

VOLUME 11  
NUMBER 11

# The Whole



# Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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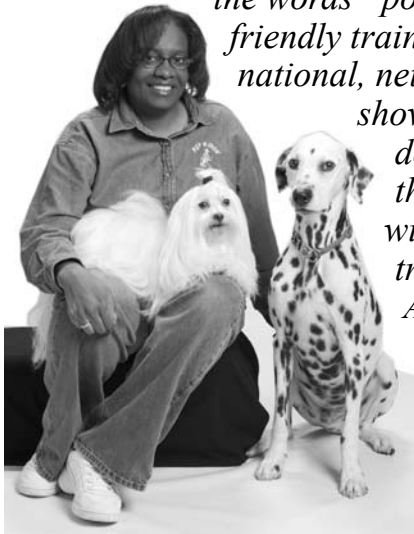
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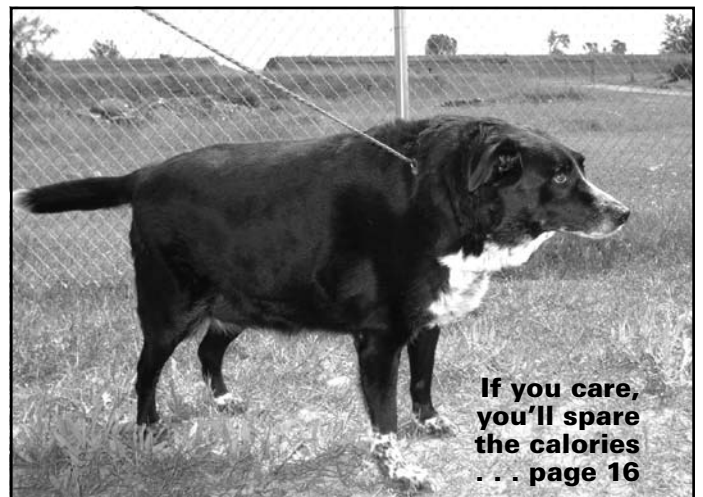
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# Autumn, Anew

*Small, special moments with my dog.*

BY NANCY KERNS

Autumn seems to be having a positive effect on the internal clock of Otto, our new dog, helping him get in synch with a schedule that more closely resembles the one we follow – you know, sleeping at *night* and being active during the *day*? More frequently, I am enjoying the pleasure of being woken by the light of day, rather than Otto's middle-of-the-night barking at feral cats, or his pre-dawn gallops back and forth past my bedroom window with a toy dangling from his mouth.

As I write this, in early October, his preference is *still* to sleep outdoors, even though the nighttime temperatures are dropping. He made an exception on the night of our first rain since last spring. Though he still sometimes curls up in the dirt, more and more, he's been sleeping in a doorless crate on our back deck. It's well protected from the weather – but when the rain started falling hard, he wanted to come into the house.

I let him in, of course, and put a wooly (synthetic; he chews wool) mat (no padding; he chews foam) on the kitchen floor for him to lie on. I sincerely *hoped* he'd sleep on it. Past attempts to keep him in the house at night resulted in restless nights for the whole family, as he paced and whined and dropped toys loudly on the floors.

Maybe he was tired by the long walk we took in the rain before darkness fell, or perhaps it was the sudden change in the weather that curbed his usual interest in nighttime activities, but he lay quietly on the

mat throughout the evening as we ate dinner and watched a movie. *And* he slept there until about 4 am! That's when he padded into our bedroom to nudge my arm and let me know he was ready to greet the day. I could just barely make out his gleaming eyes and wagging tail.

It was quiet; the rain had stopped. I got up and tip-toed across the cold floor to open the sliding door to the backyard, intending to let him out and go right back to my warm bed. But when the door opened, Otto and I *both* lifted our noses at the intoxicating scent of the damp earth. And we *both* stepped out onto the deck, which was blanketed by wet,



newly fallen leaves. We stood there for a long while, transfixed by the rich, earthy aroma, the brightness of the stars, and the distant sound of geese calling as they flew past, far overhead.

Then we both shivered – me from the cold, and him from excitement. “Have fun!” I whispered, as he trotted off to make his rounds. I was drifting

back to sleep when I heard his first galloping trip past the bedroom window. He was play-growling and rhythmically squeaking a toy as he ran. I recognized its pitch – one of the stuffed bees from his “three bees in a hive” interactive toy.

I smiled to myself. And then I realized: I enjoy *everything* more with a dog in my life again!

NK

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

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# Unconventional Food

*High quality food now comes in several novel forms; checking ingredients and nutrient levels should still be a priority.*

BY NANCY KERNS

The commercial pet food industry has enjoyed strong growth in the past two decades – and spectacular growth in the past five years. According to Euromonitor International, an international market intelligence provider, sales of pet food in the U.S. exceeded \$15 billion in 2007 – up from \$12 billion in 2002.

Some of this growth is due to an increase in the number of pets in the U.S. (Euromonitor estimates that there were 67 million dogs in the U.S. in 2007, 7 million more than in 2002.) But not all of the industry's growth can be directly correlated to the increase in the number of canine and feline mouths to feed.

The pet food industry, like the human food industry, has become increasingly savvy about marketing – essentially, selling more pet food than is actually needed. And empires are being built from the innovation of products that fill previously unnecessary “needs.” How did our dogs survive before they had special diets for seniors, large-breeds, small breeds, dogs



**The Honest Kitchen innovated a type of food – a powdery mix of dehydrated whole-food ingredients – and a quality standard that is unmatched in the industry.**

## What you can do . . .

- If you intend to feed any of these products long-term, look for foods whose labels carry a “complete and balanced” claim – or demand a complete nutritional analysis of the product, and discuss it with your holistic veterinarian.

- Contact the product makers and ask where they source their ingredients, and how they guarantee quality. Move on if you don't trust the answers.



of specific breeds? (Really? A food just for Yorkshire Terriers?)

Despite my skeptical tone, I've welcomed some of the industry's advances, such as the increasing use of organic and other high-quality ingredients.

More recently, pet food *manufacturing* has seen a lot of innovation, as a growing number of entrepreneurs, thinking outside the conventional bags of dry food and cans of wet food, have developed entirely new ways to deliver high-quality nutrition to our dogs. Some of these developments make the products particularly useful for certain applications – such as “dog food pre-mixes,” which are formulated to contain everything a complete and balanced diet contains except for the fresh meat, which you provide. These are great for the person who wants to feed fresh, home-prepared food, but is worried about

balancing the diet. Another convenient option are dehydrated foods, which are light and compact, and easy to take on the road; just add water!

Please note that some of these products are *not* formulated to meet the nutritional levels recommended by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO). It's easy to identify these products by the omission of a “complete and balanced” claim on their labels. In our opinion, the only people who should feed these products to their dogs are experienced, knowledgeable owners who would recognize the signs of nutritional deficiencies, or who have a close, collaborative relationship with a veterinarian who can provide educated oversight of such a feeding plan. For more on this topic, see “Foods for Intermittent or Supplemental Use, or That Lack a Claim,” on the next page.

Let's look at some of these manufacturing innovations, and some of the products in each category.

## Dog food pre-mixes

Pre-mixes are probably the oldest of the dog food innovations; Sojourner Farms, probably the oldest maker of dog food pre-mixes, was launched in 1985. The most basic concept behind the products in this category is "just add meat" (and water). The products generally resemble muesli.

As stated earlier, *some* companies guarantee that the addition of a specified amount of fresh, wholesome meat results in a diet that is "complete and balanced" (as per the AAFCO guidelines). Even without the "complete and balanced" statement, these products would be identifiable by one feature of their ingredients list: they generally contain added minerals; mineral levels are difficult to ensure through food sources alone.

Most of the "pre-mix" products contain grain; a notable exception is Sojourner Farm's "Europa Grain-Free Dog Food Mix," which contains dried vegetables, fruits, eggs, herbs, and a few other ingredients. Some contain whole grains that require cooking or soaking; in others, the grains are ground, and require only the ad-

dition of water. All of the products include dried vegetables, fruits, and/or herbs; some require the addition of some sort of healthy oil, in addition to meat and water. Some utilize organic ingredients.

All of these products may appear to be expensive, especially considering that you also have to buy fresh meat to complete the diet. However, because they contain so little water, when you calculate the cost of the reconstituted diet, their prices are generally competitive with other premium, healthy diets.

## Dehydrated diets

Two types of dehydrated canine diets have emerged. The first are powdery products made by The Honest Kitchen (and no one else we are aware of); the second resemble freeze-dried hamburgers.

The Honest Kitchen, a San Diego-based company, seems to have single-handedly developed the concept of complete and balanced diets comprised entirely of dehydrated *human* foods, mixed together in a human food manufacturing facility. For most of its products, dried, ground meats and grains are mixed together with dried vegetables, fruits, and herbs; a 100 percent human food grade vitamin/mineral supplement is added to complete the diet to

AAFCO's recommended nutrient levels.

With the exception of one formula, The Honest Kitchen's diets require only the addition of water and stirring. However, the company's founder, Lucy Postins, encourages owners to feel free to add fresh foods, such as vegetables and dairy products, to provide additional variety to the dog's diet.

The company's first product was a beef-based diet with organic grains, but The Honest Kitchen now offers six different canine diets, including five "complete and balanced" varieties; one ("Preference") that requires the addition of meat (like the pre-mixes discussed previously); and three grain-free varieties. We've toured The Honest Kitchen's manufacturing facility, admired what we saw, and love these products.

A handful of companies offer a freeze-dried or dehydrated versions of their frozen diets. In most of these products, ground meat is mixed with other ingredients; then, instead of being frozen, the product has its moisture removed. The products are then contained in air-tight packages. Dog owners simply add water, wait, and feed.

These products are very popular with owners who feed their dogs raw diets at home, but prefer an easy-to-transport and

## Foods For "Intermittent or Supplemental" Use, or That Lack a Claim

Some of the products described here are formulated to meet the "nutritional levels" standard of the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO), and some are not. To earn the "complete and balanced" appellation, the product must demonstrate (through laboratory analysis) that it contains a concentration of nutrients that meets all the minimum levels, and does not exceed the maximum levels, of certain nutrients determined by AAFCO to be necessary to maintain healthy dogs.

There is another method through which pet food companies can be allowed to state that a food is "complete and balanced," but it involves a feeding trial that follows an AAFCO protocol. To use this statement, a product must demonstrate that it's capable of maintaining the health of a specified number of dogs who were fed an exclusive diet of that product alone for a specified period of time. Few, if any, of the products mentioned here use this claim; feeding trials are notoriously expensive, and the companies that offer these products are generally quite small.

Products that do not carry *any* statement that includes the words "complete and balanced" are sometimes labeled with the statement, "Intended for intermittent or supplemental use." But not always! Some products carry absolutely no claim regarding their ability to completely nourish a dog.

Why would a dog owner buy such a food? In some cases, it's because the owner has been convinced, by virtue of company literature that while the product has not met AAFCO's guidelines for a "complete and balanced" food, it's proven to be adequate – or even superior to conventional foods. In other cases, the dog's owner may have enough knowledge of canine nutrition, or experience with feeding healthy dogs, that he feels confident that the product can meet all his dog's needs.

I've heard a few makers of novel dog foods claim that the AAFCO guidelines should not be regarded as the "gold standard" for nutritional completeness. Some formulators think they can make foods that are healthier than foods that are formulated with the nutrient levels suggested by AAFCO. Personally, I'd be reluctant to disregard all the science that went into developing these guidelines, or a similar set of guidelines developed by the National Academies National Research Council (NRC).

In our opinion, when buying a product that does not carry a "complete and balanced" claim, *at minimum*, an owner should ask for a complete laboratory analysis that lists values for each of the dog's required nutrients, and compare these values to either the NRC's or AAFCO's guidelines. If the product has values that aren't in the ballpark, we wouldn't rely on it as a long-term staple of our dog's diet.

prepare diet while traveling. All of the products we are aware of in this category are complete and balanced diets.

## Dog food rolls

We have to admit that this is our least-favorite type of novel canine diet – and that some of our readers swear that these products are the only type of foods that their finicky dogs will eat. Having nursed a very thin, senior dog who had almost no appetite through his final years on earth, we can appreciate that there is a time and a place for these foods. These products are also used by many positive trainers as training treats. Their texture, aroma, and taste (apparently) make them a high-value treat for most dogs.

All of the dog food roll products that we are aware of are complete and balanced diets. They generally contain a high percentage of animal protein – including animal muscle tissue (including heart) and lungs, livers, kidneys, and spleens. Both of the two largest makers of these products list these organs by name and by species. This lends the impression that these are not the low-cost, bottom-of-the-barrel by-

products found in bargain pet foods.

The products contain a lower percentage of moisture than conventional “wet foods; they average about 40-43 percent moisture. This is closer to the moisture levels found in fresh meat; unlike with many canned foods, water is not needed for processing, and so none is added.

Everyone wonders: How can products that contain so much meat be stored at room temperature for up to a year, and remain wholesome? Preservatives *are* used, but the manufacturing process and the oxygen-free product packaging are key. Like canned foods, rolled products are actually cooked and sterilized of bacteria in the plastic packaging. Once the package is sliced open, the product must be kept refrigerated, and should be consumed within a few days.

## Fresh-chilled

This is the newest type of novel canine diet to the marketplace. While frozen canine diets (raw and cooked) have been available for many years, only recently did a company roll out a complete and balanced fresh diet in the U.S. Interestingly, this sort

of diet is highly popular in Australia, where the category comprises 20 percent of all the pet food sold.

There is only one company we are aware of that offers this type of diet here in the U.S.: the appropriately named Freshpet. The company was launched in 2006, and has reportedly experienced phenomenal growth, mostly through supermarket sales. The products contain no preservatives, are never frozen, and have a relatively short shelf life – 13 weeks from manufacture to declared “best by” date.


Fresh-chilled products are by far the most expensive of the novel foods described here, but their availability in mainstream grocery stores, in refrigerator cases that are in close proximity to prepared human food products, seem to increase their attractiveness to many owners. The quality of the ingredients, the lack of preservatives, and the high inclusion of meat (the company claims the products are 70 percent meat), are terrific. We can’t imagine being able to afford to feed these products to anything but a very small dog, or a convalescing dog for a short period of time, however.

## DOG FOOD PRE-MIXES


<p><b>Dr. Harvey's</b> Keansburg, NJ (866) 362-4123 drharveys.com</p>	<p>Dr. Harvey's Canine Health contains six organic grain, and dehydrated vegetables, herbs, and many nutritious food supplements, such as bee pollen and yeast. To prepare, add mix to boiling water, steep, cool, and then add meat and healthy oil. Product is fragrant and attractive, with bright vegetables and whole grains.</p>	<p>Preparation directions are provided <i>inside</i> the package. No statement regarding product's nutritional completeness is made on the package, although website literature indicates that no additional supplements are required, as the product contains a "Whole Food Herbal Multi-Vitamin" but this does not appear on the ingredients list. Dr. Harvey's claims that ingredients are all "human quality." The product is sold in select stores and direct from Dr. Harvey's.</p>
<p><b>Happy Dog Food</b> Salinas, CA (800) 359-9576 happydogfood.com</p>	<p>Add raw or cooked meat and water and the contents of a separate vitamin/mineral packet to make these product "complete and balanced." Happy Dog offers three dog food pre-mixes: Original (which contains whole grains and requires stovetop simmering for 40-50 minutes); the Express (which contains flaked barley and oats) and Grain Free varieties requires only the addition of hot water. All contain dehydrated vegetables.</p>	<p>The company is under new ownership, and when we requested a nutritional analysis of the product, when prepared as directed, we were told it was in the works; a basic "guaranteed analysis" of the product (sans meat) appears on the product and website. Happy Dog claims the ingredients are all "human quality." Currently, the product is sold in select stores in five states; contact Happy Dog to ask whether you could buy it in your favorite pet supply or health food store.</p>
<p><b>Noah's Kingdom</b> Wall, NJ (800) 662-4711 noahskingdom.com</p>	<p>Six whole grains, all organic, top the ingredients list of Noah's Kingdom Dog Food Pre Mix. Also includes a variety of dehydrated veggies, nutritional supplements such as bee pollen and lecithin, and herbs. To prepare, add mix to boiling water, steep, cool, and then add meat and healthy oil. Product is fragrant and attractive, with bright vegetables and whole grains. A grain-free variety is also available.</p>	<p>Noah's Kingdom claims that all ingredients are "human consumption grade. Company does not make a "complete and balanced" claim, but feels strongly that the product does provide complete nutrition when prepared as directed. Products are sold in select stores and direct from Noah's Kingdom. Upon request, company will "custom-blend" a batch of food, omitting or adding ingredients as the customer desires, for example, for a dog with an allergy to a particular ingredient.</p>
<p><b>Sojourner Farms</b> Minneapolis, MN (888) 867-6567 sojos.com</p>	<p>Sojo's European Dog Food Mix contains grain flakes, ground pecans, herbs, and other foods. Add water, meat, and soak before serving. Maker suggests adding a rotating variety of vegetables and/or fruit. A grain-free variety, Europa, contains dehydrated vegetables, fruit, eggs, and more. Europa can be added to Sojo's in lieu of fresh vegetables.</p>	<p>These products are clearly labeled as "for supplemental or intermittent use" although the maker feels the product, prepared as suggested, provides superior nutrition. Sojourner Farms will deliver complete nutritional analyses for the products when prepared as suggested. Sojourner Farms bought a former competitor, Monzie's Organic Muesli, and now offers that product, too. It's similar to Sojo's, but uses all organic grains.</p>




## DEHYDRATED DIETS

<p><b>Nature's Variety</b> Lincoln, NE (888) 519-7387 naturesvariety.com</p>	<p>Nature's Variety's Freeze Dried Raw Foods are meant as a complement to their raw frozen, kibble, and canned diets. They contain raw muscle and organ meat, fruit, vegetables, healthy oil, eggs, and other food supplements.</p>	<p>These diets are labeled as for intermittent or supplemental use. They are available in four types of freeze-dried patties: beef, chicken, lamb, and venison. Sold in stores and from a variety of retail outlets; call company or see website.</p>
<p><b>Stella and Chewy's</b> Muskego, WI (888) 477-8977 stellaandchewys.com</p>	 <p>Stella and Chewy's Freeze Dried Steaks are available in beef, chicken, and lamb varieties. The beef variety contains raw muscle meat, organ meat, ground bone, and a vitamin/mineral mix. The chicken and lamb varieties resemble the beef, but also include vegetables and other supplements.</p>	<p>Most of the vegetable ingredients are organic. Complete nutritional analyses for each product appears on the company website. Lab results for bacterial testing of each batch of food is available on the company website – wow! These products are popular with owners who feed their dogs a raw diet and are already comfortable with handling and feeding raw meats. Sold in stores and from a variety of retail outlets; call company or see website.</p>
<p><b>The Honest Kitchen</b> San Diego, CA (866) 437-9729 thehonestkitchen.com</p>	<p>The Honest Kitchen offers six different varieties of its dehydrated, powdery diets, to which you just add water. Five are “complete and balanced.” Three are grain-free. All grains used are organic.</p>	<p>All of The Honest Kitchen's products are made with human food ingredients, in a human food manufacturing facility. Complete nutritional analyses are available for all products. Lower-cost varieties are available for owners with large or multiple dogs. Sold in select stores and direct from the company.</p>

## DOG FOOD ROLLS

<p><b>Dick Van Patton's Natural Balance</b> Pacoima, CA (800) 829-4493 naturalbalanceinc.com</p>	<p>Natural Balance Dog Food Rolls are offered in three varieties: beef, lamb, and turkey. All contain a mix of muscle and organ meat, including lung; all contain a grain meal, such as wheat flour or rice flour. Includes a vitamin/mineral premix.</p>	<p>These diets are complete and balanced diets. Once opened, the product must be refrigerated, similar to canned food. Sold in stores and from a variety of retail outlets; call company or see website.</p> 
<p><b>Redbarn Pet</b> Long Beach, CA (800) 775-3849 redbarninc.com</p>	<p>Redbarn's dog food rolls are offered in three varieties: beef, lamb &amp; rice, and chicken &amp; liver. All contain a mix of muscle and organ meat, including lung; all contain a grain meal, such as wheat flour or rice flour. Includes a vitamin/mineral premix.</p>	<p>These diets are complete and balanced diets. Once opened, the product must be refrigerated, similar to canned food. Sold in stores and from a variety of retail outlets; call company or see website.</p>

## FRESH CHILLED DOG FOOD

<p><b>Freshpet</b> Secaucus, NJ (866) 789-3737 freshpet.com</p>	<p>Freshpet, launched in 2005, makes two lines of complete and balanced diets: Freshpet Select, which is sold mainly in grocery stores, and Deli Fresh, which is sold mainly in pet speciality stores. Both lines feature the diet in two forms: in a “loaf” that closely resembles dog food rolls (as described above), and in the form of dog food “bites,” which are then packed in an airtight plastic wrap, inside a plastic tub. The Freshpet Select “Slice &amp; Serve” loaves come in four varieties, including one for puppies; the Deli Fresh Slice &amp; Serve loaves come in three varieties. The ingredients lists are only slightly different from line to line. All varieties contain fresh meat, liver, some grain (rice or oatmeal), a couple of fresh vegetables (peas and carrots, usually), and a vitamin/mineral supplements.</p>	<p>These products are complete and balanced diets. They are pasteurized, so their shelf life (13 weeks from manufacture) is longer than raw meat, but they must be kept refrigerated; they contain no preservatives whatsoever. Sold in stores and from a variety of retail outlets; call company or see website.</p> 
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**Each box of Freshpet Select Bites contains two airtight “packets” of fresh, cooked dog food.**



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STATE _____	ZIP _____
# _____ BACK ISSUES @ \$7.50 EA.	\$ _____
POSTAGE & HANDLING	\$ 2.00
TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED	\$ _____

# Dog Gone?

*What to do – immediately and persistently – if your dog goes missing.*

BY PAT MILLER

For some reason the blinking red light on my phone that signals “message waiting” always seems ominous to me. Last Thursday, my wariness was reinforced: my friend Cindy had left a frantic message. Her dog was lost.

“Hattie’s missing!” I could hear the panic in her voice. “I was walking her at Antietam Battlefield last night, the leash came off her collar, and she took off after a deer!” Bad news. In many parts of the country, dogs who chase wildlife or livestock can be shot.

There was more bad news as Cindy’s message continued. “I have to leave town today for a work-related retreat. I have people looking for her, but if there’s anything you can do?”

I called Cindy back immediately. She had already placed a “lost dog” ad in the paper for her 18-month-old, wheaten-colored, Irish Wolfhound-mix. She had put up posters in the area where Hattie was lost, as well as on the five-mile route between

the park and her house in Sharpsburg. She had notified the only shelter in the county that handles stray dogs. She left one of her sweatshirts in the spot where Hattie went missing. And she had people who knew Hattie well – staff from the doggie daycare facility she visited regularly – looking for her. There wasn’t much more I could do. I gave her contact information for a person in Maryland who has a dog trained to find missing pets, and suggested setting a humane dog trap. And praying.

It was worrisome that Hattie had been out all night on her own and hadn’t been spotted by anyone. She was a large, light-colored, well-socialized dog, micro-chipped, and wearing a collar with tags. Someone should have found her already.

Thanks in part to my 20 years working at a California animal shelter, when an animal goes missing I tend to immediately imagine the worst-case scenarios. Lost dogs can be hit and killed (or badly injured) by cars; shot if suspected of chasing

## What you can do . . .

- Make sure you have several forms of identification solidly attached to your dog; we strongly recommend using implanted microchip IDs, too.
- Put your dog’s name on her ID tags so she can be as comfortable as possible with her finder.
- Look early, look often, look long, if your beloved canine companion goes missing.



livestock or wildlife; poisoned; caught in a leghold trap; attacked by wild animals; or picked up by someone who wants to keep her themselves, or by someone with the misguided idea that anyone who loses a dog is irresponsible and shouldn’t get her back. Of course, what you hope is that your dog is picked up by someone who returns her to you or to a local animal shelter.

Our best hope was that Hattie was still wandering around the cornfields at the Battlefield, trying to find her way home. If someone had found her, they should have already called.

## Before your dog gets lost

I fervently hope you never find yourself in the position of looking for your missing dog. But just in case, there are a number of things you can do in advance to maximize your success in finding her.

- **Identification:** For starters, make sure your dog is wearing a collar with lots of identification. Tags should include both a current dog license (if required where you



**Stray dogs scrounge for food in a parking lot in Kansas City, Missouri. Like most feral dogs, the moment these dogs noticed that they were being observed, they quickly ran away. A frightened dog who is lost may also display this behavior.**



live) and an ID tag with up-to-date owner information and at least two, preferably three, contact numbers. You can also order collars that have your phone number and the dog's name stitched into the collar. Well-fitted collars are less likely to fall off than tags.

Finally, tattoos and microchips are excellent "back-up" ID systems. Be sure you keep owner information current with those registries as well – if you've moved, they need to know. (For more information about identification methods, see "Collar, Tag, and 'Chip,'" WDJ August 2004.)

■ **Shelters:** There is only one shelter in my county that handles stray dogs. That makes it relatively easy to know where to look for a lost dog. In some jurisdictions there are several, and your dog could end up in any of them if she wanders or is transported over county or city lines.

Before your dog gets lost, find and visit every shelter in your area and ask how long they hold stray dogs, so you know where they are and how often you have to visit.

Ask if they keep records of dogs found dead along the road, or if someone else does – perhaps the Department of Public Works. Then keep a list by your phone of the addresses, telephone numbers, and holding times of each shelter, so you don't have to look them up in a panic.

■ **Training:** A solid, frequently practiced recall is a must if you plan to take your dog off-leash anywhere that's unfenced. But even if you don't *intend* to let your dog run off-leash, dogs frequently get lost when stuff happens – stuff like Hattie's equipment failure, the board that came loose on our fence last July, earthquakes and fires, doors and gates left open, and car accidents.

I highly recommend teaching *every* dog an emergency recall to a special cue that will carry through forests and over cornfields. We have a "storm whistle" – available online and at camping supply outlets – that is so shrill and loud I have to cover my ears when I blow it. Teach your dog that the sound means "chicken!" (or

whatever your canine pal likes best) and you'll have an invaluable tool for those emergencies.

■ Take several photos of your dog now. Make a stack of emergency fliers with her photo and your contact information to hand out if she gets lost. Offer a reward on the flier. Stash them in a safe place for future use. With luck, you'll never need them.

■ Check your perimeter fence regularly to be sure it's secure.

■ Put locks on yard gates to avoid accidental release – and keep them locked.

■ Google "lost dog" and bookmark websites that offer online lost pet announcements.

■ See [www.missingpetpartnership.org](http://www.missingpetpartnership.org) and find a trained "pet detective" near you. These are people with dogs who are specially trained to search (using their keen sense of smell) for lost dogs. Talk to the

## Factors That Influence a Lost Dog's Travel

The Missing Pet Partnership is a nonprofit organization based in Seattle, Washington, founded by professional pet detective Kat Albrecht. The Partnership provides training for animal welfare organizations and conducts research into the behavioral patterns of lost pets.

According to MPP, there are six major factors that influence how, and how far, a lost dog will travel. These are:

**1. Temperament of the dog.** Friendly dogs are most likely to walk up to the first person they see, be rescued and either returned to the owner, taken to a shelter, or "adopted" by the finder. Aloof dogs are more likely to avoid strangers until they get hungry, and may travel a considerable distance before someone befriends them. Fearful dogs are likely to travel farther and actively avoid contact with humans, even when hunger calls. Sometimes the only way to capture a fearful dog is with the use of a humane trap.

**2. Circumstances of the disappearance.** A dog who wanders out of curiosity is likely to stay close to home and wander back in fairly short order. One who bolts from fear can run for several miles in a blind panic.

**3. Terrain.** Wide open spaces are more conducive to distance travel than residential neighborhoods, where fences create barriers to travel.

**4. Appearance of the dog.** "Warm fuzzy" dogs are quicker to be rescued than large, aggressive-appearing dogs. Someone

who may quickly stop to pick up a Cocker Spaniel or a furry Labradoodle may think twice before inviting a roaming Rottweiler into her car. Purebred dogs may also be picked up more quickly – as people sometimes mistakenly think it's normal for mixed breeds to be roaming the streets but a purebred dog "must belong to someone."

**5. Weather.** A dog in a blizzard or driving rainstorm is likely to seek shelter. A dog wandering in 95-degree heat will seek a cool spot and settle down. A dog on a sunny autumn day may happily chase deer and wander farther than one inhibited by bad weather conditions.

**6. Population density.** It's just common sense that the more people there are around, the more likely it is that your dog will be seen and reported to you, or rescued by someone who calls you or the local shelter. If you lose your dog in a wilderness area, she has wide open spaces in which to travel far, and is relying on only you to find her.

The Missing Pet Partnership: The organization has no phone, and cannot respond to requests for help in finding lost pets. If you've lost your dog, read and follow the tips on its website ([missingpetpartnership.org](http://missingpetpartnership.org)) and contact someone from its list of lost pet detectives in your area.

For more information about lost pet detection dogs, read Kat Albrecht's books: *The Lost Pet Chronicles: Adventures of a K-9 Cop Turned Pet Detective* and *Dog Detectives: Train Your Dog to Find Lost Pets*.

lost pet specialist, find out what services she offers, and put her contact information on your shelter list by your phone so you can reach her easily if you ever need her.

## After your dog gets lost

The worst has happened: Your dog has gone missing. Don't panic! It can happen to any of us. Our Scottie found the loose board on the fence late one evening last July and slipped out into the darkness. I envisioned searching through the woods for him all night as he pursued nocturnal critters. Fortunately, Dubhy came when I called him. Of course, the sooner you spring into action, the better your chances of recovering your dog quickly. So don't panic, but do get busy.

Unless you know your dog was lost away from home, first, go looking on your own property. Dogs sometimes get trapped in a culvert, stuck in a hole or crawl space, closed in the basement, the clothes dryer, an upstairs bedroom, or a stall in the barn. Take a flashlight, so you can look in holes. Look behind, under, and inside everything that could possibly hide a dog.

If you don't find her on your own property, or you know for sure she's not there because someone saw her dash out the door and down the street, search your neighborhood. Take your emergency whistle, treats, a flashlight, and your dog's favorite squeaky toy or anything else that makes a noise she's familiar with. If she has a favorite canine friend, take him, too. Grab your emergency fliers to hand out to people you see while you search. Go to every home in the area, talk to the residents, and leave a flier with them. If no one is home, leave a flier on the door.

Talk to everyone you meet on the street, and give them fliers. Children, mail carriers, meter readers, delivery people, and school bus drivers are especially helpful. Walk the streets calling your dog, occasionally blowing the whistle, rattling a dog cookie box, squeaking her squeaky toy. Call out her favorite phrases, like, "Want to go for a ride?" or "Cookies!" Stop occasionally and be quiet, to see if you can hear your dog answering you. If she's trapped somewhere, she may bark, or whine to try to get your attention. Most lost dogs can be found within the first few hours when the owner makes a concerted effort.

If you don't find her within an hour, it's time for the next level of attack. Call a lost pet specialist. Her dog will have a better chance of finding yours if there's a

fresh scent trail. Call the shelters to see if anyone's reported finding your dog, or brought her in.

Make large, fluorescent posters and post them *everywhere*. If possible, put a large color photo of your dog on each poster, and make sure your phone number is large enough to be seen and dialed from a passerby's car; you want to make it easy for someone to call you as quickly as possible if they've spotted your dog as they were driving. Consider creating fliers in a second language if there is a concentration of non-English speakers in your area. Offer a reward.

Call the newspapers and place "lost dog" ads. Call all the vet hospitals in the area, to see if anyone has brought in an injured dog, as well as to put the staff on the alert if someone should happen to come in for vaccinations or a check-up of their "new" dog – who just happens to fit your dog's description. Deliver fliers with photos to all the vet hospitals and shelters. Look through each shelter's kennels; your description of your dog may differ from theirs, and if you rely on a phone call, they could miss her.

Before you end your search for the day, especially if your dog went missing in unfamiliar territory, leave an article of your clothing and a bowl of her food in a sheltered place near where she was last seen. You may even choose to camp out in a sleeping bag. You probably aren't going to sleep well anyway.

## Day two

On the second day, if you haven't already, put a pet detective to work. Her dog should be able to at least help you focus your search on the most likely area, where your dog's scent is strongest and freshest. She may also be able to tell you that your dog's scent stops abruptly along the side of a road – perhaps a clue that someone picked her up. Her dog should also be able to find evidence – hair, perhaps blood – if the trail stops because your dog was hit by a car, in which case you'll redouble your efforts to find your injured dog in the immediate area, hopefully still alive and in time to get veterinary care.

If the pet detective dog tells you there's no fresh scent in the area, then you know to concentrate your efforts at shelters and around the community.

How long should you look? Start immediately and keep looking – for weeks and months if necessary. If someone

else is keeping her, someone will see her sooner or later. If she's roaming, someone will spot her and, one would hope, let you know, even if they can't catch her.

If you have a strong connection to your dog you'll find a way to do the impossible – visiting all the shelters, posting fliers, working with a pet detective, checking with rescue groups and internet sites – until you find your dog. If you are easily discouraged, your chances of finding your missing pal plummet dramatically. Don't give up; she's counting on you to bring her back home.

## Tragic ending

The vast majority of lost dog stories have happy endings. But sometimes the end of the story is tragic. Cindy came home from her work commitment on Sunday afternoon and immediately went searching for Hattie. I got another red-flashing-light phone message from her late Sunday.

"I found Hattie." Cindy's voice on the recording trembled with emotion. "She's dead."

Cindy found her dog's body not far from the place she had last seen her. She believes Hattie was shot with a high-powered rifle, possibly illegally on federal property and dragged back to the place Cindy found her, probably on the first night she was lost. Cindy, of course, was grief stricken and guilt-ridden.

If your story doesn't have a happy ending, at least you will know you did everything possible to find your missing companion. Like Cindy, you will grieve, and perhaps blame yourself for allowing it to happen, or blame anyone else who might have contributed to her escape.

People who don't understand the depths of your love for your dog will tell you to get over it – that she was "just a dog." But you'll know better. They are not just dogs. They are our beloved friends, family members, and part of our hearts. It's okay to grieve, as long and as hard as you need to. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise. 🐾

*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 the brand-new Play with Your Dog. See "Resources," page 24, for more information.*

## Lost Dogs Often Behave Strangely

BY NANCY KERNS

One day last July, as I walked to the local farmer's market, I gradually realized that there were fliers for a certain lost dog *everywhere* I went. They were on practically every phone pole. I saw them in store windows, gas stations, and parks.

A few weeks later, I saw a couple from my block taking down some of the fliers. "Are you connected to the lost dog?" I asked my neighbors. It turned out that the dog belonged to their young adult son, who lives across town. His parents were the ones who blanketed Oroville with the signs (more than 1,500, they told me), and they related the happy story of his return.

The dog, an 18-month-old pit bull named Link, had gotten spooked at a roaring tractor-trailer and had pulled and then run away (dragging his leash) from the young man's girlfriend, who had taken the dog for a walk. All told, Link was lost for three weeks, during which they received a number of calls from people who had seen the dog.

One day, they received a call from a person who had sighted the dog; they quickly made their way to the area and actually *saw* Link. Unfortunately, as is common with lost dogs, Link panicked and ran, seemingly not recognizing them.

A day later, another person managed to lure Link into his garage with food and then close the door. He called animal control, and just like that, Link's summer sojourn was over. Well aware of the campaign to find the dog, the shelter staff called

Link's owner and told him they thought they had the dog in custody. Link had lost his leash and collar (probably after having gotten stuck, but fortunately not hung), and he was skinny, but was otherwise okay. He's since been microchipped.

Link's behavior while lost was not uncommon for a frightened dog; even the friendliest dogs may behave as if they are feral when they are lost. They may not only fail to come when they hear their owners' voices, but also run away in a panic.

Recently, I've been following a story about a lost dog in the San Francisco Bay Area – one who has been spotted numerous times, but has so far eluded capture or death. Bella is a three-year-old Shiba Inu, who, along with her owner, Steve Belsley, was attacked by a loose dog on April 11. In an attempt to protect her, Belsley lifted Bella into his arms, but she got free and ran away as he defended himself, suffering more than 20 bites. Trailing blood, Belsley, a 57-year-old engineer, ran home to get his wife to help him try to find Bella. His injuries were extensive; his badly bitten hand may not ever function properly again. But the pain of losing Bella is worse.

The Belsleys, their friends, and sympathetic dog owners have maintained a website ([bringbellahome.info](http://bringbellahome.info)) with reports of confirmed sightings of Bella. Most of the people who have spotted the Shiba Inu (and the many "lost dog" fliers in the area) have reported that she was very spooked and ran away when she noticed someone observing her. As of this writing, she was last seen in mid-September.



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# A Positive Rep

*Trainer Laurie Williams placed 2nd in CBS's "Greatest American Dog."*

BY NANCY KERNS

**H**ow many of you would put your dog and yourself at the mercy of a network TV “reality” show, competing against other dogs and dog owners for more than six weeks? Keep in mind that the show’s producers will do their best to foment discomfort and personal conflict between yourself and your fellow contestants. Also, while your every moment will be filmed, only a highly edited and manipulated version of what actually happened will be broadcast to a national audience, who will be encouraged to share their opinions with other dog owners about you, your dog, your dog training skills, and your most unguarded facial expressions and utterances. I don’t think I would do it!

In my opinion, all of the 12 people who actually put themselves through this very experience last spring and summer – on CBS’s “Greatest American Dog” – were very brave.

True, they were competing for a prize of \$250,000, and some hoped to use the exposure to promote their various careers; there was potential for some compensation to offset the risk of being made to look ridiculous.

In my opinion, though, the most admirable contestant was Laurie Williams, CPDT, a professional dog trainer from Fredericksburg, Virginia, who went on the show with her six-year-old Maltese, Andrew.

During the final episode, broadcast on September 11, the judges questioned the final three contestants about their motivation for taking part in the competition and what they had gotten out of the experience. Williams answered that her motivations for being on the show included promoting positive, dog-friendly training, and showing what well-trained small dogs are capable of. She added that she felt that she and Andrew had succeeded in realizing those goals.

The three judges on the show agreed. “Laurie, you and Andrew have so much love and respect for each other. You define what dog ownership is all about,” said judge Victoria Stilwell. Another judge, Allan Reznik, commented, “Andrew loves to work. I’ve never seen a dog work so happily, and that joy reflects the loving nature of your relationship and of your work ethic.” The final judge on the show, Wendy Diamond, said, “Andrew is the most incredible Maltese we have ever witnessed.”

Despite these enthusiasms, the judges selected another dog/owner pair as the winners of the “Greatest American Dog” title; Williams finished the competition in second place. Williams remains proud of her accomplishments on the show. “We definitely walked out of there with our heads held very high,” she says.

I interviewed Williams shortly after the conclusion of the show, to talk about her experiences in the competition, the opportunity she had to demonstrate dog-friendly training to a mass audience, and about her professional observations about the advantages of positive-only dog training techniques. You don’t have to have seen the show to appreciate her comments about the benefits of a strong, fear-free relationship with your dog.

**WDJ:** Laurie, it’s great to talk to you! Please accept my congratulations – and condolences – on your second-place finish. Of course, I wanted you to win!

**LW:** Thank you. I did, too!

**WDJ:** You got as close to winning as possible. Unfortunately, there was no way of guessing which way the final judging was going to go. It wasn’t at all clear what the judges’ criteria were.



**Fredericksburg, Virginia, trainer Laurie Williams tried to use her appearance on CBS's "Greatest American Dog" to promote positive training.**

**LW:** Yes, that was disappointing. But I'm very proud of Andrew. He did everything I asked him to do and more. And I've received hundreds of letters and e-mails from people who appreciated his performance.

**WDJ:** During the show's run, I was unsure as to whether you or any of the other contestants were professional trainers. The biography provided by the show indicated you were a dog daycare owner.

**LW:** I'm not sure why they did that. I *am* a dog daycare owner, but I'm also a Certified Pet Dog Trainer (CPDT). I opened my business, Pup N Iron, in Fredericksburg, Virginia, in 2005. It is primarily a training facility and dog daycare, but we also have a therapy pool and offer rehab. I used to be a personal fitness trainer and a gym manager, and I would always joke around with my colleagues that one day I was going to open a dog gym and call it Pup N Iron. They would all laugh at me, but I got the last laugh, because I have realized my dream.

**WDJ:** Were you the only professional trainer on the show?

**LW:** I wasn't. Teresa Hanula is also a CPDT, although the show identified her only as a pet sitter. She has a dog training *and* a pet-sitting business. Two of the other five finalists, Bill McFarlin and J.D. Platt, also have extensive dog training experience.

**WDJ:** Which makes it even more strange that the winner, Travis Brorsen, was quite up-front in saying he had no dog training experience whatsoever.

**LW:** He did make a lot of progress over the course of the show, though. He was smart enough to spend a lot of time learning from those of us who had a lot of experience, and asking a lot of questions. And he really did have a nice relationship with his dog. Plus, they were very appealing; they had "that look," the stereotypical all-American boy from the Midwest and his floppy-eared young Boxer.

**WDJ:** I had a bad feeling about the show



**Four of the five finalists had extensive dog training experience, except for the winner, Travis Brorsen (far right). From left, Laurie Williams and Andrew; Bill McFarlin and Star; J.D. Platt and Galaxy; and Teresa Hanula and Leroy. Photo courtesy of CBS.**

from the way it was originally described, but as a viewer, I was drawn in from the beginning. I have to say, though, that I was frustrated throughout the series because the technical aspects of training were very rarely discussed. And only in the *final* episode did we hear anyone say, "positive, dog-friendly training." I could have kissed the TV when I heard you use that phrase.

**LW:** It was even more frustrating for *me*, because getting those words on TV was definitely part of my whole agenda for being on the show. I told [the producers] going in that that's what I wanted to show. I wanted to show them the fantastic relationship I have with my dog, which was created entirely through positive training.

**WDJ:** I was surprised by the selection of the participants on the show. It seemed as though the producers wanted *some* well-trained dogs, but not *all* well-trained dogs on the show.

**LW:** That surprised me, too. From the way the concept of the show was described to me, I thought it was going to focus on the relationships between dogs and owners – and that the whole objective was to test who had the strongest and best relationship. I wasn't envisioning a lot of physical challenges; I thought it would be more about having a well-behaved dog and one you're in sync with. That's one of the reasons I was shocked when I saw very young dogs and completely untrained dogs after the selections were made.

At the end, the judges talked about who was the most *improved*. I thought, "Gee, I wish I knew at the beginning they wanted

to see the dog's progression. I also have a young Dalmatian I could have brought if that's what they wanted!" But, in retrospect, I brought exactly the right dog, maybe not to "win" by the judges' standard, but to be a champion for my cause. I'm getting lots of e-mails from people who really appreciated what Andrew and I have, and who recognized the depth of our relationship.

**WDJ:** Did the show's producers provide any instruction to those who needed help getting their dogs to complete the challenges?

**LW:** They did have trainers – *studio* trainers – who do things completely differently from the way *I* do them. Generally, they didn't seem concerned with how to teach a dog to do something in a way that preserves his relationship with them, or in a way that will prove to be a positive experience for the dog in the long run. Studio trainers just want to get the dog to "get the shot" as fast as possible. Learning theory and principles of animal behavior was not the focal point.

Also, some of the participants were advised to get some help with training their dogs before the show started. The producers even sent lists of trainers to the contestants – with a suggestion that we have some dog training "cram sessions" before we got to the show. I know that Travis (the eventual winner of the show) was one of the people who spent a bunch of time with a dog trainer, a week or two before the show started filming.

Here's an odd thing: They made it clear from the beginning that all training styles would be welcome. And not all of the trainers on their list were positive trainers.

But when we got there, and learned that Victoria Stilwell [a positive trainer from Britain, and star of a cable TV show called *It's Me or the Dog!*] was one of the judges, it was clear that at least *some* of the judging would be biased toward positive techniques. Which was fine with me; I'm completely committed to positive training. It was not especially fair to the people who use other types of training methods. J.D., in particular, got a raw deal; even though nobody ever saw him do anything harsh to his dog, Galaxy, he frequently described

himself as an “old-school dog trainer,” and he got slammed for that on the show. If that’s not a set-up, I don’t know what is.

**WDJ:** I wanted to ask you about J.D. and his dog. It seems to me that you have a very strong relationship with Andrew, and clearly, nothing makes him happier than to work with you. J.D. also seems to have a strong relationship with Galaxy – but I thought I could see a difference between the bond between you and Andrew and the one between J.D. and Galaxy. She’s a *very* well-trained dog, but there were moments when her body language told me that she had some reservations about him, that she had been trained with force-based methods at some point. It sometimes seemed as if she complied with his requests because she was at least conscious of the potential for an unpleasant consequence.

The judges said several times that Galaxy seemed “robot-like.” I think they were responding to the same things I was seeing – but I have had a hard time figuring out what, exactly, it was about her that lent these impressions. I mean, it’s not like she cowered from him or anything like that. I finally decided that it’s her stillness, that body language that says, “Maybe I had better sit here and think about what he wants me to do, so I don’t make a mistake.” Whereas dogs who have been trained with no aversive techniques frequently and spontaneously “offer” behaviors. Was it a lack of exuberance?

**LW:** Perhaps that’s it – the lack of that glee, that joy, that “Hey! Let me try *this!*” But you know, she’s also an older dog. She was very quiet. She didn’t really come alive until he got the ball out and she could work.

Andrew, on the other hand, *did* do that. He chose to do his own thing a *lot*. That was one thing that kind of got my goat, when the judges suggested he had separation anxiety. I felt that was so irresponsible of them to equate what can be such a serious dog behavior issue to Andrew’s desire to remain with me when given the choice. I’ve worked hard to establish that connection with him, because it’s necessary with a therapy, service, and performance dog.

Once he jumped up on an obedience trial judge in the ring – “Hi judge! Pick me up!” He’s also prone to veering off to greet people at ringside – “Hello fans, love you!” He’s really a ham. And he offers behaviors all the time; he’s always clown-



**Laurie enjoys a rare laugh on the set. The participants were completely sequestered – no phone calls, TV, newspapers, books, Internet – for six weeks. Photo courtesy CBS.**

ing. In contrast, Galaxy is very “locked on,” very quiet, and I never really saw her behave in an upbeat way until her ball came out. But you’re right; she doesn’t offer behavior. She rarely did anything until told to do so.

**WDJ:** J.D. was highly criticized by the judges during the so-called “loyalty challenge,” where the dogs had to stay even with people using toys and food to try to get them to break the stay. She was really tempted by the balls and other toys and food, and he had to lean forward and raise his voice and his intensity, and keep repeating, “Galaxy, no, no!” and “Stay!” You and Andrew provided quite a contrast there. You were very quiet and calm, not at all intense, and you only had to repeat “Andrew, stay!” I loved watching that.

**LW:** That challenge was really difficult for Galaxy because she really loves to chase balls – and to eat treats, since she never gets them! J.D. doesn’t believe in using food in training at all, and never, ever gives dogs “people food,” so of course food was her weakness, her Achilles heel. That’s why he felt he had to stay on her like that, kind of stay in her face, take his intensity to that level.

But that challenge leveled the playing field in that it was all about our

relationships with our dogs and how we communicate with them; *finally* the dog’s size or age or physical condition didn’t matter. I mean, a dog can only do what he can do physically. Physically, Andrew can’t do everything that Travis’ Boxer can do. The challenges like that, which tested our relationships, were my favorites. And that one in particular showed how strong the relationship is between Andrew and me. He’d rather hang out with me than go play ball or take food from someone else, and thank God for that!

Another reason I liked that one: It did really show your training style. If I leaned over Andrew and shook my finger at him and raised my voice, he wouldn’t know what that means. He’d be curious; “What are you doing, Mommy?”

I was trying to explain this to J.D.; he didn’t understand why the judges said he was being intimidating to Galaxy, because of course he didn’t hit her or scare her. I told him that it seemed like he was telling Galaxy, “Don’t you move, or else!” For my dog, there has never been an “or else.” Andrew doesn’t know what “or else” might mean. The worst thing that might happen is that I pick him up and put him back in that spot and ask him to do it over again. And the more likely thing that may happen is that he’ll get some delicious treats after a while.

But, again, J.D. wasn’t the only one who used that posture. I think most of the other contestants except for me used that type of body language at some time or another.

**WDJ:** Andrew was the only purely positively trained dog on the show, then?

**LW:** By my definition of correctly implemented positive training methods, yes. However, I think some of the contestants really didn’t know what correct positive training is. Some thought they were using positive methods when they actually were bribing and baiting, never “marking” correct behavior and just babbling “Sit! Sit! Sit! Sit!” Repeating every cue half a dozen times. That’s what gives people like J.D. a negative view of positive training

**WDJ:** This is what I liked most about the show: The opportunity to watch different people work with their dogs, and see what works well and what doesn’t. I can see the difference between dogs who are trained with only positive techniques, dogs who



are trained with a lot of aversives, and dogs who are trained with a mix of techniques. Except for Andrew, the dogs on the show seemed like mostly the latter. J.D. and Galaxy, included.

**LW:** I found J.D. to be a very gifted handler, but from my view, he didn't understand the science of animal behavior. He would say, "I never use treats; I'm old school!" And I would say, "J.D., don't you understand that when you use playing with a ball as a reward, or praising Galaxy with words and petting, you *are* using positive reinforcement, just like I'm doing with my treats?" He couldn't wrap his brain around that. He thought it was different. I would say, "It doesn't matter what the reward is, as long as the dog enjoys it." He could not accept that.

**WDJ:** Teresa and Leroy might be another example. It was clear that she used positive training and had taught him to do a *lot* of things – but there were times when he would get overstimulated and lose focus, and she would get frustrated and yell at him. He would get confused and anxious and start barking . . .

**LW:** I have gotten to know Teresa better since the show ended, and I know she's very committed to positive training. Some of her problems with Leroy are kind of like stage mother problems. I think she gets self-conscious and anxious when there are people waiting for her to get Leroy to do something, and she gets nervous, and he feels that and gets more nervous. But she's very well-educated about animal behavior. And when she's teaching others what to do with their dogs, she's very positive, very patient, very encouraging.

**WDJ:** It must be difficult to sit still when you hear or read criticism from people who saw the show, knowing that they were only seeing an edited version of what really happened.

**LW:** Well, yes. And many people just dismissed the show out of turn, because it seemed ridiculous. It *was* ridiculous at times. But it was also the first time you saw regular people training dogs on national, network television!

**WDJ:** Many people make snap judgments

about what they see on TV. I read many comments on the show's message boards and elsewhere where people basically said, "I'm not watching the show any more since Tillman got voted off." Or, "I'm not watching the show because they had an elephant scare the dogs."

I thought, "Wow, people are so judgmental! Maybe you don't agree with the judges or even with the show's production choices, but, wait, you can learn from some of this footage!" It occurred to me that the challenge for the show's producers was the same challenge I face at WDJ – and perhaps the same challenge you face as a positive trainer: Keeping people interested long enough past their initial snap judgments to show them how fun positive training is, and how effective . . .

**LW:** I think you're right! I took a lot of flak for subjecting Andrew to the elephant challenges [where the dogs had to hold a sit-stay as an elephant approached them, and then, in a later episode, where the dogs had to fetch an object by running underneath a stationary elephant]. As I saw it, my daily job was to keep my dog safe, make sure each task was fun for him, and not set him up to fail. If I could meet those goals in each challenge, then we'd participate as best we could. And we were able to do that in the elephant challenges.



**On Laurie's cue, Andrew keeps his eyes on her and holds his sit-stay even as a trained elephant approached to within 10 feet. Photo courtesy CBS.**

I was actually more concerned about the smaller, daily things, like the extreme heat, keeping Andrew's stress low, and making sure he was successful and didn't get hurt. Unfortunately the judges didn't seem to understand this, which was surprising. Victoria Stillwell accused me of "over-mothering" Andrew, which really shocked me. I thought of all the judges she would understand the concept of setting a

dog up for success rather than failure, particularly when we were never really given the proper amount of time to really teach our dogs new behaviors and acclimate them to various different equipment.

**WDJ:** In the final episode, I liked when you stated that Andrew didn't care if he won or not, he wouldn't know the difference . . . that he was simply doing what made you happy with him.

**LW:** I'm glad [the producers] included that part, too. I thank my dogs a lot. "Thank you for letting me take you to that show, for doing what you do for me!" I know that they would rather just chill at home on the couch. I think people are delusional when they say the dog wants to win, or the dog is competitive. They mostly just want to be with you.

**WDJ:** And I *loved* when you stated that your goal had been to represent positive, dog-friendly training. And I think you did it very well.

**LW:** Thank you! Of course, having started training dogs 25 years ago, I used to be old school, too – like everybody else back then. I am a "crossover trainer" for sure. I crossed over from the dark side about 11 or 12 years ago. And while I've never looked back, I think it helps me get through to my students even more, because I can tell people, "Look, I've done it both ways. And force-based methods do work. But I know that the relationship I have with my dog today is *far* deeper, *far* closer, *far* more reliable than what I had when I used aversives."

I had dogs that I put obedience titles on who would run away from me if they were off-leash and had the opportunity. My all-positive dogs today are far more reliable than those well-trained dogs in my past; they can go anywhere off-leash and they stay with me without any special effort on my part. Because of their positive experiences with me, my dogs always look for me, check in with me, they want to be close to me. I really know the difference. I've seen it, I've lived it.

**WDJ:** Thanks so much for speaking with us, and doing your best to "represent" all of us fans of positive training. You and Andrew did us proud! 🐾

# A Pain in the Pancreas

*Pancreatitis can be a serious acute condition, or just a chronic pain.*

BY MARY STRAUS

**Y**our dog has vomited several times, doesn't want to eat, and is walking around with his back arched up, or lying in a corner refusing to get up. Should you:

- A) Try tempting him to eat by adding bacon grease to his food or offering something tasty like ham or bologna
- B) Wait a day or two to see if he gets better
- C) Take him to your vet right away

The answer is C: Take him to your vet right away. These can be signs of pancreatitis. While it's fine to wait to see if a dog improves on his own after a single vomiting episode with no other signs of



**Pancreatitis can occur in dogs of any age, breed, or sex. That said, most dogs with pancreatitis are middle-aged or older, overweight, and relatively inactive.**

## What you can do . . .

- Contact your vet right away if your dog has persistent vomiting, can't keep water down, or appears to have abdominal pain.
- Discuss feeding options with your vet if your dog must be hospitalized for more than a couple of days. It's important that your dog not go longer than that without food.
- Feed a low-fat diet until your dog is fully recovered, then slowly transition back to a normal diet, if your dog can tolerate it.
- Help overweight, sedentary dogs lose weight and exercise to prevent pancreatitis.



illness, repeated vomiting can quickly lead to dangerous dehydration and electrolyte imbalance, especially if your dog isn't drinking or can't keep water down.

When signs of abdominal pain accompany vomiting, pancreatitis is high on the list of possible causes. The worst thing you can do is feed your dog fatty food at this time.

Pancreatitis literally means inflammation of the pancreas, the glandular organ that secretes enzymes needed to digest food. When something causes these enzymes to be activated prematurely, they can actually begin to digest the pancreas itself, resulting in pain and inflammation.

Pancreatitis occurs in two different forms, acute and chronic, and both may be either mild or severe. Acute pancreatitis occurs suddenly and is more often severe, while chronic pancreatitis refers to an ongoing inflammation that is usually less severe and may even be subclinical (no recognizable symptoms).

## Acute pancreatitis

Acute pancreatitis can be extremely painful, and can become life-threatening if the inflammation spreads, affecting multiple organs and systems. Symptoms commonly include anorexia (loss of appetite), vomiting, weakness, depression, and abdominal pain. Abdominal pain in a dog may be exhibited as restlessness or not wanting to move; a hunched appearance or a "praying position," with the chest down and the rear raised; or vocalization (crying or whimpering). Additional symptoms may include diarrhea, drooling, fever, and collapse.

For mild cases, all that may be needed is to withhold food and water for 24 to 48 hours (no longer), along with administering IV fluids to prevent dehydration and drugs to stop vomiting and control pain.

For moderate to severe cases, hospitalization and intensive treatment and monitoring is required. Supportive treatment includes intravenous fluids to keep the dog hydrated and restore electro-

lyte and acid-base balance. Potent pain medication is needed, such as injectable buprenorphine or other narcotic pain relievers. Treatment is generally required for three to five days, and sometimes longer. Surgery may be necessary, particularly if the pancreas is abscessed or the pancreatic duct is blocked.

Recommended medications that stop vomiting (antiemetics) in dogs with pancreatitis include a metoclopramide infusion and chlorpromazine (once dehydration has been controlled).

Alternatively, dolasetron (Anzemet) and ondansetron (Zofran) – antiemetics developed to combat vomiting that has been induced by chemotherapy – may be used. Cerenia (maropitant) is a new antiemetic drug approved for dogs that some vets are starting to use, though it has a limited track record. Metoclopramide (Reglan), a commonly used antiemetic, may be contraindicated in pancreatitis due to concern that it may decrease blood flow to the pancreas (antidopaminergic effect), though this has not been substantiated.

Antibiotics to control infections secondary to pancreatitis may be used, though this complication is not thought to be common in dogs. A plasma transfusion is sometimes given in moderate to severe cases in the hopes that it will inhibit active pancreatic enzymes and systemic inflammatory response; it also provides clotting factors that can help prevent and treat disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC), an often lethal potential side effect of pancreatitis.

Antacids have not been shown to have any beneficial effect in the treatment of pancreatitis, though they may be given when vomiting is persistent or severe. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are not effective and should be avoided due to concerns for gastric ulceration and kidney and liver damage. There are no studies yet to support the use of corticosteroids for treating pancreatitis in dogs.

## Nutrition during acute pancreatitis

Traditionally, the standard recommendation has been to withhold all oral food and water until symptoms subside, in order to allow the pancreas to rest. If symptoms persisted for more than 72-96 hours, nutrition was given parenterally (intravenously, avoiding the stomach and intestines). It was thought that even the sight or smell

of food could trigger pancreatic secretions that would make the problem worse.

Today, though, there is growing evidence in both humans and animals that recovery time is reduced and survival rates increased when patients are fed early in the recovery from pancreatitis. It is now accepted that prolonged withholding of oral food and water for more than 48 hours (including the time before the dog was brought in for treatment) can lead to increased intestinal permeability (“leaky gut”), atrophy of the digestive cells in the small intestine, and sepsis (blood poisoning). In turn, sepsis can contribute to multiple organ failure and decreased survival rates.

Without oral nutrition, the intestines starve, even if nutrition is provided to the rest of the body through IVs. This is because the intestines receive their nutrition only from what passes through them. Enteral feeding, in which nutrition is provided through the digestive system, is thought to decrease the potential for bacterial infection caused by intestinal permeation, and may reduce the time the dog needs to be hospitalized.

Because most dogs with pancreatitis are unwilling to eat, a liquid diet may be fed via a tube placed through the nose, esophagus, or stomach. Dogs may tolerate nasoesophageal feeding even when vomiting persists. There is evidence that pancreatic secretions are suppressed during an attack of pancreatitis, so food delivered in this manner stimulates the pancreas less than we used to believe, and helps to maintain the health of the gastrointestinal tract and decrease inflammation and side effects such as those listed above.

The ideal composition of this diet has not yet been determined. It is possible that the addition of omega-3 fatty acids, pancreatic enzymes, medium-chain triglycerides, and the amino acid l-glutamine to the liquid nutrition may also help with recovery, though this must be done with caution. Probiotics, however, are *not* recommended; a recent human study showed an increased death rate for patients with severe acute pancreatitis when probiotics were administered, possibly due to reduced blood flow to the small intestine.

Enteral (tube or oral) feeding should begin after 48 hours without food. Vomiting can be controlled with antiemetics and pain medication. The goal of nutrition in the short term is to improve barrier function (stop leaky gut syndrome) rather than

to supply total caloric needs.

Parenteral (IV) nutrition should be used only when absolutely necessary, due to persistent, uncontrolled vomiting. Survival rates improve when it is combined with enteral nutrition. A tube can be placed into the jejunum (part of the small intestine) if needed to provide enteral nutrition when vomiting cannot be controlled.

## Chronic pancreatitis

Chronic pancreatitis refers to a continuing, smoldering, low-grade inflammation of the pancreas. Symptoms such as vomiting and discomfort after eating may occur intermittently, sometimes accompanied by depression, loss of appetite, and weight loss. In some cases, signs may be as subtle and nonspecific as a dog not wanting to play normally, being a picky eater, or skipping a meal from time to time. Chronic pancreatitis may periodically flare up, resulting in acute pancreatitis.

Dogs with chronic pancreatitis often respond favorably to a low-fat diet. Pain medication can be helpful in relieving the symptoms of chronic pancreatitis and may speed recovery.

Chronic pancreatitis is often subclinical and may be more common than is generally realized, with symptoms blamed on other diseases. It may also occur concurrently with conditions such as IBD (inflammatory bowel disease) and diabetes mellitus.

## Pancreatic functions

In addition to digestive enzymes (exocrine function), the pancreas also produces insulin (endocrine function). Dogs who are diabetic may have an increased risk for pancreatitis.

Conversely, a dog whose pancreas is damaged due to pancreatitis may develop diabetes, which can be either temporary or permanent; 30 percent of diabetes in dogs may be due to damage from chronic pancreatitis.

Exocrine pancreatic insufficiency (EPI), when the pancreas is no longer able to produce digestive enzymes, can also result from chronic pancreatitis, leading to weight loss despite consuming large amounts of food. When the pancreas is damaged, diabetes is likely to show up several months before EPI.

## Causes of pancreatitis

Pancreatitis is often blamed on high-fat diets, though there is little scientific evidence to support this. Active, working dogs,



such as sled dogs, can eat as much as 60 percent fat in their diets without developing pancreatitis, but **too much fat** may cause trouble for middle-aged, overweight, relatively inactive dogs, who are the ones most commonly affected by pancreatitis. Too much fat can also cause problems for some dogs with chronic pancreatitis.

**Dietary indiscretion**, such as eating rancid fatty scraps from the garbage, can also lead to pancreatitis, particularly when a dog accustomed to a low- or normal-fat diet ingests high-fat foods. That's why pancreatitis incidents are thought to increase after Thanksgiving, when people may feed their dogs a meal of turkey skin and drippings.

**Low-protein diets have also been shown to predispose dogs to pancreatitis, especially when combined with high fat intake.** Some prescription diets may be a concern, such as those prescribed to dissolve struvite bladder stones; to prevent calcium oxalate, urate, or cystine stones; and to treat kidney disease; especially for breeds prone to pancreatitis.

Several medications have been associated with pancreatitis, most recently **the combination of potassium bromide and phenobarbital** used to control epilepsy. This combination has a much higher risk of causing pancreatitis than phenobarbital alone (no studies have been done on the use of potassium bromide by itself).

**Many other medications** have been linked to pancreatitis, though the relationship is not always clear. These include certain antibiotics (sulfa drugs, tetracycline, metronidazole, nitrofurantoin); chemotherapy agents (azathioprine, L-asparaginase, vinca alkaloids); diuretics (thiazides, furosemide); other antiepileptic drugs (valproic acid, carbamazepine); hormones (estrogen); long-acting antacids (cimetidine, ranitidine); Tylenol (acetaminophen); and aspirin (salicylates).

Corticosteroids, such as prednisone, are especially controversial: while veterinarians have long considered them to be the most common drug to cause pancreatitis, recent human studies have discounted this link. Based on anecdotal evidence, however, I believe the association does exist in dogs. I personally know dogs who developed pancreatitis within days of being given corticosteroids.

**Toxins**, particularly organophosphates (insecticides used in some flea control products), as well as **scorpion stings**

and **toxic levels of zinc**, may also lead to pancreatitis.

Certain conditions may predispose a dog to pancreatitis. These include **diabetes mellitus** (though it is not clear whether pancreatitis precedes diabetes); **acute hypercalcemia** (high levels of calcium in the blood, usually from a calcium infusion or poisoning rather than diet or supplements); **hyperlipidemia** (high fat content in the blood, again usually due to metabolic disorder rather than diet); **hypothyroidism**; and **Cushing's disease** (hyperadrenocorticism).

Both diabetes and hypothyroidism can affect fat metabolism and lead to hyperlipidemia, which may predispose a dog to pancreatitis. Miniature Schnauzers are prone to developing hyperlipidemia and thus may have an increased risk of pancreatitis. Obesity predisposes dogs to pancreatitis, and the disease is often more severe in dogs who are overweight.

Pancreatitis *can* occur in dogs of any age, breed, or sex. That said, most dogs with pancreatitis are middle-aged or older, overweight, and relatively inactive. **Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Collies, and Boxers** have been shown to have an increased relative risk of chronic pancreatitis, and **Cocker Spaniels** an increased relative risk of acute and chronic pancreatitis combined. **Dachshunds** have been reported to be predisposed to acute pancreatitis.

Other breeds mentioned as having an increased risk for pancreatitis include the **Briard, Shetland Sheepdog, Miniature Poodle, German Shepherd Dog, terriers** (especially **Yorkies** and **Silkies**), and **other non-sporting breeds**.

People sometimes develop autoimmune chronic pancreatitis, and it is theorized that dogs may as well. German Shepherd Dogs have been shown to develop immune-mediated lymphocytic pancreatitis, which predisposes them to pancreatic atrophy.

Pancreatitis has been associated with immune-mediated diseases, which may include IBD, though the cause-and-effect relationship is not understood. While there is no scientific evidence to support this, some doctors have suggested that food allergies could be a rare cause of recurrent or chronic pancreatitis. I think IBD could possibly be both a cause and an effect of pancreatitis, or that both could be caused by an underlying autoimmune disease or food allergy.

Dogs with immune-mediated

pancreatitis may respond well to corticosteroids such as prednisone, which suppress the immune system, even though this drug has also been thought to cause acute pancreatitis.

**Trauma to the pancreas**, such as a result of the dog being hit by a car, can lead to inflammation and pancreatitis. **Surgery** has also been linked to pancreatitis, probably due to low blood pressure or low blood volume caused by anesthesia. Gallstones (choleliths) can block the bile duct, and thus the flow of digestive enzymes from the pancreas and can lead to pancreatitis in people; it is likely that the same would be true for both species (pancreatitis can also block the flow of bile from the gall bladder).

Other theoretical causes include bacterial or viral infections; vaccinations; obstruction of the pancreatic duct; reflux of intestinal contents up the pancreatic duct; impaired blood supply to the pancreas due to shock, gastric-dilatation volvulus (bloat), or other causes; and hereditary factors. In rare cases, pancreatitis can be caused by a tumor in the pancreas.

In most cases with dogs, the cause is never found. In people, pancreatitis is most commonly caused by alcohol abuse.

## Confirming the diagnosis

Some blood test results are suggestive of pancreatitis, but not definitive. Substantially elevated (three to five times the normal level) lipase and amylase, in particular, are strongly supportive of a diagnosis of pancreatitis, but the absence of these signs does not rule it out; lipase and amylase may be normal in as many as half of all dogs with pancreatitis. With chronic pancreatitis, blood tests are often completely normal, and may be so with acute pancreatitis as well, particularly if it is not severe enough to cause complications.

In 2005, IDEXX Reference Laboratories developed a blood test called Spec cPL (canine pancreas-specific lipase), based on the cPLI (canine pancreatic lipase immunoreactivity) test developed at Texas A&M University. There are three types of lipase: pancreatic, hepatic, and gastric. Standard blood tests cannot differentiate between them, but the Spec cPL measures only pancreatic lipase. Spec cPL is now considered the best choice for quick and accurate diagnosis, with results available in 12 to 24 hours. The cPLI test is equally accurate, but not as readily available and the results take longer.

IDEXX claims that the Spec cPL test has a sensitivity greater than 95 percent, meaning almost every dog with pancreatitis will test positive (fewer than 5 percent false negatives), and a specificity also greater than 95 percent, meaning fewer than 5 percent of dogs who don't have pancreatitis will have a false positive result. In comparison, the cPLI test has 82 percent sensitivity and 98 percent specificity.

The Spec cPL test can be repeated every two or three days to help judge response to therapy, and after returning home, to confirm recovery. It can also be used to monitor response to changes in diet and other treatment for dogs with chronic pancreatitis.

The Spec cPL test is recommended for any dog whose symptoms include vomiting, anorexia, or abdominal pain. It can also be used to monitor dogs with chronic pancreatitis, or those with conditions or whose medications predispose them to pancreatitis. In the future, this test may be done as part of standard blood work on normal, seemingly healthy dogs, to identify chronic pancreatitis that may be subclinical (not causing recognizable symptoms).

In 2007, IDEXX introduced the SNAP cPL, a version of the Spec cPL test that can be done in-house by your veterinarian and return results in 10 minutes. If the SNAP cPL test results are abnormal, IDEXX recommends that you follow up with a Spec cPL test to establish a baseline cPL concentration and to monitor treatment.

Radiographs detect only 24 to 33 percent of cases of acute pancreatitis, but are also used to identify other causes of vomiting and anorexia, such as intestinal obstruction.

An experienced ultrasound practitioner can detect two-thirds of acute pancreatitis cases. Ultrasound may also be used to look for signs of peritonitis, pancreatic abscess or cyst, and biliary obstruction. Neither x-rays nor ultrasound can identify chronic pancreatitis. Biopsy of the pancreas can be used to identify pancreatic cancer. Biopsy may be an unreliable method of diagnosing pancreatitis, as often only part of the pancreas is affected.

TLI (trypsin-like immunoreactivity) is a blood test that has only 33 percent sensitivity for pancreatitis, but it is very accurate for diagnosing EPI (exocrine



**Some breeds are at increased risk of developing pancreatitis. Miniature Schnauzers are prone to hyperlipidemia, which in turn can be a cause of pancreatitis.**

pancreatic insufficiency). Dogs with chronic gastrointestinal problems should have TLI, cobalamin, folate and Spec cPL testing done to look for EPI, SIBO (small intestine bacterial overgrowth, also called ARD, or antibiotic-responsive diarrhea), and chronic pancreatitis. Dogs with EPI usually have lower-than-normal Spec cPL results, but TLI is considered more accurate for diagnosing EPI.

### Recovering from acute pancreatitis

Whether in the hospital or at home, once vomiting is under control, water is slowly introduced, with a few laps or ice cubes every hour or so. If the dog keeps this down, liquids are tried next, followed by soupy, low-fat, high-carbohydrate foods. Frequent small amounts are less likely to cause problems than larger quantities, particularly in the beginning. Dogs who have been hospitalized can return home once they are able to keep food down without vomiting.

Dogs are often sent home with pain medication, such as a Fentanyl patch or Tramadol. Controlling pain is important during recovery, so ask your vet for help if you feel your dog is uncomfortable.

Dogs recovering from acute pancreatitis are frequently maintained on an easily digestible, fat-restricted prescription diet, particularly if they are overweight or have hyperlipidemia. While I am not a fan of these products due to their low-quality ingredients, I think that sometimes it is easier to follow your vet's advice, as long as your dog is willing to eat this food and

does not react adversely to it. You can later transition your dog back to a better quality commercial or homemade diet.

But what if your dog won't eat the prescription food, or reacts poorly to the food, or you just can't bring yourself to feed a commercial food after feeding a homemade diet for so long? What should you feed your dog in that case?

### What to feed in the beginning

The goal in the beginning is to feed a diet with low fat, moderate protein, and high carbohydrates, as carbs cause the least amount of pancreatic stimulation. An easy diet to start with is overcooked

white rice made with extra water, combined with a low-fat protein source, such as cooked chicken breast, low-fat cottage cheese, or boiled hamburger (boiling removes most of the fat).

Even if you normally feed a raw diet, the meat should be cooked for now, to remove fat and to destroy bacteria that can be problematic if the intestines have been damaged. Cooking or warming food usually makes it more appealing as well. Bones should not be fed at this time. Offer food at room or body temperature, as cold food takes longer to digest.

If possible, choose foods your dog has had before – ones you know agree with him and that he likes. White rice is the preferred carbohydrate choice, as it is easiest to digest, but you could use potatoes or sweet potatoes instead if you need to avoid rice due to allergies or intolerance (remove the skins to reduce fiber in the beginning).

Overcooking starchy foods such as rice or potatoes increases their digestibility. Cooking white rice with extra water creates a type of porridge called rice congee, which is soothing to the stomach and digestive tract, and can help relieve vomiting and diarrhea. To make congee, boil one cup of white rice (not Minute Rice) in four cups of water for 20 to 30 minutes. You can offer the rice congee liquid alone to start with, then include the rice, and next add the protein. This progression can happen over the course of a few hours or a day or two.

At first, feed a higher percentage of carbohydrates, and a lower percentage of protein, such as two-thirds carbs and one-

third protein. If your dog is doing fine, the ratio can then be slowly changed to half and half after the first few days.

Whatever you feed, start with small amounts fed frequently, six to eight meals a day or more. Small meals stimulate the pancreas less, and are less likely to trigger vomiting. Small meals are also easier to digest than larger meals, and less likely to cause discomfort. If your dog is able to keep the food down without vomiting or showing signs of pain, you can begin to feed larger amounts at longer intervals, but proceed slowly, especially in the beginning; you don't want to make changes too quickly and end up with a setback.

Contact your vet for advice if your dog vomits. You will probably need to stop feeding again briefly (12 to 24 hours), then start over by introducing water and progressing to bland foods again. Your dog may also need anti-vomiting medication.

**It is not necessary for your dog's diet to be "complete and balanced" in the short term;** an adult dog will do fine on an incomplete diet for a few days to a few weeks. Start with a very simple diet, and then add more ingredients as your dog recovers and you see he is doing well.

### Broth and other flavorings

Broth can be used to make rice and to add to foods to improve flavor and encourage your dog to drink more. Many store-bought broths are high in sodium, however; even some "reduced sodium" varieties have hundreds of mg per serving. Look for broths with less than 100 mg sodium per serving. You can make your own nonfat, no-sodium broth if you prefer.

You can also use the water that you boil chicken or other foods in for flavor and nutritional value, since boiling removes some nutrients that are then left in the water. Just be sure to remove the fat before feeding.

### Healing the digestive tract

**L-glutamine** is an amino acid that can help the intestinal mucosa to recover from the effects of going without food. A typical dose is 500 mg per 25 lbs of body weight daily, but 10 times that much can be used to supply nutrition when necessary.

L-glutamine is available both as a powder and in capsules. The powder can be dissolved in water or mixed in food. Glutamine is unstable at room temperature for extended periods, so any uneaten portion should be removed after 15 minutes. L-glutamine can be found at supplement

## Medium-Chain Triglycerides

Medium-chain triglycerides (MCTs) are a form of fat that does not require pancreatic enzymes for digestion, so it is well tolerated by dogs with chronic pancreatitis, EPI, and other forms of fat malabsorption. MCTs can be used to increase calories, and to help with the absorption of fat-soluble vitamins for dogs who cannot tolerate other forms of fat in their diets. MCTs may help to reduce triglyceride levels in the blood and prevent pancreatitis that is caused by hyperlipidemia, though it does not lower cholesterol levels.

MCTs are found in coconut oil, and small amounts are found in dairy fat. Purina Veterinary Diets EN Canine Formula, one of the prescription diets recommended for dogs recovering from pancreatitis, uses coconut oil to supply 22 to 34 percent of its fat. MCT oil is also available, but MCT oil is not very palatable, so you may find coconut oil easier to use. If your dog has problems with coconut oil, MCT oil may still be an option.



When feeding coconut oil, it's best to use virgin (unrefined) oil sold in glass jars. You can give as much as 1 teaspoon per 10 lbs of body weight daily, but start with much less and increase only gradually as you see your dog can tolerate it. (See "Crazy About Coconut Oil," October 2005, for more information.)

shops online and at health food stores.

**Seacure** is a highly nutritious supplement designed to treat malnutrition. Seacure can help to heal the intestines and provide other health benefits. Made of hydrolyzed whitefish, Seacure has a fishy smell. Sprinkled on your dog's food, it helps make the food more attractive to your dog. (See "Securing Seacure," WDJ April 2003, for more information.)

The herbs **slippery elm** and **marshmallow** can help to soothe a throat and stomach that have been irritated by vomiting. One product that contains both is Phytomucil from Animals' Apawthecary. You can also make your own by steeping 1 teaspoon of either or both dried herbs in 8 ounces of very hot water. Optionally, add a teaspoon of honey for flavor. Give from 1 teaspoon to 4 tablespoons, depending on the size of the dog, every four hours.

### Transitioning to a normal diet

Once a dog has had an attack of acute pancreatitis, he may be less able to tolerate fat in the future, depending on how much the pancreas was damaged. Some dogs are able to return to a normal diet after they have fully recovered, while others may need a low-fat diet for the rest of their lives to prevent chronic pancreatitis and further acute episodes.

Dogs who experience a single, acute, uncomplicated episode are more likely to be able to return to a normal diet, while dogs with repeated episodes of acute pan-

creatitis, hyperlipidemia, or steatorrhea (large, greasy, foul-smelling stools caused by fat malabsorption) should be kept on a fat-restricted diet.

Dogs with chronic pancreatitis may also do better on a lower-fat diet. Drugs that predispose dogs to pancreatitis should be avoided if possible in these dogs. If such drugs are needed, e.g., to control seizures, these dogs, too, may benefit from a low-fat diet. Dogs who have had acute pancreatitis should never be fed really high-fat meals, even if they are able to return to a normal diet afterwards.

Continue to feed a low-fat diet with moderate protein for at least 7 to 10 days or longer, depending on the speed of your dog's recovery and the severity of the episode. Gradually increase the size of each meal and the time between meals until your dog is eating two or three meals a day.

If your dog is doing well and showing no sign of discomfort after eating, you can then begin to gradually increase the amount of fat in the diet. Begin adding small amounts of his regular food back into his diet. If the diet he was eating before was high in fat, try feeding foods with a moderate amount of fat to start with, though you may eventually be able to transition back to somewhat higher-fat foods if your dog gets a lot of exercise, is lean rather than overweight, and you have reason to believe that something other than diet caused the acute pancreatitis.

Remember that lower-fat diets provide



fewer calories, so the total amount you feed will need to be increased when you reduce the amount of fat in the diet. The increase will depend on how much fat was in your dog's previous diet. If possible, determine how many calories your dog was getting before and try to match that with the new diet (or moderately decrease the calories, if your dog is overweight). Weigh your dog frequently and then adjust the amount you are feeding up or down as needed to maintain proper weight. If your dog lost weight due to acute pancreatitis, don't try to put the pounds back on too quickly; slow and gradual weight gain or loss is healthier than trying to make large changes in a short period of time.

Keep a close eye on your dog, particularly after meals, watching for signs of discomfort such as a hunched appearance, whining, panting, restlessness, or not wanting to move around. If you see any of these signs, return to a lower-fat diet and smaller, more frequent meals, and wait longer before trying again to increase the amount of fat even more slowly, using different foods. If the signs of discomfort return, you may need to keep your dog on the lower-fat diet indefinitely.

Also watch for signs of digestive upset, such as burping or flatulence (gas), borborygmus (stomach gurgling), lip licking, or heavy swallowing. These are not signs of pancreatitis, but could indicate that the diet you're feeding does not agree with your dog. Try feeding a different brand of food, using different ingredients, a grain-free diet, or one with a different protein source, adding digestive enzymes, or feeding smaller, more frequent meals, to see if that helps.

These symptoms can also be signs of EPI, especially if accompanied by increased appetite, weight loss, and large "cow-patty" stools. EPI is treated with prescription-strength digestive enzymes such as Viokase, Pancrezyme, or generic equivalents. Raw pancreas can also be used, or human pancreatin supplements, which consist of freeze-dried pork pancreas.

With pancreatin supplements, strengths such as 4x or 10x indicate that the product is concentrated and the dosage is equivalent to 4 or 10 times as much as is shown on the label. Each mg of pancreatin contains 25 USP units of protease and amylase, and 2 USP units of lipase. Dogs with EPI may also require cobalamin (vitamin B12) injections, and often a low-fat diet as well.

## Preventing recurrence

Pancreatitis is both more common and more severe in overweight dogs. Inactivity may also be a contributor, so weight loss and exercise are both important.

Many weight loss diets are extremely high in carbohydrates, with low fat and low protein – in fact, some have even less fat than the prescription diets that are recommended for dogs recovering from pancreatitis. A low-fat diet is not required for dogs to lose weight, and higher protein helps dogs lose fat, while low protein can lead to muscle loss. It's better to feed a diet that has higher protein and moderate amounts of fat and carbohydrates to help your dog lose weight. (See "Diet and the Older Dog," December 2006, for more information on this topic.)

Underlying metabolic disease such as hypothyroidism, hyperadrenocorticism (Cushing's disease), and diabetes mellitus may be associated with increased risk of pancreatitis and should be managed appropriately. Hypothyroidism can contribute to obesity and may affect fat metabolism. Not all dogs who are hypothyroid have the classic signs, such as dry skin and hair loss. A full thyroid panel is more accurate than a simple screening test. Even dogs whose results are in the low normal range may benefit from thyroid supplementation. Noted thyroid specialist Dr. Jean Dodds at Hemopet will consult with you or your vet regarding test results for a small fee.

If your dog is prone to hyperlipidemia (increased blood levels of cholesterol or triglycerides, even when fasted for 12 hours before the test), there are several things you can do to try to lower these levels and reduce the likelihood of pancreatitis. Feeding a low-fat diet, giving fish oil supplements, and treating hypothyroidism, which is often the underlying cause, are all helpful in reducing lipid levels in the blood. In addition, dogs prone to hyperlipidemia may benefit from the use of human statin medications, such as Lipitor, to control lipid levels. Though no studies have yet been done, anecdotal reports from vets who have tried this on an experimental basis have been positive.

Whether or not too much fat was the initial cause of your dog's pancreatitis, high-fat foods may trigger a recurrence, particularly if the pancreas was damaged. Be sure that your dog does not have access to your trash bin (use locking lids or an alarm if needed), and don't feed high-fat foods or treats such as pig ears. Make

sure that your dog does not get fatty treats from other family members, friends, or neighbors. Don't try to tempt your dog with high-fat foods and additives if he doesn't want to eat; this may be good advice even for dogs who have not had pancreatitis, unless you're certain that the inappetence is not caused by pancreatitis nor a condition that would predispose a dog to it.

Avoid medications that may be linked to pancreatitis, particularly any that may have contributed to the initial attack. If possible, find alternative therapies for dogs taking drugs known to cause pancreatitis, such as using Keppra (levetiracetam) in place of or in combination with potassium bromide or phenobarbital for seizures.

In people, vaccinations have sometimes been associated with pancreatitis. Avoid overvaccinating your dog. The American Animal Hospital Association now acknowledges that there is no need for yearly "boosters" for most vaccines. (See "Vaccinations 101," August 2008, for more information on current vaccination recommendations.)

Periodic monitoring with the Spec cPL test may be helpful in preventing recurrent pancreatitis, especially after a change in diet.

## Supplements

Certain supplements can help reduce the risk of acute pancreatitis or control the effects of chronic pancreatitis.

Digestive enzyme supplements that contain pancreatin may be helpful for dogs who have had acute pancreatitis or suffer from chronic pancreatitis. It is theorized that these may reduce the load on the pancreas and inhibit pancreatic secretion.

These supplements are sold over-the-counter for humans or dogs; the prescription-strength enzymes needed by dogs with EPI can also be tried to see if they seem to reduce pain from chronic pancreatitis. Note that enzymes seem to help some dogs, but not others. If your dog does not respond well to one brand, you can try adjusting the dosage or using a different brand, but don't continue to give them if they cause any problems.

You can also try feeding small amounts of raw pancreas, giving pancreatic glandular supplements, such as Pancreatrophin from Standard Process, or giving plant-derived digestive enzymes, which may be helpful if your dog has trouble digesting carbohydrates.

Fish body oil, such as salmon oil or EPA



oil (not cod liver oil), can help to lower blood lipid levels (both triglycerides and cholesterol) in dogs with hyperlipidemia. Studies have also found it to be beneficial in treating acute pancreatitis, while its effects on chronic pancreatitis are unknown. The dosage needed to treat hyperlipidemia may be as high as 1,000 mg of fish oil (supplying 300 mg combined EPA and DHA) per 10 lbs of body weight. Dogs with normal lipid levels should do fine on that amount per 20 to 30 lbs of body weight daily, preferably split into two doses. If you use a supplement with more or less EPA and DHA, adjust the dosage accordingly. Vitamin E should always be given whenever you supplement with oils – give around 5 to 10 IUs per pound of body weight daily.

Probiotics are beneficial bacteria that live in the intestines and help to keep bad bacteria in check. While probiotics are not recommended for dogs with acute pancreatitis, their effect on chronic pancreatitis is unknown. As they are known to help with some gastrointestinal problems, and since their population may be depleted during acute pancreatitis, I think it makes sense to give them once your dog has recovered. You can use products made either for dogs or for people.

Prebiotics are indigestible carbohydrates that feed the beneficial bacteria in the intestines and are often included in probiotic supplements. Certain prebiotics called oligosaccharides have been shown to decrease triglyceride and cholesterol

blood levels, which can be helpful for dogs prone to hyperlipidemia. These ingredients may be listed on the label as fructooligosaccharides (FOS), oligofructose, inulin, or chicory. (See “Probing Probiotics,” August 2006, for more information on both probiotics and prebiotics.)

Dogs fed a very low-fat diet may become deficient in the fat-soluble vitamins A and E. Adding fish oil and coconut oil to the diet can help with this. Dogs with damage to the pancreas may also suffer from vitamin B12 (cobalamin) deficiency – in this case, monthly injections may be needed if the dog is unable to absorb B12 when given orally. Chronic pancreatitis may interfere with absorption of vitamin B, so supplementing with B-complex vitamins makes sense.

Human studies suggest that antioxidants, which are found mostly in fruits and vegetables, may help protect against pancreatitis, and reduce the pain of chronic pancreatitis. Vitamin E and selenium (which work synergistically), vitamin C, beta-carotene, and methionine have been found to be effective in helping to prevent pancreatitis in human studies.

Other natural antioxidants sometimes recommended for chronic pancreatitis, though evidence is lacking, include SAM-e (S-adenosyl methionine); alpha lipoic acid (not recommended for diabetics); OPCs, found in grapeseed extract and pycnogenol; resveratrol; and milk thistle. There are a number of combination antioxidant products made for dogs, such as Small

Animal Antioxidants and Immugen from Thorne Veterinary, and Cell Advance made by Vetri-Science.

In their book, *All You Ever Wanted to Know About Herbs for Pets*, Greg Tilford and Mary Wulff-Tilford suggest herbs to support the liver and digestive system. “Dandelion, burdock root, or Oregon grape can help improve digestion and reduce pancreatic stress by gently increasing bile and enzymatic production in the liver. . . . Yarrow is said to help reduce pancreatic inflammation and improve blood circulation to the organ.”

## Long-term low-fat diets

Next month, we will discuss commercial and homemade diets for dogs with chronic pancreatitis, EPI, and other conditions that may require a low-fat diet to be fed long-term. You will learn what defines a low-fat diet, and how to calculate the amount of fat in any food or combination of foods, whether kibble, canned, dehydrated, frozen, or fresh. The following month, we will present actual low-fat diets that people are feeding to their dogs. 🐾

*For a list of scientific references for the material in this article, send a request to Mary Straus at [WDJ@dogaware.com](mailto:WDJ@dogaware.com).*

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## Resources Mentioned in This Article

**All You Ever Wanted to Know About Herbs for Pets**, by Mary L. Wulff-Tilford & Gregory Tilford. Available in bookstores or from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or [dogwise.com](http://dogwise.com)

**IDEXX Spec cPL® Test** provided by IDEXX Reference Laboratories. (888) 433-9987; [idexx.com/animalhealth/laboratory/specpl](http://idexx.com/animalhealth/laboratory/specpl)

**Pancreatitis e-mail discussion group:** [pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/dogpancreatitis](http://pets.groups.yahoo.com/group/dogpancreatitis)

**Phytomucil**, made by Animals' Apawthecary. (888) 463-7748; [animalessentials.com](http://animalessentials.com)

**Seacure**, made by Proper Nutrition. (800) 247-5656; [propernutrition.com](http://propernutrition.com)

**Thorne Veterinary Small Animal Antioxidant and Immugen**, made by Thorne Research, Inc. Information available at [thorne.com](http://thorne.com). Also available from [wellvet.com](http://wellvet.com), (303) 702-1986; and [holisticpetinfo.com](http://holisticpetinfo.com), (877) 573-8227

**Thyroid testing by Hemopet/Dr. Jean Dodds.** (714) 891-2022; [hemopet.com](http://hemopet.com)

**Vetri-Science Cell Advance 440 and 880 Antioxidant Formulas**, made by Vetri-Science Laboratories of Vermont. Information available at [vetriscience.com](http://vetriscience.com), (800) 882-9993. Available from [VetAmerica](http://VetAmerica.com) ([vetamerica.com](http://vetamerica.com) or 888-838-2637) and other retailers.

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## 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: 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

**Association of Pet Dog Trainers**  
(800) 738-3647; apdt.com

**Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers**; cpdt.org

**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

**Truly Dog Friendly Trainers**  
trulydogfriendly.com

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