptable levels” of coliform (fecal) bacteria, which were likely to include both *Salmonella* and *E. coli*.

*Clostridium difficile*, often called *C. difficile* or “C. diff,” causes watery diarrhea, fever, loss of appetite, nausea, and

abdominal pain or tenderness. Severe cases produce life-threatening inflammation of the colon. This bacterial infection commonly affects older adults in health care facilities and typically occurs after the use of antibiotics. In recent years, its infections have become more frequent, more severe, and more difficult to treat, making *C. difficile* a bane of hospitals and nursing homes.

*Staphylococcus aureus*, a common

bacterium found on the skin and in the nasal cavities of up to 30 percent of healthy people and animals, can produce toxins that cause gastrointestinal food poisoning. Sliced meat, puddings, pastries, sandwiches, and other foods have caused *Staphylococcal* food poisoning. The most famous member of this bacterial family, **methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*** (MRSA, pronounced MER-sa), is not considered a foodborne pathogen. This

## A Response to a Throwaway Line

We can’t resist responding to what appears to be a casual reference in Delta Society’s “Raw Protein Diet Policy.” The following statement opens the policy’s “frequently asked questions and answers” section on Delta’s website:

**Q: “What exactly are the scientific facts?”**

**A: “The use of raw animal proteins to promote animal health has not been based on proven or known scientific facts, only anecdotal incidents.”**

In fact, health claims for raw diets have *not* been scientifically disproved. For the most part, they have simply not been tested. They are likely to remain untested because without substantial funding, even the most interested researchers are unable to conduct large-scale clinical trials.

One exception is a study conducted in the 1930s and 1940s by Francis Pottenger, Jr., MD. Last year the Price-Pottenger Nutrition Foundation in Lemon Grove, California, published a new edition of *Pottenger’s Cats*, its detailed report of the study, with restored photos and newly scanned text.

Certified clinical nutritionist David Getoff, the organization’s vice president, explains. “In Dr. Pottenger’s famous experiment, he studied more than 900 cats over a 10-year period, housing them in identical outdoor shelters and feeding them the same foods – a diet consisting of two-thirds meat and one-third milk plus cod liver oil – while observing their health and behavior as they ate that food either raw or cooked. Some cats received raw meat and raw milk, some received raw meat and heated milk, and some received raw milk and cooked meat.

“The cats that consumed everything raw had good bone structure and bone density, wide palates with plenty of space for teeth, and shiny fur. They had no parasites or disease and reproduced with ease and gentleness, and they got along well with other cats in their enclosure.”

Just a few feet away, the cats fed cooked meat or heated milk suffered from skin diseases, allergies, soft bones, reproductive problems, infant mortality, adverse personality changes, parasites, hypothyroidism, and other degenerative diseases.

Dr. Pottenger kept detailed records of each cat’s health from adoption or birth to death, including autopsy reports.

“Today’s veterinary feeding trials don’t begin to do what

Dr. Pottenger did,” says Getoff. “His study proved beyond a doubt that on a raw diet, cats thrive. There’s no reason to assume that dogs are any different. The original Pottenger cat study, which we keep in print along with a video covering Dr. Pottenger’s work, is just as relevant today as when it was completed in 1942.”

Since its publication almost 60 years ago, Juliette de Bairacli Levy’s *Complete Herbal Handbook for the Dog*, which describes her natural rearing philosophy, has influenced generations of dog lovers around the world. Of the 230 breeders listed at a natural rearing website (see “Resources Mentioned in This Article” page 15), most feed an all-raw diet, and many require puppy buyers to do the same before they will guarantee the animals’ health.

Many members of the American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association also recommend raw diets for dogs and cats.

Ian Billinghurst, the Australian veterinarian who wrote *Give Your Dog a Bone* and introduced the BARF (Bones and Raw Food or Biologically Appropriate Raw Food) diet to the world 20 years ago, didn’t conduct formal studies, but he observed that when processed pet foods were introduced to his country, the health of his patients declined. When their owners returned to traditional methods of feeding raw meaty bones and table scraps, the dogs’ health improved.

Richard Pitcairn, DVM, PhD, immunologist and author of the best-selling *New Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats*, recalls, “When I began to suggest the feeding of raw meat, I found animals becoming more healthy even without other treatment. Since that time, other veterinarians have told me similar things about the use of raw meat. My experience, albeit clinical and not based on studies, is that my patients have improved health on a raw diet. Dogs and cats, being carnivores by nature, are meant to eat raw meat and do not have a problem doing so.”

Many who feed raw consider their diet choice a safety issue, for they have complete control over the source and quality of their ingredients. They point out that a commercially prepared diet cannot protect dogs from all pathogens; significant numbers test positive for *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, *Clostridium difficile*, MRSA, and other harmful bacteria despite their cooked-food diets – and the recurring problem of pet food contamination has produced several of the human and canine illnesses that cooked or commercially prepared foods are supposed to protect against.

life-threatening “supergerm” is usually acquired in a hospital setting, though “community-acquired” MRSA is the more dangerous strain. (See “Defeating the Resistance,” WDJ January 2008.)

## Bacterial shedding

According to the University of Wisconsin’s School of Veterinary Medicine’s website, “*Salmonella spp.* can be isolated from healthy dogs and cats at rates of up to 36 and 18 percent, respectively. Dogs and especially cats can shed *Salmonella* organisms in both their feces and saliva, meaning that transmission can occur via licking. Dogs and cats may suffer salmonellosis as a ‘reverse zoonosis,’ with infection transmitted from human-to-dog and subsequently back to other humans. Similarly, outbreaks of *Salmonella* infections in large animal teaching hospitals have been linked to the introduction of bacteria from infected human personnel, with subsequent spread to animals and then back to other human workers.”

Although dogs can contract salmonellosis, healthy dogs usually remain free from symptoms of infection even when they ingest *Salmonella* bacteria.

In a study reported in the *Canadian Veterinary Journal* in 2007, 7 of 16 research dogs given *Salmonella*-contaminated raw food shed salmonellae in their feces the following week. The remaining nine did not shed salmonellae, and none of the dogs exposed to the bacteria exhibited any symptoms of illness. Although the study’s size was very small, it suggests that most healthy dogs effectively neutralize *Salmonella* without colonizing or shedding the bacteria.

Delta Society Medical Advisory Board member J. Scott Weese, DVM, DVSc, DACVIM, of the Ontario Veterinary College at the University of Guelph in Canada, has co-authored several studies of zoonotic agents in Ontario-area dogs.

A 2006 cross-sectional study of 102 healthy visitation dogs tested their stool samples, hair brushings, and rectal, aural, nasal, oral, and pharyngeal swabs for 18 specific pathogens. Zoonotic agents were isolated from 80 of the dogs (80 percent), the primary agent being *Clostridium difficile*, which was present in 58 percent of the tested dogs.

Two studies published in 2009 tested therapy dogs for MRSA and *C. difficile*. In one, both MRSA and *C. difficile* may have been transferred to the fur and paws of

nine visitors through patients handling and kissing the dogs, or through exposure to a contaminated healthcare environment. In the other, the rates of acquisition of MRSA and *C. difficile* were 4.7 and 2.4 times as high, respectively, among dogs who visited human healthcare facilities compared with rates among dogs involved in other animal-assisted interventions. Among dogs who visited human healthcare facilities, those who licked patients or accepted treats during visits were more likely to be positive for MRSA and *C. difficile* than were dogs who did not lick patients or accept treats.

Another study, co-authored by Dr.



**All therapy dogs, not just raw-fed ones, may be agents of infection. We believe that the benefits they offer far outweigh the small risk they pose.**

Weese and published in 2008, examined stool samples collected every two months for one year from 40 raw-fed therapy dogs and 156 therapy dogs who were not fed raw food. The study showed these positive test results:

- Vanomycin-resistant enterococci: 0 raw-fed dogs (0 percent) and 1 cooked-food dog (0.6 percent)
- MRSA: 1 raw-fed dog (2.5 percent) and 8 cooked-food dogs (5.1 percent)
- *Clostridium difficile*: 5 raw-fed dogs (12.5 percent) and 40 cooked-food dogs (25.6 percent)
- *Salmonella*: 19 raw-fed dogs (47.5 percent) and 12 cooked-food dogs (7.7 percent)
- *E. coli*: 31 raw-fed dogs (77.5 percent) and 32 cooked-food dogs (20.1 percent)

Are these statistics significant? The studies’ samples are small and regional. They don’t differentiate between dogs

fed ingredients from factory-farmed and pasture-fed animals (pasture-fed meat, poultry, and eggs have been shown to have significantly lower *Salmonella* and *E. coli* bacteria counts than the same ingredients from animals raised in confinement).

Neither do the studies consider infection control measures that are easily implemented in animal-assisted therapy programs or by therapy dog handlers at home. And rather than proving that raw-fed dogs are dangerous, the studies suggest that all dogs, regardless of diet, may be agents of infection.

Many dog lovers counter with questions about human visitors to health care facilities. Have they been screened for bacteria? Might their clothing or handshakes and kisses spread pathogens in all directions?

Another variable to consider is the human immune system. While it certainly makes sense to reduce the exposure of medically fragile patients to potentially harmful bacteria, the germ theory of disease does not explain every illness, and not all immune-compromised patients who are exposed to pathogens become infected.

In fact, some studies, such as “Effect of Petting a Dog on Immune System Function” by C. Charnetski, *et al*, in the medical journal *Psychological Reports* (December 2004), show that petting a dog boosts immunity. For more than 30 years, Delta Society has documented the health benefits of pet visits, and its website and published reports provide a wealth of information on this subject.

## Legal liability

Until it announced its new policy, Delta Society deferred to its members’ veterinarians regarding diet, vaccinations, parasite control, and other health matters. The new policy links its decision to override the dietary recommendations of its Pet Partners’ veterinarians to the organization’s legal responsibility for the animals it insures.

But according to attorney Ray Mundy of New Hempstead, New York, who has served as president of the Hudson Valley Humane Society for more than 15 years and is well acquainted with lawsuits involving animals, the likelihood of anyone suing an organization like Delta Society for infecting someone with *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, or any other pathogen is negligible – and the likelihood of such a suit succeeding is, he says, “beyond imagination.”

While it’s true that in the United States,

anyone can sue anyone about anything, contingency fees are the standard in personal injury cases. In contingency cases, attorneys who file a lawsuit aren't paid until and unless the case is decided in the plaintiff's favor.

"This system filters out frivolous suits," says Mundy, "along with cases that aren't likely to succeed. For someone to sue a therapy dog organization for infecting a client or patient, they would have to prove that the infectious agent, whatever it was, came directly from the animal and nowhere else. Considering how ubiquitous infectious pathogens have become in our society, how many facilities allow visits from unscreened dogs belonging to friends or family members, and how many human visitors carry bacteria on their hands and clothes, that burden of proof is for all practical purposes impossible."

This is especially so, he says, when pet handlers with special training visit with screened, healthy, clean animals, and when handlers and facility staff encourage clients to wash their hands or use a hand sanitizer after petting therapy animals.

Other strategies that help reduce infection when visiting at-risk patients include preventing therapy dogs from licking the people they visit; using barrier protection, such as placing an extra sheet on the bed and another on the patient before a visiting dog sits or lies next to the patient; working with a staff or volunteer escort who can watch for hazards and assist clients or patients with hand cleaning; and not visiting patients with open wounds or those who are in isolation for infection control.

## Infection control options

According to Mary G. Enig, PhD, an expert on fats and oils, coconut oil's medium-chain fatty acids inhibit the growth of many pathogenic microorganisms, including *Staph* bacteria. Coconut oil's caprylic acid significantly reduces *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter jejuni* (another serious foodborne pathogen) when fed to chickens and other animals. Dr. Enig cites research on two strains of *S. aureus* showing that monolaurin from coconut oil

combined with the essential oil of oregano (itself a powerful disinfectant), worked better than the most potent antibiotic.

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

The recommended amount for dogs is 1 teaspoon per 10 pounds of body weight per day. Start with small amounts and increase gradually. (See "Crazy about Coconut Oil," WDJ October 2005, for more information about coconut oil's benefits to dogs.)

Oregano essential oil can be given to dogs by placing drops in an empty two-part gel cap (available at health food stores), closing the cap, and

placing it in a small amount of food so that the dog swallows it whole. Dogs do not like the taste! When buying, be sure the label says *Origanum vulgare*, preferably wild-crafted or organic. Use 1 drop of oregano oil per 50 pounds body weight once or twice per day. For small dogs, dilute 1 drop essential oil in ½ teaspoon vegetable oil and give ¼ teaspoon per 10 to 15 pounds of the dog's body weight.

Clorox bleach effectively kills *Salmonella*, *E. coli*, MRSA, and other harmful bacteria. Meat, poultry, fish, and eggs can be disinfected by soaking them in a solution of 1 teaspoon regular unscented Clorox in 1 gallon of water. Soak eggs for 20 to 30 minutes; soak meat, poultry, or fish for 10 minutes per pound if fresh and 15 to 20 minutes per pound if frozen. Immediately place food in a fresh water rinse for 10 minutes.

To disinfect counters and work surfaces, add 1 tablespoon Clorox to a gallon of water. Spray or wipe and let air dry. To disinfect sponges and dish cloths, prewash, then soak in ¾ cup Clorox diluted in 1 gallon water for 5 minutes; rinse, and dry.

Alternatively, portable steam cleaners have become popular because they're easy to use and effective sanitizers of kitchen counters, sinks, floors, pet bedding, and other surfaces.



**Hand disinfectant for the clients and microfiber wipes for the therapy dogs can cut infection risk.**

Your microwave is a powerful germ killer, too. A study published in 2007 in the *Journal of Environmental Health* showed that zapping wet sponges, plastic scrubbing pads, and dishcloths in the microwave for two minutes at full power killed or inactivated more than 99 percent of the living germs and bacterial spores that contaminated them, including *E. coli*.

One of the easiest ways to help keep dogs clean is with microfiber cleaning cloths. These rough-textured polyester-polyamide cloths were originally developed for "clean room" applications in the semiconductor industry. Used wet or dry, they attract and trap dust, dander, loose hair, and other particles. Microfiber fabric does not disinfect, but it picks up and removes bacteria. Dogs can be wiped with clean microfiber cloths during therapy visits to minimize the transfer of potentially harmful bacteria from hands that pet them. The cloths can be microwaved or washed in hot water with bleach and dried in a hot dryer. Don't use fabric softeners or dryer sheets, which reduce the cloths' effectiveness.

In addition, several brands of disinfecting pet wipes or sprays can be applied to a dog's coat or paws.

## The future of pet visits

Delta Society's abrupt announcement of its new policy has sent shock waves through both raw-feeding and pet-therapy communities. Many advocates of raw feeding as well as concerned Delta Pet Partners have sent letters and emails asking the organization to reconsider.

The American Humane Association's (AHA) Animal-Assisted Therapy program, headquartered in Englewood, Colorado, is one of the largest Delta affiliates in the nation. AHA President and CEO George C. Casey and Senior Vice-president of Human-Animal Interactions Marie McCabe, DVM, wrote in a June 2 letter to Delta Society, "We invite Delta Society to share additional details [that led to the new policy] and consider an inclusive process of both reviewing the science behind the decision and revisiting the decision itself. The new policy has a tremendous impact, not only on Delta Society volunteers, but on all the clients they serve. Additional background and facts regarding the basis for this sudden and drastic decision would allow our staff and volunteers to evaluate it for themselves. Without such information, we are concerned that many members, and even affiliates, may elect to withdraw from

the Delta Society Pet Partners program.” The AHA’s questions to Delta Society include:

■ What prompted this decision and short compliance deadline which provides virtually no opportunity to phase in changes in therapy-animal diets?

■ Has there been a recent incident involving one or more persons contracting *Salmonella* or *E. coli* from a therapy animal on a raw protein diet?

■ Have the Centers for Disease Control and the Joint Commission (an accrediting agency of health-care organizations) been consulted and, if so, do they concur with Delta Society’s position?

■ Has Delta Society determined the number of therapy animals and clients potentially be impacted by the decision?

Delta Society has invited members to submit questions about the new policy to its Medical Advisory Group, which will answer them through a FAQ page at the Delta website. We submitted the following questions:

■ How does Delta Society plan to enforce its new policy?

■ Can dogs continue as Pet Partners if they eat raw cheese sold for human consumption (a protein food) as a snack, training treat, or as part of their dinner?

■ Does the restriction apply to freeze-dried raw treats or foods, such as Wysong’s, or a dehydrated raw diet, such as Honest Kitchen?

■ Are dogs who are fed a commercial diet but occasionally eat cat droppings, manure, or dead animals prevented from making visits as part of this new policy?

■ What about commercially fed dogs with coprophagia?

■ What about commercially fed dogs who live in messy houses? Or with reptiles? Or with people who are themselves spreading *Salmonella* or other infections?

As this article goes to press, no members’ questions or answers have been posted at the Delta website, nor has the

organization announced any change or review of the new policy.

Considering the many documented social and health benefits of pet visits – animals have a calming effect on people; petting a dog lowers blood pressure and calms heart rates; pet visits boost morale and provide important social stimulation and interesting activities; pet visits encourage cooperation among clients or patients as well as cooperation with health care practitioners; and contact with pets can significantly improve quality of life – it’s no wonder therapy dogs are popular.

Some Delta-affiliated groups with raw-feeding members plan to continue as independent organizations with their own liability insurance. Others may turn to regional organizations or to Therapy Dogs Incorporated, Therapy Dogs International, the Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy (Love on a Leash), or Paws for Friendship, Inc., all of which are national/international therapy dog registries and none of which

ban the participation of animals fed raw protein.

As researchers Sarah Brodie, Francis Biley, and Michael Shewring concluded in their 2002 report “Exploration of the potential risks associated with using pet therapy in healthcare settings” in the *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, “A search of the literature has assessed potential and actual risk and concludes that the hazards are minimal. The potential to suffer harm does exist but it can be minimized by taking simple measures, including careful selection of animal and client, thorough planning and allocation of responsibility, rigorous health care of the animal, and informed practices by all involved.” 🐾

*CJ Puotinen was, until June 30, a Delta Society Pet Partners training instructor, and, with her Labrador Retriever, a Delta Pet Partner. She is also a prolific author of books on holistic health. See “Resources,” page 24, for more information.*

## Resources Mentioned in This Article

**Delta Society**, Bellevue, WA. (425) 679-5500; [deltasociety.org](http://deltasociety.org)

**The following national/international registries accept raw-fed therapy dogs:**

**The Foundation for Pet Provided Therapy (Love on a Leash)**, Oceanside, CA (760) 740-2326; [loveonaleash.org](http://loveonaleash.org)

**Paws for Friendship, Inc.**, Tampa, FL. (813) 961-2822; [pawsforfriendshipinc.org](http://pawsforfriendshipinc.org)

**Therapy Dogs Incorporated**, Cheyenne WY. (877) 843-7364; [therapydogs.com](http://therapydogs.com)

**Therapy Dogs International**, Flanders, NJ. (973) 252-9800; [tdi-dog.org](http://tdi-dog.org)

### BOOKS

***The Complete Herbal Handbook for the Dog and Cat***, by Juliette de Bairacli-Levy. Sixth Edition, Faber and Faber, 1991

***Dr. Pitcairn’s New Complete Guide to Natural Health for Dogs and Cats***, by Richard Pitcairn, DVM, PhD, and Susan Hubble Pitcairn. Rodale Books, Third Edition, 2005

***Give Your Dog a Bone: The Practical Commonsense Way to Feed Dogs for a Healthy Life***, by Ian Billinghurst, 1993. Available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com)

***Pottenger’s Cats: A Study in Nutrition***, by Francis M. Pottenger, Jr., MD. Price-Pottenger Nutrition Foundation, Second Edition, 2009

### OTHER RESOURCES

**American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association**, Bel Air, MD. Holistic veterinarian referral list available at [holisticvetlist.com](http://holisticvetlist.com)

**Clorox**. Lots of information about disinfecting the home at [clorox.com](http://clorox.com)

**Natural Rearing Breeder Directory**, [naturalrearing.com](http://naturalrearing.com)

**Price-Pottenger Nutrition Foundation**, Lemon Grove, CA. (800) 366-3748; [ppnf.org](http://ppnf.org)

**University of Wisconsin School of Veterinary Medicine**, [vetmed.wisc.edu](http://vetmed.wisc.edu)

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# Bowling for Better Manners

*How you feed your dog can impact his behavior in a profound way.*

BY PAT MILLER, CPDT-KA

**Y**ou may think feeding your dog is a simple matter of dumping food in his bowl and plopping it down on the floor in front of him. You may be wrong. Mealtime is fraught with significance for your dog, and loaded with opportunities for you to influence his health and his behavior. Failure to take advantage of these could actually contribute to the development and/or escalation of problems that might otherwise be averted. A few deliberate decisions and choices on your part can go far in creating harmony in your home.

## What to feed

Many pages in each issue of WDJ are devoted to articles about what to feed your dog, so I won't go into detail here. Suffice it to say that there is no substitute for a top quality diet for your dog, for both good health and good behavior.

## When to feed

When people ask me when I feed my dogs, I tell them I feed twice a day on a regular schedule. My dogs are fed regularly in the morning between 6:30 and 10:00 am, and

regularly in the evening between 4:00 and 8:00 pm. Puppies, of course, need to be fed more often, and all my feeding suggestions go out the window if your dog needs a particular diet or feeding schedule due to health reasons.

I am adamantly opposed to "free-feeding," where food is left down for the dog all the time. You lose a lot of information about your dog's eating habits and health if you just refill the bowl every time you notice it's dropped a few inches, and you miss great training and relationship opportunities if your dog has free access to food.

When I feed my dogs, they eagerly lick their bowls clean within minutes. If one of my dogs doesn't clean her plate, I'm on alert for possible health problems. If she misses *two* meals, it's time to talk to the vet. If your dog has food available all the time, you probably wouldn't notice as quickly, and he might be much sicker by the time you see your veterinarian.

Then there's the leadership thing. One definition of "leader" in a social group is the one who can control the good stuff. Controlling your dog's food – when and

## What you can do . . .

- Use your dog's mealtimes as training sessions and practice his good manners and deference behaviors.
- Manage the location of your dog (or dogs') food bowls to encourage and reinforce desirable behaviors.
- Use your dog's meal to improve your relationship with her, and/or with family members whose relationship with your dog needs enhancement.



where he gets it – is just one more way of gently reminding him that you're in charge. When you put your dog's bowl down on the floor, full of his tasty dinner, you're saying, "This is *my* food, furry friend, and out of the goodness of my generous heart, I'm willing to share it with you."

While you're at it, this is an ideal time to implement your "Say please" program, where your dog earns all good things by offering a deference/good manners behavior such as "sit." If you teach your dog to offer a sit, and wait after you place his bowl on the ground until you release him to eat, you multiply the leadership value of controlling your dog's access to food.

Weight control is another good reason for feeding meals instead of having an open food-bar. Lucy's putting on a few pounds? Time to cut back a few of the California Natural kibbles in her bowl. Scooter's looking a little thin? Let's add an extra half-scoop of Merrick's canned food to his. If you free-feed multiple dogs, you



**It's valuable to practice the "food bowl wait" exercise daily. If he gets up or goes for the bowl, just lift it up.**



**Wait for him to offer the sit again (don't cue the sit). When he sits and waits, then release him to eat.**



**Few of us have dogs who can peacefully share their meals! If you have a multi-dog household, you *must* supervise chow time, both to keep everyone safe and to make sure that each dog gets her fair share.**

may end up with one on the too prosperous side, while another looks too lean. There could be some subtle resource-guarding going on.

Resource-guarding is yet another reason not to free-feed. It may be subtle, where one dog quietly intimidates another away from the food, or it may be quite blatant, with one dog guarding all the food that's available from his canine packmates as well as his human family members. Guarding can expand from the bowl and surrounding area to the entire room, and even the doorway and the hall outside.

Your training program is another very important reason to feed meals. Since most positive trainers use food as a reinforcer much of the time, it's helpful to know when your dog's stomach is emptier; that's when he'll be more reinforced by food. When I have a client who tells me her dog isn't very food-motivated, I often discover that the dog is being free-fed. You can schedule your training sessions according to your dog's mealtimes or vice versa. If training class is tonight, hold off on dinner until after class, and then gauge how much dinner he gets based on how many treats he got during class. As long as you use high-quality treats, he won't be deprived of nutrition by this exchange. If he loves his food, you can even use part of his meal as training treats when you practice his lessons at home during the week.

Some trainers, in fact, recommend hand-feeding *all* your dog's meals, at least at first, to take advantage of the relationship-building opportunity of delivering all of your dog's food directly to him. This has its benefits, especially with undersocialized dogs who need to learn to trust their humans, and those with poor impulse control for whom food delivery can be used as training sessions.

Finally, a dog's digestive system is designed to eat meals, not graze like a horse. In the wild, canids make a kill, gorge, and go away until it's time for the next hunt. They don't need a bowl of kibble, like peanuts on your coffee table, to snack on all day.

### Where to feed

Feeding location depends on your dog, and your family's routine. If your dog guards his bowl, feed him in an out-of-the-way location where you can close the door and let him eat in peace. If you have multiple dogs, feed them in locations that don't elicit resource-guarding or meal-stealing. We feed three of ours in opposite corners of the kitchen, one in the dining room, and the little Pomeranian in the laundry room with the door closed – both to protect him from intrusion by the big dogs, and because he guards resources. We always stay in the area to referee the big dogs if necessary (it rarely is).

You might choose to feed your dogs in their crates; this keeps everyone contained and minimizes the need for you to referee. It can also exacerbate resource-guarding, so it may not be a good choice for a dog who already aggressively protects his resources. If you have just one dog (or you can separate your dogs), load the food into interactive toys such as Kongs, so he (or they) have to work for their meals.

Another environmental enrichment feeding plan is to scatter your dog's food in the yard, so he has to go "hunt" for it. This is not free-feeding; you still just give him one meal's worth. And it doesn't work for multiple dogs unless you have separate yards in which to feed them.

### How to feed

If you have a single dog, "how to feed" is fairly simple. I already mentioned the value of using "Say please" by having your dog sit and wait while you set his bowl down. You can take that even further, on the days you have a little spare time, by making each meal a training session: set the bowl on the counter and practice several different behaviors before putting the bowl on the floor.

If you live in a multi-dog household, feeding gets more complicated. Who eats first? How do you manage one dog (or more) while you're putting food down for another?

With five dogs in our family, feeding time is a classical exercise in management. I'm the primary feeder, with Paul doing back-up when I'm not there. I fix all the bowls, placing them on the counter, adding supplements and medications as needed. (Our dogs all get their pills, when they need them, in cheese, on top of their food.) The dogs are gathered around my feet in eager anticipation. When all the bowls are ready, I escort Scooter to the laundry room, popping a cheese-cube in his mouth as we go to forestall his barking. Lucy always wants to follow us; I cue her to "Wait" at the laundry room door, and she gets a bit of cheese when I return – her reward for complying.

Laundry door safely closed, I return to the counter and select Lucy and Missy's bowls. Lucy (the Corgi) also tends to be vocal, and I feed her next, after a "Sit, wait!" to avoid her editorial comments about the feeding schedule.

Missy (the Aussie) has a tendency to push her way into Lucy's bowl, so I divert her attention with *her* bowl in my left hand

while I set Lucy's down on my right. Then a short walk to the dining room to Missy's spot, by the front door. Missy does three spins as we walk to her rug, then sits and waits until she gets the "Okay!" to eat.

Back to the kitchen, where I pick up Bonnie and Dubhy's bowls. Bonnie (the Scorgidoodle) gets hers by the water bowl on one side of the kitchen (opposite end from Lucy), and Dubhy (the Scottie) gets his in the opposite corner.

By the time Dubhy's bowl is down, Lucy and Missy have finished and swapped bowls to see if the other has left any crumbs behind. They both respect Bonnie and Dubhy, leaving them alone until they have finished. Then all four play round-robin lick-the-bowl. When the excitement is done I let Scooter out of the laundry room to rejoin the group, and Lucy rushes out to check his bowl.

The order in which I feed is based on my convenience and preference, and has nothing to do with hierarchy. I'm in charge, so I get to decide who eats in what order. Notice that Scooter, who is easily the lowest-ranking member of our canine totem pole, gets to eat first, just because that works best. I want him out of the way of big dog feet before everyone starts dancing around in anticipation of the food's arrival.

## Who feeds?

Lots of families choose the dog's meal as an opportunity to teach the kids to be responsible. That's all well and good, providing an adult is supervising to be sure the dog is fed the proper amount, and to be sure the dog actually gets fed. It's not fair to make the dog go hungry while you try to teach your child a lesson.

In truth, any family member can feed the dog, as long as there's consistency and reliability. If there's a family member who genuinely wants to work to improve his relationship with the dog, feeding is a great way to do that. If multiple family members feed at various times, it's a good idea to have written feeding instructions that detail amount and procedure, so everyone gets it right. And it's a good idea to have feeding utensils that promote consistent amounts. If your dog gets a half-cup of kibble, keep a half-cup measuring cup in your feed

container, so it's easy to scoop once and get the right amount.

I suggest this technique to keep the dog's meal size consistent: measure out the correct amount of food, pour it into a paper or plastic cup, and cut the cup with a pair of scissors to the height of the food. Then have the family use that cup as the food scoop.

## What to feed in

Last but not least, have you looked at your dog's bowl lately? Is it clean? Or is it chipped, cracked, scratched, and worn with grungy old food stuck to the edges? Dirty and damaged bowls harbor bacteria that can cause health problems for your dog. I know, they drink out of dirty puddles, eat cat poop, and munch on dead animal carcasses, but still, you can minimize their exposure in your home by keeping their food bowls sanitary.

We're strongly against using plastic bowls for dog food (and water). Plastic scratches easily – and those scratches trap and hold bacteria. Chemicals in some types of plastic can leach into your dog's food (or water). Stainless steel is the best choice for dog bowls – and keep them clean!

Maybe you never realized how valuable your dog's food bowl can be. Now you



Four of Pat's five dogs, from left to right: Missy, Dubhy, Lucy, and Bonnie. Not pictured: Scooter.

know. The good news is, it's never too late to start taking advantage of all the benefits of thoughtful feeding. You can begin today to utilize mealtimes to their full potential. I'd love to see the look on your dog's face when he realizes he has to sit and wait to get you to give him his bowl! 🐾

Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, is WDJ's Training Editor. Miller lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. See "Resources," page 24 for more info.

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# Get On Track!

*Any dog can learn to follow a scent trail and compete in tracking.*

BY TERRY LONG

The day is very young. The sun is not yet up to help warm the bones or dry the dew-laden grass. With one exception, there is not a soul to be seen. That lone exception, bundled in layers of warm clothing, climbs out of her truck, scans the area, and smiles. There is no one in sight in this usually heavily populated urban park.

These are perfect conditions for laying a track. The scent she will leave in her wake as she walks through the wet grass will last longer in these early morning damp conditions than it would in the latter part of a warm day. And the last thing she wants after working hard to lay a good track is a carload of people arriving and unwittingly trampling the area.

As Vicki Chaney of Garden Grove, California, unloads tracking flags, harnesses, longlines, and training bags, her Golden Retrievers, Polly and Ivy, whine and thump their tails against their crates, a joyous duet of canine anticipation.

“Being wet, cold, and muddy is not my favorite, but it is necessary to teach your dog how to work under these conditions.

You have to go out tracking in the rain and wind as the dog needs to learn to track in poor weather; tests are in the winter and you’re likely to be dealing with these conditions. When I first started training for this sport, I had no idea it would change my sleeping patterns and create so much dirty laundry!”

## History

The sport of American Kennel Club (AKC) tracking started out as a stepchild to its competition obedience Utility Dog (UD) title. Although you needed to pass a separate tracking test to earn your UD title between 1936 and 1946, tracking garnered a one-paragraph description in the rules and regulations of the time.

Fans of tracking pushed for changes in the rules as a result of increased understanding of scent work and, in 1947, tracking became a separate class. The Tracking Dog (TD) title was the only tracking title available until 1980 when the Tracking Dog Excellent (TDX) title was added. Responding to the challenges of finding large amounts of land in urban

areas, the Variable Surface Tracking (VST) title was added in 1995. The AKC tracking rulebook now comprises 45 pages.

Tracking titles can be obtained through several organizations, including the Australian Shepherd Club of America (ASCA) and the American Mixed Breed Obedience Registration (AMBOR), but most follow the AKC test rules (the titles listed here are AKC titles). Note that although the AKC now allows mixed-breed dogs to participate in obedience, rally, and agility, they are still not allowed in tracking. ASCA and AMBOR both have provisions for mixed-breed tracking titles.

AMBOR, for example, provides titles to people who have contacted an AKC tracking judge and made arrangements for the judge to test their mixed breed, under AKC rules, in order to attain a tracking title from AMBOR. Tracking titles, regardless of purebred status, are also available as a separate test through the United Schutzhund Clubs of America.

Dogs must be at least six months of age to enter an AKC tracking test. A dog either passes or fails a tracking test; in

contrast, many other dog sports are scored, with points awarded or deducted. The dog is tested on his ability to follow a track and “indicate” that he has found the article along the track. The article is usually a glove or wallet. Advanced test levels involve longer tracks, tracks that have “aged” longer, and those that have more difficult terrain and include turns in direction.

The following are brief descriptions of the AKC tracking titles. A single “pass” earns a title.

■ **Tracking Dog (TD).** The track is 440 to 500 yards long with 3 to 5 turns and



Erin Sullivan and her American Pit Bull Terrier, Doc, in a successful tracking test. Erin writes about her adventures in training Doc, a rescue dog from Baltimore, on her blog: [baltimorebulldogs.blogspot.com](http://baltimorebulldogs.blogspot.com). Photo by [bartlettimage.com](http://bartlettimage.com).

has been “aged” for 30 minutes to two hours. The dog must “indicate” the article found. Tracks are laid in open fields with uniform cover and do not include changing terrain, roads, ditches, etc.

■ **Tracking Dog Excellent (TDX).**

The track is 800 to 1,000 yards long with 5 to 7 turns and has been aged for 3 to 5 hours. There are two sets of “cross tracks” that are diversionary only and should not be followed by the dog. The terrain is more difficult, and the dog must indicate his find of four dissimilar articles along the track.

■ **Variable Surface Tracking (VST).**

The track is 600 to 800 yards long with 4-8 turns and has been aged for 3 to 5 hours. The articles used must include one each of leather, cloth, plastic, and metal. The terrain must be comprised of three different surfaces and include a change of direction on one without vegetation, such as concrete. This more accurately tests a dog’s ability to track in an urban environment.

■ **Champion Tracker (CT).** This title is awarded to dogs who have passed all three tracking tests. An annual Tracking Invitational is open only to dogs who have their CTs. According to the AKC, only 50 dogs have passed the VST, and only 44 have their CTs.

Before entering an AKC tracking test, a dog must be “certified” by an AKC tracking judge. Tracking tests require a lot of work on the part of many people (judges and tracklayers). Due to this, and to the time-intensive nature of each test, the number of entries is limited. The certification process ensures that a dog is truly ready for a real tracking test so that the entries go to people who have done the necessary preparation.

If a dog and handler pass the certification test, they get four certifications to use in a year. Each certification must be sent in with their entry. There is a random draw from those entries to determine who will get the available test spots.

Joan Telfer of Stillwater, Minnesota, has 16 TDs and 6 TDXs on her Beagles; she’s been tracking since the early 1980s and became an AKC judge in 1993. She says that getting into a tracking test is much different from entering other sport’s com-



**Sally Nesbitt tracking with her German Shepherd Dog, Journey. Nesbitt lives in the San Diego area and is also an AKC tracking judge and teaches tracking. See [sallynesbitt.com](http://sallynesbitt.com) for information.**

petitions. “When you enter a test (TD, TDX, VST), the trial secretary accepts all entries until the closing date. Then there is a random draw to see who gets in the test and the order of the alternates.”

### Training

One might think, given the amount of time our dogs spend with their noses to the ground, that not much training would be involved in this sport. Although handlers *are* tapping into a natural ability of their canine friends, there is more to it than meets the untrained eye. Two things become apparent when talking to those with experience training and competing.

One is the need for the handler to “know” their dog in order to assess whether the dog is working a track or getting distracted by other things in the environment. The second is that the more a handler un-

derstands about how scent works, the better able they will be to “read” their dog’s response to the track as well as how to lay a good track.

Telfer says that this sport taught her more about her dogs than the other sports she had participated in. “I was training my Lab in obedience at a local obedience school. We were training for a CDX and I had been training him for over two years. They had started a tracking class, and all of these people were coming in with their maps and looked like they were having a great time. I asked a friend of mine what it was all about and she convinced me to try it.

“I learned how to read and handle my dog in that class. I found I love having the dogs in charge and being outdoors and watching them do something they really like. I was raising Beagles at the time and had one of them in obedience as well. She hated it so I thought maybe she would like tracking. She was a natural but, unfortunately, I was not! I pulled her off a scent too many times when she was correct.

“I started another of my Beagles and he was a natural, too. Over time, I became very good at the sport and love training and competing. I have since trained 16 Beagles to track, as well as countless students’ dogs.”

Dogs differ in how they act when they are actively working a scent and how they indicate that they have found the article placed on the track. A good

### SNAPSHOT OF THE SPORT:



- **What is this sport?** In tracking, the dog follows a scent trail to find an article (such as a glove or wallet).
- **Prior training required?** Minimal.
- **Physical demands?** On the dog: Moderate. On the handler: Moderate.
- **Best-suited structure?** Dogs of all sizes and shapes can participate, although small dogs might struggle in rough terrain.
- **Best-suited temperament?** Dogs who are independent and enjoy making decisions are ideally suited, but many dogs love this sport.
- **Cost?** Moderate.
- **Training complexity?** Moderate.
- **Mental stimulation?** High.
- **Physical stimulation?** Moderate.
- **Recreational opportunities?** Low.
- **Competition opportunities and venues?** Low.

tracking instructor or experienced competitor can be invaluable in helping you identify your dog's particular way of signaling that she is working a scent. If you don't have an instructor, you will have to learn to carefully watch your dog and notice subtle differences in how she behaves when following a track.

Since part of passing the test is to indicate the article, you as the handler must make the determination that your dog has, in fact, tracked to the article. Some handlers select from a behavior their dog offers, such as looking at the article and then looking at you. Some trainers train their dog to perform a specific behavior when they have made their find. This can be a sit, down, or nudging the handler. In either case, you as the handler, "make the call" as to whether your dog has tracked and found the article. If you make the call too early, the judge could determine that your call was premature and you will not pass the test. On the other hand, you could mistakenly think your dog has gone off the track and become distracted by a diversionary scent and inadvertently call your dog

off the correct track! This is why tracking handlers often say that tracking work has taught them the most about their dogs.

Vicki Chaney decided to try tracking only because all of Polly's Coppertop Golden's littermates had tracking titles. "I didn't want my Polly to be the slacker of the litter. It became a joke between me and the other puppy owners. I never looked at tracking as something that could be fun. I really had very little idea what I was doing, but I thought it couldn't be that hard! I watched a video that had been recommended to me, emailed my Coppertop friends for some advice on getting started, and then went out to the local parks and got to tracking. I soon found out that it wasn't as easy as it looked, but I wanted that title and I was not going to quit until I got it!"

Chaney ended up getting hooked on the sport. She has a TD on three of her Golden's and a TDX on two. Early on, she was surprised to discover a hidden challenge working with eight-year-old Polly, who had both an obedience champion title (OTCH) and an agility champion title (MACH). "Her years of solid training in

obedience was a huge issue and, coupled with her personality of a very polite, never wanting to make a mistake dog, the issue was made greater. Polly believed it was not okay for her to lead the way.

"In tracking it is the dog who must take the lead, showing you where the track is, and feeling confident enough to make the turns. Polly would come to a turn, stop tracking, look around, and then whine. It took me a year to figure out that she was waiting for me to give her permission to make the turn. Once I figured out what was wrong, I was able to help her understand that she had to make the decision without my permission and show me the way."

As with many dog sports, your dog's enjoyment of the activity will depend on how motivating you make it for him. Telfer believes that you don't have to have a Beagle or other natural scent hound to succeed in the sport. "All dogs can do well. Highly trained obedience dogs often have trouble believing it's not a set up [for correction]. Conformation dogs or dogs who have never been in a field may have trouble with negotiating rough cover.

## "Who Is Making This Call, Anyway?"

BY VICKI CHANEY

This is a story about canine and human communication. It took place during my second attempt to put a TDX on my youngest Golden Retriever, Ivy.

I had both Polly and Ivy entered in my first attempt to get their TDXs. Polly was 11 by then, and Ivy a comparative pup at 20 months. The two dogs couldn't be more different in style when it comes to tracking, and I really hadn't fully grasped that yet.

Polly drew the first track and Ivy drew the fourth track of the day. Polly, not being very confident in taking the lead, likes me to verbally encourage her throughout the track. This helps her stay focused on her task since my chatter lets her know I approve of her work, and that is very important to Polly. Ivy, on the other hand, is very confident in her tracking and is comfortable taking the lead. She knows her job and I rarely talk to her as we run a track; something I had not given much thought to.

Polly ran her track beautifully, earning her TDX. When it came time to run Ivy, I was still in "Polly mode," chattering away, and I made a series of mistakes. The most critical was when I

yelled, "Yes, good girl," as Ivy paused with her nose buried deep in the footsteps of the cross-track layer! Good dog that she is, Ivy responded to my poorly timed verbal encouragement and went off on the cross track, causing us to fail. She understood our mistake when they allowed me to pull her off the cross track, put her back on the correct track, and finish.

At my second TDX test with Ivy two weeks later, I was focused only on her. I had learned my lesson and kept my

mouth shut. As we came to the first set of cross-tracks, with her nose buried deep in the cross-track layer's step, she spun around, looked up at me, nose still to the track, as if to say, "Are you calling this or am I?"

I stood there like a deer in the headlights and didn't dare make a sound! Had I not wanted so badly to pass the test, I would have burst into laughter at the sight of her expression!

After making her point, she turned around and continued on. Upon reaching the second set of cross tracks, she simply paused with her back to me letting me know they were there and that my options were still open. Again, I was silent. I am trainable! Ivy then continued on down the track, earning her TDX. What a good girl – both of us!



**Vicki Chaney (standing in center) had to adjust her handling style from what worked with her senior Golden Retriever, Polly (front row), in order to succeed at tracking with her puppy.**

“But beyond that, it is all about motivation. You need a dog, a tracking harness, a 40-foot line, and treats or toys. The hardest part is getting the handlers to trust their dogs.”

Motivation is Chaney’s top priority when starting one of her dogs in tracking. She starts with very short tracks and a super high rate of reinforcement. She starts on concrete, spraying the ground with a mist of water, and then “triple lays the track.” That is, she walks three times on the track to make sure her scent is strong. Then, she peppers the track with small bits of hot dog so that the dog follows her scent for a very short distance and gets rewarded, with the head down, with the hot dog. “As the dog eats the hot dogs, their noses are buried deep in human-scented footsteps. Human scent equals great treats!”

As the dog progresses, Chaney spaces the hot dogs further apart, lengthens the distance of the track, and introduces turns. This incremental raising of criterion lays a solid foundation for long-term success.

### Team attributes

Telfer has seen a great variety of dogs through her years as a tracking judge. When asked if there are dangers and risks in the sport, she points out that smaller dogs might have trouble with some rough terrain and those with large, protruding eyes are at risk of eye injuries from shrubs and other ground cover. “Dogs built low to the ground can have trouble negotiating the terrain and cover, as well as injury to their belly and chest areas. The AKC does allow a dog to run while wearing protective gear.”

Many different kinds of people are attracted to tracking. However, Telfer sees a trend over the years of transient interest. “There are now a lot of people who are in it for the TD title so they can earn an AKC Versatility title (three titles in three different sports). Those people disappear after they earn their TD. Agility also seems to have claimed a lot of people’s interest.” People who stick with the sport appear to have a special connection with their dogs that comes from the close working relationship that the activity engenders.

Chaney reflects: “Polly taught me how to teach her. I began to see the wonder of scent work and how amazing it is that our dogs can find and follow a track that we laid. Watching them figure out problems as they show you how the scent changes under trees, by fences and walls, on differ-

ent surfaces and in different weather, it is truly fascinating.

“I think this sport teaches you more about your dog’s body language than any other and that helps you in every other sport you and your dog train and compete in. Thanks to tracking, the relationship and communication between me and my dogs has developed to a level I never dreamed of, and it has enriched everything else we do together.”

### Equipment and expenses

The cost of training classes, when you can find them, varies depending upon where you live. Telfer finds that 4- to 6-week classes run \$50 and up. Entry fees can run \$50 to \$100 due to the expenses of putting

on a tracking test. Telfer’s experience is that a TD test runs \$50 to \$60, while a TDX or VST can easily top \$100.

Equipment costs are minimal, but travel and lodging can add up if you need to travel to test sites.

Do you have a dog who is not ready to compete in other sports due to the physical demands of those activities? Do you have a dog who is retiring from other sports? Do you have a dog who loves to use his nose? Then get tracking! 🐾

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

## Further Information Resources

Many excellent websites do not provide phone numbers to contact them for more information, preferring to field inquiries by e-mail. We provided numbers when they were available.

### SANCTIONING ORGANIZATIONS AND CLUBS

**American Kennel Club (AKC).** (919) 816-3904; [akc.com/events](http://akc.com/events)  
Search for a club near you: [akc.org/clubs/search](http://akc.org/clubs/search)

**American Mixed Breed Obedience Registration (AMBOR).** [ambor.us](http://ambor.us)

**Australian Shepherd Club of America (ASCA).** [asca.org/programs/tracking](http://asca.org/programs/tracking)

**Southwest Tracking Association of Metropolitan Houston**  
[southwesttracking.org](http://southwesttracking.org)

**United Schutzhund Clubs of America.** [germanshepherddog.com](http://germanshepherddog.com)

### BOOKS, VIDEOS, AND ONLINE ARTICLES

There are a variety of good books on the subject. Please refer to the AKC and Newf sites for their recommendations, and go to [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com) and enter “tracking” in the search field. Here are just a few:

***Enthusiastic Tracking***, by William (Sil) Sanders

***Scent and the Scenting Dog***, by William Syrotuck

***Tracking from the Ground Up***, by Sandy Ganz & Susan Boyd

***Tracking Fundamentals*** (DVD), by Sandy Ganz

***Try Tracking: The Puppy Tracking Primer***, by Carolyn A. Krause

**“Tracking Fields,”** by Ed Presnall  
[pawmark.com/articles/tfields.htm](http://pawmark.com/articles/tfields.htm)

**“Tracking with Your Beagle,”** by Hans van der Stroom  
[thetroutbum.com/messageboard\\_article\\_beagle.htm](http://thetroutbum.com/messageboard_article_beagle.htm)

**“Tracking with Your Berner,”** by April Rifenburg  
[softcom.net/users/aprilr/tracking\\_with\\_your\\_berner.htm](http://softcom.net/users/aprilr/tracking_with_your_berner.htm)

**“Tracking with Your Newf”**  
[newfclubseattle.org/tracking.html](http://newfclubseattle.org/tracking.html)

## RESOURCES

### HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

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

### BOOKS

WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of *The Power of Positive Dog Training*; *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog*; *Positive Perspectives II: Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog*; and *Play with Your Dog*. All of these books are available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or [dogwise.com](http://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](http://dogwise.com). Puotinen is also author of several books about human health including *Natural Relief from Aches and Pains*, available from your favorite bookseller.

### TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

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

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

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

**Sarah Richardson**, CPDT-KA, CDBC, The Canine Connection, Chico, CA. Group and private training, puppy kindergarten, socialization sessions, daycare. Force-free, fun, positive training. (530) 345-1912; [thecanineconnection.com](http://thecanineconnection.com)

**Sandi Thompson**, CPDT-KA, BRAVO!PUP Puppy and Dog Training, Berkeley, CA. Classes for puppies, adolescents, and adult dogs, "puppy socials," private lessons, and group classes. (510) 704-8656; [bravopup.com](http://bravopup.com)

## WHAT'S AHEAD

### The Annual Vet Visit and Vaccines

Read this before responding to that postcard from the vet.

### Dinner on Ice

WDJ reviews frozen diets for dogs.

### Alphabet Soup

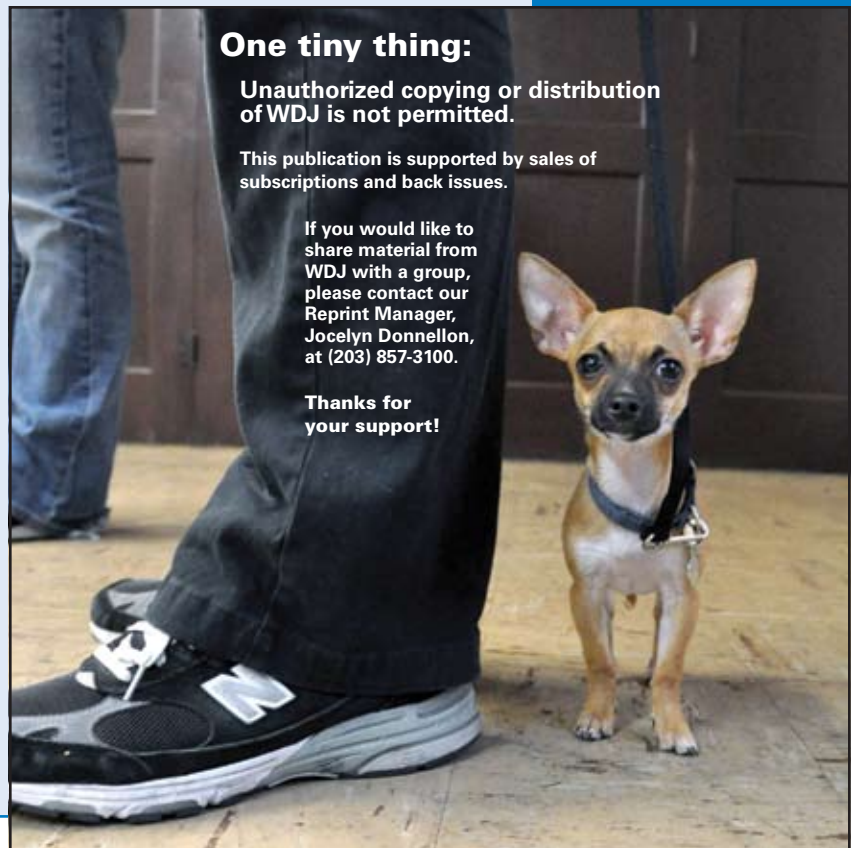
What are all those letters after some trainers' names?

### Grains v. Carbs

Everything you need to know about carbs in your dog's diet.

### Inventing a Better Conehead

WDJ reviews devices that keep your dog from chewing himself or his stitches.



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