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# The Whole



# Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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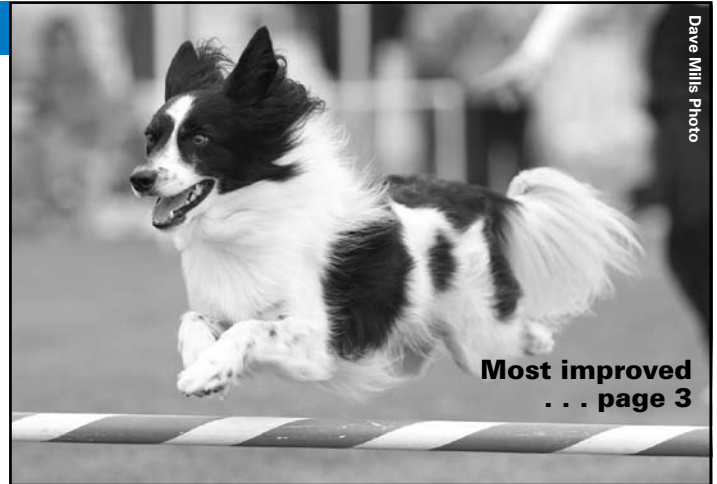
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# Packed With Advice

*Training, mangement, health . . . and love.*

BY NANCY KERNS

**A**s the proud, happy, but sometimes vexed owner of a new dog – one who has made a serious dent in the amount of sleep I'm getting – I completely understand that you don't really know what you're getting when you adopt a dog. Of course, you do your best to assess the dog's character and temperament before you bring him home, and try to compare the list of attributes you were looking for in a dog with the traits he seems to display. But you don't *really* know whom you've brought home for days, weeks, and months.

That was certainly the case with Spryte, the dog discussed in the "case history" that appears on the following pages. Fortunately for Spryte, she was adopted by an unusually experienced, determined, and open-hearted couple, who did everything in their power to find just the sort of training regimen the reactive dog needed. Positive trainer and writer Terry Long, of Long Beach, California, brings us the story, which could serve as a blueprint for an extremely successful dog adoption.

Also in this issue, Training Editor Pat Miller defines "generalization" in its dog-training context, and explains why it should be your goal whenever teaching your dog a new skill. The article appears on page 8.

After hearing about case after case of kennel cough, our long-time contributor and holistic health expert, CJ Puotinen, decided to take an in-depth look at preventing and treating this contagious canine condition (see page 10).

On page 15, I offer another account of what I'm doing to try to establish my new dog, Otto, as a well-behaved, diurnal member

of the family. I'm *much* less experienced than the owners featured in our case history, but just as determined. And, of course, I have 11 years' worth of back issues of WDJ's training advice at my fingertips! It's my hope that through sharing some of the details of our experiences with Otto, others may find some useful information on dealing with their new dogs. Or learn from my mistakes!

Finally, on page 18, we present a longer article from Pat Miller about obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) in dogs. Many people (myself included) make jokes about OCD, but anyone who has a dog who suffers with this condition can tell you that it's not a laughing matter. These dogs truly can't control their behavior in certain circumstances, and may be easily triggered into long sessions of tail-chasing, fly-snapping, licking themselves, or other repetitive behaviors until they have harmed themselves (and driven their owners to the brink of madness). Miller describes the tell-tale signs of a budding canine OCD behavior, and instructs us on what to do and what *not* to do if our dog begins exhibiting one.

Say, last month I gushed about my guilty pleasure: watching a TV show called *Greatest American Dog*. I mentioned that it was broadcast on Thursday nights – *just* before its schedule was changed to Wednesdays. I hope everyone saw its final episodes, and apologize if I accidentally made anyone miss it. As this issue goes to press, all the episodes are still available on the CBS website: [cbs.com](http://cbs.com).

NK

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# A Life-Changing Experience

*The long and winding road to success with a reactive dog.*

BY TERRY LONG, CPDT, AND CHRIS BOND, DIP. ACBS

At some point in our lives, some of us find ourselves living with a difficult dog, one whose behavior challenges our patience, and exhausts our training knowledge – and opens our hearts and eyes to a new, better way of training. This is the story of one such dog and her very knowledgeable dog owner. Together, they reached an entirely new and higher level of dog training skills, thanks to the owner's life-altering experiences with a reactive dog who wasn't fit to compete in the career intended for her: Flyball.

Flyball is not the sport for everyone. It is a relay team event, which means you have to commit to training and competing with your dog and other dogs and dog owners as a team, and you have to have an appreciation for over-the-top dogs and the resulting cacophony of sounds.

In flyball, a team of four dogs race, one after the other, leaping a series of hurdles, throwing their bodies against a spring-loaded box that ejects a tennis ball, snatching the ball, and hurtling their bodies back down the row of jumps to where their next teammates strain to be released for their turns. The fastest team wins.

You hear a typical flyball tournament before you see it. Dogs are barking in excitement and play growling while they play tug between races, and people are screaming encouragement so loudly to their canine teammates that many of them are hoarse the next day. Whistles blast to start races, to alert false starts, and to end races. It can be hard to hear the PA system, which alternately blares announcements and rock and roll music.

Chris Bond loved it all. She and her husband Rich, with three of their Border Collies, were on the Jets, the British flyball team that broke the world record in 1997. They loved it so much that when they moved back to California in 1999, they started their own team, Gold Rush Flyball. They worked with inexperienced pet dogs and owners and trained them to top competition levels. One of their teams achieved a race time of 17.88 seconds – at the time, within one second of the fastest team in their region. What they needed in order to beat the competition was a fast, small dog. Small is important in flyball because the jump height for the team is determined by the shortest dog on the team.



**Spryte, shown here at about five months old, proved to be too reactive to noises and to other dogs to make a flyball dog. With extreme patience, her owners helped her find a new "career."**

Other than being a bit nervous and shy, Spryte acted like a "normal" dog for the first two weeks. Then she suddenly began attacking the other household dogs. In one instance, when Misty (a 12-year-old Border Collie) walked by the couch where Spryte and Chris were sitting, Spryte leaped on Misty's back and began biting her around the neck and shoulders.

Around the same time, Spryte began barking and lunging at unfamiliar dogs and people while out on walks. Her reactivity increased exponentially over the next few weeks. She became reactive to any sudden change in her environment, including loud or unusual noises, and other dogs or people appearing, even at a distance. Often, she would "shut down" for no apparent reason – most likely due to a noise she could hear that her humans could not.

Despite this, Chris's attachment to

## What you can do . . .

- Keep in mind that all dogs are not candidates for your favorite dog sport! Consider a "change of career" for your dog if he is stressed by the training required for a given sport.
- Never use aversive "corrections" or punishment for aggressive behavior. Chances are that your dog is fearful; aversives will only worsen his anxiety.



## Fate in a small package

In February 2002, Chris was approached by someone from another team who was looking for a home for a small, bright-eyed, five-month-old Border Collie-mix pup that had been found as a stray. That little dog captured Chris and Rich's hearts and, hoping that she would become the super-fast flyball dog they were looking for, they adopted her on the spot.

Although the little dog showed subtle signs of fearfulness (weight backward on the haunches when she greeted someone, lowered posture, and furtive glances at her surroundings), Chris assumed these were a result of the unfamiliar, noisy environment. They named her "Spryte" because she was as sprightly and cute as a little English pixie.

Spryte was growing. When Spryte was in what she perceived a “safe” environment, she was very clever, sweet, and personable. Chris had never had a dog like this before. “My husband, Rich, and I were fortunate to have had three beautiful, sociable Border Collies, which we adopted over the years we lived in England. They came to us as puppies from Ghostland Kennels, known for lovely natured dogs. Our dogs were friendly with people, well mannered with other dogs, and full of confidence. They had traveled everywhere with us, and were comfortable in any environment. Nothing fazed them.”

As a result, all of Chris’s experience with training dogs had been with good-natured, resilient dogs; she was now in uncharted territory. She was also coming to the realization that this little dog might not reach the goals Chris longed for. In fact, she might not be a competition dog at all.

By nature, Chris does not give up easily so she decided to start training. But where to start? She had used both lure-and-reward training and traditional, punishment-based methods. Like many people, Chris’s first reaction to any signs of aggression from Spryte was to stop the behavior immediately. When Spryte attacked the other household dogs, Chris would hold her by the scruff and say, “No!” When she lunged and barked at people or dogs while on leash, Chris would jerk the leash and say, “No!” But Spryte’s over-reactivity escalated. When off-leash, she would rush other dogs and people across football-size playing fields. She had to be continuously leashed, and was often left crated in the car to avoid conflicts.

### A positive shift

Frustrated and depressed, Chris sought the advice of a friend and professional

trainer, Lisa Clifton-Bumpass of Hayward, California. Lisa is a positive trainer and her influence was a turning point in Chris’s relationship with Spryte.

“Lisa changed my understanding of how dogs learn, which probably saved Spryte’s life,” says Chris. “Through Lisa, I learned that fear is an emotion that is highly responsive to classical conditioning. If I punished Spryte in the presence of something she feared, she would begin to fear that thing more. If I rewarded Spryte in the presence of something she feared before she became reactive, she would begin to associate that thing with good instead of bad, and she would become less fearful. Lisa taught me that punishment was escalating Spryte’s reactivity.”

Lisa recommended Chris avoid all punishment. She gave Chris reading assignments, including *Don’t Shoot the Dog* by Karen Pryor, and she explained how

## Glossary of Positive Training Terms

**Clicker training:** The use of a mechanical or verbal sound to identify for the dog the exact behavior that is going to be rewarded. There are several different kinds of mechanical clickers available. Common verbal markers include the words “Yes!” and “Good!” A food or toy reward follows each marker.

**Classical conditioning:** Also known as Pavlovian conditioning, this behavior modification technique is used to create an animal’s association (neutral, good, or bad) with a given stimulus. For example, the click of the clicker is followed by a treat. Soon, the dog loves hearing a clicker because he associates it with the treat. A similar process can be used to change a dog’s fearful association with something to a positive association. This is the foundation of “counter-conditioning.”

**Counter-conditioning:** A behavior modification process that is used to change, or counter, the dog’s emotional response to a particular stimulus. In the case of a dog who is fearful, the trainer first determines the intensity of the stimulus with which the dog can be reasonably relaxed. Every time the scary stimulus (e.g., a dog, child, skateboard) appears, the trainer delivers several small treats, one after the other, until the scary stimulus leaves. Over time, the dog will start to expect that good things happen (the treats) when the stimulus appears. As a result, the dog will become less reactive at that distance. Gradually, the distance is decreased until the dog can be calm in the presence of what was once very scary. A very good book to read for more information about counter-conditioning is *The Cautious Canine*, by Patricia McConnell, PhD.

**Desensitization:** Typically used in tandem with counter-conditioning, desensitization accustoms the dog to the intensity

of a stimulus that he is afraid of. This is done by very gradually increasing the intensity of the scary stimulus. Trainers manipulate various elements during the desensitization process, including the distance between the stimulus and the dog, the size of the stimulus (small dogs first, then bigger dogs), the sound of the stimulus (a low-volume version, then gradually a louder version), etc.

**Management:** For counter-conditioning to succeed it’s important that the dog isn’t placed in situations that will provoke anxiety or reactivity; the goal is to avoid giving him opportunities to practice the reactive behavior and to keep his arousal level low. A group class may not be appropriate for a reactive dog; you may not be able to create enough distance between your dog and other people/dogs. Asking people to respect your dog’s need for space is part of a good management plan.

**Shaping:** Usually done with a clicker, shaping is the art of observing, marking, and rewarding small movements from the dog that will gradually lead to the completed, goal behavior. For example, when teaching a nose touch to a target, the trainer first marks and rewards if the dog even glances at the target. Once the dog is looking at the target, the trainer might then mark and reward when the dog reaches his nose toward the target to sniff it. Next would be lightly touching his nose to the target, then touching it more firmly.

**Shaping games:** The use of shaping to elicit a variety of behaviors from the dog. Not all shaping games have a predetermined, functional purpose. Rather, some shaping exercises focus on marking and rewarding anything the dog does so that the dog learns how rewarding it is to offer behaviors. Later, the trainer may leverage this ability into specific training exercises.

Spryte's fears could be reduced through counter-conditioning. She also explained the limits of counter-conditioning, and the amount of time that Chris would need to invest. Months. Years, perhaps. And, although the work would make a profound difference, Spryte would always be what her genetics and prior learning history had made her.

"My heart sank with the realization that I had a true problem dog on my hands, and at the same time rose in the hope that there was something I could do to make things better," says Chris. "With Lisa's guidance, I began a positive training regime with Spryte. She earned her meals every day, with food for all her good behaviors.

"For counter-conditioning and desensitization, I took Spryte on leash to a nearby school in the evenings, when only a few children would be playing on the equipment. I stood at the far end of an open field, so far that Spryte was still attentive to me and not paying attention to the children. There, I fed her a continuous stream of food, one morsel at a time. She got all of her favorites: smelly, juicy, cooked steak; cheese; and sausage, chopped into quarter-inch squares. We gradually moved closer to the children, but never so close that she reacted. Before her bag of treats was finished, we would turn and leave. Over time, the distance gradually reduced. Eventually, we were able to play ball at the far end of the field, with her off leash. Things were looking better."

## Clicker training, shaping, and management

Chris also added clicker training to her arsenal of training tools. She played shaping games and practiced behaviors daily. Spryte learned an amazing number of behaviors, including useful skills such as a nose touch and a paw touch to objects. Chris would later use the nose touch to teach her to heel, and the paw touch to teach her agility touch-points.

Most importantly, Spryte learned that she had control of her environment through behaviors Chris wanted and rewarded, instead of behaviors Chris didn't want and, therefore, did not allow to be rewarded.

For example, looking calmly at an unfamiliar dog or person was a wanted behavior; lunging at the dog or person was not. So Chris reinforced the wanted behavior by clicking as Spryte first glanced at the dog or person. At the sound of the click, Spryte would instantly turn her head back



**Fortunately for Spryte, Chris Bond recognized that flyball was too stressful for her new little dog. Chris was also flexible enough to find a sport that better suited Spryte. She sought out new instructors, and a new, positive-only style of training and responding to Spryte's occasional setbacks, with great success.**

to Chris for a treat. Spryte soon learned to look at the other dog, then look back. This not only made an enjoyable game out of something that would otherwise be worrying to Spryte, it also taught her a head-turn, which is now one of her signature freestyle (dog dancing) moves.

Because clicker training was fun, it motivated Spryte (and Chris) to learn a variety of exercises. Chris and Spryte trained daily, building foundation skills such as "look at me," "check the environment, then look back at me," as well as the basic sit, down, wait, and leave-it behaviors. They participated in several classes, where the training was positive and the environment was calm and spacious. Spryte learned basic obedience, freestyle, tracking, and dock diving.

All the while, Chris worked very hard to manage Spryte's environment. If they went somewhere, she would check the place before taking Spryte out of the car. If people were there, she would let them know that her dog was reactive, and she

was specific about what they should do (avoid eye contact with her, give her space, and not make any sudden movements). Everywhere they went, Spryte was rewarded. And Chris quit activities before her little dog became bored or tired.

It was during this time that Chris accepted that Spryte could not compete in flyball. But she still hoped there was some venue that would allow her to compete with Spryte. She started thinking that perhaps agility would be okay. There, Spryte would have the ring to herself, with just a judge and a few ring stewards. Although there is a lot of activity going on at agility trials, there is only one dog competing at a time, unlike flyball where there can be as many as 16.

## Agility class

Chris enrolled in a local class. There were 20 dogs in the class. Fortunately, most were good-natured Shelties. Standing in line with calm dogs her own size, Spryte began to respond positively. Chris asked

the people around her to give them space, and she continuously fed Spryte small bits of fresh cooked meat or cheese. She was able to complete the first few training sessions, and things were going well.

Then one evening an Australian Cattle Dog attacked a Border Collie he had been eyeing for several sessions. One of the trainers was badly bitten, and the commotion was too much for Spryte. "Spryte refused food treats and began to bark at the air above her head. She had lost it," remembered Chris. "The head trainer looked at me and said, 'Hold her muzzle shut and tell her No!'"

"Instead, I knelt down and made eye contact with Spryte. After a moment, her glassy eyes cleared as she recognized me. She came to me quietly and leaned her body into my side. She had learned to trust me. At that moment my heart melted, as a poignant realization hit me to the core: First and foremost, my duty is to protect

this little dog. Not just physical protection. Emotional protection as well. I did not return to that training class."

Some months later, a friend recommended another agility trainer. Kathryn Horn had a long track record in both the sport of agility and positive reinforcement methods. Chris contacted Kathryn and explained her situation. She told her everything she had been working toward over the past nine months and the progress Spryte was making. She asked if she could enroll in her class and use Spryte's class time to do more counter-conditioning before working on the agility equipment. Chris wanted Spryte to enjoy agility, but knew that years of foundation work lay ahead before they could begin to focus on agility skills.

Kathryn was very understanding, and welcomed Chris into her class. "When I first brought Spryte out of the car, Kathryn automatically knelt down and averted her

gaze so she did not make eye contact with Spryte. I was amazed when Spryte trotted up, wiggling with appeasement, and greeted Kathryn without barking. I felt a flood of relief. This was the kind of training instructor Spryte and I needed."

Kathryn didn't put any pressure on Chris to teach Spryte agility. Instead, she allowed Chris to teach Spryte that the agility arena was a fun place. The environment Kathryn provided was so supportive, with a small class and plenty of space and one-on-one training, that Spryte's confidence grew quickly. She was able to practice on agility equipment much earlier than planned.

The agility equipment itself was easy for Spryte. She had some difficulty with the teeter-totter because of the noise; otherwise, she had no fear of the equipment. For touch-points (teaching a dog to stop at the bottom of the dogwalk, A-frame, and teeter), Kathryn taught bow-on-a-mat using clicker training. Spryte loved touch-

## Helpful Hints for Rehabilitating Reactive Dogs

- Find a positive trainer for foundation skills, and avoid anyone who uses punishment. This person needs to have the credentials and understanding of dog behavior, and use only management and positive training methods to resolve problem behavior. Ask him/her to help you embark on a counter-conditioning regime.

- Protect your dog from anything that may be punishing or in any way aversive. Instead, use management to avoid behaviors you don't want, and use a high rate of reward for behaviors you do want. This is vital to build trust and a positive association with you, the agility equipment, and the dog's world in general.

- Take up clicker training, particularly shaping. Through shaping, the dog learns confidence and becomes a partner in the learning process. As a bonus, you can shape useful behaviors and some very cute tricks – and you'll learn how clever your dog is.

- Search for an agility trainer that supports the needs of a fearful dog. The trainer should allow you to progress at your own pace to give the dog a strong foundation. That foundation should include a highly positive association with agility equipment.

- Some dogs are just not cut out for competition. If the dog is a danger to others, or if the dog does not enjoy agility, don't compete. Instead, find something the dog does enjoy, like hiking, swimming, or just playing ball.

- Until your dog is proficient, only compete with a club that

allows you to set your dog up for success. North American Dog Agility Council (NADAC, see [nadac.com](http://nadac.com)) courses allow more space between obstacles for ease of stride. Its "Skilled" level allows a jump height that is four inches lower than the dog's measured jump height, and they accept the concept of training in the ring.

- Set up your dog's crate in an environment where he can relax. Find a quiet, cool place and block his view by covering the sides of the crate where activity is taking place.

- Don't rush to your first competition as soon as your dog knows the equipment. For a fearful dog, the biggest obstacle is emotion. It could take years of positive training, without any punishment, to build positive associations strong enough to override a fearful response.

- Train for long-term success, not for the immediate goal. Don't become a "greedy trainer" or a "greedy competitor." If you have a fearful dog, you will forever need to put the dog's emotional needs first. Stop training and competition well before the dog becomes tired or bored. Always end a training session on something easy. If the club allows, use the competition ring to train. That is, do a few obstacles successfully, and then leave the ring with lots of praise and reward for the dog. If the environment is uncomfortable for the dog, don't practice or compete there.

- Don't expect training to cure your dog's problems. But do expect (over time) the quality of your life, and his, to improve dramatically. And do expect the bond you have with your dog to strengthen.

points so much that she began seeking out the A-frame and dogwalk.

“Because my goal was to build confidence, I rewarded everything Spryte offered, as long as it was not fearful behavior. It worked. Spryte began to show excitement in the car when we neared the agility-training site, and confidence when she was in the training arena. As the months passed, she began to look like a true agility dog.”

### Dealing with setbacks

Spryte’s progress was not always unremitting. One night as they were training, a ranch hand started the diesel engine of a Mac truck. The noise was sudden, loud, and startling. Spryte shut down. She became frenetic, looking for a place to hide, body tucked low in an attempt to become invisible. After the truck left, Chris tried to bring her out of it, but Spryte was unable to cope, so Chris took her home.

The following week when they neared the agility site, Spryte curled herself up in her crate. Fearful, she refused to come out of her crate, so they sat together in the car, watching the other dogs run, and Chris focused once again on counter-conditioning, feeding her bits of meat and cheese just for being there. Spryte took the food timidly at first, and then began to relax a little. But she still would not leave her crate.

“It was very depressing; I was starting all over again,” describes Chris. “My goals of a competition dog were, once again, slipping away. I thought about quitting. I had put so much work in building her confidence, and here we were back to square one. I decided to continue agility for a couple of months and, if she didn’t bounce back, we would leave the sport. After all, we were doing this for fun, and right then, it wasn’t fun for either one of us.”

Over the next few weeks, Spryte gradually became less fearful. Kathryn avoided using the teeter during that time so Spryte wouldn’t have a setback. Once her fears had subsided, her confidence bounced right back to where it had been before the event. Because Chris had worked through the problem, the bond between them seemed to grow. Lisa had given sound training advice that paid off over the months and years: Set short, attainable goals, and look at the behavior modification program from a long-term perspective.

After four years of agility training with Kathryn, Spryte was doing beautifully in practice and Chris was learning how to



**Today, Spryte flies over agility obstacles with the same joy and confidence she displays in her daily life with Chris and Rich Bond. And Chris has gone on to pursue further training experiences and credentials. Photo copyright Dave Mills.**

give verbal and physical cues smoothly to keep her confidence high. But she was so worried that Spryte would rush and bark at the agility judge that she avoided entering a competition. Finally, Kathryn convinced her to enter Spryte in a small competition where Kathryn would be judging some of the classes.

### The payoff

On the day of the competition, Kathryn made sure all the judges, ring stewards, and helpers knew that Spryte was fearful and not to approach her. Kathryn even saved Chris a parking spot in a quiet, shady spot, away from everyone else.

Kathryn was judging the first round. The plan was to walk Spryte into the ring, do a couple of obstacles, then mark (i.e., “Yes!”), and leave the ring to give her loads of treats. Chris’s goal was for both of them to completely forget about the dogs and people around them and play together, just for a moment. Chris describes their breakthrough:

“I walked Spryte in and out of the barn to introduce her to the area before our round, working some freestyle moves and giving her treats. She was tense. Then, when our turn came, we went straight into the ring, treat-less and leash-free. I said, ‘Ready, go over!’ Spryte flew forward, sailed over the jump, right past a helper – without even a glance – and up the dog-

walk. We connected at the base of the dogwalk, and then she was off over the next jump, tunnel, and so on. Before I knew it, she’d done the entire course, about 15 obstacles – fast, happy, and absolutely connected with me the whole way. I threw my arms up with a big “Yes!” as she sailed over the last jump. She responded by bouncing on her hind legs. She was still playing. I was absolutely amazed.”

Chris and Spryte had done far more than achieve their goal. They not only made it through the entire course, but won first place in her height group. Spryte was also the third fastest out of 17 dogs in the Novice class. And she achieved a qualifying round toward her first agility title.

Chris and Spryte ran two more perfect courses, winning yet another first place and qualifying for points toward two titles. Most importantly, she was able to play agility happily among unfamiliar people and dogs, in an unfamiliar place. The classical conditioning of the agility obstacles was so strong that it transferred to a new location better than Chris expected.

“Throughout the day, several people commented how well we were doing for our first time. That was pretty cool. Especially given the true ‘obstacles’ we had tackled together. Of course, even if she hadn’t done all that, Spryte is still very

**Spryte’s story is continued on page 22**

# Generally Well-Trained

*What “generalization” is, and how to teach it to your dog.*

BY PAT MILLER

**B**ut he does it at home!” Usually uttered in a plaintive wail, this common dog owner complaint is often heard in dog training classes, among other places. When one of my students says this, I reassure them that I believe their dog probably *does* perform the behavior in question with a high degree of reliability in the comfort of his own home. The fact that he won’t do it in class is usually a *generalization* issue; the owner has only practiced the behavior with her dog at home. He doesn’t *know* he’s supposed to do it other places.

According to authors Mary Burch, PhD, and Jon Bailey, PhD, in their excellent book, *How Dogs Learn*, “Generalization occurs when behaviors are seen in contexts other than those in which they were originally trained.” Simply stated, this means practicing with your dog in different places, at different times of the day, under different conditions, in the presence of different people, dogs, and a variety of other distractions.

People who compete with their dogs in obedience, rally, and other canine sports – at least those who compete successfully – understand how important this is. They call it “proofing” when they help their dog generalize his show ring behaviors to new and distracting environments. They make

sure to “proof” their dog for typical show ring distractions such as wild applause, metal chairs clattering to the floor, flash bulbs going off, and a dog owner shouting conflicting cues in a commanding tone in the next ring.

You may not need to take it to that extreme, but if you want your dog to perform his behaviors as well in public as he does in the privacy of your own home, you will need to help him learn how to generalize.

## Monitor your expectations

If you teach your dog new behaviors such as “sit” only at home in the den on the rug in front of the coffee table, your dog will believe that “Sit!” means “sit in the den on the rug in front of the coffee table.” That’s it. If you never ask him to sit anywhere else, that will be the sum total of his “Sit” association.

It’s not fair, then, for you to get irritated, frustrated, angry, or annoyed and claim he’s “blowing you off” if he fails to sit when you ask him to do it in the waiting room of your vet’s clinic surrounded by a barking Pomeranian, two cats yowling in their carriers, and a parrot squawking loudly on his owner’s shoulder. Even *well-trained* dogs might have difficulty responding to the cue in that environment! If that seems too obvious, it’s just as unfair to

## What you can do . . .

- Make a commitment to help your dog generalize *all* his good manners behaviors.
- Create your own custom list of generalization variables.
- Bring treats (or other rewards) with you everywhere you take your dog.



expect him to sit the first time you ask him to sit in your kitchen, or on the sidewalk in front of your own house, regardless of how well he responds to that cue in the den on the rug in front of the coffee table.

Trainers frequently say, “Dogs don’t generalize well.” What we mean is that dogs don’t generalize “operantly” trained behaviors (you do this, you get a cookie) without some assistance from their humans. The good news is that your dog can become quite proficient at generalization, if you take the time to show him how.



**Sandi Thompson, a positive trainer in Berkeley, California, works with Turtle, her terrier-mix, outside a playground.**



**In a new environment, you may have to initially reintroduce a lure, and increase your rate of reinforcement.**



**Turtle ignores the waves and the shore birds, focusing only on Sandi. Hurray! Turtle has generalized “sit” well.**



## How to generalize

Generalization really is quite simple. To start, make lists of all the variable conditions in which you might ask your dog to respond to your cue for a particular behavior (see “Generalization Variables,” right). Train that behavior to a high degree of reliability – 80 percent or better – in the den on the rug in front of the coffee table. Take “Sit,” for example. When your dog will promptly and consistently sit at least 8 out of 10 times when you ask him to, you’re ready to start generalizing.

Add a variable. Ask a friend to stroll through the den, and cue your dog to sit. (Still on that rug in front of the coffee table!) If he does it, click and treat (if you are not familiar with this phrase, see the Review sidebar, below). If not, prompt the sit with a food lure or a hand motion, to remind him what “Sit!” means. When he does it, click and treat. Repeat this exercise with your strolling partner until your dog responds reliably even with the distraction of a moving person.

Now add a different variable. Have another volunteer bounce a ball on the den floor, opposite side of the room. Cue the sit, prompt if necessary, click and treat when he does. When he’s reliable with the bouncing ball, try changing the venue – move him several feet off the rug and work up to reliability, then add strolling spouse *and* bouncing ball.

Okay, there’s a whole world out there and you and your dog haven’t even left the den yet. Your next step is to practice his sits

## Generalization Variables

There are an infinite number of environmental variables you can find to help your dog generalize his trained behaviors. You don’t have to generalize him to *all* of them, just *lots* of them. We’re not giving you a comprehensive list here, just some ideas to get you started. We fully expect you to add more variables to your own list. Just remember, until your dog gets the hang of generalization, you may need to prompt him to help him perform the behavior you ask for, each time you introduce another variable.

**PLACES:** (Note: *If it doesn’t say “no dogs” on the door, I take mine in. If asked to leave, I do so, promptly and politely.*) Bank, office supply store, hardware store, park (if dogs are allowed), downtown sidewalks, laundromat, add your own . . .

**PEOPLE:** The carrier delivering your mail, people outside the fence during a Little League game, neighborhood teenagers, bicyclist wearing a helmet, next-door neighbor washing her car, kids playing hide-and-seek, parent pushing a stroller, Girl Scouts selling cookies, Santa ringing his bell, add your own . . .

**CONDITIONS:** Dew on the grass, gravel, mud, snow on the ground, on a hill, in shallow water, wind, rain, cold, heat, add your own . . .

**OTHER DISTRACTIONS:** Dogs, squirrels, leaves blowing, cats, motorcycles, trucks or construction equipment, horses, live music, add your own . . .

**TIME OF DAY:** Early morning, mid-morning, noon . . . You get the idea!

in various rooms of the house, first without, and then with, additional distractions. During this phase, you can also generalize him to your own body positions: sometimes ask for the sit while he’s facing you, sometimes next to you and behind you, and sometimes when you’re sitting, or even lying down.

## Taking it on the road

But you’ve only just begun; you’re still in your house! When your dog will sit consistently and reliably anywhere *inside*, it’s time to go *outside*. Ready for your walk around the block? Have your dog sit at the door – a “Say please” good manners behavior that is appropriate to practice anywhere, anytime. When the two of you step outside, ask for a sit on the front stoop. Prompt if necessary, click and treat when he responds. Ask for sits several times as you make your way around the block, making sure to prompt him if he needs help, and rewarding him each time he sits.

As your dog becomes more and more responsive to your sit cue in an environment with infinite possibilities for distraction (other dogs, squirrels, cars, bicycles, cats, mail carriers, baby strollers, joggers, etc.), you can gradually start decreasing the rate of reinforcement. Sometimes ask for a sit, *praise* him when he does it, then ask for another, and click and treat when he responds. By decreasing the rate of reinforcement you make the sit response *very durable* (resistant to extinction). He’ll learn that if he keeps playing

### TOPIC FOR REVIEW: “CLICK AND TREAT”

You see it a lot in WDJ, and if you’ve ever taken a class with a positive trainer, you’ve probably heard it frequently, too. But if you are new to training with positive reinforcement, you might be wondering: What’s this “click and treat” thing?

First, we often use the phrase “click” to represent the use of a “reward marker” – a word or sound that you make at the *instant* your dog exhibits a desirable behavior. A plastic device called a clicker, available in most pet supply stores, is commonly used as a reward marker because the click! sound is so distinctive and consistent. Reward markers can also consist of the word “Yes!” (or any other word you choose), a “mouth click,” the click of a ball-point pen, or any other consistent, distinct sound. The click or “Yes” (or other reward marker) is a promise to the dog that a treat is forthcoming, and every click earns a treat.

Positive trainers use food treats as rewards because food is a primary motivator – something all living things need to survive – and because a dog can quickly eat his treat and get back to the fun of training. It is possible to train without reward markers and treats by using toys, play, petting, and/or praise as rewards; but in our experience, it’s less effective and less efficient.

When you see “click and treat” in WDJ’s text, it’s shorthand for “Mark the desired behavior with a consistent signal at the very moment the dog exhibits it, and then quickly deliver a food treat or other reward that is valuable to your dog.”

Generalization is continued on page 22

# Drop the Cough

*Natural, gentle remedies to prevent or treat kennel cough.*

BY CJ PUOTINEN

Anyone who's heard it will recognize the dry, hacking, something's-stuck-in-my-throat cough that won't quit. It's the signature symptom of canine infectious tracheobronchitis, also known as Bordetellosis, Bordetella, and most commonly as kennel cough. Whatever you call it, tracheobronchitis is one of the world's most widespread canine diseases.

Like the common cold in humans, tracheobronchitis is highly contagious, rarely fatal, and runs its course in a few days. Fortunately, there are several ways to help make canine patients more comfortable, speed recovery, and prevent future infections.

Tracheobronchitis is called kennel cough because of its association with boarding kennels, animal shelters, veterinary waiting rooms, grooming salons, and other areas where dogs congregate in close quarters. It can strike dogs of any age but is



**Shelters and kennels are infamous for spreading the viruses and bacteria that can cause "kennel cough." However, outbreaks are not necessarily due to poor disinfection practices. Stress and crowding can make a dog's immune system vulnerable to this infection, which is much like the common cold in humans.**

## What you can do . . .

- Watch for symptoms of tracheobronchitis in puppies, recently rescued dogs, and dogs under stress.
- Soothe a coughing dog's sore throat with honey, herbal teas, or cough preparations.
- Keep track of your dog's symptoms in case they worsen or last longer than 10 days.
- Have natural preventives, treatments, and immune-boosters on hand to help prevent or treat the illness.



most common in puppies, whose immune systems are still developing, and adult dogs with conditions that impair immune function.

Although often referred to as Bordetella, tracheobronchitis isn't caused by *Bordetella bronchiseptica* bacteria alone. Several infectious agents contribute to the condition, primarily parainfluenza. Other viruses that may be involved include canine adenovirus, reovirus, and the canine herpes virus.

When Bordetella and parainfluenza combine to cause tracheobronchitis, symptoms appear within a week of exposure (usually after three to four days) and continue for about 10 days. Even after symptoms disappear, the recovering patient remains contagious, shedding Bordetella bacteria for up to 14 weeks.

In mild cases, infected dogs remain active and alert, with good appetite. In more

severe cases, symptoms may progress toward pneumonia and include lethargy, fever, and a loss of appetite.

The main symptom of tracheobronchitis – its cough – has been described as unproductive, throat-clearing, goose-honking, hacking, dry, harsh, gut-wrenching, gagging, wheezing, and croup-like – not to mention annoying to the dogs who can't stop coughing and the humans they live with. Vigorous exercise triggers it, but even resting dogs may cough every few minutes throughout the day.

The cough is caused by irritation and damage to the lining of the trachea and upper bronchi. In the trachea, exposed nerve endings are aggravated by the passage of air over damaged tissue as the dog inhales and exhales.

Just as the virus that causes the common cold is carried by water vapor, dust, and air, the bacteria and viruses that cause

tracheobronchitis spread in all directions. When inhaled by a susceptible dog, they attach to the lining of upper airway passages whose warm, moist conditions allow them to reproduce and eventually damage the cells they infect.

## Risk factors

Some people catch frequent colds and others never get sick. Some dogs are susceptible to tracheobronchitis and others never get it, even after repeated exposure.

According to Wendy C. Brooks, DVM, Educational Director of VeterinaryPartner.com, “The normal respiratory tract has substantial safeguards against invading infectious agents. The most important of these is probably what is called the mucociliary escalator.”

Cilia are tiny hairlike structures that protrude from the cells that line the respiratory tract. They are covered with a protective coat of mucus, and they beat in a coordinated fashion. As viruses, bacteria, and other debris become trapped in the sticky mucus, the cilia move everything up (hence the escalator analogy) toward the throat, where it can be coughed up or swallowed.

Conditions that damage the mucociliary escalator include shipping stress, crowding stress, heavy dust exposure, exposure to cigarette smoke, viruses, and poor ventilation. “Without this protective mechanism,” says Dr. Brooks, “invading bacteria, especially *Bordetella bronchiseptica*, may simply march down the airways unimpeded.”

Poorly ventilated, crowded conditions increase the odds of contracting tracheobronchitis, but dogs can catch the disease almost anywhere. All they need is exposure to a dog who has an active infection or is recovering from one – or to the viruses and bacteria an infected dog left behind.

## Treatment

Most veterinarians treat tracheobronchitis the way physicians treat the common cold. They let it run its course while keeping the patient comfortable. Some veterinarians routinely prescribe antibiotics, which are effective against bacteria, thus addressing part of the infection. But because antibiotics have no effect on viruses, this treatment is not a cure, and most vets save antibiotics for more serious conditions, such as the secondary infections that sometimes develop in dogs with tracheobronchitis.

For partial relief of symptoms and to help the dog feel more comfortable, minor cases are often treated with nonprescription cough remedies such as Robitussin (dextromethorphan). Recommended for chronic, dry, unproductive coughing, Robitussin should not be used for moist or productive coughs. Products that contain acetaminophen or caffeine should not be given to dogs.

Prescription cough suppressants and most antibiotics are reserved for cases in which a fever develops, symptoms last longer than a few days, or the cough becomes more severe.

## It might be something else

Tracheobronchitis usually clears up on its own without complications. If it doesn't, there may be a secondary bacterial infection (such as pneumonia), or the problem may be due to something entirely else entirely. Dogs cough for many reasons.

For example, dogs can create their own tracheal irritation by pulling on the leash. A body harness with a leash attachment in front of the chest or on the back instead of the collar can prevent this cough-inducing problem.

Dogs with heart disease, including congestive heart failure and heartworm infestations, often cough after exercise or excitement. Heartworm disease is endemic in some parts of the country, and less common in others, but is a possibility in any area where mosquitoes are common. Congestive heart failure, which occurs when the heart's valves leak, is most common in middle-aged or older dogs, including small breeds.

Coughs due to tracheal collapse can be triggered by drinking water.

Diseases of the larynx or esophagus can cause coughing after eating. A damaged larynx may not close properly, allowing swallowed food to enter the trachea. Paralysis of the larynx is more common in large breed dogs.

An abnormally dilated esophagus may allow food to pool, then pass back up to the mouth and down into the lungs, causing infection and coughing. Tracheal collapse is most common in middle-aged and older, overweight small-breed dogs.

The cough resulting from tracheobronchitis is usually dry. A moist cough sounds that way because of accumulated fluid in the lungs or airways. The fluid can be water, blood, or pus. Hunting dogs and dogs who spend most of their time outdoors

may inhale seeds, pollen, grasses, or other foreign matter that travels through the nose to the lung, causing pyothorax, an infection that produces a large amount of pus.

Dogs of any age can develop allergic lung disease from exposure to dust, pollen, or smoke.

While lung cancer is unusual in dogs, it too can cause coughing. Short-nosed breeds exposed to second-hand smoke and any dog exposed to asbestos may be at risk.

Pneumonia and other secondary bacterial infections can develop in pet store puppies with tracheobronchitis and in older dogs with weak immune systems or other illnesses.

Any dog who doesn't recover quickly from what appears to be tracheobronchitis should receive a thorough veterinary exam. To help your veterinarian reach an accurate diagnosis, keep track of your dog's symptoms, noting on a calendar or notebook the date of each symptom and its description.

## It's not the flu

Three years ago, canine flu seemed to be an epidemic affecting dogs of every description (see “Fending Off the Flu,” WDJ, December 2005).

The cough produced by the canine flu virus is soft and moist, and it's usually accompanied by a high fever and nasal discharge, none of which are symptoms of tracheobronchitis.

Fortunately, of the strategies that help prevent and treat tracheobronchitis work for canine flu as well as other infectious diseases. The herbs, supplements, and treatments described here can help your dog stay healthy when exposed to many different viruses and bacteria.

## Vaccination

Most boarding facilities require proof of Bordetella vaccination for dogs who will be visiting. However, because there are many strains of Bordetella, and because no vaccine protects every patient, some immunized dogs contract tracheobronchitis despite being vaccinated. Veterinary recommendations range from vaccinating every four months to not at all.

“There are two kinds of Bordetella vaccine,” says Stacey Hershman, DVM, a holistic veterinarian in Hastings-on-Hudson, New York. “The intranasal vaccine is highly effective and very safe since it is not systemic but goes down the

nose into the throat. I do not recommend the injectable vaccine since it can cause negative side effects like lethargy, fever, vomiting, or diarrhea.

“I never vaccinate animals more than once a year for kennel cough, and then only if they are going to a boarding kennel. Kennel cough is not fatal in adult dogs, who usually board, therefore it would be over-vaccinating in my opinion to do it more than once a year. Healthy, strong immune systems are resistant and do not catch it, which is another reason not to vaccinate unless the dog is going to a kennel that requires it.”

No matter what your dog’s vaccination status, a few natural preventives can’t hurt, especially whenever your dog is exposed to dogs with active or recent infections.

## Honey and coconut oil

The single treatment for tracheobronchitis that conventional veterinarians, holistic vets, and caregivers of every description agree on is honey. Honey soothes the throat, but it does far more than that.

As noted in “A Honey of a Cure” (September 2007), all honey has disinfecting properties. One of the most expensive honeys sold in the United States and around the world is manuka honey from New Zealand, where bees harvest nectar from the manuka bush (*Leptospermum scoparium*). Twenty years of research at the University of Waikato show that manuka honey has impressive antibacterial, antimicrobial, antiviral, antiseptic, anti-inflammatory, and antifungal properties. While all honeys share these properties, they are especially pronounced in manuka honey.

Most dogs enjoy honey’s sweet taste, so it’s easy to feed from a spoon or, if the honey is thick, you can roll it into a treat-sized ball. Honey can be fed by itself, mixed with powdered herbs for additional benefit, or added to herbal teas that double as cough syrups.

There is no specific recommended dose, as both larger and smaller doses are safe and effective, but for most dogs ½ to 1 teaspoon of honey three or four times per day works well.

In recent years, coconut oil has become a popular supplement for people and pets (see “Crazy about Coconut Oil,” October 2005). Because its medium-chain fatty acids kill harmful bacteria, viruses, yeast, fungi, and parasites, its advocates call it an all-purpose infection fighter. As coconut oil expert and book author Bruce Fife, ND,



**Honey and coconut oil are powerful health-boosters for you and your dog. They are also inexpensive and easy to find in your local health food store.**

explains, “Taking coconut oil daily is like a daily inoculation. It will help prevent your dog from becoming infected.”

The recommended maintenance dose is 1 teaspoon coconut oil per 10 pounds of body weight per day in divided doses, always starting with smaller amounts and increasing gradually. When your dog has been exposed to tracheobronchitis or any other infection, the dose can be doubled. The only adverse effects of a too-high dose of coconut oil are loose, greasy stools and a temporary feeling of fatigue (thought to result from detoxification). Most dogs adjust easily to a coconut oil regimen, and because they’re usually fond of the taste, coconut oil can be fed from a spoon or added to your dog’s food.

Honey and coconut oil work well together. Combine these two infection fighters for both the treatment and prevention of tracheobronchitis and other contagious diseases.

## Herbs for tracheobronchitis

Most natural foods markets and pet supply stores sell herbal products that help coughing dogs.

Licorice (*Glycyrrhiza glabra* or *G. uralensis*) is a favorite of herbalist Juliette de Bairacli Levy. In her book, *The Complete Herbal Handbook for the Dog and Cat*, which describes her “Natural Rearing” approach to pet care, Levy recommends making a strong infusion (steeped tea) by combining 1 tablespoon dried licorice root

with 2 cups cold water, bringing it to a boil, removing it from heat, and letting it stand until room temperature. Add 1 teaspoon honey to each tablespoon of licorice tea and give 2 tablespoons to the dog before meals. Small dogs and puppies can take less and large dogs more, but precise measurements aren’t necessary. Refrigerate leftover tea for up to five days.

Levy also recommends as cough remedies teas made of sage leaves (*Salvia officinalis*), blackberry leaves (*Rubus spp.*), elder blossom (*Sambucus nigra*), and thyme (*Thymus vulgaris*). “Sage is the best,” she writes.

Apitherapy Honey Wild Cherry Bark Syrup from Honey Gardens in Vermont, sold in natural foods markets, contains raw honey, apple cider vinegar, wild cherry bark (*Prunus virginiana* or *P. serotina*), elecampane root (*Inula helenium*), propolis (a bee product), rosehips (*Rosa spp.*), ginger root (*Zingiber officinale*), licorice root, slippery elm bark (*Ulmus fulva*), and the essential oils of lemon, peppermint, and eucalyptus.

All of these ingredients are traditionally used to support upper respiratory health and soothe sore throats. The human adult dose is 1 teaspoon every other hour while symptoms persist. Adjust the dose for your dog’s weight, and to make the product more palatable, try mixing it with honey and/or coconut oil or add it to a small amount of interesting food.

Kennel-Koff, an herbal product from Amber Technology, contains infection-fighting olive leaf (*Olea Europaea*), mustard seed (*Brassica spp.*), black seed (*Nigella sativa*), and pau d’arco (*Tabebuia impetiginosa*).

Described as an antimicrobial that aids upper respiratory infections, Kennel-Koff is given orally four times per day for up to 10 days. The recommended dose for most dogs, based on weight, is 15 drops at a time. According to the manufacturer, this product is designed to stimulate immunity, rid the lungs of congestion, kill viruses and bacteria, soothe digestion, rid the body of free radicals, and protect pets who are exposed to illness.

Australian herbalist Robert McDowell’s favorite treatment for tracheobronchitis is a blend of rosehips, garlic (*Allium sativum*), fenugreek (*Trigonella fornum*), marshmallow, elecampane, coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), kelp (*Laminaria digitata*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), and mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*), which he makes in

a base of apple cider vinegar.

“All this sounds like a lot,” he says, “but the old-fashioned way of treating chest and respiratory infections works well. These herbs provide important minerals and vitamin C, and they act as healing tonics, expectorants, and lymphatic supplements. The result is an herbal mix that gets rid of the cough, and by continuing for several weeks after the cough has gone, it builds up the immunity. I recommend that it be kept on hand and given to the whole kennel at any signs of cough showing up, at which time all dogs should be given a short course. One dog recovered quickly when given this blend after six prescriptions for antibiotics failed.”

Juliette de Baircli Levy’s famous Natural Rearing (NR) Herbal Compounds tablets contain garlic, rue (*Ruta graveolens*), sage, thyme, eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus globulus*), wormwood (*Artemisia absinthium*), and vegetable charcoal.

Levy recommends giving dogs 3 to 6 tablets daily to help fight and prevent disease. “These tablets maintain health and promote a cure in the sick,” she explains. “Use them daily for prevention, especially before and after your animal is exposed to any public place where other animals have been.”

Holistic health consultant Marina Zacharias recommends Bioprin, a Chinese blend of 21 herbs.

“This formula is the best for any type of viral infection,” she says, “as well as helping the overall immune system, and it acts like a natural anti-inflammatory. Combined with the kennel cough nosode (a homeopathic remedy designed to help increase the body’s defense against the infection), Bioprin usually brings quick relief, often within one to three days.

“Most of the people I work with have multiple-dog households, so we give the remedies to everyone preventatively whenever we know there has been exposure or when one of the household members has contracted the infection. The results are great as no one else in the house gets sick.”

## Clearing the air

When Faith Thanas, an aromatherapist who lives in Leicester, Massachusetts, adopted a Doberman Pinscher from Louisiana one year after Hurricane Katrina, Sasha arrived in a van carrying 20 rescued dogs. A few days later, she started coughing.

To help soothe Sasha’s throat, Thanas mixed a blend of essential oils to spray in the air around the dog. She started with Ravensare (*Cinnamomum camphora*), one of the “must have” essential oils listed by Kristen Leigh Bell in her book *Holistic Aromatherapy for Animals*. As Bell explains, this gentle and tolerable antiviral, antibacterial essential oil supports the immune system and has tonifying effects.

Thanas then added *Eucalyptus radiata*, the gentlest of the many eucalyptus varieties available. It is known for its antiviral, anti-inflammatory, and expectorant properties. Bell writes, “Due to its gentleness, it is very appropriate for use in blends for animals for congestion, and it makes an excellent room air cleaner, deodorizer, and flea repellent.”



**Faith Thanas’ Doberman, Sasha, was a Katrina dog. After being shipped in a van with about 20 other rescued dogs, she developed a severe cough. Thanas, an aromatherapist, developed Cough Drop! to treat Sasha’s cough.**

*Eucalyptus globulus*, the next ingredient, is the eucalyptus commonly found in chest rubs, cough drops, and cough syrups. It has a fresh antiseptic fragrance and, when inhaled, acts as a decongestant.

Thanas added Spike Lavender (*Lavendula latifolia*) for its powerful antibacterial properties.

After diluting the essential oils, Thanas used a spray bottle to mist the air around Sasha. “The results were instantaneous,” she recalls. “She stopped coughing, she was able to breathe, and she was so much more comfortable.”

Thanas wasted no time adding Cough Drop! to her AromaDog line of aromatherapy pet products. She describes it as an all-natural cough suppressant that works quickly, helps open breathing passages, acts as an expectorant (antitussive), soothes the chest and respiratory system (balsamic), reduces swelling (antihistamine), helps reduce excess mucus secretion (anticatarrh), and acts as an immune system stimulant.

“The bottle should be shaken well for at least three seconds before use,” she says. “Repeat the application every three hours. In households with other animals, or in boarding kennels, spraying the air, bedding, and other surfaces can help keep the illness from spreading.”

Another way to disperse essential oils into the air is with a diffuser. Aromatherapy supply companies, such as Aromatherapeutix, sell different models. A nebulizing diffuser consists of a nebulizer (glass receptacle) attached to the hose of a small air compressor. Drops of essential oil placed in the nebulizer are atomized into tiny droplets that are sprayed into the air.

Bell notes that disinfecting essential oils dispersed by a nebulizing diffuser effectively clean the air, deodorize the room, and help clear up and prevent contagious illnesses.

A new type of ultrasonic cold mist diffuser runs silently (unlike nebulizing diffusers with their noisy air compressors) and can be set for constant or intermittent dispersal. To use, simply fill

the unit with water, add a few drops of essential oil, and turn it on. Buttons on the unit control the frequency and duration of misting. Simpler models, such as the SpaMist diffuser, run constantly. Ultrasonic diffusers have become popular accessories for aromatherapists and those who use essential oils.

Any blend of disinfecting essential oils, such as Ravensare, *Eucalyptus radiata*, or Spike Lavender, can be dispersed into the air with a diffuser.

Canine nutritional consultant Linda Arndt has a favorite remedy for clearing the air and helping dogs recover from and avoid respiratory infections. The Nzymes product Ox-E-Drops (not to be confused with Oxy Drops, an eye drop from a different manufacturer) contains sodium chlorite, which breaks down to form chlorine dioxide, a microbicide.

To use in a warm steam vaporizer (an inexpensive appliance sold in pharmacies), mix 1 teaspoon Ox-E-Drops Concentrate with one gallon of water. For severe cases, use up to 1 tablespoon. In a small bathroom, other enclosed room, or in a crate covered by a sheet, direct the vapors

toward the dog's head, keeping the vaporizer far enough away so that its hot steam doesn't pose a safety hazard.

"Allow your pet to breathe the vapors for 15 to 20 minutes each hour for four to five hours," says Arndt. "Repeat the procedure for two to three days until symptoms improve."

### It's in the water

Ox-E-drops can be added to drinking water as well as sprayed in the air. "Use 1 drop per 20 pounds of body weight, diluted in 1 to 3 teaspoons of water," says Arndt, "and give this amount three times per day for all types of illness or respiratory problems."

Faith Thanas at AromaDog created Lickity Spritzer, a blend of colloidal silver and lemon balm (*Melissa officinalis*) hydrosol, to help keep dogs healthy while traveling as well as at home.

Colloidal silver, a suspension of submicroscopic metallic silver particles in a colloidal base, is promoted as an all-purpose disinfectant and infection-fighter.

In her book *Hydrosols: The Next Aromatherapy*, Suzanne Catty writes that

the hydrosol (distilled flower water) of lemon balm makes a good prophylactic in flu and allergy season and has both immune-stimulating and infection-fighting properties.

"Together," says Thanas, "these two super-power ingredients knock out the potential for infection from bacteria, fungi, and viruses, stimulating the immune system and emotionally calming your pet. Lickity Spritzer purifies your pet's yucky water bowl so it becomes a clean source of good health. This product is great for dogs or cats and multiple pet households."

### Special supplements

According to San Diego veterinarian Stephen R. Blake, DVM, the most important defense against any infection, whether fungal, viral, or bacterial, is the gastrointestinal system.

Dr. Blake's favorite supplement for immune support is bovine colostrum from New Zealand, where all cattle are pasture-fed and organically raised. Colostrum is the "first milk" a cow produces after

**Kennel cough is continued on page 22**

## Resources Mentioned in This Article

### PRODUCTS

**Apitherapy Honey Wild Cherry Bark Syrup.** Honey Gardens Apiaries, Inc., Ferrisburgh, VT. (802) 877-6766 or honeygardens.com

**Aromatherapy diffusers** from Aromatherapeutix, Los Alamitos, CA. (800) 308-6284 or aromatherapeutix.com

**Bioprin.** JBNI Biodrux Products, Bothell, WA. (425) 408-9091 or jbni.us. Sold at naturalrearing.com and other retailers.

**Bovine Colostrum.** Sedona Labs, Cottonwood, AZ. (888) 816-8804 or sedonalabspro.com

**Cough Drop!** and **Lickety Spritzer.** Aromadog, Leicester, MA. (508) 892-9330 or aromadog.com

**Kennel-Koff.** Amber Technology, Lake Point, UT. (801) 966-8895 or (877) 727-8243 or ambertech.com

**Manuka honey.** Manuka Honey USA, Aurora, CO. (720) 524 3237 or manukahoneyusa.com

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**Nzymes Ox-E-Drops,** Las Vegas, NV. (702) 228-0097 or nzymes.com



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**Linda Arndt,** GreatDaneLady.com, GrDaneLady@aol.com

**Stephen Blake, DVM.** San Diego, CA. (858) 566-3688 or thepetwhisperer.com

**Wendy C. Brooks, DVM.** VeterinaryPartner.com

**Bruce Fife, ND.** Coconut Research Center, Colorado Springs, CO. coconutresearchcenter.org

**Stacey Hershman, DVM, PC.** Hastings-on-Hudson, NY. (914) 478-4100 or naturalvetforpets.com

**Robert McDowell,** Australia. International call 61-2-6331-3937, herbal-dogkeeping.com

**Faith Thanas,** AromaDog. Leicester, MA. (508) 892-9330 or aromadog.com

**Marina Zacharias,** Natural Rearing, Jacksonville, OR. (541) 899-2080 or naturalrearing.com

### BOOKS

***The Complete Herbal Handbook for the Dog and Cat,*** by Juliette de Bairacli Levy. Faber & Faber, 1992

***Holistic Aromatherapy for Animals,*** by Kristen Leigh Bell. Findhorn Press, 2002

***Hydrosols: The Next Aromatherapy,*** by Suzanne Catty. Healing Arts Press, 2001

# A Nocturnal Dog

*We're trying to switch our nighttime adventurer to a daytime shift.*

BY NANCY KERNS

Some of my friends have been horrified to learn that my husband and I have chosen, so far, to allow our new dog, Otto, to spend his nights outdoors. From some of our friends' reactions, you'd think we were turning him loose in the Alaskan wilderness each winter, but the fact is, the decision was made in response to Otto's own wishes – and our own pressing need for sleep! Allow me to explain.

As I've hinted before, Otto is quite nocturnal. Left to his own devices, he would sleep through most of the day, and do his very best to party all night. To his dismay, he's alone in the wee hours. This is incredibly *boring*, but he's game for the challenge of finding things to do, even with so few activity partners at night!

On the few nights when we did try to



**Otto on his last surviving bed; he chewed up all the cushy foam-filled beds. He's taken a towel off the clothesline and dragged it around, but did not chew it up. Due to his busy nighttime schedule, he always looks sleepy in the morning.**

## What you can do . . .

- Try to manage your dog's environment, so he has little opportunity to practice unwanted behaviors.
- Exercise him daily, as thoroughly as his fitness permits. A tired dog is *always* a better-behaved dog.
- Never punish your dog after he comes when called, no matter what horrid thing he was doing when you called him. You want to him to come enthusiastically whenever you call, without the slightest reservation.
- Provide young dogs with lots of chew toys, play toys, and short, positive training sessions.



have him sleep in the house, he paced, whined, chewed stuff up, and nudged me repeatedly (seemingly right after he had gotten a drink of water, and had water all over his beard, every time) as I slept. When we gave him toys and chew-items, he threw them around, clunking them into the walls and furniture. Then he paced and whined some more.

Also, he barked. Because it's *hot* where we live, from May through October, and because we aren't big on air conditioning, we open the house up at night and position fans to bring in cooler air and drive the hot air out of the house. We have screens on the windows, and security screen doors – which means that Otto can hear and see anything that is going on outside at night, but he can't go investigate. So he barked with his big, booming bark, perhaps as a guarding behavior, but also in frustration. He wanted *out*.

It didn't take us long – just a few nearly sleepless nights – to agree that, yes, Otto can go play outside at night. With all the doors and windows open we can still hear

when he barks at something – which, thank goodness, is less and less all the time. Because I'm a mom, and have experience with jumping up out of bed to check on a crying baby (albeit 16 years ago . . . these reflexes don't ever go away, I think), I'm the one who leaps out of bed and goes to the appropriate door to look out and say, "Hey Otto . . . What are you doing?"

## Busy, busy, busy

Mostly, what he's doing is, you know, keeping busy. He looks for random objects to augment his growing toy collection. He collects shoes, tools, and sticks – and of course, anything that we've witlessly left untied down – and this fills an hour or two. Tossing those items in the air and carrying them around the yard takes up most of the night.

He chews *some* things during his nighttime adventures – weird things. He has chewed the arm of a plastic deck chair and the edge of a wooden bench. He loves chewing sticks and scraps from the lumber pile, but his favorite thing to chew is a

foam-filled dog bed – yum! He’s chewed up three beds, which I find odd because he also has several soft stuffed toys, and he hasn’t chewed even a tiny hole in any of them.

Due to all the foam-bed-ripping, he’s now down to a single bed, a mat-like fleecy thing that he likes dragging around from the front yard to the backyard and back to the front. He likes to chew stuff up while lying on the mat, but he doesn’t sleep on it. When he does sleep, he either curls up in the dirt or in his (now) bare-floored plastic crate. Go figure.

One good thing that has resulted from his item-chewing and -relocation habits: our yard and deck are now very neat. No one leaves anything out, because we have all learned that anything that’s left outside *will* be relocated and might be chewed.

The exception to the tidiness is the potting table by our back door; it’s become heaped with a bunch of stuff we don’t want Otto to chew, hide, or roll through the dirt, including shoes, gardening gloves, a paint brush, a broom, Otto’s leash and car harness, his brush, and the toys we want to preserve (or have taken away at night when his tossing them about wakes us up).

As happy as Otto seems to be as a nocturnal dog, we’re trying to convince him that life on the day shift is more fun. Throughout the day, when I see him snoozing in the shade somewhere, I say,

“Hey Otto! Wake up!” and engage him in an impromptu training session or race around the house. We give him Kong toys with wet food frozen inside (“Kongsicles”) and rawhide chews or bones to chew on. I invite him into my office, and send him back outside at random intervals. Brian calls him into the house, into *his* at-home office. We take him along to the post office – a half block away!

We also have been making him exercise a lot. I often take him for an early morning walk or bike ride; we have easy access to some terrific trails where I can let him off-leash and run ahead of my mountain bike. When we walk along the river that runs through our town, he wades and swims a little. About once a week I take him to a dog park for a couple hours of off-leash play with other dogs. And we take him for a long walk or off-leash run every evening. Tiring him out is tiring us out!

“I think it would be easier to put him on a plane and send him to Europe for a week,” I once told Brian. “Maybe he’d come back with jet lag, and get onto our schedule.” I haven’t entirely ruled this out! Still, no matter what we do to try to exhaust him during the day, at around 9 p.m., mellow Otto visibly transforms into Super Otto! His ears and tail go up, and he starts running laps around the house, a toy in his mouth and not a care in the world. It would be darling, except . . .

## Oh, the barking!

During his first week with us, Otto barked in short bursts practically all night. He barked when leaves fell onto the deck. He barked when trains went by, as they do about five times a night, about four blocks from our home. He barked when police or ambulance sirens were heard in town, and when a loud truck or motorcycle went by. And of course, he barked when he heard human voices, from people walking by or if he heard loud conversation from any of our neighbors’ homes.

But just at night! During the day, he sleeps through *all* of it!

Because we got him from our local shelter and his past is unknown, we weren’t sure if previously he had been treated as a watch dog, and perhaps encouraged to bark; had been neglected and allowed to bark; or had lived in a home that was much less stimulating, perhaps in a remote area. What was clear was that he had *absolutely* no idea that barking at night was not welcome. No matter how excitedly he was barking at something, if I called him, he would turn and run toward me happily.

One of the most basic principles of dog training is that you never, *ever*, punish or scold or treat in any unhappy way a dog who has come when called, no matter what horrid thing the dog had been doing when you called him. I didn’t want to give him any reason to be reluctant to come to me when I called his name.

Because both of us were sleep-deprived and cranky within three days of Otto’s arrival, on the fourth day, we decided to allow him to stay outside at night. And I volunteered to sleep outside, to be able to call him to me as quickly as possible when he barked. The goal was to interrupt the unwanted behavior – keeping him from practicing something we didn’t want him to do – and to give him something else to do, something we’d rather he do, and to reward him for it. I love to camp and sleep outside anyway, and we have a big, private deck on the side of the house where I could sleep unobserved by the neighbors. And I got a bit more sleep than when Otto was pacing in the house.

Every time Otto barked, I’d whistle or call him as softly as I could, and then pat the foam mattress next to me. He’d joyfully romp back to me and dive onto the bed, rolling over for a belly rub. Sometimes I’d get up and give him a rawhide chew, an interactive toy (he enjoys the plush beehive with the bees that can be pulled out of



**Managing a young dog:** An outdoor potting table has become a place to put flip-flops, brooms, gardening gloves, leashes, and dog brushes out of Otto’s reach. The last foam bed we own is chewed, as are the outside corners of his now-paddless crate. Shoes now go into the tub on top of his crate.



various openings), or a food-stuffed Kong. Other times, I'd praise him and pet him for a minute, then fall back to sleep.

Within just a couple of nights, Otto stopped barking at all but the most alarming things: people walking by the house in the middle of the night, and cats. I have to admit I'm probably okay with a dog who woofs a time or two when a person is slinking around my house at 3 a.m., though of course I don't want him barking for longer than that. When I woke to Otto's barking, and I could see or hear a person or people walking by, I'd let him bark a time or two more, and *then* call him. "Good boy," I'd say.

### Stray cats: Our nemesis

Cats are another matter. There are a *lot* of feral cats (and a few wild skunks) that prowl around our riverside town. Prior to Otto's arrival, at least one of the cats had learned how to enter our cat door and eat our cat's food in our kitchen. (This was actually a factor in my husband's sudden decision to get a dog.) Now, with Otto on night patrol, at least one of these cats started hanging out on the sidewalk in front our house, just on the other side of our chain-link fence. Wahoo! Or rather, as Otto puts it, "Wah, woo-woo-woo-woo woo!"

*This*, I don't want. If he could chase cats away silently, I'd be all for it, but this is pretty unlikely. When I call him away from a cat, he comes to me, but the second I take my attention from him, he's amped up to go look for the cat again.

Now, I know from reading 11 years' worth of articles by WDJ's Training Editor, Pat Miller, that one of the major strategies of a positive training program is to manage the dog's environment to prevent him from being rewarded for behaviors you don't want him to repeat. Because we have (weather permitting, for now) allowed him to spend the night outside, we've eliminated "putting him in the house" as a viable option to prevent his cat-related barking. And we know he's busy at night, so I'm not eager to try crating him or locking him in my office; I think he'd freak out.

For now, we've settled on a compromise: on most nights, we close the gates on the sides of our house, keeping Otto restricted to the backyard. It's just a matter of time, I expect, before the feral cats figure this out, and start taunting him from the front yard. To try to prevent that, I sometimes leave a side gate open, so Otto can perform



**The earthdog "decorative hemp collar" (left) and "decorative hemp martingale collar," and matching leash all get softer with time and laundering. I like the extra large D-ring for snapping the leash onto.**

random sweeps of the front yard – usually with a bit of barking, of course.

It's a work in progress; we know we'll have to adjust things when the weather starts to get cold. I'm still sleep-deprived, but he's getting better all the time.

### Choosing gear

One of the most rewarding things for me in the past few weeks has been compiling some of my favorite bits of dog-care and -training gear. Like many former horse owners, I've got an inordinate love for "tack" – leashes that feel just right in the hand, buckles that adjust easily, training equipment that looks good and fits really well, and so on. Finding the right gear to use with Otto has been fun for me.

One of my first challenges was finding just the right collar. I've always put leather collars on my dogs, and especially like those made of soft leather in a full-rolled (round) style. However, Otto has an apparent wealth of experience with ducking out of a collar. He needs a "limited slip" or martingale collar, the kind that tightens when his leash is taut, but one that can't choke him or tighten too much.

I went back through WDJ's collar reviews, including "The Collar of Money" (May 2005) and "Slip-Sliding Away?" (about martingale collars, in October 2000). I remembered that I liked the limited slip collars made by Premier Pet Products, but preferred the soft hemp fabric and wide variety of colors and styles

offered by earthdog (the company doesn't use capital letters in its name). I looked up the company's website ([earthdog.com](http://earthdog.com)) and excitedly ordered a red collar with stars.

This collar has been a dream. It has a nice, big ring on it for clipping a leash onto; I hate hunting one-handed for a too-small ring. It fits nicely, hasn't allowed Otto to slip loose – even when he was trying hard to escape a bath – looks handsome, and washes well.

Very recently, I was admiring a large line of earthdog collars and leashes in my favorite independent pet supply store (Dog Bone Alley) in my old town of Alameda. I decided that because it had been weeks since Otto had tried to slip his collar, I'd buy a regular earthdog collar, in blue, with a matching leash. We'd be the stars of our next training class!

Back home, I switched the tags from the martingale collar to Otto's new flat collar, and for days, I admired his new look – until one day I decided he again needed a bath, and he deftly slipped his new collar on the way to the hose. Whoops! Now we change collars frequently; I just have to remember which collar he has on before initiating something he's likely to try to escape. 🐾

*Nancy Kerns is Editor of WDJ. She adopted Otto from a shelter on June 13, 2008.*

*earthdog is located in Brentwood, TN. See [earthdog.com](http://earthdog.com) or call (877) 654-5528.*

# Help for OCD Dogs

*Why you should (and how you can) cure your dog's obsessive-compulsive disorder.*

BY PAT MILLER

**Y**ou've probably heard about people who wash their hands repeatedly until the skin wears off, who pull out their hair until they're bald, or return home, time after time after time, to make sure the stove is turned off. These are obsessive-compulsive disorders (OCDs).

Sad to say, OCD behaviors aren't confined to humans; dogs get them, too. Oh, you won't see your dog worrying about whether the stove was left on, nor will you catch him washing his paws repeatedly in the sink. Dogs have a whole set of potential OCDs all their own, specific to canine behavior. Canine OCDs are just as capable of destroying a dog's ability to function as human OCDs are capable of affecting human lives.

## What is OCD?

MedicineNet.com says this about OCDs:

"OCD is a psychiatric disorder characterized by obsessive thoughts and compulsive actions, such as cleaning, checking, counting, or hoarding. One of



**German Shepherd Dogs are prone to a number of OCD behaviors, including tail-chasing, licking themselves until sores develop, and fly-snapping. This dog is so distracted by an imaginary fly that he stops playing with a real toy!**

## What you can do . . .

- Be on the alert for any repetitive actions from your dog that seem out of context.
- Intervene early if you suspect the beginnings of an obsessive compulsive behavior.
- Don't reinforce behaviors that have the potential to become obsessive compulsive disorders, such as tail chasing, or chasing laser light beams.



the anxiety disorders, OCD is a potentially disabling condition that can persist throughout a person's life. The individual who suffers from OCD becomes trapped in a pattern of repetitive thoughts and behaviors that are senseless and distressing but extremely difficult to overcome. OCD occurs in a spectrum from mild to severe, but if severe and left untreated, can destroy a person's capacity to function at work, at school, or even in the home."

The last thing you want is for your dog to develop an OCD. The more you know about them, the better armed you are to prevent OCDs, and the better able to recognize and take action sooner rather than later – a critically important element of a successful behavior modification program for OCDs.

## An "obsessive" debate

There is some disagreement among animal behavior professionals about applying the term "obsessive" to canine behavior. The "anti-s" declare that the term "obsessive" refers to the dog's thoughts, and because we can never really know what a dog is thinking, it's therefore inappropriate to use the term in reference to dog behavior; we should simply call it "Canine Compulsive Disorder." The word "compulsive" refers to the dog's actions, which we can clearly see, so it's okay to use that term in relation to dogs.

Those who favor using the term "obsessive" argue that we know a dog's brain is similar in many ways to a human's, albeit with a smaller cortex, and the observed compulsive behavior patterns



**The same GSD sometimes displays a bit of a “drinking problem.” He gets so preoccupied with snapping and pawing at his water, that he fails to drink! Then, still thirsty, he’ll whine for more water.**



are so similar to human OCDs that it only makes sense to call it obsessive, even with regard to dogs. A growing number of behavior professionals share this opinion – as do I – and so “Obsessive Compulsive Disorder” is becoming an increasingly used term in dog behavior work.

Noted veterinary behaviorist Dr. Karen Overall suggests that as much as two to three percent of our canine population may be afflicted with OCD. She also identifies it as one of the most difficult canine behavioral disorders to successfully treat, and emphasizes that genetic, environmental, and neurochemical/neurophysiological elements all come into play.

Certain breeds have a clear genetic propensity for specific OCDs. Cavalier King Charles Spaniels are prone to fly-snapping, and shadow- and light-chasing; Doberman Pinschers tend to flank-sucking and self-mutilation from licking; a high percentage of Golden and Labrador Retrievers seem to suffer from pica (eating inappropriate objects); and several of the herding breeds are likely to demonstrate OCD spinning and tail-chasing behaviors (see “OCDs and Breed Predispositions,” next page). It’s a good idea to research your own breed thoroughly, so you can be especially watchful for telltale signs of any that may plague your breed.

In addition to the genetic component of OCD behavior, environment plays a

significant role. OCDs most often emerge in young dogs, between 6 to 12 months, in dogs who have a genetic predisposition to the behavior, when subjected to environmental stressors that trigger the onset of the behavior. Dogs who may be genetically prone to a behavior *may* dodge the OCD bullet if they avoid being significantly stressed during this period. Or maybe not.

### Early signs

The early sign of any OCD is the *occasional* performance of a behavior out of context. It’s normal for a dog to chase a real fly; it’s *not* normal for him to start snapping at things in the air that you can’t see. Because well-practiced OCDs are heartbreakingly



difficult to modify, it’s critically important to identify and modify OCD behavior in its early stages.

I’ve had two different clients who had dogs with fly-snapping behavior. One was a Bernese Mountain Dog, the other a Cavalier King Charles Spaniel. Both are on the list of breeds at high risk for this behavior. The Berner’s owners, already Peaceable Paws clients, identified the behavior at its onset and we immediately took appropriate steps to modify the behavior. Leo eventually stopped snapping at imaginary flies. The Cav’s owners also identified the behavior at onset and contacted



the breeder, who told them, “Oh, some Cavs just do that. His sire and several of his littermates do it, too.”

By the time Widget reached the age of 18 months and his owners sought professional behavior assistance, the condition was severe. When I visited their home I found a dog in misery, unable to be in a lighted room for any length of time without becoming extremely anxious, eventually snapping nonstop at his invisible tormentors. He could escape his mental torture only by running into the darkened dining room and hiding in his crate. This poor dog required extensive treatment with psychotropic drugs as well as a behavior modification program to bring the debilitating behavior under control.

Our own Cardigan Corgi, Lucy, exhibited tail-chasing behavior in the shelter before we adopted her, both in her kennel and during the assessment process. Note that tail-chasing and spinning are seen disproportionately in the herding breeds. Fortunately for us and for her, Lucy was young when we adopted her (six months). Simply removing her from the stressful shelter environment and providing her with large daily doses of physical exercise resolved her behavior.

Ben, a four-month-old Golden Retriever client in Monterey, was also treated successfully, simply by having his owners remove all reinforcement (getting up and leaving the room) the instant the pup started to chase his tail. His spinning behavior ceased within a month. A Standard

Poodle client I worked with in Santa Cruz was not so fortunate. At age three, Giselle’s spinning behavior was well-established; her owners couldn’t even walk her on leash because of her nonstop spinning



anytime she was in the least bit stimulated. Like the Cavalier, she required extensive pharmaceutical intervention.

The following are the most common OCD behaviors seen in dogs:

■ **Lick granuloma:** Also known as Acral Lick Dermatitis or ALD, this disorder presents as repetitive licking of the front or hind legs, ultimately causing a bare spot, then an open sore, sometimes causing systemic infection. In extreme cases, a limb may need to be amputated.

■ **Light-chasing** (includes shadow-chasing): Likely related to predatory behavior, light-chasing is characterized by staring, biting at, chasing, or barking at lights and shadows. This behavior is sometimes triggered by an owner playing with the dog with flashlights or laser lights.

■ **Tail-chasing/spinning:** Also perhaps a displaced predatory behavior, tail-chasing often starts as an apparently innocuous, “cute” behavior that is reinforced by owner attention. Only when it attains obsessive proportions do many owners realize the harm in reinforcing this behavior.

■ **Flank-sucking:** A self-explanatory term, flank-sucking behavior is likely a displaced nursing behavior. Similarly, some dogs may suck on blankets or soft toys – behaviors that can be equally obsessive, but are less self-destructive.

■ **Fly-snapping:** No, this one doesn’t refer to dogs who chase real flies – that’s a normal behavior; the OCD version of fly-snapping involves snapping at *imaginary* flies. Dogs who exhibit this behavior may appear anxious, apparently unable to escape their imaginary tormentors.

While some fly-snapping may be seizure-related, a significant percentage of sufferers don’t demonstrate behaviors typical of seizure activity, and those episodes are characterized as true OCD behaviors.

■ **Pica:** While many dogs are happy to eat objects that humans consider inappropriate, dogs with pica do so obsessively. Pica induces some dogs to obsessively eat and swallow small objects such as stones, acorns, and twigs, while others ingest large amounts of paper, leather, or other substances. Pica can cause life-threatening bowel obstruction.

It’s important to note that dogs who are prone to one obsessive compulsive behavior can easily adopt another. I firmly prohibited my husband from playing with Lucy with a laser light, or water from the hose, knowing full well she’d delight in these activities. We didn’t need light-chasing on top of tail-chasing! Ben, the tail-chasing Golden pup, had a more serious OCD problem: he was obsessive about eating pebbles, small sticks, and acorns. At the tender age of four months he had already undergone one emergency surgery for intestinal blockage, and had to wear a muzzle when he was outside, on leash or off, to prevent a recurrence.

For this reason, simply suppressing the behavior through punishment is a dangerously inappropriate approach. Not only does the punishment *add* stress to a behavior already triggered and exacerbated by stress, it heightens the risk of having the dog transfer to a new OCD. Far better to approach an OCD modification program more scientifically.

## Modifying OCD behavior

There are five key components to most successful OCD modification programs:

■ **Increase exercise.** A useful part of almost any behavior modification program, exercise relieves stress and tires your dog so he has less energy to practice his OCD behavior. While physical exercise is hugely important, don’t overlook the value of mental exercise for relieving stress and tiring a dog mentally. (See “A Puzzling Activity,” June 2008, and “Mind Games,” October 2004, for more information on how to keep dogs busy.)

■ **Reduce stress.** This is an important and obvious step, given that OCDs are triggered and exacerbated by stress. You will need to identify as many stressors as possible in your dog’s life. Have the whole family participate in making a list of all the things you can identify that cause stress for your dog – not just the one(s) that appear to trigger the obsessive behavior.

Then go down the list identifying any you can simply eliminate (i.e., shock collar for that evil underground shock fence) and commit to removing those from his environment. Next, mark those that might be appropriate for counter-conditioning – changing his opinion of them from “Ooh, scary/stressful!” to “Yay! Good thing!” (See “Fear Itself,” April 2007).

## OCDs and Breed Predispositions

Certain obsessive compulsive disorders are known to be strongly associated with particular breeds of dogs. This doesn’t mean that every dog of that breed will display the behavior, nor does it mean that dogs of other breeds won’t – just that there’s a higher than normal appearance of the disorder in that breed. Here are some:

**Lick granuloma:** Breeds most commonly affected are Dobermans, German Shepherd Dogs, Great Danes, and Labrador Retrievers.

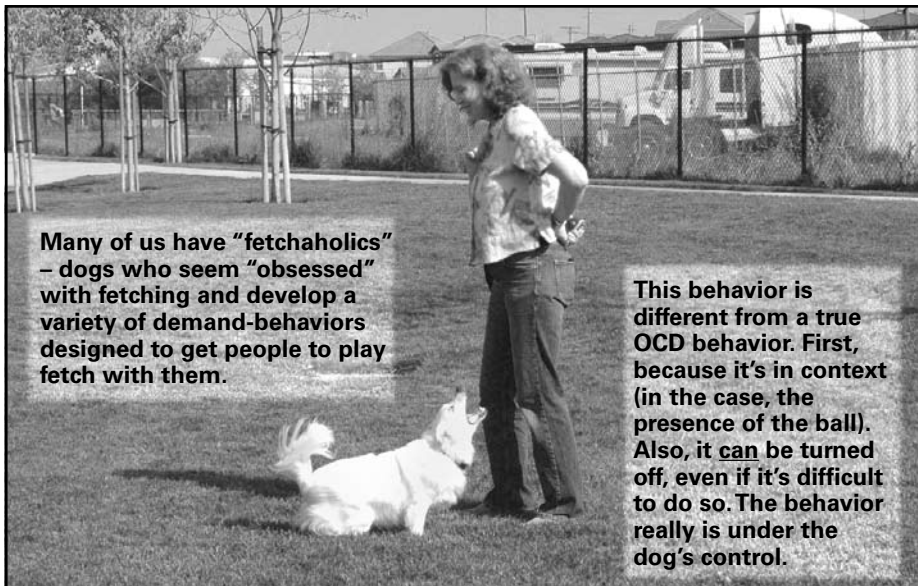
**Light-chasing (shadow-chasing):** Breeds prone to light-chasing include Wire Haired Fox Terriers, Old English Sheepdogs, Schnauzers, Rottweilers, and Golden Retrievers.

**Tail-chasing/spinning:** Tail-chasing is seen disproportionately in herding and terrier breeds, especially German Shepherd Dogs and Bull Terriers.

**Flank-sucking:** Doberman Pinschers are most likely to engage in flank-sucking.

**Fly-snapping:** Breeds that suffer from fly-snapping may include Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, English Springer Spaniels, Dobermans, Bernese Mountain Dogs, Labrador Retrievers, German Shepherd Dogs, and a variety of terrier breeds.

**Pica:** Most common in Retriever-type dogs who are highly reinforced by putting objects in their mouths.



Many of us have “fetchaholics” – dogs who seem “obsessed” with fetching and develop a variety of demand-behaviors designed to get people to play fetch with them.

This behavior is different from a true OCD behavior. First, because it’s in context (in the case, the presence of the ball). Also, it can be turned off, even if it’s difficult to do so. The behavior really is under the dog’s control.

Finally, try to manage his environment to at least reduce his exposure to those that can’t be eliminated or modified.

■ **Remove reinforcement.** All too often, owners mistakenly think obsessive behaviors are cute or funny. They reinforce the behavior with laughter and attention, and may even trigger the behavior deliberately, unaware of the harm they’re doing. When the behavior becomes so persistent that it’s annoying, the dog may be reinforced with “negative attention” when the owner yells at him to stop doing it.

As in the case of Ben, the Golden pup, removing reinforcement by having all humans leave the room can work well to help extinguish an OCD in its early stages.

■ **Reinforce an incompatible behavior.** This was also an effective part of Ben’s modification program. When the puppy *wasn’t* chasing his tail, his owners used a high rate of reinforcement for calm behavior, especially for lying quietly on his bed.

Also, look for other calm behaviors to reinforce during otherwise potentially stimulating moments, such as sitting quietly at the door for his leash rather than leaping about in excitement over the pending walk. (See “Uncommonly Calm,” April 2008.)

■ **Explore behavior modification drugs if/when appropriate.** With persistent and well-practiced OCDs, referral to a qualified veterinary behaviorist for consideration of pharmaceutical intervention is nearly always imperative. The selection, pre-

scription, and monitoring of the strong, potentially harmful psychotropic drugs used for modification of difficult behaviors requires the education and skill of a licensed veterinary professional.

You can find veterinary behavior professionals at [avsabonline.org](http://avsabonline.org) or [veterinarybehaviorists.org](http://veterinarybehaviorists.org).

If some of this information has alarmed you – good! Obsessive-compulsive disorders are alarming.

If your dog, or a friend’s, is showing early signs of OCD behavior, we want you to take it seriously, and intervene immediately, in order to prevent the behavior from developing into a debilitating disorder. Dogs like Lucy, Ben, and Leo can lead full and happy lives because steps were taken early to prevent their behaviors from becoming extreme.

If your dog already has a severe obsessive compulsive behavior, do something about it now. Dogs like Widget can lead quality lives because their owners care enough to find solutions for difficult behaviors. Make the commitment to find the help you need so you and your dog can have a full and happy life together. 🐾

*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.*

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### YOUR RENEWAL IS JUST A CLICK AWAY!

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**SPRYTE'S STORY,**  
Continued from page 7

special to me. She taught me how to be a better trainer and a better partner in our agility team.”

As Spryte's confidence in the world has grown, Chris has focused more on agility. Since that inaugural competition, Spryte and Chris have entered five more agility competitions, qualified in 11 runs across four different classes, and earned two titles: Novice Regular and Novice Touch-n-Go. To a spectator, Spryte looks like a “normal” agility dog. She barked at the judge once, and at a cameraman once. But she recovered quickly on both occasions, and finished the course.

Spryte is a work in progress. She has provided Chris with many challenges, setbacks, and disappointments, but also a lot of joy and achievement. “The road to success with Spryte has been long and winding, with lots of dips and rises, but we're enjoying the journey together,” says Chris.

Because she is so aware of every little thing around her, Spryte has taught Chris to be aware of her, to observe her, and respond to her needs each moment.

“The lessons Spryte has taught me have made me a better trainer,” says Chris. “She has taught me that trust, even in the human-dog relationship, requires patience, consistency, and clear communication beyond verbal language. She has also taught me that communication is two-way: To succeed as a team, I must listen to my dog and understand her emotional needs. In this way, Spryte has provided a service not only for herself, but for all the competition dogs that share my life in future.” 🐾

*Terry Long, CPDT, is a writer, agility instructor, and behavior counselor in Long Beach, CA. Terry lives with four dogs and a cat and is addicted to agility and animal behavior.*

*Chris Bond lives with her husband and three Border Collies in Dublin, CA. Since her introduction to clicker training, Chris earned a diploma in Advanced Canine Behavioral Sciences with Companion Animal Sciences Institute, and has become a CAP assessor.*

*For contact information for Terry Long and the other trainers mentioned in the article, see “Resources,” page 24.*

**GENERALIZATION,**  
Continued from page 9

the “sit game,” like a slot machine, it will eventually pay off.

**The rest of the world**

Your home and your walk around the block are still relatively limited environments. Now you get to generalize your dog's sit behavior to the rest of the world. Take him with you to the bank and practice sits while you wait in line to make a deposit. Visit your vet's office and just hang out in the lobby practicing sits. Go to your favorite pet supply store and practice sits in the aisles. Walk past a school playground and reinforce sits in the presence of children running and playing. And oh yes – then you get to do the whole procedure with all the other behaviors your dog is learning. Phew!

The good news is that generalization seems to, well, generalize. The more you do the process, the easier and easier it becomes for your dog to generalize new behaviors. So, while it may take a concerted effort to help him understand that sit means sit *everywhere*, when he gets that figured out, he'll generalize each new behavior more quickly.

The other piece of good news is that you don't have to restrict yourself to one behavior at a time. If you've already taught him sit, down, stand, and target on that rug in the den in front of the coffee table, you can go ahead and practice all four behaviors when you take your generalization show on the road. So – get going on your generalization program! You and your dog have a lot of work to do if you want him to be a truly well-trained, well-behaved canine companion, wherever your travels together may take you. 🐾

*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.*

*Thanks to trainer Sandi Thompson, of Bravo Pup! in Berkeley, California, for modeling for our article. See “Resources,” page 24, for contact information.*

**KENNEL COUGH,**  
Continued from page 14

giving birth, and it contains all the immune support a calf needs to avoid infection. Cows produce colostrum in greater quantities than their calves can consume, so the excess is collected for supplement use.

“I recommend a dose of 500 mg colostrum per 25 pounds of body weight once or twice a day, depending on the dog's risk factor,” says Dr. Blake.

Other supplements that support the gastrointestinal tract include probiotics, such as *Lactobacillus acidophilus* and other “friendly” or “beneficial” bacteria, which help make up the body's first line of defense against viruses and other pathogens.

Probiotics are especially important for dogs who have been treated with antibiotics, as antibiotics destroy these beneficial microbes. Several probiotic supplements have been developed for dogs and are sold in pet supply stores or veterinary clinics.

And don't neglect vitamin C. Consider giving your dog 500 mg vitamin C three times per day, or half that amount for small dogs, in addition to the animal's usual supplements for as long as the infection lasts.

**The best defense**

Controlling your dog's exposure to other animals is one way to help prevent tracheobronchitis, canine flu, and other contagious diseases. Another is to disinfect the air and surfaces around her.

These are commonsense precautions. But your dog's best defense against infection is a strong immune system, which you can boost with nutrition, exercise, and supplements like those mentioned here. And if your dog ever contracts a respiratory infection, you'll know how to use simple remedies to turn it around in record time. 🐾

*CJ Puotinen is a frequent WDJ contributor and freelance writer living in New York. She is also the author of The Encyclopedia of Natural Pet Care and many books on holistic health care and herbal remedies for humans. See “Resources,” page 24, for information on her books.*

# More On Meat

*We promote grass-fed and humanely raised sources of food.*

## GREEN TRIPE

I felt compelled to send a response to Patricia Coale's letter (in the August 2008 issue) about the article on green tripe ("How Green Is Your Tripe?" July 2008). I wholeheartedly agree with her that the community in which we live is absolutely unaware of the atrocities committed to factory farm animals. I have actually assisted an animal rights activist to help get Proposition 2, the Prevention of Farm Animal Cruelty Act, on the 2008 California ballot.

I introduce myself in this manner to only illustrate that I too, have quite a bit of knowledge in the treatment of farm animals. I also agree with Patricia that maybe WDJ could add a comment about the source of the meat in products they recommend. The source for products such as green tripe is the main reason why these foods have such a positive benefit.

WDJ promotes a holistic approach to dog care. I would also assume that the target audience for the newsletter has a very high regard for all animals, not just their dogs; these subscribers are seeking a healthier approach to caring for their canine family members. This is what I've found in the short time I've been a subscriber.

Additionally, I found that most of the suppliers I contacted from the resources WDJ listed in the green tripe article, worked only with suppliers who provided the animals with a free-range environment and organic feed. This was apparent just by scanning the list of suppliers in the resources section. Many companies described themselves as raising pasture-based and/or organically grown cattle.

In talking with the suppliers of green tripe listed in WDJ's article, I learned that they all felt that using meat from a factory farm was *not* an option, due to the chemical processing/health concerns with these animals. The people from these companies seemed intent on promoting the benefits of

using meat from farms where the animals were humanely treated. Please note that I do know there are companies that will jump on the raw food/green tripe bandwagon for the purpose of profit and use unhealthy meat sources that treat animals cruelly. My comments about the "all natural sources" are based on the resources WDJ has provided, not companies across the board.

Caroline  
via e-mail

## GRASS IS GREAT

Thanks so much for your article on grass-fed and pasture-fed beef ("Grass-Fed Is Greener," September 2008). As you are aware, there are many producers that package and ship beef across the country. We have a small family farm and raise our beef cattle with individual attention and care for local consumption. Most of our cattle are sold as breeding stock to other breeders. However, we also sell grass-fed beef raised right outside our house to individuals for their own and their animals' consumption.

It would be a valuable service to your readers to provide a list of local grass fed beef producers to enable dog owners to locate a provider in their area. I'm sure there are many people who are interested in local sources of grass-fed beef. We would be happy to help concerned dog owners obtain a natural product for themselves and their pets at a very competitive price. Our website is [kcgrassfedbeef.com](http://kcgrassfedbeef.com).

Kaye Fuller, DVM, and Roger Fuller  
Owners, KC Grass Fed Beef

*Rather than list farms – which might be longer than we could run – we gave the contact information (in the Resources section of the article) for groups that publish lists of grass-fed and/or organic sources for meat, dairy, and poultry products. Thanks for writing! We love hearing from farmers who have dogs and produce grass-fed meats for dogs and dog owners!*

## GOOD, NOT GREAT

I very rarely write letters to the editor but this one, about your editorial in the September issue ("Guilty Pleasure"), I had to send. I wish that you had chosen to be involved in the development of this show because as a dog owner I am very disappointed in it. The three judges invariably have harsh comments for each contestant and dog and offer no suggestions of how they could have accomplished the task differently.

We need people who understand that dogs are *not* people, and they need socialization and training. I agree with the judges that positive rewards yield higher gains than negative methods, but they fail each week to impart any suggestions of how things could be done differently. I agree with you that the show is cute, but it provides little value (like all reality shows) in how to accomplish positive training with your dog and have a good, fun, productive, four-legged member of your family and society.

Laura Jenkins  
Via e-mail

*I, too, wish the show included even just a tiny bit of instruction on positive training and tips on canine body language, especially the signs of canine stress!*

I see I am not the only one; CBS's Greatest American Dog is my guilty pleasure, too! It has been really interesting watching the dogs and handlers, seeing nervous behavior sometimes, wonderful compliance at other times, and seeing where certain dogs excel. The varying styles of the handlers has been very interesting, too. Of course, I have my favorite pairs! When the challenges are given, it is fun to ponder how I might guide my dog in similar circumstances. Very creative and fun show!

Carolyn & Maggie  
Via e-mail 🐾

## RESOURCES

### BOOKS

WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of *The Power of Positive Dog Training*; *Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog*, *Positive Perspectives: 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

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

### HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

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

### TRAINING AND INSTRUCTION

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

**Sarah Richardson**, CPDT, CDBC, The Canine Connection, Chico, CA. Group and private training, puppy kindergarten, and agility. All force-free, fun, positive training and relationship-building. (530) 345-1912; thecanineconnection.com

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

### CASE HISTORY

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

**Lisa Clifton-Bumpass**, CTC, CPDT, CDBC, CAP2, A Step Beyond, Hayward, CA. Behavior modification, and private lessons. (510) 461-2205 or astepbeyond.us

**Kathryn Horn**, MA, CAP2, Paws and Cues Dog Training and Agile Paws Agility, Castro Valley, CA. In-home, private dog training, and group agility classes. (510) 638-PAWS (7297) or agilepaws.com

## WHAT'S AHEAD

### Canine Cognitive Dysfunction

*How to identify "doggie Alzheimer's" – and how it can be treated.*

### Novel Foods

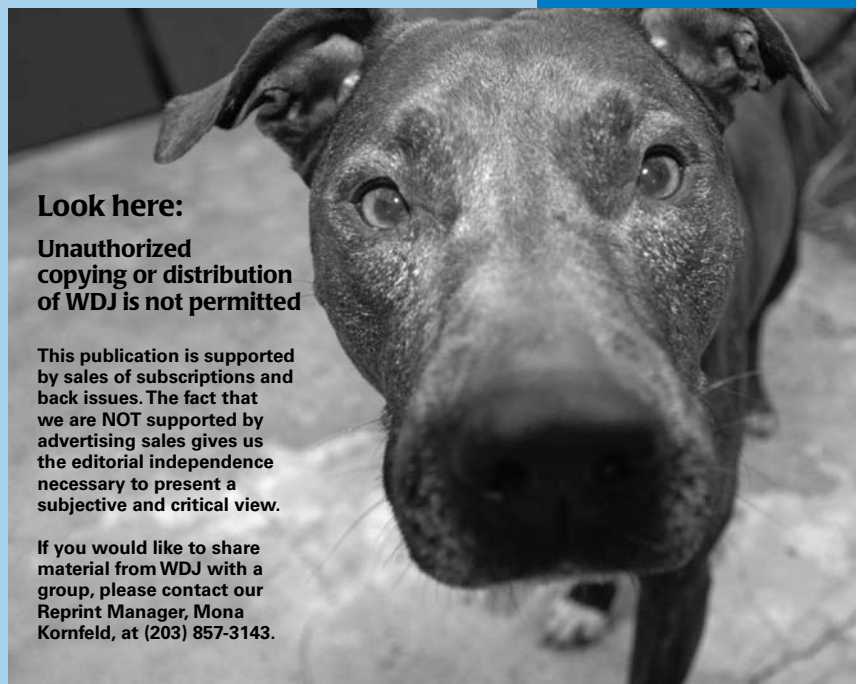
*WDJ reviews uncommon forms of commercial diets, including dehydrated and fresh/chilled.*

### Pancreatitis

*What this life-threatening is, what causes it, and how to feed your dog for the rest of his life after he's been diagnosed with it.*

### Lost Dog!

*Where to start your search for your lost dog.*



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