

VOLUME 12
NUMBER 5

The Whole



Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

May 2009

\$5.95

FEATURES

3 Chewed Shoes?

Five things to do if your dog mistakes your shoes for his toys.

4 It's Me and the Dog

British positive dog trainer Victoria Stilwell promotes dog-friendly training on TV.

8 Finding the Right Rawhide

Safe, natural chews are difficult to find, but they do exist.

12 Fence Sense

How to effectively contain your dog, and avoid the many pitfalls of inferior fencing.

15 Good Sports

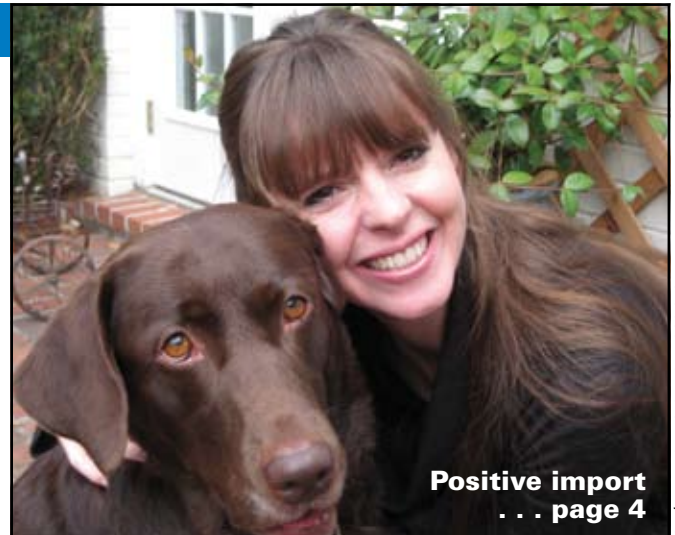
Introducing a new column about fun sports to enjoy with your dog.

16 An Underground Activity

"Earthdog" is an ideal activity for small dogs with a strong prey drive. (Don't think your Daschund has a prey drive? You won't know until you try this sport.)

20 Still Growing

Otto is gaining in size, experience, and, happily for us, reliability!



Positive import
... page 4

PHOTO COURTESY VICTORIA STILWELL, INC.



A clear winner ...
page 8



Going to ground
... page 16

ALSO IN THIS ISSUE

- 2 Editor's Note
- 23 Letters From Readers
- 24 Product and Expert Resources

Don't Go There

Dog food and Consumer Reports.

BY NANCY KERNS

I wish they would stick to reviewing cars and vacuum cleaners and stay away from dogs. That was my first response to the short articles about pet food that appeared in the March 2009 issue of *Consumer Reports*. People keep asking me about the articles – maybe because WDJ has been described as the *Consumer Reports* of the dog world? That used to make me happy, but now, I don't know.

In case you missed it, here are the highlights of that magazine's coverage:

- Expensive dog food is not necessarily better than cheap dog food.
- Homemade diets are more likely to make your dog sick than inexpensive dog food.
- Buying foods that contain certain ingredients is less important than "overall nutrient profile."

Who came up with these pearls of wisdom? They weren't named; they were only described as eight experts in animal nutrition from seven top veterinary schools. Well, that's part of the problem right there. The giants of the pet food industry make huge investments in the education of veterinary nutritionists; *Consumer Reports*, to its credit, did note that seven of the eight experts have received some funding from the pet food industry. It's no wonder that the best advice these experts can offer sounds as if it was written by

industry itself. What I want to know is, who was that eighth expert? Would he or she like to write for WDJ?

For what it's worth, this is how I interpreted the article's main points:

■ For the past decade, sales of dog foods that are considered "premium" (expensive ingredients, high-priced) have been growing faster than the sales of cheap foods. The makers of cheap foods spend a lot of money on feeding trials that prove that dogs can survive just fine on cheap food; they see no reason for people to be buying more and more expensive food.

■ Homemade diets take far too long to explain. People are not smart enough to feed themselves properly, much less dogs. Owners should leave thinking to the experts.

■ Don't look at the ingredients list! It could burn your eyes! Instead, look at the column of numbers under "Guaranteed Analysis." See? It all adds up to 100 percent. So stop worrying!



Note: I mention two different brands of vacuum in the article on page 20. Don't be influenced by this! *Consumer Reports* is still absolutely the best place to find reliable, independent information about vacuums. And cars, too, I hear.

NK

CORRECTION

We listed an incorrect phone number for one of the pet insurance companies mentioned in "What's Your Policy?" in the April issue.

The correct number for Pet Health, Inc. is (866) 275-7387. We apologize for any inconvenience this caused.

The Whole Dog Journal™

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

EDITORIAL OFFICE

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

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

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

BACK ISSUES, WEBSITE INQUIRIES

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

REPRINTS

For price quote, contact Jennifer Jimolka at
 (203) 857-3144
 Minimum order 1,000

NEWSSTAND

Jocelyn Donnellon, (203) 857-3100

WHOLE DOG JOURNAL DOES NOT ACCEPT COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING

THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL (ISSN #1097-5322) is published monthly by Belvoir Media Group, LLC, 800 Connecticut Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06854-1631. Robert Englander, Chairman and CEO; Timothy H. Cole, Executive Vice President, Editorial Director; Philip L. Penny, Chief Operating Officer; Greg King, Executive Vice President, Marketing Director; Marvin Cweibel, Senior Vice President, Marketing Operations; Ron Goldberg, Chief Financial Officer; Tom Canfield, Vice President, Circulation; Michael N. Pollet, Senior Vice President, General Counsel. Periodicals postage paid at Norwalk, CT and at additional mailing offices. Copyright ©2009, Belvoir Media Group, LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is strictly prohibited. Printed in U.S.A. Revenue Canada GST Account #128044658. Canada Publishing Agreement Number #40016479.

THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL makes every effort to provide information on dog health, care, and treatment that is authoritative, reliable, and practical. It is not intended, however, to replace diagnosis or treatment from a veterinarian or other qualified dog professional. THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL does not assume any legal responsibility. Readers should always consult qualified healthcare providers for specific diagnosis and treatment.

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

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

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

Eschew Chewed Shoes

Five things to do when your dog chews up your shoes.

BY PAT MILLER

For almost any challenging dog event there are at least five relatively easy things you can do to defuse the crisis and reduce the likelihood of a return engagement of the unwanted behavior. “Action Plan” is a new column that will offer five simple solutions for one common undesirable dog behavior. Feel free to suggest your favorites!

Here are five things to do about the dog who chews up your shoes.

1 Breathe. Even if your dog still has your \$600 pair of leather Gladiator sandals in his mouth, take three deep breaths to calm yourself. Then grab a high-value treat out of the plastic container of treats that you keep handy in every room of the house – you do, right? – and quietly trade him for the shoe. Tell him he’s a good boy when he gives up the sandal

for the treat, and absolutely resist the urge to punish him! You’ll get your shoe back faster, with less damage, if you cheerfully trade for it rather than chasing him around. If you punish him, it’ll be that much harder to get the next shoe back. (See “Thanks for Sharing,” WDJ September 2001.)

2 “Dog-proof” the house for items you really don’t want him to chew. Put your shoes in a closet and close the door. It really *can* be that simple. Often, management is the answer, rather than training.

3 Restrict him to smaller, more dog-proofable areas if you can’t dog-proof the whole house: Prevent your dog’s access to any areas where tempting, chewable footwear might be left lying about. Use baby gates, tethers, doors, and leashes

to restrict his activities to dog-proofed areas or, if necessary, to the “right under your nose” zone. (See “Upper Level Management,” October 2001.)

4 Get him some appropriate chew things. “Appropriate” means things that are safe, reasonably healthful, and that he likes. If he doesn’t chew what you’ve already bought him, keep searching until you find things he does chew. Not every dog loves hard plastic ersatz bones. Remember that leather shoes are just treated animal hide – not so very different from a pig ear or any of the other animal-parts chewies now on the market. A Pizzle makes a fine alternative to shoe leather. Stuffed Kongs are high on the “appropriate chew things” list. You can create stuffing recipes to tempt all but the most finicky of chewers.

If you have a dedicated chewer get him a black Kong – they are the toughest. Thick raw carrots can also make great chew toys.

5 Increase his exercise. That’s mental exercise, by the way, as well as physical exercise. Unless you’re walking a marathon, remember that an on-leash walk is a mere exercise *hors d’oeuvre* for a dog. A walk is a nice social outing, but exercise means when you get done he plops to the floor, stretches out on his side, happily panting, for a long nap.

So, it’s a rousing game of fetch, with you standing on top of the hill and tossing the ball down to the bottom. It’s an invigorating round of tug, or an off-leash hike in the hills with your dog running circles around you. Mental exercise is positive training that encourages your dog to think. My personal favorite for mental exercise is shaping. (See “The Shape of Things to Come,” March 2006; and “A Puzzling Activity,” June 2008.) 🐾

Pat Miller is Training Editor of WDJ.



Remember, some problem dog behavior is actually a human behavior problem. It’s your responsibility to manage your dog’s environment so he has few opportunities to do things that make you unhappy. Put those shoes in the closet and close it!

It's Me and the Dog

British dog trainer Victoria Stilwell promotes positive training on TV.

BY LISA RODIER

Entering its sixth season, the Animal Planet TV channel's "It's Me or the Dog" takes dog trainer Victoria Stilwell into the homes of frustrated couples and families to help them troubleshoot issues with their problem pooches. Broadcast in 21 countries, the show was based for its first four seasons in Stilwell's native United Kingdom, while the past two seasons have seen the show move to U.S. soil, taping in Los Angeles and Atlanta.

Stilwell is also author of *It's Me or the Dog: How to Have the Perfect Pet* (Hyperion Books, 2007) and *Fat Dog Slim: How to Have a Healthy, Happy Pet* (Collins, 2007). Stilwell's mission is to bring her positive training message to the masses. We had time to sit down with her in Atlanta, in between West Coast swings, to talk about her work.

WDJ: How did you come to positive training?

I remember when I was first starting to learn and I was walking dogs and teaching them to heel. The way that we used to teach them to heel was to give them a leash jerk, and then the dog would stay by your side for a little bit. But then I thought, Wait a second. What does this word "heel" mean to a dog? It means, I say the word "heel," and then it means leash jerk! The dog's not learning to walk close to me because he wants to, he's learning to walk close to me because he fears what's going to happen to him if he doesn't. I have to say this was a long, long, time ago. I thought, "This is bizarre, this is stupid; surely there's a smarter way."

I learned from a behaviorist who was very mixed—using traditional and positive training—and then I met some more positive reinforcement trainers in the U.K. and I said That's it! That's it! That feels much more comfortable, that makes sense, to build a relationship that's based on cooperation, not dominance. Much better!



PHOTO COURTESY VICTORIA STILWELL, INC.

In the course of each one-hour episode of Stilwell's cable TV show ("It's Me or the Dog"), the trainer assesses a problem dog's behavior. She then teaches the dog's family how to work together and use force-free methods to train the dog.

Describe your training philosophy.

I believe the best kind of leaders lead without force. In the beginning when I first started learning, I learned sort of a mixture. I never felt comfortable using that kind of approach (traditional methods); this was about 15 years ago when I first got into training. I realized the dogs actually responded much, much better when you used positive reinforcement. You reward a behavior you like, and there's a chance of that behavior being repeated. It's as simple as that!

I didn't like jerking a dog on a leash, and I didn't like yelling. I used to use quite loud sounds—sound aversion—that I don't use now. I learned different methods from different people, and took the stuff I liked. The discipline now that I like to use is guidance. It's constructive discipline, not

destructive. I would say I'm not violently positive [laughs] because I do believe that there has to be discipline; I do believe at certain times you have to say no to your dog. The discipline that I use now is a vocal sound as an interrupter of behavior, a time-out (removal), or ignoring the behavior.

Who are your mentors or from whom do you take inspiration?

Dr. Ian Dunbar. Patricia McConnell—big time; I just love her books, she's God's gift to training. Suzanne Clothier—I think she's a real pioneer, she's intense, she has a mind that puts all of our minds to shame. She's an incredible person. If anybody should pick out the Obama family puppy, she should. Jean Donaldson. I've learned a lot from her. I've also got some fabulous trainer friends here [in Atlanta], wonderful

people. And that's what I love as well. I would say for any trainers, try and get with other trainers because it's so wonderful to be able to talk through ideas.

For example, one dog on my program, a Boxer, who was on the first program we filmed here in the U.S., I had three days with this dog, which was not long enough. He was very dog-aggressive, very insecure, very unconfident. By the end of the program, we could only get him to a certain point, so we're still working with him. Unfortunately, after filming, he blew out two knees, so he was in a crate for six months, basically. So we're back working with him again now, and my trainer friends, we all do it together. We go and it's two hours of absolutely inspiring, stimulating, exciting work; I love it. I love when we train together.

And the trainers I hang out with, we are open to seeing other things. We might not agree with them, but we are open to seeing. There are a couple of incredibly good trainers I know who work with very difficult dogs, and they use remote [collars]. I was open to going and seeing this method. Now, whether you agree with it or disagree with it – I don't really like it – but I'm open to seeing it. And I think that's the mark of a good trainer; you must know what else is out there in order to be able to form your own opinion.

Do you see a general trend toward positive or more traditional (compulsion-based) methods?

In England, there's much more positive reinforcement. There are still some traditional and compulsion trainers there, but I think they're much further ahead in England when it comes to training dogs. Whereas here in the United States, I'm absolutely shocked at the amount of traditional/compulsion trainers still training this way, who truly believe and "validate" what they're doing. "My dog's well behaved [due to compulsion-based methods]." "I'm going to get my dog to do what I want it to; I'm going to *make* my dog well behaved."

I see it in trainers who have been training for many, many years who do not want to change their ways, but also I have to say . . . some TV programs that are now very popular have set dog training back 40 years. No TV program is perfect. Surely there's stuff with mine that maybe I would change. For example, we didn't show more process, so it seems like a quick fix.

But, on the whole, the positive reinforcement message is getting out. There are two camps; there is a battle going on and I will fight it. Any person who trains in the dominance style of traditional training does not have my vote. It's the idea that if your animal misbehaves you discipline it, you dominate it, you make it submissive toward you so that it doesn't misbehave anymore. But there's no emphasis on relationship.

Why not use aversives, especially when they work?

They work to a point. "Quick fixes very quickly come unstuck," that's my motto. I would rather my dog follows me and does stuff for me because she wants to, rather than because she's made to. And unfortunately, there are people who don't care. As long as their dog behaves, they don't care [what method they use]. But I care and I think that we, who domesticated these animals, we'd better do our utmost to make their lives as rewarding as we can because we brought them into our homes. They're living, breathing, essential beings, and they need our support to live in our domestic world.

How do you feel about taking on the challenge of re-training the world's dog owners not to use force and violence?

I feel very honored by the challenge. I'm by no means the best trainer in the world, I've never claimed to be. I just had an idea for a TV program; I wanted to take my positive reinforcement message out to the masses and it worked. I feel very hon-

ored, but I'm a bit of a fighter. And people who know me know that I'm a fighter, and I'm going to win this battle.

How do you educate people about positive training? What do they want to hold on to about traditional training?

I tell them, first of all, if you are learning, when you went to school, what kind of schooling would you have preferred to receive? Would you prefer to learn by getting gold stars for working really well, or would you prefer to learn by being punished if you weren't? In nursery school, I remember getting a ruler on my hand! I was three years old, and I remember that. And I hated it, and I hated the teachers, and I couldn't wait to leave and I would cry and pretend I was sick to my Mom so I didn't have to go. Then I went to a new school, and it was reward-based, with wonderful teachers, and I wanted to go to school, I wanted to learn, and I learned much more! That's the kind of education that I wanted to receive. And it's your responsibility to give your dog a good canine education.

But let's get down to the very crux of the problem: people don't have time. So if the shock works on their dog, that's bloody well going to do it. They don't have time.

Many people say, "Give me something that works quickly." Which is why the CM (Cesar Millan) program . . . it's edited beautifully to make it look so wonderful, but it's interesting because some of the cases on there that are labeled "successes," are so not successful to a trainer's eye; we're howling at the television. This dog is

Quick Answers to Short Questions

Favorite training equipment?

I love the double leash. It's a leash with an attachment at both ends; one goes on to the head collar or front-clip harness, one goes on to the collar. And I find people really like doing that.

You still like head collars?

I like the concept of leading by the head, rather than the throat, but a lot of dogs find them very uncomfortable, and sometimes they can cause more problems than not. I've backed off the head collar a bit, in favor of a front-clip harness. But there are a lot of people, especially small women and pregnant women, for example, who need more control to be able to take their dogs out for walks.

Any of these, they should not be used on a dog for life. They should be a tool to help the dog learn. Once they've learned, take them off.

What's in your bait bag?

A lot of fresh chicken! And I also use the Natural Balance rolls.

freaked out, yet it's labeled a success, and that's what people are watching, that's what people are thinking. And unfortunately, people do not have time to read, they don't want to be educated, it's a fast society; get my dog to behave and that's enough. And that's what we're battling.

That begs the question of why, in our time-crunched society, are people getting dogs?

Companionship. [But sometimes] it's a pleasure for when they want it, and obviously, a lot of it is a fashion statement. I always say to people when they want to get a dog: What do you think you can offer the dog? If a dog was going to choose to come into your home, what experiences do you think it would have? How do you think it's going to feel, living with you? Tell me about you? Do you shout a lot? Do you sleep a lot? Tell me about you. And then see what kind of dog might be able to live with you. And if you think you don't have time, and you've got five kids – well, don't do it.

How do you feel about trying to educate people about the science of behavior modification versus what people think of as training – making the dog just do something, as quickly as possible?

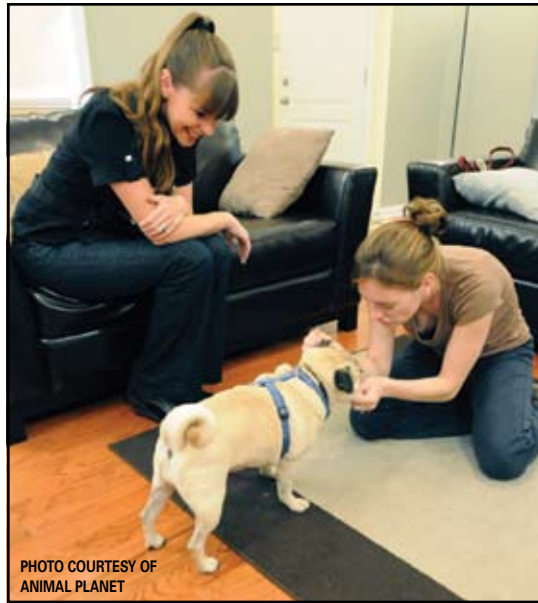
I ask them, what kind of leader do you want to be? Do you want your dog to look up to you and do things because he wants to, or do things because he fears you? You choose. If you want the former, I'll work with you. If you want the latter, I'm not your person and I'll caution you against it. Do you want to have a relationship built on cooperation, or one built on domination? You can go down the other route, it's your prerogative, but I feel sorry for your dog. And I feel sorry ultimately for you because I think you're going to encounter a lot of problems with your dog in the future.

Are people able to get their brains around what you are saying?

They really are. I can be pretty blunt, but I'm also compassionate.

Those of us who use positive training can get frustrated when we see someone using aversives. How do we convince someone that there is another way?

If you fight fire with fire, you'll get burned. The person will get irritated.



Stilwell says a good dog trainer must first be a "people person." The owner must trust the trainer in order to "buy into" the process.

I try to explain, "Hey, there's a different way, and it's exciting!" I was on a beach in Florida, and a guy was walking his Golden Retriever and it was lunging at other dogs, and he would slam it down, put it in an alpha roll and stand over it, then he'd get up, walk, and then another dog would go past, and the dog would lunge, and he would slam it on the ground. My husband said to me, "Oh no, please, don't go over there."

But it's like stopping a raging bull. I said, "I'm not going to go over there and slam him. I'm going to go over, introduce myself, say who I am, and tell him there's a better way." And I worked with him for a half an hour, and we had the dog not lunging at other dogs that were walking past. And the owner said, "Oh my gosh! That's amazing!" It's not amazing, but for people who haven't seen it before, it is.

What about when people object to training with food?

"Oh, I'm bribing my dog." No you're not, you're giving incentives! I say, look, you don't have to use food! Find out what your dog's most powerful motivators are: food, toys, play, praise, or something else? Let's find out. Many people think positive reinforcement trainers only use food, but we don't. I reinforce everything all the time, but I'll do it with praise, and the next time with food, then the next time with praise, then I'll pet the dog; I vary it. But I believe that we need to give feedback.

Your expectation is there will always continue to be rewards of some sort?

Yes! Mark it, as you like to be marked, "Oh, you look nice today," or "That was a really good job!" Mark it, it makes them feel good. Let's make our dogs feel good about what they are doing!

I've heard you say that people who train dogs need to love not only dogs, but people.

Absolutely, and I do love people, and I think that is the most important thing. Because if you do not have the ability to change the person's mind, to encourage the person to change, to encourage the person to train her dog, and to carry on training, you've failed. Show them that they can get results the other way and then people have an "Oh my gosh" moment: "I couldn't believe that my dog would do this!" and the dog's looking much happier. And the relationship begins to grow.

So do you come at it with the approach of dealing with the people, first?

You bet. Always. It surprises me how many trainers out there are not "people people." I don't think you can be a good trainer without being a people person. What I've found that's so important when I go into a home, I get the person to talk to me. I don't just go in – even though it seems that way in the program. We have a day, and I'm looking, I'm observing all day and then I get the person to talk. I'm listening, listening, listening, and get the real story. You find so many clues from what people have to say. Finally, they've got someone who's listening to them.

Sometimes people cry, sometimes they get very angry. And then I always tell people, "You know what? You can trust me. I've got your back. I've got your dog's back. Even though this is a TV program, I'm going to do everything in my power to make sure you're in a better place when I leave." And that immediately puts people at ease. They're pretty shocked that, after the program, "You're going to keep in contact with me?" Yeah, you're a client! We don't just go away.

What are the most common mistakes you see people making when they do use positive training techniques?

You can teach "obedience training"

very quickly with positive training. But when you're trying to change a behavior, that's what people don't understand; they want quick results. Traditional training methods suppress the behavior; that's what they're "designed" to do. They don't change the way the dog feels. Whereas positive training changes the way a dog feels inside. For anybody, human or dog, making that emotional change can sometimes take time.

I put it in human terms. I say, look, if somebody is suffering from anxiety, and they're going to a psychiatrist, do they go for one session? No they don't, they go for many. And even at the end of that, they might not be 100 percent. But they'll have coping mechanisms, and they begin to feel different. And some will do a complete turnaround, others might just do three-quarters. I'm not equating dogs to humans, obviously, but you sometimes have to use a human example, otherwise sometimes people don't get it!

But when I explain that a dog's brain is similarly wired to a human's in terms of emotion, they go, "Oh, yeah, it does take a long time to change emotion in humans, so I guess it can take a long time to change emotion in dogs if the dog's brain is like a human's. That's fascinating, I didn't know that!" Understanding that positive training takes time, but ultimately, you're going to have a dog who feels better! Your dog is happier, and your life is made easier. It's a win-win situation for everybody.

What do you think about the behavior problems we see today? Do you think we have so many more canine behavior problems than in the "old days"?

I think there have always been a lot of behavior problems, but dogs had been working. That was what a dog was for. And now, dogs are living with the pressures of our weird domestic society. They can't pee and poop in the house; they have to do it outside. And they can't bark, and they can't tell another dog to go away, 'cause they'll get told not to, even though they're scared. And they're having to meet other dogs every day, even though they might not be sociable, and then you've got kids and other people . . . it's a lot of pressure! No wonder!

Plus, the ridiculous industry of puppy mills, which is just breeding dogs with no attention to temperament. It's a money machine, so we're getting messed-up dogs out there with anxieties and medical issues.

That's where America is so backward. I'm sorry! Get with the program! Regulate these puppy mills, shut them down! If you want a puppy industry, regulate it. I don't believe there should be an industry at all, but if there's going to be one, get with the program, get smart. Same in Britain. Even though they're not allowed to sell pets in pet stores anymore, you can still get puppies online.

What is the most common behavior problem you encounter today?

A lot more anxieties, a lot more separation anxiety. A sense of abandonment. There are a lot of reactive dogs out there. Temperament-wise, we are seeing a lot more dogs with aggression issues because of the way they're bred. That's very worrying. Also, we're seeing a lot of aggressive dogs from people who have trained in the traditional style. I don't care what you label aggression – protection, whatever – I believe aggression comes from an underlying insecurity. A confident dog doesn't feel the need to aggress. It comes from an underlying insecurity.

What are some of the most rewarding or difficult cases you've worked on?

Junie B, a very aggressive little Poodle [U.S. season one]. Junie B hated boys, hated men, loved the girls. Now Junie B hangs out with the little boy in the family and his friends, she's letting the husband take her for walks, she'll voluntarily jump up into his lap and go to sleep. It's so beautiful.

Also, two pit bulls I worked with, belonging to a guy named Victor [U.S. season two]. One was dog-aggressive. Victor was so overwhelmed, very emotional, and now the change has been incredible. Both of these were people who really worked. They were passionate about their dogs and worked at it. And that feels so good.

Both families, they didn't relish being on TV. It's funny, because a lot of people say, "Oh it's because they want to be on TV," but a lot of the families don't. They see it as an opportunity. "We're going to air our dirty linen and we're going to do it because our dogs are worth it."

We had a neglected pit bull-mix, out of control. On the day of observation, I went in there, and I said I don't believe you should have this dog, you should not keep this dog. This dog is not going to be successful in your home. Let's work to get it to a point where he's adoptable and re-home

him. For those people, I knew that I had to get the dog out of there. Whether it's a TV program or not, I will not allow a dog to continue in an abusive or a neglectful situation. I think sometimes that there are people who get dogs, and it's the wrong thing. As long as they can work hard to re-home, think what's better for the dog.

You speak a lot about rescue; why is this important to you?

I started in rescue; I was a volunteer, I've volunteered all my life in rescue. I remember when I was a volunteer dog walker at a shelter – however many years ago that was, I'm getting so old! There was this little black dog, terrified of people, and then this child came along and she started petting this dog. And I was saying "Stop!" and this dog just loved her. And I went, Oh my gosh, you're terrified of adults, but not children! That was when I realized that I loved this. So I've done rescue now for 15-16 years. I liked to see how dogs developed and how from a horrendous abandonment situation they would then go to a new home.

I wish we didn't have to have rescue shelters but we always will. Helping is something valuable you can do for your community. You can do so many things – you can donate things, you can donate money, or you can bring in blankets, toys. You can take dogs for a walk, or you can just go and hang out with a dog. We get our volunteers at PAWS Atlanta (a private shelter in Atlanta) to take the dogs out and just hang out. The dogs learn to be calm when they need to. I do rescue work when I can, which is not that much these days, at PAWS Atlanta, and I work with three other volunteer trainers there.

In addition to rescue, I'm passionate about getting puppy mills closed down or regulated. I'm going to be marching in Pennsylvania demonstrating against the puppy mills up there for Puppy Mill Awareness Day in September.

I'm also setting up a foundation, which I'm very excited about. It's "Victoria Stilwell's Think Dog Foundation." We're going to support smaller shelters, and also help children with disabilities with assistance dogs. The foundation is going to help give out money to those various groups, and we expect to launch it in early summer 2009. 🐾

Lisa Rodier lives in Alpharetta, Georgia, with her husband and two Bouviers.

Finding the Right Rawhide

Safe, natural chews are hard to find, but they do exist.

BY NANCY KERNS

There are an infinite number of things in pet supply stores that are intended for our dogs' chewing pleasure. I wouldn't buy a great many of them for any dog of mine. Why? Because many are too hard, inviting broken teeth. Some are splintery, risking perforated intestines and other internal injuries.

I wouldn't eat plastic for any number of reasons, and I don't allow my dog to chew up and swallow bits of plastic-based chew toys, either. Animal-based chews seem more natural, but some (especially things like pigs' ears) are dried to a level of brittleness that seems to invite internal injuries when the shards are crunched into small pieces and swallowed. It hurts my throat just thinking about it!

Chews made from dried tendons offer what I consider to be the ideal chewy consistency, but can't be found in a large enough size to ensure that my large dog will be forced to chew them slowly, rather than swallow chunks that he could choke

on. Dried "pizzles" (made from beef and other animal penises) also offer an ideal consistency, but I admit that I find them (and certain other chewy but identifiable anatomical parts, like pig snouts) too gross to handle.

That leaves me looking at the rawhide chews. Rawhide is made from dried animal skin, so it is stiff, but quickly softens under the influence of a dog's saliva and the mechanical action of the dog's jaws: no sharp shards! Purchased in the right form, it takes a lot of work for the dog to chew off little bits, so it presents a lower risk of choking or digestive problems than many other chews. It's generally not smelly, messy, or overtly disgusting to touch or look upon, even though it's an animal product. And *because* it's an animal product, most dogs are immediately drawn to it and enjoy chewing it.

As attractive as rawhide is as a canine chew item, it's not uniformly safe or wholesome. Rawhide comes in many



There are literally thousands of "rawhide" dog chews on the market, but they are anything but equal in terms of safety, quality, and price. We advise that you do your homework and take your time before buying chews for your dog.

What you can do . . .

- **Actively** supervise your dog when he's chewing a chew. To reduce the risk of choking or bowel obstructions, take it away from him if it starts shedding pieces that you wouldn't want him to swallow whole, or when he gets close to the end.
- Look for chews that are made from a single, thick sheet of rawhide.
- Don't buy chews that smell putrid, or that have no odor at all.
- Avoid rawhide products that are unnaturally white; extreme whiteness indicates extensive chemical treatment.



forms, and not all of them are appropriate for your dog. Here's how to identify the best rawhide chews. Please note that top-quality chews may not be available in *every* pet supply store you happen to visit; you may have to shop around or order online from reputable businesses to find reliably safe, good products.

What rawhide is

Most people are surprised to learn that rawhide is a by-product of the leather industry – *not* the beef industry. It might seem logical that, in a beef-producing and beef-eating country like the United States, we'd be practically rolling in rawhide for dogs; in fact, there *is* currently a glut of beef hides produced here. But U.S.-produced rawhide is in very short supply. How can this be?

As I said before rawhide is a by-product of the leather industry; its production starts in a tannery – and tanneries are rare in the United States today. One rawhide company representative I interviewed estimated that there are about 30 in the whole country; Mexico, in comparison, may have in excess of 3,000.

Tanneries use an enormous amount of water – and thereby create an enormous amount of waste water – to process beef hides. The cost of all that water, in addition to environmental laws, neighbor complaints, and the relatively higher cost of a relatively unpleasant business have all contributed to today's shortage of tanneries in this country. According to Cattle Network, an information resource for the cattle industry, the U.S. exports more than \$1 billion worth of hides annually to China alone; we are China's largest source of hides from cattle, sheep, and pigs. Hides from American cattle fetch top dollar; the breeds of cattle here and our seasonally cool climate combine to produce a thick, consistent hide that, in turn, produces top-quality leather.

Cattle hides are shipped from slaughterhouses to tanneries for processing. Like any perishable meat product, the hides should be handled in a manner that prevents or minimizes decay. Hides that will be processed quickly, in this country, are generally iced and delivered to the tannery within no more than a few days. The vast majority of hides, however, go directly from the kill floor into a brine-filled trough; the highly concentrated salt solution arrests any protein-destroying organisms. The hides "cure" in the brine bath for about 12 to 18 hours before they are packed and shipped for export.

Of course, exportation takes time – and though the brining process helps slow decay, it can't prevent it forever. Hides sent to China are typically trucked to ports on the West Coast, where they are packed into containers and loaded onto ships. It may take weeks or months for the hides to reach the tanneries in China and continue the process that turns them into chews for our dogs.

Once at the tannery, the hides are soaked, treated with lime (which helps strip the fat from the hide), de-haired (through physical and a chemical process), and then de-limed (accomplished by numerous water rinses). They are then treated with chemicals that help "puff" the hide, making it easier to split into layers. ("Full-grain"



Avoid buying chews like these, which were made out of shredded, pressed bits of rawhide bound together with who-knows-what material. Also, these contain artificial colors – a completely unnecessary ingredient in a dog chew.

leather is made from unsplit hides.)

The outer layer of the hide is further processed into leather goods – car seats, clothing, and so on. The inner layer is the source of rawhide (and collagen, which is made into gelatin, cosmetics, and glue, among other things). Very thick hides may be split into three or more layers (hence the global popularity of thick American cattle hides).

Rawhide: The inner layer

Finally, we'll talk about what happens at the rawhide dog chew manufacturing facility. In simple terms, the rawhide is washed; sanitized; formed, cut, rolled, and/or shredded and pressed into its final shapes; dried; packaged; and shipped for sale. But the *actual* simplicity of the process depends on freshness and quality of the rawhide.

Truly fresh hides – those that have been iced and refrigerated and delivered to the rawhide manufacturer within a few days of the source animal's slaughter – require far less processing with chemicals than aged (and preserved) hides. "Sanitizing" in this case generally means some time in a bath of hydrogen peroxide. Exported hides require more extensive interventions.

Even though the brining process inhibits decay, it doesn't arrest it altogether, and most exported rawhides are literally black with rot by the time they arrive at the rawhide processor. That means, at a minimum, they have to be bleached to improve their appearance and aroma; if

the decay is advanced, they may also be treated with other chemicals and even painted with a coating of titanium oxide to make them appear white and pretty on the pet store shelves.

The global recession has slowed the demand for leather luxury goods; even the formerly strong market for leather for car seats has diminished as car sales have dropped to record lows worldwide. As a result, tanneries are buying fewer hides and producing less leather – which means they have less rawhide to sell to the makers of rawhide dog chews. It's a bit ironic that these manufacturers are now scrambling to secure rawhide, even as containers of cattle hides have begun to accumulate all over the globe.

"Made in the USA"

The freshness factor alone is a good reason to try to buy American-made rawhide chews for your dog. But it's also true that it's less likely that illegal or toxic chemicals are used in the products' manufacturing if the products are made in the United States. Lead, arsenic, mercury, chromium salts, formaldehyde, and other toxic chemicals have been detected in low-quality hides.

Read that label carefully, by the way. The pet product manufacturers are aware that many pet owners see "Made in China" or other indications of foreign manufacture as a red flag, and they are ingenious at finding ways to make their products look as if they were domestically produced. I've seen products with American flags on the label



These rawhide rolls are made with a small sheet of rawhide wrapped around a bunch of chunks and fragments of rawhide. When the outer sheet loosens with the dog's chewing, the small chunks inside could pose a choking hazard, or even perforate the dog's esophagus or intestines.

that were made overseas. Even the phrases like “made in America” or “made from American beef” are abused; sometimes, the fine print will reveal that what’s meant is Mexico, or South or Central America. There *is* a difference!

Some companies have made a case for the use of South American (especially Brazilian) beef hides. They say that cattle there are raised on grass, with fewer hormones, pesticides, and antibiotics, resulting in a healthier, more natural rawhide. Their competitors in the U.S. counter that cattle raised in warm, equatorial climates are thinner-skinned – resulting in thinner, less chewy chews – and that foreign manufacturing can be dicey. Both arguments have some merit, which is why I don’t use country of origin as my sole (or even the most important) selection criterion when shopping for dog chews.

Instead, I look at the thickness of the hide itself (thicker is better, because it will take longer for a dog to chew) and its color. Extremely white hides are unnatural; they have to be bleached and/or painted to appear so white. Natural or lightly bleached rawhides are a light tan, like a manila folder. These less-processed hides retain more of the natural flavor and aroma of the hide. “Basted,” smoked, and decoratively tinted products might be any color (or odor) underneath the coating of (often artificial) dyes and flavors, and so I avoid them.

Speaking of odor: It stands to reason that the dried skin of an animal would naturally present some aroma. However, a rawhide chew really shouldn’t smell rotten or putrid; such an odor could indicate a high bacterial load. On the other hand, neither should a rawhide chew be completely odor-free! This would indicate that the product had been subject to extreme bleaching and chemical treatment.



The rawhide roll on the left is an example of the kind of rolls we would not buy. The outer layer is nice and thick, but it is hiding all sorts of little scraps inside. The roll on the right, made by Wholesome Hide, displays all the traits we are looking for in a top-quality rawhide chew. It’s made in the United States from a single sheet of fresh, thick, natural rawhide from U.S.-raised cattle.

More selection criteria: Form and function

I admit that I have a strong bias about the form of the rawhide chews I buy for my dog, Otto. I want a chew that will take as much time as possible to chew up, provide a lot of exercise for his jaws, help clean his teeth, make it difficult to ingest a lot of rawhide in any one chewing session, and present the lowest possible risk of choking. These criteria eliminate very many of the rawhide products on the market, which seems silly to me; *every* rawhide chew should meet these requirements.

So, to start, I won’t buy any rawhide products that have small or intricate pieces. I examine “knotted” products carefully; the best ones are made from a single sheet of rolled and knotted rawhide, whereas inferior products are made with separate, smaller pieces of rawhide forming the knots on the end of a rawhide “roll.” After just a few minutes of chewing, the knots loosen and separate from the roll; these small pieces can be swallowed whole, presenting a serious choking hazard.

Neither do I buy products that are made of shredded and pressed-together tiny bits of rawhide. The makers of good-quality rawhide chews say they use natural (and beneficial) collagen as a binder for these products. But since ingredients panels are not required for these products – which, despite the fact that dogs ingest them, are not considered a food item by the Food &

Drug Administration – there is no sure way to know what binding agent has been used as the product’s “glue.”

The rawhide products that seem to best fit my selection criteria are the “rolled” products, made from a square of rawhide that’s been rolled up like a newspaper and dried. As the owner of a big dog, I look for the longest rolls I can find, so they last as long as possible before they are chewed to a length that my dog could possibly swallow. Then I take them away. Owners of smaller dogs could probably start with shorter rolls, but what’s the point? The longer the roll, the longer it will last.

The first thing I look at when buying a rawhide roll is the end of the roll. That’s the only way to see whether it has been made from a single, long sheet of rawhide – or whether a smaller sheet has been wrapped around a lot of bits and fragments of rawhide. As with the knots that are separate from the roll on some knotted products, these bits will be quickly released from their rawhide sheath as the dog starts to chew. And what do dogs do with small chunks of edible matter? Most dogs swallow any chunk of rawhide they can chew free, whether it is soft and safe or sharp and dangerous.

Until recently, I would dig through every bin, and examine every package of rawhide rolls until I found some that appeared to be made from just a couple of large sheets of rawhide each. Then I discovered a company that makes each of its rolls from a single long, thick piece of rawhide. I’ve never seen rawhide rolls as nice as those made by Wholesome Hide.

Quality is worth the expense

I’ve also never seen any other rawhide chews that are as expensive as these chews! Good quality rawhide rolls usually sell in stores for about \$6-7 for a three-pack; a single roll of the largest size that Wholesome Hide sells for that much in some stores! (Prices are generally lower online and in bulk.)

However, the Wholesome Hide rolls last much longer than most rawhide chews; it takes Otto up to a week (chewing for an hour a day or so) to chew one down to the point that I take it away for safety reasons. As expensive as these rolls are, however, I’ve found that they are less expensive than leather work boots, redwood decking, and garden hoses! It behooves me to make sure that my dog has a variety of safe chew items available to him at all times, and rawhide has provided one of the most reliably time-consuming, trouble-free chews he enjoys. Don’t get me wrong; I wouldn’t want rawhide, no matter the quality, to be a staple of *any* dog’s daily diet. But using top-quality rawhide as one of his regular jaw-exercisers keeps him happily occupied.

Wholesome Hide makes its rawhide chews in Chicago, from beef cows raised here in the United States. They are sold in select pet supply stores around the country, and available from four Internet retailers:

■ Cherrybrook

cherrybrook.com; (800) 524-0820

■ KV Vet Supply

kvvet.com; (800) 423-8211

■ PetExtras

petextras.com; (651) 257-8534

■ West Coast Pet Supply

westcoastpetsupply.com
(800) 604-2263

See wholesomehide.com or call (888) 872-1110 for more information.

I’ve seen other good-quality rawhide chews. **Pet Factory**, located in Mundelein, Illinois, makes nice, natural rawhide chews for a number of private labels. The company does not sell directly to the public, but its products can usually be identified by the notation on the label, “Made in Mundelein, IL.” See petfactory.com for more information.

There used to be a company called **Ecology Rawhide** that made nice products, but despite seeing mentions of the company in hundreds of places on the Internet, we could not locate a working website or phone number for it.

There may be – there *must* be – other companies in the United States that make natural rawhide chews that meet all of our selection criteria. If you find products that meet this description, and that are not mentioned here, will you let us know? 🐾

Nancy Kerns is editor of WDJ.

Supervise, Supervise, Supervise

Rawhide chews – of even the finest quality – may not be safe for every dog. Rawhide (and most other chews) are not appropriate or safe for dogs who have an overly aggressive chewing style, who tend to swallow large chunks instead of gnawing them smaller and smaller, and those who tend to “guard and gulp” their toys or chews to prevent anyone from taking them. Many vets have seen at least one dog with a big piece of rawhide stuck in its mouth or esophagus, or causing an upper airway obstruction or gastrointestinal distress.

We recommend buying oversized rawhide chews for every dog. The chew should be too big to fit entirely in the dog’s mouth. As soon as it’s been chewed to a size that the dog could swallow, it should be taken away.

Even dogs with a safe chewing style can experience stomach upset from ingesting rawhide. Some only have problems when they eat too much; others seem to react to chews of certain origin (indicating a response to the chemicals used in the manufacturing process, perhaps).

If your dog repeatedly experiences problems from chewing or eating rawhide, and you’ve already increased your supervision and the quality of the chews you buy, you should choose a non-rawhide chewing alternative.



It takes a long time to whittle down a top-quality rawhide.

Fence Sense

How to avoid the hazards of inferior dog fencing.

BY PAT MILLER

There was a time when no one thought twice about letting their dogs roam the neighborhood. A fenced yard was almost unheard of. If you grew up in the 1950s and '60s as I did, you may remember those times. Dogs were well socialized, loved kids, and it was no big deal when the neighbor's dog came over and visited your female dog in season. Of course, they also chased cars, got pregnant a lot, and occasionally – although rarely – bit someone. You may also remember, as I do, a long list of childhood pets who got shot, hit by cars, or simply vanished, having fallen victim to who knows what fate.

Today, our canine companions are more likely to be spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and responsibly contained. As a result, they tend to live safer, longer lives. But having a fence isn't always the be-all, end-all solution that it seems to be. Fences can bring on a host of challenges that our parents never faced with the family dog a generation ago.

The fence itself

One significant challenge is the cost of fencing. Unless you've purchased a house

that already has a dog-proof fence around it, you're looking at a significant investment of resources to install one. Whether you pay someone to do it or are a skilled do-it-yourselfer, you're probably looking at least a few thousand dollars for a modest-sized suburban yard. The cost for materials for a six-foot chain link fence (not our favorite choice) for a 50-foot-square yard runs around two thousand dollars. Wood fencing, especially privacy fencing (the best choice, in our opinion), is considerably more.

If all you needed the fence for was to keep your dog from roaming, chain link would be fine. But you also need the fence to protect your dog from the unwanted attentions of passersby (human and otherwise) and to prevent him from becoming overly aroused by visual stimuli such as passing cars, bikes, joggers, skateboards, dogs, and mail-carriers.

When my husband and I bought our house in Chattanooga, Tennessee, it came with a lovely, large yard, fenced securely with chain link. Since our driveway was a quarter-mile long and passersby were rare, I thought we'd be fine.

However, a neighbor who lived a half-

What you can do . . .

- Provide the best and safest fence you can afford for your canine family member.
- Do not leave your dog in his fenced yard when you aren't home. If you are home and inside while he is out, make it a point to be attentive to what he's doing, and bring him in at the first hint of trouble.
- Make a vow to never use an underground shock fence for your dog.



mile away had two Labrador Retrievers that he attempted to keep his on his property with an underground shock fence; we were treated to regular visits from the pair. I'm convinced that our Scottish Terrier's dog-reactivity was initiated by (or at least significantly exacerbated by) his interactions through our chain-link fence with these two visitors. To this day, he is still most reactive to Labrador Retrievers and dogs who resemble that breed in body size, shape, and haircoat, although he has made a lot of progress with other types of dogs.

Over, under, around, through

Regardless of the type of fencing you have or will have, it's important that your fence fulfills its primary responsibility of keeping your dog contained. To that end, I recommend a six-foot high fence. Of course, not all dogs require a six-foot fence. Our fence at our current home in Maryland is only four feet high. It came with the house and none of our dogs are jumpers or climbers, so we can slide by with four feet for now.



It's frustrating for many dogs – especially young, high-energy dogs – to see and be close to passing people, dogs, bikes, etc., but be unable to interact with them.

When Is a Fence Not a Fence?

It sounds like a childhood riddle, but the answer to the serious question “When is a fence not a fence?” is “When it’s invisible.”

Even if the sole purpose of a fence was to keep your dog contained to a designated area, underground shock fences – commonly called “electronic containment systems” – do a shoddy job at best. The two Labrador Retrievers that taunted Dubhy through our fence in Tennessee are not uncommon. Ask any animal control officer how many stray dogs end up in the shelter still wearing their shock-fence collars.

But containment of your dog is not the only reason for having a fence. If you’re still willing to shock your dog for a containment system that has a high failure rate, here are some more reasons not to use one:

- It doesn’t protect your dog from intruders. Black snakes may slither through our wooden fence, but the rare stray dog who wanders by can’t get to my dogs. Strays can walk right across an invisible shock boundary with impunity. So can other animals, or human intruders who may have less-than-honorable intentions toward your dog.

- It doesn’t protect others from your dog. Even if you have one of those dogs who never tests or runs through his fence boundary (and they certainly exist), it doesn’t stop well-meaning people, including children who can’t read your fence warning signs, from crossing the boundary into his space.

- The initial training, during which the dog must get shocked at least once, is supremely traumatic to some dogs. Stories abound of dogs who have refused to go into their yards after being shock-fence trained, and of those who developed house-

training issues because they were afraid to go outside at all. You don’t know until it’s too late if your dog will be one who is so strongly affected by the shock.

- The dog can associate the shock with passersby and become increasingly aggressive when he perceives them as responsible for the shock. I have had clients, and almost every trainer I know has had clients, whose dogs had no problem with aggression toward humans until they put their dogs in an underground shock fence. Insidiously, many of these owners think it’s worth one “tiny” shock to be able to let their dogs run free in their unfenced yards – because after that one shock all they get is the warning beep. What they don’t understand is the dog associates the beep with the shock, so emotionally, hearing the beep is the same as being shocked.

- And then . . . the shock fence beep is similar to many other electronic beeps. Digital watch beeps, microwave beeps, camera beeps, computer beeps, alarm beeps – and the dog can have the same emotional response to those beeps. I had a client last year whose rescue dog appeared to have separation anxiety – becoming destructive when left home alone. We ultimately determined that the anxiety-related destruction occurred when the dog heard a watch beeping in the kitchen drawer – the result of being conditioned to a fence/beep/shock in a prior home.

I know there are communities that don’t allow physical fences, and that underground shock fences are all the rage in those places. I wouldn’t live in one. If I did have to live somewhere with no fence, I’d use a leash, a long line, a super recall – but I wouldn’t use an underground shock fence. Not me. Not ever. Never.

But if we were to adopt a dog who had high-jump proclivities, we’d be in deep trouble. If I were installing a new fence, it would be six feet, for sure.

Dogs escape from fenced yards because they can, and often because they’re left alone in them for long periods of time while owners are sleeping or away at work. They get bored and lonely and decide to go looking for something to do, or someone to be with. They employ a variety of escape techniques, including jumping or climbing over the fence, digging under, chewing through, or, in the case of the “non-fence” – running through. I try to avoid saying “never,” but I will say that I never leave my dogs in our fenced yard when I’m not home to keep at least half an eye on them.

If you have a dog who jumps your fence, raising the height in small increments is a great way to teach him to jump higher and higher – hence the benefit of installing a six-foot fence to start with,

rather than starting at three or four feet and raising it gradually. If you have a super-athlete who can jump a six-foot fence, you can slow him down by planting bushes or placing something solid and heavy at his take-off point so he can’t gather himself properly to jump.

If your dog can climb a six-foot fence, you can install a “roof” that comes inward off the top of the fence at a 45- or 90-degree angle, so when he gets to the top he’s stymied. (This roof can also confound a jumper, who will have a harder time determining the fence height with the addition.) Or you can attach “coyote rollers” along the top of the fence – pieces of PVC pipe suspended on wires that will spin when he tries to grab the top of the fence to pull himself over. You can build these rollers yourself, or purchase them commercially at coyoteroller.com.

Our dogs don’t jump our fence, but Dubhy, the Scottie, has managed to escape

a few times, once by pushing out a loose board, and twice by squeezing through a gate that didn’t close tightly at the bottom. Our fence is old and one of these days we’ll have to replace it, but until then, we are diligent about checking for loose boards and faulty gates. In the meantime, we’re fortunate that we live smack in the middle of our 80-acre farm with a half-mile driveway, and that when Dubhy has escaped he hasn’t headed for parts unknown, but rather just explored the woods on our own property, and returned when we called for him. I suspect the first groundhog hole he finds keeps him happily and thoroughly occupied until he’s summoned home.

When we lived in Monterey, we had a Pomeranian who could squeeze under our privacy fence. A row of concrete blocks lining the inside of the fence stopped his efforts, but it wasn’t very attractive. If your dog is a digger, make a note to bury your fence at least six inches.

One last tip on keeping your dog contained: make sure there's nothing next to the fence your dog can use as an escape aid. The top of a doghouse or a solidly stacked woodpile can make an excellent springboard; move them away from the fence. I have some incredible video footage of a small terrier who uses a tree trunk to support his rear legs as he climbs up a chain-link fence with his front paws, working his way up until he can jump over the top of the fence. Be sure to install your fence far enough away from any trees or other permanently fixed objects that could aid and abet your potential escapee.



Many dogs are best left in the house when you're not home.

Still more trouble

Dogs don't limit themselves to escaping as their only fence-related means of complicating their humans' lives. Dogs in fenced yards are capable of developing a host of undesirable behaviors such as barking, running the fence line, aggression toward dogs and humans on the other side of the fence, and redirecting aggression toward human and non-human family members on the inside of the fence.

Barking is usually boredom, alert/ alarm, or arousal barking. Boredom barking tends to be a repetitive, continuous, monotonous, "bark-bark-bark" for hours on end, with little or no change of tone. These dogs are usually out the whole day while their humans are at work. Some are out 24 hours a day, seven days a week, bored and lonely. Boredom barkers are at the highest risk for being poisoned, shot, released, or stolen by a neighbor who is fed up with the noise. At best, the irritated neighbor might report the barking to a local animal control officer. The simple answer for these dogs is to bring them in and engage them in activities that stimulate them physically and mentally, so they are no longer bored and lonely.

Alert or alarm barking is the dog's attempt to tell his humans that there's something going on that he thinks they should know about. A dog who is frequently left alone in a fenced yard decides it's his responsibility to be on sentry duty, and to let you know when something's afoot. If he restricted his definition of "something's

afoot" to the bona fide burglar or approaching wildfire that would be fine. But he's just as likely to include squirrels, cats, and the mail truck in his "afoot" category, and pester both you and your neighbors with his frequent pronouncements of neighborhood news.

A solid fence, as opposed to chain link, can reduce alarm barking, since the dog won't see as much to bark at, but it won't stop him from seeing tree-climbing squirrels or fence-walking cats, or his attention and response to auditory stimuli.

Arousal barking occurs when the dog has a strong emotional response to something in his sensory field. Again, it's often a visual stimulus, but can also be auditory or even olfactory. Anything that involves a strong emotional response has the potential to become a serious behavior problem and often leads to aggression. The tone of this bark is serious – an intense, "Danger! Danger! Code Red!" kind of bark. The dog may also dash back and forth along the fence line, reaching a high state of arousal that continues long after the stimulus is out of sight. Arousal barking can generalize to anything on the other side of the fence – and woe to the unsuspecting child who reaches over the (four-foot) fence to pet the dog or feed him a cookie.

This dangerous level of arousal can be caused by passersby who tease the dog, but it can just as easily be caused by the constant frustration of wanting to greet the dog or person on the other side of the fence, but being unable to do so. In fact, the behavior, which quickly leads to aggression, is often called "barrier" or "restraint" frustration. The barrier doesn't have to be physical to create this behavior; it can just as easily occur when the barrier is the threat of an invisible shock. The accumulated stress behavior, and the classical association that develops with the stimuli, can cause long-term behavior problems that require significant behavior modification (and a change of environment) to repair.

Redirected aggression is often related to barrier frustration. It happens when the target of a dog's aggression is unattainable, while someone or something else is within reach. You may see it when two dogs who

live together and know each other well are fence-running and becoming aroused at a dog or some other stimulus on the far side of the fence. Suddenly, one dog turns on his companion and a full-scale fight erupts. Yikes!

Safety

We've already touched on some of the safety issues that can arise for your fenced-in dog, even when you're confident he can't escape the fence. Poisoning, shooting, accidental or deliberate release, and theft are just a few. Others include danger from wildlife. Coyote rollers can keep those rascally guys out as well as keep your dogs in, but the rollers don't prevent contact with all wildlife. I've rescued five-foot black snakes from Dubhy. It makes me sad that he's killed a couple before I could save them, but if they were rattlesnakes or copperheads the situation would be much more serious.

Rabid skunks, foxes, raccoons, and even bats can have contact with your furry friend when he's out in that backyard on his own. I even met a young puppy once who had been lifted off his paws by a golden eagle who ultimately decided the potential meal was either too heavy, too squirmy, or both, and dropped him from a height of 20 feet. The puppy was lucky to be alive, and will bear a scar on his back from the eagle's talons for the rest of his life.

Other potential backyard hazards include overheating, hypothermia, lightning strikes, alligators, brown recluse spiders, ingestion of poisonous mushrooms . . . Gee, I'm scaring myself. I think I'll go call Dubhy in from my yard.

The answer to all these fence-related problems is to not leave dogs unattended in fenced yards. That includes not allowing free access to doggie doors when owners aren't at home. A dog-walker is a better alternative if you must leave your dog home for periods much longer than eight hours at a stretch and no family members can dash home on lunch to let him out for a bathroom break. 🐾

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

Play Together, Stay Together

A new series on sports you can learn and enjoy with your dog.

BY TERRY LONG

Disc dog. Flyball. Agility. Earthdog. Musical freestyle. Lure coursing. Splash dogs and Dock dogs. Weight pulling. Obedience. Rally. Schutzhund. Lucky dogs . . . the list of sports for canines goes on and on.

Just watch a flyball tournament; you'll see human and canine faces alight with the exhilaration of the race for the ball against another team barely six feet away.

Witness the connection between dance partners in a musical freestyle routine and try not to get misty-eyed.

Marvel at the dog whose natural sense of smell has been channeled into a game of "find it!" – and share in the joy of both handler and dog as he correctly locates the hidden source of the odor.

Gawk at the agility team that has just mastered a challenging obstacle course, recognizing how much training – and love – made that run possible.

Looking at these competitors' faces, would you guess there is any other place they would rather be? Unlikely! They are in "the zone." They are like the top-seeded tennis phenom, or the enraptured concert pianist, completely absorbed in their art. The most amazing thing about dog sports is that our partner is not a little white ball, or a grand piano, but a living, breathing

friend who also warms our feet at night. How amazing is that?

There is an almost endless list of sports to enjoy with your dog. Just when you think you've explored them all, someone comes up with an activity to which can be applied rules and titles for those wanting the camaraderie and structure of competition. A good example of this is pool diving, the most recent dog sport to draw big crowds. There are now two major organizations that provide competitive outlets for people whose dogs love to dive off the side of a pool after a toy.

You don't need a purebred dog to enjoy these activities. Although you will see the American Kennel Club (AKC) listed as a resource for more information about some

sports, there are many organizations that welcome *all* dogs to participate. Be sure to check them out and give them your support. The more we support organizations that welcome and encourage all kinds of dogs to play these games, the more avenues there will be available to those of us who do not have only purebred dogs.

You'll find that there are classes and clubs available for any sport even if you just want to have a good time with your dogs or explore your dog's potential. Often, however, people end up practicing with like-minded dog owners and, finally, competing. That's natural: The relationship between dog and person blossoms from training and playing together. You look into your dog's eyes and he looks at you, and the connection, the understanding, the thrill of it all is there, and you want more of it.

Starting this month, we will explore this wonderful world of dog sports. We'll explain how owners can learn each sport with their dogs – whether it's for a ribbon and title or for the fun alone – and how each sport offers yet another way to celebrate the human-canine connection. And, as always in WDJ, we'll explain how positive, non-punitive training methods can be used to train your dog to love and succeed at the sport. 🐾



PHOTO BY SANDI THOMPSON

An Underground Activity

“Earthdog” is for small dogs with a strong prey drive.

BY TERRY LONG

Get the rat! Get the rat! Get the rat!”

“Yap, yap, yap, yap!”

These are the sounds of a successful earthdog team. As the human team member encourages her dog to sniff out and pursue the scent of an underground rat, her canine partner indicates his find by barking, barking, barking. The adrenaline level is high in both human and canine as they revel in this unique canine sport called earthdog. One of several dog sports that tap into our dogs’ hard-wired instincts, earthdog is a great outlet for dogs with tenacity, a high predatory drive, and the flexible physical structure to squeeze into – and out of – tight, narrow spaces.

History

As long as there have been farmers and hunters, there have been “earth dogs.” Hardy, scrappy little dogs helped hunters tree squirrels, run rabbits to ground, corner foxes in their dens, and clear vermin from dwellings. As often happens, humans found a way to create competitive games from dogs’ natural abilities. For terriers and Dachshunds, a sport is born. Earthdog! Get that rat!

As early as 211 B.C., mention was made of tiny rough-coated dogs used to follow animals into their burrows. Later, in the 1576 book *De Canibus Anglicis*, by Johannes Caius, the use of terriers was described in detail.

In 1935, after many years of friends gathering together to test their dogs’ capabilities against those of their friends’ dogs, the Dachshund Club started offering trials modeled after German training for fox and badger hunting. This included building underground tunnels up to 50 feet long, with twists and turns along the way that required dogs to make decisions about which way to go to find their quarry. And it’s dark down there!

In 1941 the Sealyham Terrier Club issued the first “working certificate,” which outlined requirements for dogs to search out woodchucks. In 1971 the American Working Terrier Association (AWTA) started artificial den trials in the U.S. By

Snapshot of the Sport: Earthdog

■ **What is earthdog?** Dogs’ natural olfactory and predatory capabilities are used to train the dog to detect the scent of a rat and to bark to alert its handler to the location of the rat.

■ **Prior training required?** Minimal: Basic obedience, socialization, and confidence-building.

■ **Physical demands?** For dogs, moderate to high. For humans, mild.

■ **Best-suited structure?** Smaller dogs do best; they must go in to small spaces to find the rat. Terriers and Daschunds have the most natural structure for participating in earthdog.

■ **Best-suited temperament?** High-predatory drive and tenacity.

■ **Cost?** Minimal.

■ **Training complexity?** Minimal.

■ **Mental stimulation?** High.

■ **Physical stimulation value?** High.

■ **Recreational opportunities?** High. Practice in your yard!

■ **Competition opportunities and venues?** Moderate.



Wagstaffe, a, 11-year-old Welsh Terrier, has attained his Junior Earthdog title. His owners take him to earthdog practices as extra-special treats. Photo by and courtesy of Rick Moerloos.

1994, the American Kennel Club had launched its Earthdog program.

Diane Amendola of Huntington Beach, California, has been participating in the sport for 27 years, primarily with Welsh Terriers. Also a competitor in conformation, obedience, tracking, and agility, Amendola has judged earthdog tests for AWTA since 1986 and for AKC since the start of that program. Each organization plays a vital role in promoting the sport.

“The AWTA, from which the AKC drew its sport, focuses on hunting and getting people into the field. Their members provide actual hunts for other members,” she says. “The AKC does not encourage people and their dogs into actual hunting. Each one has its place in our world. Not everyone has the time or inclination for hunting, but AKC is a place where they can get an idea of what kind of instincts or not that their dog has.”

As with all of its approved sports, the AKC’s Earthdog competitions are for AKC-registered terrier breeds only. The AWTA also recognizes certain breeds (listed on its website, dirt-dog.com), but also permits mixed-breeds “of the correct size and character to enter a nine-inch artificial earth (burrow)” in its competitions.

Earthdog attributes

Farmers and hunters bred dogs for both structure and temperament, using individu-

als best suited for the job they would do. Too broad a chest could interfere with a dog’s ability to squeeze in and out of small spaces. The best “go to ground” dogs were compact and strong, and had rough coats that would protect them from injury when they followed their quarry underground.

Courage and tenacity were just as important as the aforementioned physical traits, ensuring these dogs would pursue their quarry despite obstructions to passage and solve the problems they face in underground tunnels with false tunnels (no rat down that one!). These attributes, combined with a keen sense of smell, made for the perfect earthdog since the earliest days.

Amendola, who has attained a variety of titles from both AWTA and AKC, has developed preferences for a working earthdog. Real-life hunts can be dangerous. Gophers, rats, woodchucks, and raccoons, can all inflict serious wounds. Amendola says, “I like a calm, sensible dog that takes care of itself and usually doesn’t get too chewed up in the hunt field. I think the trait of caution is inherent and comes with a smart dog, and a small amount does come with experience. However, there are those dogs that never quite learn to take care of themselves and in my opinion should not be taken into the field.”

Self-preservation is only part of it. The intense predatory behavior of a successful

earthdog results in a very high arousal level in the working earthdog.

Some people are reluctant to encourage behavior that looks for all intents and purposes like a dog gone mad. Yet, like many sports, the best earthdogs are always under the control of their owner/handler. Amendola has clear preferences on this subject as well. “Having prey drive, to me, means a dog that has the determination to go after and stay with the job at hand, is not sound-sensitive, and responds to cues (not as in an obedience ring, but as at home). He hunts when there is quarry and is alert and ready to work and will respond to his owner. Prey is what turns the dog on and not everyday situations like seeing another dog. An intelligent, calm, self-confident dog makes the best field dog.”

Breeds commonly seen in today’s earthdog trials include Dachshunds and a variety of terriers: Australian, Bedlington, Border, Cairn, Dandie Dinmont, Fox, Jack Russell or Parsons, Lakeland, Manchester, Norfolk, Norwich, Scottish, Sealyham, Silky, Skye, Welsh, West Highland, Miniature Schnauzers, and even Miniature Bull Terriers. Some of the less common earthdog terriers include the Cesky, Pat-terdale, Glen of Imall, and Rat.

Equipment & supplies

Many people are encouraged to try the sport due to the very inexpensive, small amount of gear needed to get started.

■ **Rat cage.** This is a small wooden or wire box that closes securely, and has a wire front panel. A real or fake rat is placed in the box.

■ **Rat.** Many of the rats used in earthdog training have been bred and raised to tolerate barking dogs. Alternatively, a fake rat that has been scented with real rat odor can be used in training. (Go to your local pet store and ask for used rat bedding from their cages.) In competition, live rats are used.

■ **Tunnels.** Short tunnels (10 feet long) are used during initial training.



A rat (real or fake) is placed in a locked box. The first stage of training is to simply encourage the dog’s interest in the box. This Australian Terrier is showing good interest and is ready for the next step in training.



The tunnel through which dogs burrow underground is a simple box with wood sides and an opening at either end. Short tunnels are used initially in training. The dog is encouraged to explore the tunnel.

Later, longer tunnels (up to 50 feet) are used.

■ **Harness, leash, and longline.** A standard, back-clip harness helps take the pressure off the neck and trachea of dogs pulling toward the box. A leather, cloth, or nylon six-foot leash is used in between training sessions, while a light-weight longline is used while working the dogs in practice sessions.

Training

Training your first earthdog will be easiest if you hook up with an experienced earthdog trainer and handler through a variety of clubs that focus on this sport. An experienced handler can quickly get you started and point out things to avoid during initial training, especially if you think you will want to compete with your dog.

Amendola recommends starting with basic obedience, socialization, and confidence-building. “Besides taking the dog everywhere to acquaint it with different situations, I often suggest that a dog owner bring home a paper shopping bag, put a treat inside, and encourage the dog to get it. Sticking his head into, and then venturing inside, a dark bag that is moving, flapping, and making noise is a great confidence-builder for a dog.”

Here is a brief overview of the major components in training.

■ **Introduction to the quarry (the rat).** Put your rat in the cage. Your initial goal is to spark interest in the cage and to encourage your dog to bark at the rat in the cage.

With your dog on-leash, encourage your dog to investigate the cage by tapping on the cage and saying, “Get the

rat!” Praise any interest in the cage, letting your excitement level build as your dog’s interest increases. As he becomes more interested, you can “tease” him a bit by moving the cage slightly out of his reach and then repeating “Get the rat” and letting him run to it.

Once you are sure he is very excited about the cage, don’t praise unless he paws or barks at the cage. If your dog seems uninterested, don’t push it. Start over at another time. Training sessions should be kept very short (2-3 minutes).

When your dog consistently barks at the cage with the rat in it, you will switch to a fake rat (you are going to be moving the cage around and don’t want to jostle the rat). Put your fake rat, scented with rat scent, in the cage. Restrain your dog on-leash and drag the rat cage along the ground while encouraging your dog to “Get the rat!”

When he barks at it, let go and let him race to the rat cage. Do not allow him to bite at the cage. Again, train in short sessions and quit before he wants to quit. Train your dog to settle down between training sessions so that he learns to maintain control when not actively working.

■ **Introduction to the tunnel.** Once your dog is very interested in the rat cage, place the cage at one end of a 10-foot tunnel. Take your dog off the harness (you don’t want the harness to get caught in the tunnel) and hold your dog near the other end of the tunnel and encourage him to “Get the rat.”

Don’t try to force him into the tunnel. Just let his desire to get to the rat motivate him to enter the tunnel. This is why it is important to build a strong desire, as described above, to get to the rat cage.

(Alternatively, you could train your dog separately to crawl through the tunnel so he already has this skill before this stage.)

If necessary, you can place the cage inside the tunnel and encourage your dog to poke his head in to find the rat. Praise him for any effort at entering the tunnel.

■ **Increasing the difficulty.** As your dog succeeds with a short tunnel above ground, you can increase the distance between your dog and the entrance of the tunnel, bury the tunnel, and later introduce longer tunnels and tunnels with right and left turns.

Levels of competition

There are four levels of competition under AKC standards of competition. More specific details are available from a variety of books and from the AKC and AWTA websites, but here is a brief description of the AKC standards.

■ **Introduction to quarry.** This is AKC’s initial “test” or trial level and a great place to start your dog. The judge is allowed to give tips to the handler, and the handler is allowed to cue and encourage her dog. The tunnel is 10 feet long with only one turn, with the rat behind bars at the end of a scented trail.

■ **Junior Earthdog.** The handler must stand quietly where she releases her dog; no verbal or physical cues are allowed. The release point is 10 feet from the entry of a clearly visible den entrance. The dog has 30 seconds to enter the tunnel and follow the scent of the rat through at least three right-angle turns along a 30-foot length of tunnel and “work” (i.e., bark at) the rat for 60 seconds. The dog must then allow the handler to remove him without injury to the

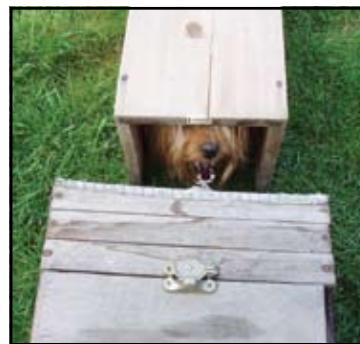
dog or handler. To earn the Junior Earthdog title, your dog must perform these requirements in two separate trials, each with a different judge.

■ **Senior Earthdog.** The handler releases the dog 15 to 20 feet from the den entrance, which is steeper and less visible to the dog than it was in the Junior level.

Again, the dog must navigate a 30-foot length of tunnel with three right-angle turns, but now he



The tunnel is aligned with the rat box so the dog can readily see the box through the tunnel. The dog is restrained for a few moments, to build his keen interest in running toward the rat in the box. When he’s released, he enters and runs through the tunnel to the rat box.



This Silky Terrier has successfully followed the rat scent (well, and the sight) through the tunnel to the rat box and is barking to alert his owner to his find.

Earthdog Resources

AKC Earthdog

For more info, see akc.org/events/earthdog/info.cfm.

To find an earthdog or working terrier club near you, see akc.org/clubs/search. Then click on “performance clubs.” Drop-down boxes will appear, allowing you to select “earthdog” as a sport and search in your state.

The AKC’s Earthdog Executive Field Representative is Barbara Teigen, (262) 313-7382.

American Working Terrier Association

For more info, see dirt-dog.com. Candy Butterfield, President, (715) 466-5773.

must also overcome a false, unscented exit and an unscented bedding area and choose, instead, the route with the scented rat bedding.

This time, due to the increased distractions, the dog has 90 seconds to get to the scented bedding, and 15 seconds to start barking. He must “work” the rat for 90 seconds at the Senior level.

At the end of the 90 seconds, the rat is removed and the dog must come back to the handler when called. The dog has 90 seconds to come when called. The dog must perform these requirements in three trials with at least two different judges.

■ **Master Earthdog.** This gets really interesting. At the Master level, two dogs (a “brace”) are randomly selected to work together, each with his own handler. The den entrance is 100 to 300 yards away, with the entrance obscured. Along the way, the dog must investigate a visible, empty, unscented entrance when the handler asks him to. Barking at the false entrance disqualifies the dog.

The dog that gets to the real den entrance gets to work it first, while the second dog must “honor” the first dog and wait. A tethering spot is provided, and the dog and handler must wait their turn. Once the first dog is called out of the den, the second dog is released to work it.

Each dog must navigate through 30 feet of tunnel with three right turns, which is the same as the Senior level; however, there are two additional obstacles at the Master Level. One is a 6-inch-diameter PVC pipe placed crossways in the den (simulating a root), and the second is a narrowing of the width of the tunnel to 6 inches for a distance of 18 inches. The dog has 90 seconds to get to the rat, must start barking at

the rat within 15 seconds of finding it, and must work it for 90 seconds. The dog must allow his handler to remove him from the den within 15 seconds.

To earn his Master Earthdog title, your dog must fulfill these requirements four different times under three different judges.

Is this sport for you?

Clearly, earthdog is a blast for the dog whose predatory nature and tenacity make this sport a great outlet for these innate characteristics. People who choose to live with these terrier-like personalities love these smart little problemsolvers, and channeling their dog’s abilities into a sport so well suited to them brings them great joy. Yet, the sport is dirty, it can be noisy, and it’s definitely not for you if you don’t want to see rats barked at by dogs. And, depending on where you live, you may have to travel quite a distance to find people of like mind.

Yet, as with many of the sports we will profile in the coming months, there’s a spark – a bond, a connection – that happens when people and dogs play together that make these minor challenges. Perhaps Amendola says it best. “I love all the dog sports and the wonderful people I have met through the years and learned so much from and continue to learn from. I cherish the many memories my friends have made possible for me to have by participating in these sports.” 🐾

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

WHOLE DOG JOURNAL READER SERVICE:

TO VIEW OUR WEBSITE:

Visit us at
whole-dog-journal.com

FOR BACK ISSUES, ARTICLES:

Visit us at
whole-dog-journal.com/backissues

TO CHANGE YOUR MAILING OR E-MAIL ADDRESS, RENEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION, CHECK PAYMENT STATUS, OR ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR ACCOUNT:

Visit us at
whole-dog-journal.com/cs

Call (800) 829-9165

To change your address by mail, attach your present mailing label to this form (or a copy of this form), enter your new address below, and mail it to:

THE WHOLE DOG JOURNAL
P.O. BOX 420235
PALM COAST, FL 32142

Name _____

Company _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____

To order or renew a subscription, enter your name and address above and check the subscription term you prefer:

2 years (24 issues) – \$54

1 year (12 issues) – \$29

In Canada, 1 year \$39 CDN, 2 years \$72 CDN. All other countries, 1 year \$47 US, 2 years \$94 US.

Check enclosed AmEx

MasterCard Visa

Card # _____

Expiration _____

Signature _____

YOUR RENEWAL IS JUST A CLICK AWAY!

whole-dog-journal.com/cs

Still Growing

Otto is gaining in size, experience, and reliability!

BY NANCY KERNS

Spring is here and so is shedding season! Suddenly, every carpet in the house is woven with dog hair. Otto has what can be best described as a “combination coat” (I just made that up). Much of his outer coat is made up of long, stiff, straight hair – resembling that from a German Shepherd, or maybe a Labrador – that seems to wriggle into the carpet pattern itself. My vacuum is helpless in the face of this hair. Admittedly, it’s not a great vacuum, so cleaning the few carpets we have has turned into aerobic exercise.

Quite some time ago, Black & Decker sent me a new DustBuster (handheld power vacuum) to try. This one is the “Retriever Pet Series Cyclonic Action,” and it plugs in; it’s powerful, unlike wimpy cordless models I’ve owned in my past. Used with its “turbo brush” (spinning rubber bristles) attachment, it’s *fantastic* at getting pet hair off our couch. But with an approximately three-inch intake, it’s not useful for cleaning entire carpets.

My sister Pam has been telling me I

absolutely *have* to get the same vacuum she recently bought: A Dyson “Animal.” She has three small white dogs and swears that she had enough hair to make another, larger dog out of the stuff that the new vacuum cleaned up on its inaugural tour through her house. “I had forgotten what a dark color my couches actually were!” she reported, incredulous. “And my rugs are beautiful!”

Otto also has a softer, shorter coat underneath, which is coming out by the literal handful – although, curiously, this is not the hair we find so much of in the house. *This* hair mostly comes out through petting. You can’t pet him right now without inadvertently collecting a pile of loose hair at the end of your handstroke.

The other day, I used a “grooming rake” – a tool with short metal teeth – to loosen and pull out some of this thick undercoat, and quickly amassed a big pile of hair on the lawn. But the tool didn’t remove any of that long, wiry hair on the top of his coat, and it’s shedding, too. I started pulling this

What you can do . . .

- Weigh your dog several times a year. An accurate weight is important for appropriate dosages of medicines and heartworm preventatives.
- Bring treats with you to the vet’s office, or anywhere that your dog might get stressed. Asking him to perform some basic behaviors (sit, down, shake hands) can help distract and reassure him.
- Carefully manage introductions to each new animal species.



long hair – gently! – and found it came out pretty easily. I know that this is an actual grooming technique; I have a good friend who has a German Wire-Haired Pointer, and she’s paid good money to have him professionally “hand-stripped” (as opposed to clipped with clippers). Between the raking and pulling, Otto looks much more sleek.

Trip to the vet

One of the reasons I wanted to clean Otto up was for a trip to the vet’s office. I took him in for a few reasons.

The first is exciting. Lisa Rodier, a regular contributor to WDJ (and who interviewed trainer Victoria Stilwell for the article on page 4 of this issue), is working on an article for us about the new DNA tests that are supposed to be able to determine the genetic contributors to any mixed breed dog. There are two leading companies offering this service; the Canine Heritage Breed Test analyzes some of the



Otto was not delighted with being brushed and having his hair pulled out, but he did like the attention, affection, and treats; overall the experience was a wash!

dog's cheek cells (which you collect with a special swab that the company provides in its test kit). The Wisdom Panel Mixed Breed Analysis requires a sample of blood, drawn by a participating veterinarian. For purposes of the article, Lisa and I decided to have both tests done on the same dog, so we could compare the results. And Otto got to be our test subject! (We don't have the results yet, but will share them with you in an article in the June or July issue.)

I haven't taken Otto to any veterinarian since I adopted him last June. In another month, he'd be due for two bits of routine veterinary business, so I combined a trip for the blood draw for the DNA test with a heartworm test and a rabies vaccine.

Heartworm

Where I live, heartworm infections in dogs are common. I've lived in parts of California where I made a calculated decision to forego heartworm preventative medication for my dogs, based on the incredibly low prevalence of the disease in those areas.

Oroville, in contrast, seems to offer an ideal climate to mosquitoes – the vital carriers of several life stages of the heartworm. There also seems to be an ample reservoir of the infection in our local wildlife – and perhaps the unprotected dogs of the area, too. Employees of the animal shelter in our town can attest that most dogs who are kept outdoors and who aren't routinely given heartworm preventatives will contract a lethal infection of the parasites.

As we reported in articles such as "Parasites Within Parasites" (August 2006); "Heartworm: Don't Take It Lightly" (March 2006); and "Reflections on Heartworm" (August 2002); there are holistic vets and some dog owners who feel that the potential dangers of heartworm preventive medications outweigh the health risks to the dog. Instead, these individuals focus on a two-pronged approach to preventing heartworm disease.

The first goal is to boost the dog's immune system – often through biologically appropriate raw diets, and herbal and other supplements. The idea is to increase the ability of the dog's immune system to detect and kill any larval forms of the heartworm that they are infected with (through the bite of a carrier mosquito).

It's not as farfetched as it might sound. Researchers are aware that *some* dogs are somehow able to live long, symptom-free lives despite light infections with adult heartworms. And other dogs seem

to be able to resist the infections so well that larval heartworms never survive to maturity; they test heartworm-free in spite of regular exposure to infected mosquitoes.

Other owners take a different (or a complementary) tack: they focus on protecting their dogs from mosquitoes, often with nontoxic mosquito repellents made of strong essential oils.

While I respect dog owners who are able to succeed at these efforts, I'm not brave enough to seek out alternatives to conventional heartworm preventatives; nor am I particularly worried about medication's side effects. In contrast, I'm scared to death of heartworm infections. I've seen dogs with severe heartworm infections, and it's not pretty. I've also seen dogs go through treatment for an infection, and that's nerve-racking as well. Immediately following treatment, the dog requires total cage-rest while the dead worms are shed from his circulatory tract into his lungs; complications are common. Treated dogs sometimes need steroids, antibiotics, fluids, and aggressive nursing care to pull through.

I do administer heartworm preventative to Otto on a slightly longer schedule than is recommended by the manufacturer (as described in detail in the March 2006 article mentioned earlier). I give the medication to Otto every 40 to 45 days.

Most veterinarians require a negative heartworm test each year, before they will renew a dog's prescription for preventative; that's one of the reasons I took Otto to the vet. Happily, his test was negative, as I hope it always will be.

Rabies vaccines

Otto received a one-year rabies vaccine in the shelter from which I adopted him, not quite a year ago. Given that he was brought into the shelter as a stray of approximately six months of age, he may or may not have received other rabies vaccines before that.

Administration of the rabies vaccine is a matter of state law. To protect the health of the (human) population from this fatal disease, public health officials in each state enforce laws that decide whether dogs must receive a vaccination against rabies annually, or every three years. California is a three-year state.

The rabies vaccine causes the greatest number of adverse reactions of the most common vaccines that dogs are given. As

a result, owners of chronically ill dogs, or those who have had previous vaccine reactions, might want to consider applying for a rabies waiver. However, Otto is a young, healthy dog, and we live in an area where skunks, bats, raccoons, and other wildlife carriers of rabies are common. Unvaccinated feral cats, too, are quite common in this area. Skunks and feral cats were both living under our house before we moved in, and Otto patrols our property nightly to prevent intrusions by these potential carriers of disease. I felt fine about arranging for a three-year rabies vaccine.

Big surprise

Since this was only Otto's second trip to a veterinarian (and I brought him to a different clinic than the one I brought him to after I adopted him), I came equipped with a bait bag and a lot of Otto's favorite treats: cut-up hot dogs. I gave him lots of treats for sits, downs, and stands, keeping him distracted from the mewling cat in a carrier across the waiting room.

When the cat and her family were called into the exam room, I took Otto over to the scale in the waiting room, and although it took a lot of treats to get him to step on it, I was finally able to see Otto's current weight. It was a big surprise! When I adopted him last June, Otto weighed 44 pounds, and it has *not* seemed to me that he's grown very much. He lost a little puppy flab, and he's put on more muscle, but he doesn't seem significantly bigger than when I got him. In fact, he's 20 pounds heavier!

This wouldn't be a big deal, except for the fact that I've been giving him heartworm preventative for dogs that weigh from 25 to 50 pounds; he should have been receiving a higher dose. I bought a new supply of the larger dose.

I adjust the amount of dry dog food that I feed Otto based on the amount of exercise he is getting and on how his weight looks. I give him a little less on the days when we don't manage to go out for a long walk or hard run, and give him a bit more on the days when he burns more calories. And when he looks a little heavy, I reduce his portions a bit more. This is pretty unscientific, but the vet who examined him agreed that his weight looks good; he is healthy.

Getting his goat

Otto's weight gain was my surprise of the month. Meeting a pair of goats was his!

We've passed horses on walks before,

and his response to them was decidedly ho-hum. So I really didn't expect Otto's agitated reaction to the goats.

I recently started going for mountain bike rides with a new friend, Leonora. We've met on the trails near my house before, and one recent Saturday, Leonora proposed a ride from her house, which is located about a dozen miles out of town, and higher up in the foothills than the town of Oroville. She also invited me to bring Otto, so he could play with her dogs; they could all hang out together in her quarter-acre, fenced dog run while we went riding. Otto gets along especially well with three-year-old Matilda. He's slightly less crazy about Leonora's newest dog, a five-month-old mixed-breed pup named Lena, and he pretty much ignores tiny S'mores, a Chihuahua.

When we got to Leonora's house, Otto was so glad to see the dogs that he failed to notice the goats for probably the first hour that we were there. Suddenly I heard a loud, "Wooo, woo woo woo!" Recognizing Otto's "watchdog" bark, I ran around the corner of Leonora's house to see two very agitated goats and one very aroused Otto

facing each other across a wire mesh fence. All three animals had all the hair on their backs standing straight up; I didn't know goats did that, too!

The goats are familiar with Leonora's dogs; they even play and are affectionate with gentle Matilda. But they took an immediate exception to Otto; there was something about him that just looked like trouble to them.

One thing that I have learned is that you never know when an opportunity to teach your dog something new will arise, so it's best to *always* carry treats. I had the benefit of a bait bag full of cut-up hot dogs, so in a clear voice, I said "Otto! Off!" And because we practice this exercise practically every day, he immediately looked away from the goats and started trotting toward me for the reward he knew was forthcoming. Jackpot! What a good dog. I gave him a steady stream of hot dog bits and praise, and then we headed back to the goat pen to work a little more.

The goats were still on red alert, so Leonora headed into the pen with Matilda, to pet and calm them. If it seemed that Otto might try to attack the goats, I would

have put him on-leash, but given that he responded so well to my "off" cue, I felt I would be able to control him well enough to avoid real trouble.

I was so proud of him. I allowed him to approach the fence to get a closer look, and I said "Off!" if he barked or rushed at the goats. Each time I said "Off!" he turned to me for a treat, and even seemed to put his fur down and forget about the strange hoofed animals for a few seconds.

After a few minutes, Leonora came out of the pen and started handing out crackers to all the animals, canine and caprine (the latter means goats; I just learned that). The goats calmed down, and all the dogs sat politely for their crackers. After a few treats, Otto apparently decided that crackers weren't that great, and he broke ranks to approach the fence again. However, as before, he turned away the moment I said "Off!" and looked to me for some more hot dogs. I decided to end the day's lesson on that note, and took him back up to the house. The goats still didn't trust him, and I wouldn't at this point, either. But I think we made good progress for his first "getting along with livestock" lesson. 🐾



The goats didn't like the looks or behavior of the new dog. They reared and stomped their feet at Otto.



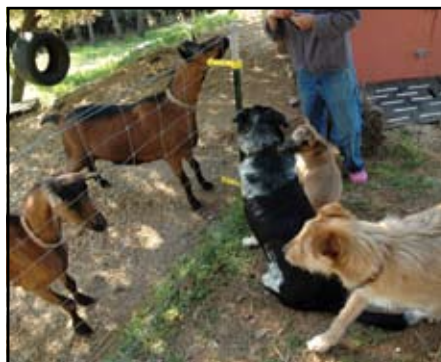
The feeling was mutual. Otto repeatedly rushed the fence barking. He seems more scared than predatory, though.



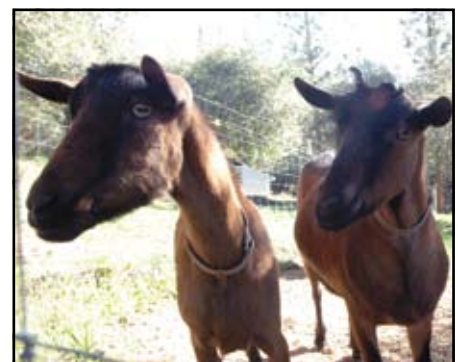
He turned away from the goats and toward me each time I said "Off!" Our daily "off" practice is paying, um, off.



My friend doled out crackers for all the dogs and goats. Otto was polite, but after hot dogs, the crackers were not yummy enough to hold his interest.



Otto is inextricably drawn to the more defensive goat. Her assertive behavior intrigued him. At this point, he's more curious than scared.



The behavior of the goats, as much as Otto's continued interest in them, tells me that he should be watched carefully around them for some time to come.

Persistence Pays

Owners must strongly advocate for their dogs' health.

We were just about to let our subscription expire when we received the March issue and noticed the article, "Starving, Not Starved." We couldn't believe our eyes! Our black Lab-mix fit all of the descriptions of this horrible disease, endocrine pancreatic insufficiency (EPI).

Despite many trips to, and many treatments at, different vets, this condition was never mentioned. We are sending a copy of the article to our vets with the hope that it will prevent suffering by pets thus afflicted. We'll never know for sure if our dog had EPI, but if she had, and had been diagnosed, what a different life she would have had. Thank you for your excellent publication. We're enclosing a renewal card and a picture of our late dog, Nala.

Ruth Schamberg
Philadelphia, PA

She certainly looks like an EPI victim. It's strange how such a dramatic disease seems to go unrecognized by so many veterinarians.

Thank you so much for your article on EPI. My little Cairn Terrier is six years old, thanks to persistence on my part to go the distance. He's had five operations due to pica and has been on 44 courses of antibiotics. I was adamant that there was something else inherently wrong with a dog that would eat anything. Thousands of dollars and eight veterinarians later, finally we know what the problem has been all along.

To all of your readers who are trying to find the cause of their dogs' issues, please don't give up! You never know when advocating for your companion will pay off.

By the way, I was already doing the right thing by giving him enzymes, probiotics, a grain-free diet, coconut oil, and raw honey (B vitamins), thanks to your previous articles.

N. Hanson
Syracuse, NY



Nala was very likely a victim of EPI.

Pros and Cons of Pet Health Insurance

Iwanted to comment on "What's Your Policy?" in the April issue, regarding pet health insurance. I took out a policy on my then-16-month-old rescued Chesapeake Bay Retriever. He was diagnosed at age six years with a stage three mast cell tumor and had a guarded prognosis.

When I began submitting claims to the insurance company, they requested my vet's records – a usual practice with insurance companies. My vet had noted in his records that there was an infected hair follicle on my dog's side that I had sought treatment for when my dog was around two to three years old.

The insurance company refused to pay my claims and terminated my coverage stating that the mast cell tumor was a "pre-existing condition" despite letters to the contrary from my vet and oncologist. Left untreated, a dog with a grade three mast cell tumor has a life expectancy of 9 to 12 months. Thankfully, with chemo, diet, and supplements, my dog was in remission for close to three years. He succumbed at age nine after a recurrence of the disease.

However, I should add that I have insured my new puppy with a different company and they have been wonderful.

Jan Hopman, Teaneck, NJ

It's really nice to see a publication that tells the truth about many health issues and encourages positive training.

I particularly enjoyed the article on pet insurance. I have pet insurance on both of my dogs and didn't have it on one, who passed a year ago after we spent thousands of dollars in vet bills. The company I had selected disqualified him from coverage as he was too old. But the insurance on both of my dogs has saved me so much money.

Funny this issue came when it did; I was just complaining about a claim that had not been paid. You have to be careful; they will try anything they can to not pay a claim. I sell health insurance for a living so I have some insider knowledge that most don't and that helps. Anyway, keep up the good work.

Robin Hamilton, Via e-mail

RESOURCES

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

HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

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

TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

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

Sandi Thompson, CPDT, BRAVO!PUP Puppy and Dog Training, Berkeley, CA. Private lessons, group classes. (510) 704-8656; bravopup.com

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

You didn't know that?

Unauthorized copying or distribution of WDJ is not permitted

This publication is supported by sales of subscriptions and back issues. The fact that we are NOT supported by advertising sales gives us the editorial independence necessary to present a subjective and critical view.

If you would like to share material from WDJ with a group, please contact our Reprint Manager, Jocelyn Donnellon, at (203) 857-3100.

Thanks!



WHAT'S AHEAD

The DNA Test

How useful or accurate are those tests that purport to determine your mixed-breed dog's genetic origins? We compare the tests.

Action Plan

Five things to do if your dog attacks or kills another animal.

Herbal Prebiotics

What they are and how your dog would benefit from some.

Socialize – or Be Ready for Exile

Dogs who are not deliberately socialized often lead short or lonely lives. Here's how to keep your dog positively social.

Good Sports

Our new series on canine sports examines flyball, a team activity that appeals to the fast, flying fetchers of the dog world.

Canine Intervertebral Disc Disease

The most effective treatments for this potentially crippling disease.