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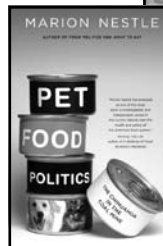
Tug o' war has a bad rap among some dog trainers. But many positive trainers regard it as a fantastically fun and useful game to play with your dog.



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Guilty Pleasure

TV show about dog training (and relationships!)

BY NANCY KERNS

What's your guilty pleasure? Right now, mine is a TV show that I did *not* have high hopes for: CBS's Greatest American Dog. It's a reality show, sort of, in that the contestants on the show are real people who have been taken out of their ordinary lives and sent to live together in a huge house, with cameras recording much of their days and nights. And it's a sort of American Idol contest, with dogs, where the contestants are challenged with various tasks they must get their dogs to complete, and they win various prizes and privileges. A contest at the end of each show is viewed by a panel of three judges, who vote one dog/human pair to be the winner – and send one team packing. The ultimate winner of the show, at series end, will win \$250,000.

I knew this show was coming to television months ago; a casting agency contacted me and asked if I would audition for one of the judges' spots. I couldn't say "No, thanks!" fast enough or emphatically enough, for several reasons. The first, quite honestly, is that I think I'm *awful* in front of a camera. Secondly, my life is complex enough, and my time in short supply; I couldn't imagine taking on another responsibility.

The third reason? I was scared that the show would be terrible, dogs would be put into stressful situations, and force-based training would be featured.

The show was actually on the air for several weeks before I saw it. My dog-crazy sister Pam was the first to tell me that I *had* to watch Greatest American Dog. I groaned. "Oh boy," I said. "Is it awful?"

"No!" she enthused. "The people are really diverse, and it's interesting to watch how differently they train their dogs and how their dogs respond. And the dogs are adorable!"

I was pleased to discover that I could view all of the first episodes, in their entirety, on the CBS website, and I was hooked from the first episode. My sister's review was spot-on. The people and dogs *are* really different. The show features individuals who are young, middle-aged, and older; athletic and phlegmatic; apparently sane and perhaps a bit unbalanced. (All the dogs, of course, are cute!)

Best of all, from my perspective, most of the training we see is positive. Force-based training does not appear to be a violation of the rules (and that's too bad), but it *is* criticized by the judges. Even better: it's shown in a fairly realistic light. It's apparent that the owners who use the most punitive training have dogs with the most behavior problems, and their relationships are plainly strained. The dogs who get yelled at, or pushed and pulled around, are shown shutting down, tuning out, turning (or running!) away from their owners. Under the challenges and time limits that the show imposes, the pairs with relationship problems just can't perform as well as the competitors who really keep things fun for their dogs. And some of the least-fun owners are getting voted off the show.

I can't vouch for the rest of the season, or say I agree with everything that's allowed on the show. But I'll admit I *have* to watch Greatest American Dog on Thursday nights, just to see what's going to happen next.

NK

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

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Getting to Know You

Practically every minute with a new dog brings up new stuff!

BY NANCY KERNS

It's going to be really difficult to stay caught up with everything we've been going through with our new dog, Otto. Every day brings new surprises and challenges, and these experiences are piling on at a quick clip.

Building a healthcare team

In our first week together, I had to deal with something I hope I don't need again any time soon: finding a good local veterinarian. In articles like "Coordinating Care" (WDJ May 2002), "The Importance of Integration" (October 2004), and "Practice Management" (December 2006), we've discussed the importance of finding health-



This is my son, Eli, handling Otto in a class for adolescent dogs. Otto may appear momentarily inattentive, but I've learned to consider that this may actually be a sign that he's a bit stressed. Anxious dogs often look or turn away, yawn, stretch, or suddenly develop an itch that *must* be immediately scratched.

What you can do . . .

- Develop a "healthcare team" of veterinary practitioners you respect, *before* your dog needs it.
- Give your dog a variety of food treats, and note which ones he likes best, and which ones he considers just so-so. Dole out appropriate rewards for behaviors of varying levels of difficulty.
- **Always** consider stress as a potential explanation for a dog's failure to take treats or to respond to you. Look for stress signals, and do what you can to reduce the stressful stimuli . . .
- . . . But don't keep your dog wrapped in cotton! Generously reinforce his attention to you and others with whatever he likes best, including treats, play, praise, petting.



The Whole Dog Journal

care professionals that you like and that are capable of meeting your expectations – *before* you actually need them. I wanted to start on this project right away.

In a perfect world, all dog owners would have easy, local access to a vet who is a warm-hearted, well-educated dog lover, a brilliant diagnostician (fully equipped with all the latest diagnostic tools) who is open to (if not familiar with) complementary care. However, in the real world, many of us have to use several different practitioners as parts of a "healthcare team" to meet all their needs, as well as their dogs' needs.

When providing emergency care for Cooper, my father-in-law's elderly dog, in what turned out to be Cooper's last days, I had lucked into an appointment with a practitioner who seemed to be a very good

diagnostician with a very well-appointed clinic and laboratory. If Otto ever needs diagnostic or emergency care, I'd go straight to that clinic again. Considering the vet's skills, I'd consider it only a bit of an inconvenience that his clinic is a good 30-minute drive from my home.

I've been asking my friends about holistic practitioners; there aren't any within an hour's drive. If I need one soon, I may end up hauling Otto down to the Bay Area holistic practitioner I relied on several years ago to provide care for my darling Rupert. It's a three-hour-drive, but it's probably what I'd do.

I'd also like to find a veterinarian with a practice close to my home, one who could provide routine, practical care, such as annual health exams and urgent treatments. My first attempt at finding such

a practitioner was not terribly successful.

When I adopted Otto, the shelter gave me a coupon that was good for a free health exam at a dozen or more local participating clinics. I wanted to contact one right away to obtain a prescription for a heartworm preventive; mosquitoes and the infamous infection they carry are rampant in our part of Northern California.

I wasn't wildly impressed with the veterinarian I took Otto to for this purpose. His technicians were personable and friendly to Otto, but the vet himself expended absolutely no effort to establish any sort of rapport with me or my dog. He even seemed mildly annoyed when I asked him to give Otto a few treats (which I handed to him) before he began his exam, to put Otto at ease.

I had already told the vet technician that I was there for the free exam and to get some heartworm preventive, so perhaps that partially excuses the fact that the vet asked me only a few cursory questions about my dog. He then left the room, saying someone would be in to get Otto's weight (so we could get the right dose of preventive), and I did not see him again! He neither engaged me in discussion about heartworm, fleas, ticks, diet, or behavioral health, nor outlined his suggestions for future healthcare practices or local hazards I should be aware of as a dog owner new to the area. If I was an inexperienced dog owner, I'd have left the clinic completely clueless as to my next healthcare responsibilities for Otto.

Again, this was a free exam, so what could I expect? On the other hand, a really engaged, proactive vet could have sold me some high-quality dog food; made sure I really understood how heartworm infections occur and how and when to administer the preventive; suggested running a blood test (it's a good idea to have these results, which can provide a baseline or history in case of future health problems); discussed the prevalence of ticks in our area and the dangers of tick-borne diseases (and sold me a tick-control product); detected and discussed Otto's mildly irritated skin; and so on.

Suffice to say that I'll keep looking for another candidate to be our local, "family practitioner" vet.

Diet considerations

Like most dog owners, I really appreciate the convenience of dry food for my dog's daily diet. If it develops that Otto has

special health needs, I'll consider a wet, dehydrated, or raw frozen diet, all of which are more expensive, less convenient, but healthier than kibble, in my opinion. In the meantime, Otto is going to get a high-quality kibble, with lots of treats, as well as occasional doses of wet food (frozen into Kong toys, representing a part of our "stay awake during the day" program; I'll write more about this later).

This switch might come sooner than I'd like; I've noticed that Otto scratches and chews himself regularly. By regularly, I mean that I see him doing it at least once a day – not in a frantic or obsessive way, but daily nonetheless. His skin looks a little red in some places, and his stools often contain a small amount of hair, confirming that he chews on himself daily.

Otto doesn't have any fleas – I look for them daily – and I haven't used any sort of flea control product on him. Shortly after we adopted him, I did bathe him with a gentle, natural shampoo, but I think it's something else that is irritating his skin. Despite being given *four* different beds in different locations in and around our house, he sleeps during most of the day (more on this in a minute) in his sandbox (which I described in "Dig This! Not That!" last month), and spends a lot of time at night sleeping in the dirt in our front yard. It's highly possible that there is something in the dirt – or something about dirty skin – that makes him itch. It's also possible that there is something in his food that is causing his mild skin problems.

I'm keeping a "diet journal," writing down what I'm feeding Otto in hopes that I might be able to identify any trend that emerges in terms of ingredients or types of food that aggravate his skin issues. I'm also



A sample of the rewards that I carry for Otto's walks and training sessions. They range from high-value hot dogs, dried meaty snacks (which I tear into little bits), to kibble and dog cookies.

keeping the ingredients panel from these foods stapled in the journal, and noting any sort of extra itching or redness of the skin I observe.

So far, I've fed Otto three different varieties of one company's kibble, without seeing any major differences in his stool, skin, or enthusiasm for the food. However, I'm also feeding him a *wide* variety of treats. If his skin issue worsens, I may have to simplify his diet so I can zero in on which (if any) of his foods or food ingredients are contributing to the problem. As we've described in "Skin Secrets" (November 2005) and "Walking the Allergy Maze" (August 2004), allergy related skin problems can be challenging to solve, but a strict elimination diet (and keeping a food journal) is the best way to identify the offending foods.

Taking treats

In our first week together, I was concerned that I had inadvertently adopted a dog with a trait that makes reward-based training particularly challenging: a low level of interest in food and treats.

Dogs who are greedy eaters present their own challenges, but in general, dogs who are somewhat food-oriented are the easiest to train. Food treats are what trainers call "primary reinforcers" – something that (most) dogs like automatically. Positive trainers use a lot of treats in the early stages of training for a number of reasons. Here are the most important ones:

- Frequent treat "payouts" classically condition the dog to form a positive association with the person who doles out the treats, thus strengthening the dog/human bond.

- Dogs pay more attention to people who give them treats; the treats help make the people more significant to the dog than other people.

- Treats can be used to desensitize the dog to new or scary stimuli.

- And of course, most critically, well-timed treats can be used to reinforce the behaviors you want your dog to repeat.

A good trainer can accomplish all of these things without the use of food, but primary reinforcers like treats definitely speed things up. In order to accomplish all of the above without treats, a person

has to find something else the dog likes as much as food – and that can be difficult and time-consuming to do, particularly with a fearful or undersocialized adult dog.

This all explains why I was worried when, in the first week with Otto, he turned away from chicken, cheese, roast beef, tuna, wet cat food, and half a dozen different types of commercial, meat-based treats (freeze-dried and semi-moist). He would sniff each treat carefully, and about half the time, take it from my fingers very gently, chew it halfheartedly, and politely decline a second serving.

Stress case!

Thank goodness, Otto's reluctance to take food was short-lived, an apparent artifact of his initial nervousness in his new home. In retrospect, I should have realized that it was a sign of anxiety. After all, I've witnessed many training sessions and classes with dogs who are so overstimulated and excited that they wouldn't take even high-value treats from their handlers.

What fooled me into thinking that this wasn't the case with Otto was the fact that he refused treats not only in highly stimulating environments (such as out on a walk), but also in the quiet of my kitchen or backyard. Plus, he didn't display the classic signs of stress that I've learned to spot, such as licking his nose, flattening his ears, tucking his tail, yawning, and so on.

I signed us up for a class with Sarah Richardson, a positive trainer in Chico, California (and frequent model for WDJ's articles), whose training center is about 20 minutes from my home. I consulted with Sarah before our first class, bemoaning Otto's delicate appetite for treats. She gave me a few more ideas about treats to try, including string cheese and hot dogs . . . and suggested that Otto was still a bit stressed by his new environment.

Like every owner (or any parent whose child's teacher made what seemed to be a mildly critical assessment of that child!) I demurred, convinced by Otto's displays of affection toward me as evidence that he was quite comfortable. I did go to the store to buy hot dogs and string cheese, though. Voila! Hot dogs were the first food item that Otto took readily and enthusiastically, and they seemed to inspire him to give more consideration to other treats, too.

Looking back, though, I realize that my experienced trainer friend was right, of course: Otto *was* stressed. The signs he displayed, though, were far more subtle



Otto is gaining confidence. His habitual posture is taller today than it was just a few weeks ago, although he "shrinks" in noisy and distracting environments.

than the ones I was familiar with and looking for. Re-reading Pat Miller's excellent article, "Stress Signals," in the June 2006 issue, I realized that Otto *had* been displaying some of the items from Pat's list of signs of canine anxiety.

In the article, Pat explained that dogs normally display appeasement and/or deference signals as everyday communication tools for keeping peace in social hierarchies. But when these signals are offered in conjunction with other stress-related behaviors, she wrote, they can be an indicator of stress as well. Otto, I now realize, was displaying slow movement; frequent sitting, lying down, or exposing his underside; and avoidance, in which the dog turns away and evades a handler's touch and treats.

I could see that Otto was nervous when he turned away from or ducked away from a stranger's touch. But I had been regarding Otto's freely offered sits and downs as good manners; I hadn't considered that they could also be signs of social anxiety. And I thought it was smart that he would proceed slowly when he was unsure of what to do. As the adolescent dog grows increasingly comfortable in our home, and gains socialization and experience in the world, I see these signals less and less.

Getting better all the time

As I write this, about seven weeks since we adopted Otto, he now will take just about every treat we give him, although he is more enthusiastic about some than others; hot dogs are still on the top of his list of

favorites. When we go out for a walk, a training practice session, or to a class with Sarah, I load a "bait bag" with about five different treats, ranging from kibble to hot dogs. This gives me the ability to vary my reinforcements, saving the best treats for the most difficult or challenging behaviors I ask Otto to display.

Otto will still duck if someone reaches for him quickly, and he's even growled a couple of times when he was startled by a stranger's enthusiastic or physical greeting. It's made me more aware of how unpredictable people can be around dogs, and how alert and proactive a handler has to be with a "soft" or nervous dog.

I try to hand treats to anyone who evinces the slightest bit of interest in my new dog, and ask them if they would give the treats to him. I briefly explain that the dog came from the shelter, is a little bit fearful, and we're trying to get him past that. Generally, this elicits a bit of sympathy from people and they readily give Otto a treat or two, as well as a kind word.

As a result of consistently receiving treats from just about anyone who focuses on him or talks to him, Otto's confidence in public and with strangers has really blossomed. My guess is that by the time I write the next installment of this column, he'll be even more secure in his knowledge that the world is a reasonably safe place, and that he can relax and be friendly toward most people. 🐾

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

Grass-Fed Is Greener

Pasture-fed animals provide healthier meat and dairy products.

BY CJ PUOTINEN

For years its advocates have claimed that pasture feeding – letting farm animals live and graze on grass – results in meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products that are more nutritious than the same foods from grain-fed animals, especially those raised in confinement.

Now the demand for “pasture-fed” or “grass-fed” meat is so high that last November, the U.S. Department of Agriculture implemented regulations for labels using those terms.

However, the new standard was immediately criticized for being inadequate by the American Grassfed Association and other organizations.

With confusion at an all-time high, how can consumers make the best ingredient choices for themselves and their pets?

The controversy

Until the USDA announced its new guidelines, the use of the words “grass fed” or “pasture fed” on labels was unregulated. The USDA now allows meat to be labeled “grass fed” only if it comes from animals



Pastured pigs enjoy eating grass, roots, nuts, and skim milk on the Peaceful Pastures farm in Hickman, Tennessee. The farm also raises pastured beef, lamb, goat, chicken, duck, and geese. Photo by and courtesy of Peaceful Pastures.

that ate nothing but grass after being weaned. Growers must have their farms and records inspected before they can use a “USDA Process Verified” seal. Meat can be labeled as grass fed without the seal if growers submit documents showing that their animals were raised according to the standard.

The American Grassfed Association welcomed the requirement that animals be fed all grass and no grain; early versions of the USDA regulations would have allowed meat to be labeled “grass fed” or “pasture fed” even if animals were fattened on grain in their final weeks. But the association objected to other, watered-down parts of the new regulations. It was unhappy that the USDA did not require grass-fed animals to live on pasture year-round (animals can be confined on factory farms, with little freedom of movement), and it allowed the use of antibiotics and hormones.

In cooperation with Food Alliance, a national nonprofit certification organization, the American Grassfed Association developed its own certification program in which animals are required to be on pasture or rangeland all year long and be free of antibiotics or hormones.

Checking a meat’s certification is one way to discover how it was produced, but not all small farms and ranches have the time and resources to invest in certification programs. Growers in your area may raise superior quality animals on pasture. In fact, their farming methods may exceed the requirements of any “organic,” “pasture fed,” or “grass fed” certification. In most cases, it’s easy to find out what you need to know.

It’s only natural

Until the 1960s, when large factory farms began to replace family farms and ranches,

What you can do . . .

- Add pasture-raised meat, poultry, eggs, or dairy to your dog’s dinner.
- Support local growers and distributors.
- Buy in bulk, shop for bargains, and share orders.
- See our list of resources (on page 11) for suppliers and more information.



nearly all of America's farm animals were raised on pasture. Calves were weaned on grass and grew to maturity on pasture and hay, reaching market weight at two to three years of age. Their meat was chilled for two weeks to enhance flavor and tenderness in a traditional process called dry aging.

This meat was free from the antibiotics, added hormones, feed additives, flavor enhancers, preservative gases, and salt-water treatments common today. Mad cow disease and the dangerous O157:H7 strain of *E. coli* bacteria that has caused recent beef and produce recalls did not exist.

Grass is the ideal diet for all ruminants – vegetarian animals with multiple stomachs who chew their cud (which consists of regurgitated semi-digested grass and other plant material). Cows, goats, sheep, bison, deer, elk, camels, llamas, and giraffes are ruminants. Chickens, turkeys, geese, and other domesticated birds also thrive on pasture because of the insects they consume in addition to their daily grain. All pasture-raised animals are “free range” by definition: they enjoy fresh air, exposure to sunlight, and unrestricted physical exercise.

Pasture-raised foods are usually lower in calories and fat, higher in vitamins, and have a more healthful balance of omega-3 and omega-6 fats than conventionally raised foods. An Argentine study published in the journal *Meat Science* in 2005 determined that grass-fed meat is higher in vitamin C, vitamin E, and beta carotene than grain-fed meat.

Scientists working with the USDA found that lamb raised on pasture and grass contained about 14 percent less fat and 8 percent more protein than grain-fed lamb.

Pasture-fed chickens, ducks, geese, and turkeys have significantly less fat than factory-farmed poultry, their bones are stronger than those of birds raised in confinement, and their meat is more nutritious.

Eggs from pastured chickens, ducks, geese, and other fowl have darker yolks, harder shells, and more nutrients than eggs from factory farms. Last year, *Mother Earth News* sponsored a test of eggs from 14 flocks around the country in which hens range freely on pasture or are housed in moveable pens that are rotated frequently to maximize access to fresh pasture and protect the birds from predators.

“We had six eggs from each of the

14 pastured flocks tested by an accredited laboratory in Portland, Oregon,” the magazine's October 2007 issue reported. “Compared to official nutrient data for commercial eggs published by the USDA, eggs from hens raised on pasture contain up to one-third less cholesterol, one-fourth less saturated fat, two-thirds more vitamin A, two times more omega-3 fatty acids, three times more vitamin E, and seven times more beta carotene.”

Milk from pasture-fed dairy cows and meat from pasture-fed cattle have two to five times more conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), a beneficial fatty acid, than milk and meat from grain-fed cattle. The butter from grass-fed cows is darker in color, richer in flavor, protects against nutritional deficiencies, and speeds recovery from illness and injury.

Some of the world's most interesting nutritional research was conducted in the 1930s and '40s by Dr. Weston Price, a dentist who traveled the world in order to study the teeth and health of indigenous people. Dr. Price discovered what he called “a new vitamin-like activator” that played an important role in the utilization of minerals, growth and development, reproduction, and efficient brain function, while protecting against heart disease and tooth decay.

This compound, which he called Activator X, occurred in the butterfat, organs, and fat of animals who consumed rapidly growing green grass in spring or early

summer. He found the same substance in certain sea foods, such as fish eggs.

In recent years, nutrition researchers have deduced that Dr. Price's Activator X is part of the vitamin K complex, specifically vitamin K2. Unlike vitamin K1, which affects blood clotting, vitamin K2 works synergistically with vitamins A and D to activate proteins and nourish the cells. The Weston A. Price Foundation, which promotes traditional farming methods and food preparation, considers “Activator X” butter an important health tonic.

Dairy products are controversial foods for dogs, but Juliette de Bairacli Levy and those who follow her Natural Rearing philosophy (see “Grandmother Nature,” WDJ, July 2006) value raw milk, butter, cottage cheese, yogurt, kefir, and other dairy products for puppies and dogs of all ages.

Only a few states, such as California and Pennsylvania, permit the retail sale of raw (unpasteurized) milk for human consumption, while several others permit the sale of raw milk at the farm but not in stores. In recent years, “cow share” programs have made it possible for consumers to legally obtain raw milk in states that otherwise prohibit its sale. They do so by buying shares in a cow and the milk it produces. Thanks to artisan cheesemakers, pasture-fed raw goat, sheep, or cow's milk cheeses are widely sold, and in some areas, probiotic-rich whey is available along with lactofermented dairy products like kefir and yogurt.



Chileno Valley Natural Beef is raised on pastures in Marin County, California. Owners Mike and Sally Gale say grass-fed beef is not only better for the environment, but also tastes better. “We were raised on corn-fed beef, and are amazed at how much better our healthier, lean beef tastes.” Photo by and courtesy of Chileno Valley Ranch.

Good for dogs

Dog lovers who have access to pasture-fed ingredients may not have double-blind placebo-controlled clinical trials to refer to, but the anecdotal evidence is persuasive. Caregivers report that most dogs prefer pasture-fed ingredients when given a choice and that dogs on a home-prepared diet who are switched from factory-farmed to pasture-raised ingredients experience improvements in skin, coat, muscle tone, stamina, and overall health.

“This isn’t surprising,” says Todd Eldred, who with his 3C Beef partner, Doreen Eldred, raises 25 to 30 mixed-breed Red Angus per year in Chester, New York. “There’s a big difference in the health of factory-farmed cattle and that of cattle raised on pasture. Dogs and people who eat naturally raised meat are getting better nutrition.”

In Hickman, Tennessee, Jenny Drake and her husband, Darrin, have been raising beef cattle, hogs, lambs, sheep, goats, chickens, ducks, and geese for 15 years. “We grow Angus cattle, Tamworth hogs, and Lincoln Longwool sheep,” she says, “and all of our animals are raised on pasture.”

Their chocolate Lab-mix, Golden Retriever-mix, two hounds, and six Great Pyrenees range in age from one to 11. “They all eat raw and pasture-fed,” says Drake. “The vets always comment on their excellent overall health and great teeth. They eat and enjoy lots of pork – in fact, it’s their favorite. They don’t like poultry except for chicken feet.”

Drake is puzzled by the resistance of some dog owners to feeding pork. “Wild pig is a favorite food of dogs everywhere,” she says, “and it’s very good for them. The hide can be left on some cuts of pork, which the pups here just adore. Trichinosis, the parasitic disease caused by the roundworm *Trichinella spiralis*, is still associated with undercooked pork but it is all but unheard-of in the U.S. today. Even if it were in the pork, it is killed by five days of freezing, and all of our meats are sold frozen. In 2006, the Centers for Disease Control reported something like 38 cases of trichinosis, all of which came from wild game and none from farmed pork. Contrast this with 23,000 reported cases of salmonella. Pork is a really safe raw food to give to dogs.”

Several of the experts we interviewed for our “Green Tripe for Dogs” article (WDJ July 2008) remarked on the differ-



Laying hens at Soul Food Farm in Vacaville, California, enjoy 55 acres of certified organic pasture.

ences between the stomachs of pasture-fed and factory-farmed cattle. Janet Klapac, a supplier of green tripe in Northeastern Ohio, told us that she avoids tripe from corn-fed cattle because it contains so much hair. “The cattle swallow hair when they incessantly groom themselves,” she says. “That’s not a behavior you see in pasture-fed cattle, and I think it reflects nutritional deficiencies as well as stress. The pasture-fed tripe is of much higher quality.”

Buying in bulk

Some buyers save by purchasing a side of beef (one-half of a steer) or an entire steer at a time.

“That’s expensive,” says Doreen Eldred, “but the per-pound cost is much lower than retail, and the butcher who prepares your order will cut the meat according to your instructions. One of our customers who orders a side of beef at a time has us deliver the prime cuts like tenderloin and sirloin steaks refrigerated rather than frozen, and she has the rest frozen in 1 to 1½ pound packages for her dog. None of the bones go to waste. They’re either attached to pieces of meat or packaged separately. The meat and trimmings that are usually turned into hamburger can be ground, cubed, or cut into large chunks for the dog.”

Depending on processing plants and local regulations, the liver, kidneys, heart, spleen, pancreas, and tongue may be available. Farms that do their own slaughtering may be able to provide dog owners with

green tripe, lungs, and other organs.

The price of large beef orders varies according to the size of the steer and its fat content. Pasture-fed beef is usually leaner than grain-fed beef and thus has a lower percentage of waste. Beef also loses weight as it ages. A lean 300-pound side of beef will typically result in 225 to 250 pounds of meat and bones, while a very fat side of beef may produce only 165 to 180 pounds of usable meat and bones.

The “per pound” price of what you actually receive will be higher than the beef’s hanging weight price. For example, a 350-pound side of pasture-fed beef costing \$3.10 per pound (\$1,085 total based on hanging weight) might produce 270 pounds of meat and bones, which would bring the finished per-pound price to \$4. Add shipping, delivery, or transportation costs and the total might be \$5 per pound or more.

Those who don’t have a large freezer or can’t afford a side of beef at a time often share orders with friends, dog club members, or fellow students in obedience class. Some trainers, groomers, breeders, and holistic veterinarians bring like-minded customers together to share the cost or take turns picking orders up.

Occasionally a rancher will cull an older steer, ram, or other animal whose meat is not suitable for sale to humans but which dogs thoroughly enjoy, and sell it at a discount. Other favorite dog treats include chicken feet, which are rich in collagen, as well as chicken or turkey livers, hearts, and gizzards.

Some farms and ranches deliver to restaurants, markets, and private homes. Others use FedEx, UPS, or other delivery services. “We ship nationwide and have customers all over the country,” says Drake, “but now that shipping prices have skyrocketed due to high fuel costs, our long-distance sales are down. I do truck deliveries three times a year to Georgia and Florida, and those cost-saving trips are popular with raw feeders.”

Most local farmers’ markets and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs offer meat, bones, poultry, eggs, or cheese from pasture-fed sources. In CSA programs, customers pay farmers at the beginning of the year for a share of the farm’s output. Like farmers’ markets and CSA programs, food co-ops and buying clubs help make pasture-raised meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy products more affordable.

For websites and organizations that will help you locate pasture-fed ingredients for your dog, see “Resources Mentioned in This Article,” page 11.

America’s feedlots

For years, the beef from supermarkets and discount stores has cost considerably less than pasture-fed beef, but the reasons for the price differences aren’t pretty.

According to Jo Robinson, author of the book *Pasture Perfect* and a leading expert on the benefits of grass feeding, nearly all of the beef and other meats sold in America’s supermarkets comes from animals raised in feedlots or in large facilities called CAFOs or “Confined Animal Feeding Operations.”

Because it’s expensive to raise cattle, the beef industry does whatever it can to make animals grow in record time. Instead of the three years that it takes grass-fed cattle to reach maturity, factory-farmed cattle reach slaughter weight in just one or two years. The process reduces the meat’s nutritional value, stresses the animals, increases the risk of bacterial contamination, pollutes the environment, and exposes consumers to a long list of unwanted chemicals. Factory-farmed beef contains traces of hormones and antibiotics, and its freshness when packaged is often chemically enhanced.

To improve the efficiency of factory farms, cows are treated with synthetic hormones that regulate the timing of conception so that all of the calves can be born within a few days of each other. On many ranches, herd bulls have been replaced by artificial insemination, and now that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has granted preliminary approval for cloning, declaring that cloned meat is indistinguishable from normal meat and safe for human consumption, industry insiders predict that within the next five to ten years, mass-produced calves will be carbon copies of each other.

After calves are born, they spend several months grazing on grass, which is how calves have been raised for millennia. But when they reach 500 to 700 pounds in weight, they are loaded onto trucks and shipped to auction barns. Their new owners truck them to distant feedlots, a journey that takes up to a week, after which the stressed, thirsty, hungry calves are dehorned, castrated, branded, tagged, dewormed, and vaccinated.

Regardless of whether they show

signs of illness, the calves are often fed tetracycline, an antibiotic used to treat humans. Then they are implanted with pellets that contain growth-promoting steroid hormones, a procedure that is repeated as needed in order to add over a hundred pounds of lean meat per calf. “Every dollar invested in implants,” says Robinson, “returns \$5 to \$10 in added gain for each animal in the 6 to 12 months they spend in the feedlot.”

Many consumer advocates and researchers have called for a ban on growth-promoting implants because even trace amounts can promote tumor growth. The European Union has banned the use of implants and importation of U.S. beef from hormone-treated cattle. Meanwhile, the FDA insists that beef from implanted cattle poses no threat to human health.

The standard fare in feedlots is a high-grain diet, usually corn, which causes calves to reach maturity months ahead of grass-raised calves. “But unnatural high-grain diets have a major drawback,” says Robinson. “They make cattle sick. To prevent or reduce the symptoms caused by grain-feeding, they are given a steady dose of antibiotics in their feed, adding yet another drug to the mix.”

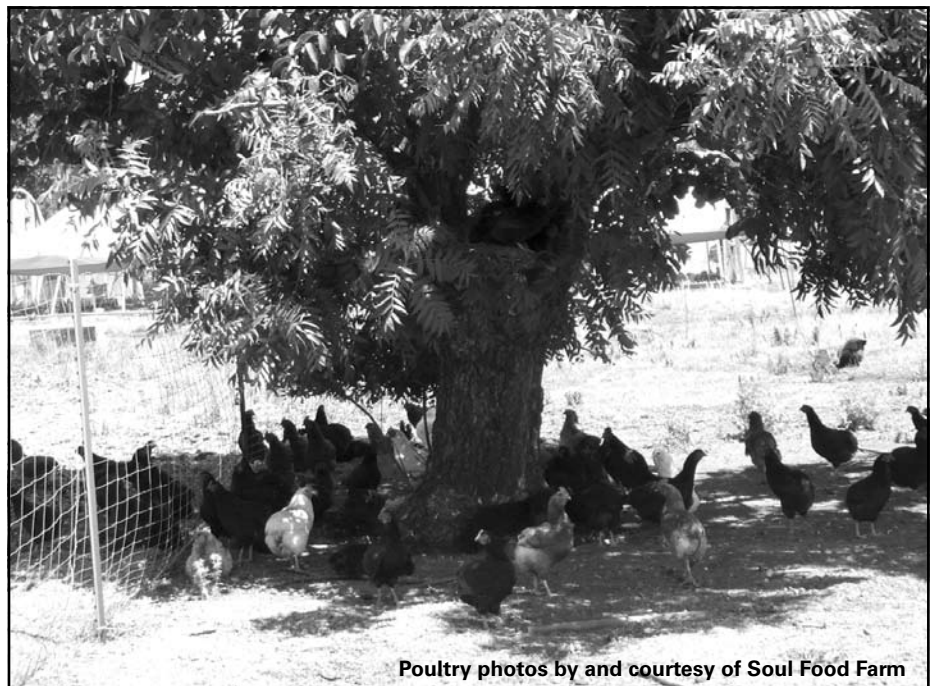
To lower production costs, cattle are often fed “byproduct feedstuffs,” which can be anything from beet pulp and carrot

tops to far less nutritious ingredients such as stale bread, candy, garbage collected from municipal landfills, chicken feathers, chicken manure, plastic, salvaged pet food, and “spent hen meal,” or ground-up laying hens. A 1996 study published in the *Journal of Animal Science* concluded that stale chewing gum, still in its aluminum wrappers, “can safely replace at least 30 percent of growing or finishing diets without impairing feedlot performance or carcass quality.”

Until 1997, many of the cattle in U.S. and European feed lots were fed blood, meat, and bone meal from other cattle. Feeding these ingredients to vegetarian animals was completely unnatural, and it also transmitted bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or BSE, more commonly known as mad cow disease.

“Mad cow disease helped pull in the reins of an industry that was getting out of control,” says Robinson. FDA regulations passed in 1997 and 2004 reduced the risk of mad cow disease by prohibiting the feeding of mammalian blood and cattle parts to cattle, but America’s feed lots remain a breeding ground for harmful bacteria like the O157:H7 strain of *E. coli*.

Feeding grain to ruminants, whose digestive tracts are designed for grass and other foliage, causes excess stomach acid. Cattle with acute acidosis can develop



Poultry photos by and courtesy of Soul Food Farm

Soul Food Farm also raises pastured chickens for meat, mostly of a breed called “Freedom Rangers,” a hardy French chicken esteemed for its ability to live outdoors on a foraged diet. The “corrals” in which the birds are kept are moved every three days so they can have clean pasture and new things to eat.

growths and abscesses on their livers, stop eating, sicken, and even die.

“Even when they’re fed antibiotics,” says Robinson, “many calves develop ‘subacute acidosis,’ an aggressive form of acid indigestion. A calf with subacute acidosis will hang its head, drool, kick at its belly, and eat dirt. Alarmingly, this is regarded as ‘natural’ in feedlots. According to an article in the trade magazine *Feedlot*, ‘Every animal in the feedlot will experience subacute acidosis at least once during the feeding period.... This is an important natural function in adapting to high-grain finishing rations.’ When calves are finished on high-grain diets, a certain amount of suffering is simply taken for granted.”

In contrast, humane treatment from birth to death matters to ranchers and farmers who know their animals as individuals. “I confess that we do give a tiny amount of grain to our steers,” says Doreen Eldred. “It’s a training treat reward for coming when we call them.”

Environment, economy, and regulation

Feedlot cattle produce waste that contaminates the environment and adjacent crops. Wherever they occur, *E. coli* outbreaks are often traced to the manure of feedlot cattle, which can be spread by irrigation, rain, farm equipment, and processing plants.

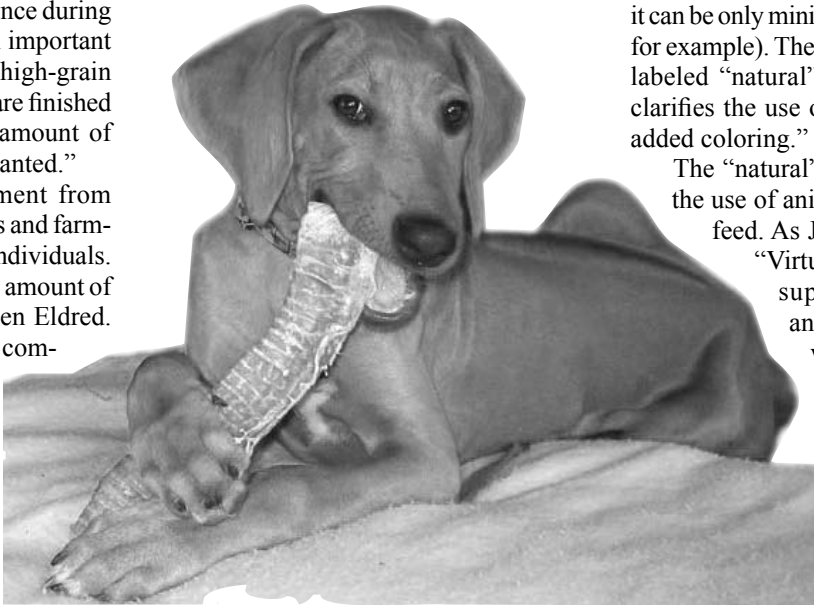
In contrast, the manure of well-managed pastured cattle – which do not carry the dangerous strain of *E. coli* – goes back into the earth. Because their forage is naturally fertilized, grass-fed cattle don’t have to ingest the residues of pesticides or chemical fertilizers.

Feedlot cattle consume about 8 pounds of grain in order to yield a single pound of meat. With corn in short supply because of recent floods that damaged Midwest crops and the loss of corn to biodiesel production, grain prices are rising.

As a result, factory farms are seeking less expensive feed for their cattle, further compromising the animals’ health and nutrition. Pasture farms feel the pinch, too, because harvesting the hay and silage for winter feeding uses equipment powered by diesel fuel. No matter how they are fed, the cost of raising cattle and other farm animals is going up.

Government regulation complicates the

lives of farmers everywhere, and, as Jenny Drake explains, “Most people don’t realize the amount of regulation we are under and the resulting high overhead. Many raw feeders are shocked at my prices, especially for poultry. They don’t realize that small farms cannot produce meats for under \$1 a pound, which is what most people want to pay for their dogs’ dinners. Then we have to add costs related *only* to processing and



A Rhodesian Ridgeback puppy enjoys chewing a dried trachea from Wholistic Paws, a specialty store in New Jersey that carries only grass-fed animal diets and chews. This pup has been raised on raw meat and bones from grass-fed animals and bones and is healthy, with an excellent, calm temperament. Photo of Wholistic Paws client, courtesy of Wholistic Paws.

regulation, which on my chickens come to more than \$2.85 per pound.”

Like other small farmers, Drake appreciates the raw feeders who go out of their way to support her farm and others like it. “If the small farms are not consumer-supported,” she says, “they won’t continue to exist. Even buying *some* of the raw food you feed your dogs helps support local farms such as ours.”

“Choosing pasture-fed ingredients is a great way to keep dogs strong and healthy,” says Katrina McQuilken, who runs a pet health store in Ridgewood, New Jersey. “The trend toward pasture-fed ingredients exists even in convenience foods. Some manufacturers work with local pasture farms in order to use grass-fed ingredients in their frozen dog foods. Whether you’re feeding green tripe, organ meats, muscle meat, bones, treats, or chews, your dogs will receive better nutrition from pasture-fed animals.”

Comparing labels

As you study descriptions and labels, be ready to decipher the following terms:

■ **Natural. All Natural. 100 Percent Natural.** Although consumers respond to this claim, it’s a meaningless label. According to the USDA, “All fresh meat qualifies as natural.” It should not contain artificial flavors, coloring, chemical preservatives, or synthetic ingredients, and it can be only minimally processed (ground, for example). The USDA requires that meat labeled “natural” carry a statement that clarifies the use of the term, such as “no added coloring.”

The “natural” label does not prohibit the use of animal byproducts in cattle feed. As Jo Robinson reminds us,

“Virtually all the beef in your supermarket comes from animals that were treated with growth-promoting antibiotics. You can’t tell by reading the label, however, because the FDA doesn’t require antibiotic use to be listed. It’s agribusiness as usual.”

■ **Organic.** This label, which applies to beef, other meats, poultry, eggs, and dairy products, has the backing of a legal

standard and certification system. The animals involved have not undergone genetic modification (they were not cloned, for example); they were fed grain or grass that was free from chemical pesticides, fertilizers, animal byproducts, and other adulterants and not genetically modified; and they were not treated with antibiotics, growth hormones, or chemical pesticides.

While the animals must have access to the outdoors, they are not necessarily raised on pasture, and their access to the outdoors may be limited. And even though their feed has to be produced organically, it need not be fresh or of high quality.

■ **Grass-fed or Pasture-fed.** The USDA defines grass-fed animals as living on pasture and eating only grass and forage after weaning for their entire lives. The term implies (but the USDA does not require) organic farming methods.

■ **Free Range or Free Roaming.** This label, which is usually applied to poultry, implies grass feeding and unlimited access to open pasture, but because the term has no specific definition in the U.S., it can be misleading. An open door may offer access to the outdoors but chickens might or might not use it, and once they get outside, they may be standing on concrete or gravel. Those who raise poultry outdoors on grass prefer the term “pastured.”

■ **No Antibiotics.** Beef, lamb, poultry, and other meats, eggs, or dairy products sold with this label must be from animals raised without the use of antibiotics over their entire lifetime.

■ **No Hormones.** Because hormones cannot legally be given to hogs or chickens,

“no hormones” is a meaningless claim for pork and poultry. Beef and dairy products carrying this label are from cattle that have not been treated with hormones.

■ **No Animal Byproducts.** The animal’s feed does not contain animal ingredients.

■ **Biodynamic.** Beef, chicken, pork, cheese, and dairy products certified Biodynamic are raised organically according to strict standards developed in the 1920s by Austrian philosopher Rudolph Steiner. This is a “beyond organic” certification.

Because so many label claims are unregulated and because so many farms and ranches operate outside the certification process, the best way to find out how your meat, dairy products, eggs, and

poultry are raised and processed is to talk to the growers. Pasture farmers are usually passionate about what they grow. They’ll explain everything in detail and invite you to visit.

“A label is only as accurate as the person placing it on the package,” says Doreen Eldred. “If you want to know the quality of the meat you are getting, you need to know the farmer and how the animals are being raised. It’s all a matter of trust.” 🐾

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.

Resources Mentioned in This Article

INFORMATION AND DIRECTORIES

American Grassfed Association, Denver, CO. The leading organization in the pasture-fed movement. Articles, news, certification, and lists of producers by state or species. Call (877) 774-7277 or see americangrassfed.com

Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, Junction City, OR. Click on “CSA info” for Community Supported Agriculture programs. (888) 516-7797 or biodynamics.com

Campaign for Real Milk, Washington, DC. This branch of the Weston A. Price Foundation advocates raw, pasture-fed, unprocessed, full-fat milk and dairy products. Information and farm directory. (202) 363-4394 or realmilk.com

Community Supported Agriculture, Beltsville, MD. A comprehensive Alternative Farming Information Center resource from the USDA. (301) 504-6559 or nal.usda.gov/afsic/pubs/csa/csa.shtml

Cows Unite, Minneapolis, MN. This organization supports the pasture feeding of dairy cattle. (Sorry, no phone number is available.) cowsunite.org

The Eat Well Guide, New York, NY. Co-ops, farmers’ markets, farms, CSA programs, organizations, and other resources. (212) 991-1858 or eatwellguide.org

Eat Wild, Tacoma, WA. Jo Robinson’s website of articles and other information about grass-fed meat, poultry, eggs, and dairy. Directory of more than 800 farms in the U.S. and Canada. (866) 453-8489 or eatwild.com

Local Food Directories, Fayetteville, AR. National Sustainable Agriculture Information Services. (800) 346-9140 or attra.ncat.org/attra-pub/localfood_dir.php

Local Harvest, Santa Cruz, CA. Directory of farms, CSA programs, farmers’ markets, co-ops, and more. (831) 475-8150 or localharvest.org

Mother Earth News, Topeka, KS. See motherearthnews.com, then enter “eggs” or “pasture” in the search box for articles.

NewFarm Farm Locator, a Rodale Institute site, Kutztown, PA. Call (610) 683-1400 or see newfarm.org, then click on NewFarm, then Farm Locator.

Pasture Perfect: The Far-Reaching Benefits of Choosing Meat, Eggs, and Dairy Products from Grass-Fed Animals, by Jo Robinson, founder of EatWild.com. Vashon Island Press, 2004

Sustainable Table, New York, NY. Information, education, and resources. (212) 991-1930 or sustainabletable.org

Weston A. Price Foundation, Washington, DC. Information about traditional farming and food preparation. (202) 363-4394 or westonaprice.org (click on “local chapters”)

Wilson College CSA Farm Database, including more than 1200 Community Supported Agriculture farms in the U.S. See wilson.edu/csasearch/search.asp

PEOPLE AND FARMS

Mike and Sally Gale, Chileno Valley Ranch, Petaluma, CA. Pasture-raised and -fed beef. (707) 765-6664 or chilenobeef.com

Jenny Drake, Peaceful Pastures, Hickman, TN. Pasture-fed beef, lamb, goats, pork, and poultry. (615) 429-6806 or peacefulpastures.com

Todd and Doreen Eldred, 3C Beef, Chester, NY. Pasture-fed beef. (845) 469-8535 or e-mail toddanddoreen@yahoo.com

Alexis and Eric Koefoed, Soul Food Farm, Vacaville, CA. Pastured chicken and eggs from pastured chickens. (707) 469-0499 or soulfoodfarm.com

Katrina McQuilken, Wholistic Paws, Ridgewood, NJ. Human-grade, hormone-free, steroid-free, grass-fed, treats, chews, and diets. (201) 444-9911 or healthstoreforpets.com



Please Play Tug

Tug o' war is a fun and useful game to play with your dog.

BY PAT MILLER

Contrary to conventional wisdom in some dog training circles, tug is a great game to play with most dogs – as long as you and your canine pal play by the rules. Lots of my clients have dogs with aggressive, reactive, and other stress-related behaviors. One of the best ways to help reduce stress is to increase exercise. Tug is great exercise.

I'm constantly encouraging my clients to play tug with their dogs. Inevitably when I suggest it I get a puzzled look and a tentative protest that "some trainer" told them playing tug would make their dog dominant and aggressive. I sure wish I could meet that pervasive "some trainer" some day and convince him/her otherwise. It just isn't so.

Tug has a lot going for it besides just being good exercise. Most dogs *love* to tug. Of course, the caveat is that you play tug

properly – with rules, which I'll discuss in a minute. Here are some of the many *other* reasons this game ranks high on my list of approved activities:

■ **Provides a legal outlet for roughhousing:** Often, one or more members of the family want to play inappropriate roughhousing games with Bruiser. Said family members are usually male. Sorry, guys, but it's true! Of course, not *all* male humans want to roughhouse inappropriately with the family dog, but chances are if someone is going to, it's Dad, Junior, or the Boyfriend. If you can get your male family members to compromise on a rousing game of tug, everyone wins.

■ **Strengthens bonds:** Dogs love to tug. Humans love to play with dogs. Anytime you and your dog can do something to-

What you can do . . .

- Teach your dog and other family members to play tug by the rules.
- Play the game frequently to help get rid of your dog's excess energy and to teach him self-control and good manners behaviors.
- Use your dog's tug toy to redirect him from inappropriate behaviors and keep his attention on you around distractions and stressors.



Some trainers regard tug as a potentially dangerous game. However, we believe that once you understand how to establish and teach the rules for safe, polite play to your dog, it's a fun and rewarding exercise for both dogs and their humans.

gether that you both love, it strengthens the bond that holds you together through thick or thin, good times or bad, until death do your part. The four to six million dogs who end up in shelters every year in this country are a stark reminder of how much those bonds need strengthening.

■ **Builds healthy relationships:** You control access to the tug toy. "Leader" is defined as the one who controls the good stuff. By playing tug and granting your dog access to the tug toy, you remind him that the toy belongs to you, the higher-ranking member of the social hierarchy, and out of the goodness of your benevolent-leader heart, you let him play with it sometimes. It actually teaches him that *deference* behavior (sitting and waiting) makes the game happen. (So much for the "It will make your dog dominant" myth.)

■ **Offers incredibly useful reinforcement potential:** While it's important to play sometimes just for the sake of play-

ing, play can be a valuable reinforcer for training purposes as well. Agility trainers are well aware of this; they usually have a bag full of tug toys they can use to help maintain their dogs' enthusiasm. They even use tug-leashes! You can also use tug to motivate a dog to do really enthusiastic recalls. My own Cardigan Corgi, Lucy, would much rather stay outside and play when the farm work is done and it's time to come inside. I used tug games with her favorite Udder Tug toy (see helpingudders.com) to convince her that coming inside could be fun, too.

■ **Redirects inappropriate use of teeth:** Some dogs, especially some puppies and adolescent dogs, just want to bite something. It can be annoying, painful, and life-threatening (the dog's life) when dogs bite human skin, even in play. In the positive training tradition, you get better results if you redirect undesirable behavior, telling your dog what you want him *to* do rather than what you *don't* want him to do.

When you play tug to redirect inappropriate mouthing behavior you get two benefits for the price of one – in addition to directing the teeth to an appropriate object, you exercise your dog and tire him out – which also makes him less likely to engage in inappropriate mouthing. (Again, so much for the “It will make your dog aggressive” myth.)

■ **Teaches self-control:** The rules of tug require that your dog sit and wait when you hold up the tug toy. He can only grab for it when you give him permission. If he jumps to grab it prematurely, you say “Oops!” and hide the toy behind your back. This is negative punishment; the dog's behavior makes a good thing (the opportunity to play tug) go away. Since he doesn't want the tug game to go away, he learns to control his jump-and-grab impulse in order to make the tug game happen.

■ **Creates a useful distraction:** When we first got Lucy three years ago, she took

delight in tormenting Dubhy, our Scottie, who hikes with me on a long line because his recall is not reliable. The long blue leash snaking through the grass would catch Lucy's eye, and she'd latch onto it and drag poor Dubhy around. A tug toy, stuck in my back pocket was perfect for redirecting her desire to grab and pull his leash. You can also use a tug toy to keep your dog's attention focused on you in the presence of general distractions.

■ **Modifies behavior:** I normally suggest using a high-value treat for the behavior modification process of counter-conditioning and desensitization (CC&D) – giving a dog a new, positive association with a previously aversive stimulus.



This tug/chase toy, the Chase 'N Pull by Vee Enterprises, makes some dogs act like cats! The toy consists of a lightweight pole, a section of rope, and a wooly, squeaky sock at the end. Dogs like to chase it, and when they grab it, they enjoy tugging.

Canned (rinsed and drained) or boiled chicken ranks high on most dogs' list of favorite treat. I had a client with a dog-reactive Briard, however, who was so overly aroused by the presence of a neighbor's dog on the next-door back deck that she couldn't even do CC&D with him in her own backyard; he was too stressed to eat chicken. She discovered that playing a low-key game of tug helped change her dog's emotional state from anxious to happy, which then allowed her to proceed with the CC&D program using food treats.

■ **Builds confidence:** You can use tug to help a timid dog become more confident. A

dog who lacks confidence may be reluctant to play tug at all, at first. Smear a dab of peanut butter or other tasty-but-gooney treat on the end of the toy, and let him lick it off. Keep doing this until he's licking eagerly, even nibbling at the toy. When you see him nibbling, gently move the toy a little – not enough to scare him! He should eventually grab onto the toy. You can pull a little – gently! Over time, as he gets braver, he'll be willing to tug harder, until you can work up to a full-blown game of tug.

Variations on the theme

The most common style of tug consists of a dog on one end of the toy, a human on the other. You don't have to stop there, however. Make or buy a “tease pole” toy for extra exercise benefits: tie a toy on a rope and attach it firmly to the end of a sturdy pole, then swing it around at dog-level to encourage your dog to chase it. When he catches it you can play tug, then ask him to “Give” and play chase again.

If you have two compatible dogs who love to tug you can give them each one end of a toy and let them go at it with each other. The key word here is *compatible*. Because tug *does* create a certain level of arousal, dogs who are prone to getting into fights should not be encouraged to tug together. Don't equate growling and snarling with fights, however – a lot of healthy noise often results when compatible dogs play tug together.

If you have two dogs who can tug together, try a threesome! Find a tug toy with one handle for the human and two ends for the dogs. Tug: a game the whole family can play!

At the other end of the spectrum, you can teach your dog to play tug by himself.

Run a rope through a Kong and knot it so the knot is inside the Kong. Stuff the Kong and tie the rope to something so that your dog can tire *himself* out by tugging at the Kong. Of course, you lose the relationship value of tug with this variation of the game, but you might increase the exercise benefits!



Your dog should never jump up or lunge for the toy without being invited to do so. Wait until he is sitting politely. Then use a consistent cue (such as “Take it!”) that signals he is allowed to take his end of the toy and start tugging.

Tug toys come in all shapes, sizes, colors, and materials, but the best ones have these characteristics in common:

- They are long enough that your dog’s teeth stay far away from your hand. I like toys that are at least 12-24 inches in length for *teaching* tug (the longer the better). Once your dog knows the rules, you can graduate to shorter toys. For some training purposes, a small tug toy you can stuff in a pocket is ideal.

- They are made of a substance that invites your dog to grab and hold, and won’t easily cause damage to teeth and gums. Braided rope and fleece toys work well, as does rubber. Stay away from wood, hard plastic, or metal.

- They are sturdy enough to withstand significant abuse. Fleece may not do quite as well in this department, especially if you have a very vigorous tugger, but could be perfect for the lightweights. Remember, you’ll put the toy away when you are done tugging, so it doesn’t have to stand up to rough chewing, just tugging.

- The “human end” has a comfortable handle or is otherwise easy to maintain a grip on. This allows you to win most of the time – an important tug rule. If it’s hard to

hold onto the toy, your dog will more easily yank it out of your hands.

- They provide good value for their cost. You should be able to find a good sturdy tug toy in the \$5 to \$25 range, depending on your dog’s size and how energetically he tugs.

Ten rules of tug

There are really only two good reasons *not* to play tug with your dog: 1) If either you or your dog has some kind of medical condition that rules out this kind of vigorous play (and then you still might be able to play low-key tug) or 2) if you have one of those very rare dogs who just can’t seem to learn to play by the rules, and insists on putting his mouth on you despite your best efforts to teach him otherwise. Barring those, the game is on, with the following rules:

1. **Use a toy that is long enough** to keep dog teeth far away from your hands, and that is comfortable for you to hold when he pulls.

2. **Keep the tug toy put away.** Bring it out when *you* want to play tug.

3. **Hold up the toy.** If he lunges for it say “Oops” and quickly hide it behind your

back. It’s *your* toy – he can only grab it when you give him permission.

4. **When he’ll remain sitting as you offer the toy,** tell him to “Take it!” and encourage him to grab and pull. If he’s reluctant, be gentle until he learns the game. If he’s enthusiastic, go for it!

5. **Randomly throughout tug-play, ask him to “Give”** and have him relinquish the toy to you. If necessary, trade him for a yummy treat. After he gives it to you, you can play again (see steps 2 and 3). You should “win” most of the time – that is, you end up with possession of the toy, not your dog.

6. **If, while you are playing, your dog’s teeth creep up the toy** beyond a marked or imaginary line, say “Oops! Too bad” in a cheerful voice, have him give you the toy, and put it away briefly. (You can get it out and play again after 15 seconds or so.)

7. **If your dog’s teeth touch your clothing or skin,** say “Oops! Too bad” and put the toy away for a minute.

8. **Children should not play tug with your dog** unless and until you are confident they can play by the rules. If you *do* allow children to play tug with your dog, *always* directly supervise the game.

9. **Only tug side-to-side,** not up-and-down (up-and-down can cause injury to your dog’s spine), and temper the vigor of your play to the size and age of your dog. You can play tug more intensely with a 120-pound adult Rottweiler than you can with a Rottie puppy, or a four-pound Chihuahua.

10. **When you are done playing, put the toy away until next time.** You control the good stuff.

Happy tugging! 🐾

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.

Pet Food Politics

A fascinating new book explores 2007's pet food disasters.

BY NANCY KERNS

Were you one of the millions of concerned dog owners who struggled to follow and make sense of the pet food recalls last year? If so (and what dog owner wasn't), I predict that you'll find *Pet Food Politics: The Chihuahua in the Coal Mine* to be the most riveting book you'll read this year. Just released by the University of California Press, *Pet Food Politics* provides an in-depth look at the record-setting (and not in a good way) pet food recalls in 2007.

Pet Food Politics is authored by Marion Nestle, PhD, an expert in human nutrition and the food industry. Dr. Nestle (rhymes with pestle, not like the chocolate company) is the Paulette Goddard Professor in Nutrition, Food Studies and Public Health (an endowed professorship) at New York University, where she was the department chair from 1988 to 2003.

Nestle also holds appointments as Professor of Sociology in NYU's College of Arts and Sciences and as a Visiting Professor of Nutritional Sciences in the College of Agriculture at Cornell University. Her degrees include a PhD in molecular biology and an MPH in public health nutrition,

both from the University of California, Berkeley.

Dr. Nestle's credentials in the human food industry transcend academia. She has served as senior nutrition policy advisor in the Department of Health and Human Services and as a member of the FDA Food Advisory Committee and Science Board. In 2004, she was awarded the American Public Health Association's David P. Rall Award for Advocacy in Public Health for her work to shed light on the impact food and nutrition policies have on the nation's health.

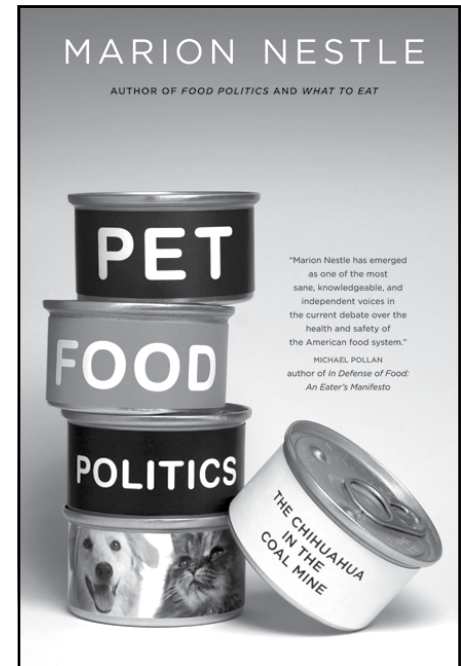
She is also author of a number of highly acclaimed books on food and the food industry, including *Food Politics: How the Food Industry Influences Nutrition and Health* (2002, second edition 2007, both from University of California Press); *Safe Food: Bacteria, Biotechnology, and Bioterrorism* (2003, University of California Press); and *What to Eat: An Aisle-by-Aisle Guide to Savvy Food Choices and Good Eating* (2006, North Point Press).

Why is this sort of human food expert poking her nose into pet food?

Dr. Nestle says that she was aware that she skipped past the pet food section of the grocery store, so to speak, when she wrote *What to Eat*, which was otherwise (as the subtitle describes) an aisle-by-aisle guide to making food choices in supermarkets. Given that her life partner, Malden Nesheim, PhD, is a retired expert in human and animal nutrition, that omission must have been glaring.

With her work on *What to Eat* completed, Dr. Nestle cooked up the idea of doing a dog and cat version of the book with Dr. Nesheim. In February 2007, they signed a contract to co-author *What Pets Eat* for Harcourt – to the puzzlement and dismay, Nestle says, of many of their colleagues in human nutrition; why on earth would they bother with pet nutrition? Who cares?

When the pet food recall starting hit-



ting the headlines the following month, their colleagues' disapproval melted into wonderment at the couple's prescience. Because, as it turns out, just about everyone with a dog or cat cares about dog and cat food – especially when some of it turns out to be deadly.

Dr. Nesheim and Dr. Nestle outlined the topics that they wanted to cover in *What Pets Eat* and divided up the research and writing work. One of Dr. Nestle's responsibilities was a small appendix, envisioned as 10 or so pages that would appear in the back of the book, discussing the recalls of spring 2007. Her research about the pet food disaster grew in complexity and scope, along with her fascination for the story. Eventually the topic expanded into a chapter, and then took on a life of its own.

The result is *Pet Food Politics*, a separate book that actually got finished in advance of *What Pets Eat* – largely due to Dr. Nestle's insatiable appetite for more information about the dramatic event. "Every

What you can do . . .

- Buy and read (or ask your local library to get) *Pet Food Politics*. This book shouldn't be missed.
- To hear a short podcast of an interview with Dr. Nestle about *Pet Food Politics*, go to: ucpress.edu/books/pages/11266.php. Click on the arrow under the book cover.
- Look for *What Pets Eat* in 2009!



An Excerpt from *Pet Food Politics*

The pet food recall may have begun with the personal – the tragic loss of beloved cats and dogs – but it quickly transformed into the political. The events that followed in the wake of the recall exposed catastrophic weaknesses in global safety systems not only of food production and distribution, but also of consumer products as diverse as toothpaste, tires, and children’s toys. Contaminated pet foods revealed the need for immediate efforts – by governments and industries – to correct some of the less desirable consequences of our rapidly globalizing world economy.

By the time the events of the recall drew to a close, it had become apparent that pet foods are just one part of an inextricably linked system of food production, distribution, and consumption, a system that involves farm animals – pigs, chickens, and fish – as well as people. Because the tainted ingredient had been imported from China by a company located in Canada, was used to make pet foods in factories in the United States, and was shipped to venues in South Africa as well as in the United States and Canada, what started out as a “mere” problem for “a few” cats and dogs ended up as an international crisis. Consumers lost confidence in the safety of American food products as well as in those imported from other countries, and for good reason. The pet food recall exposed glaring gaps in the oversight of food safety not only within the United States and at its borders but also within rapidly developing countries like China that produce foods for export.

From *Pet Food Politics: The Chihuahua in the Coal Mine*, by Marion Nestle. Copyright 2008, University of California Press. Reprinted with permission of University of California Press.

question I had led to more questions,” she laughs. “And none of my experience with human food recalls prepared me for how this recall was handled – by the companies involved, government regulators, the media, and the public.”

Genesis of the book

I first met Drs. Nestle and Nesheim at Global Pet Expo – the world’s largest annual pet industry trade show – in February 2008. They were still deep into the research for *What Pets Eat* (which is due out from Harcourt late in 2009). I can’t tell you how much I enjoyed witnessing their immediate response to their first (and very overwhelming) experience with a pet industry trade show.

Held in San Diego’s enormous convention center, the 2008 installment of Global Pet featured almost 800 vendors, in more than 230,000 square feet of exhibitor space. The couple was fascinated, exhausted, and incredulous at the size and scope of the industry. We compared notes about the companies that were promoting pet food, treats, and chews, and as they

shared their observations with me, I began to get a sense that their upcoming books were going to be quite revelatory.

This summer, I was thrilled to receive an advance copy of *Pet Food Politics* from its publisher, the University of California Press. A publicist for the book asked me if I would read it and perhaps contribute a blurb for its cover. After reading the first chapter, I sent Dr. Nestle an e-mail asking when I could schedule an interview with her to promote the book, because it is great.

Pet Food Politics not only delivers the most complete account of the 2007 wheat gluten/Menu Foods/Chinese ingredient recalls that pet owners will ever get, but also provides critical background information about each of the involved parties and the industry as a whole.

Dr. Nestle presents a detailed timeline of events – including all of the developments we read about in the newspapers, and many that we didn’t – and then analyzes the response of each of the players at each juncture. If you still have questions about the recall, you’re sure to find the

answers in *Pet Food Politics*. And, if the title hasn’t already tipped you off, the book provides a fascinating look at the wider context of the tragic event. All the potential disadvantages and dangers of a globalized food supply were highlighted during the event.

Interview with Marion Nestle

I spoke with Dr. Nestle just before the publication of *Pet Food Politics*.

Nancy Kerns, WDJ: *Hello, Dr. Nestle. The first thing I want to say is thanks so much for writing this book! It’s a fascinating read, and full of new information, even for someone who really followed the story at the time. What sparked your interest in the recall?*

Marion Nestle: *Pet Food Politics* was meant to be an appendix to *What Pets Eat*, a bigger book about the entire pet food industry that Mal Nesheim and I are writing. I was going to write a 10-page summary of the events around the recalls – and then I got caught up in it; it’s such a fascinating story and I could not believe how difficult it was to figure out what on earth was going on.

I was late getting to the story. When the recall happened, I was on a book tour for the paperback edition of *What to Eat*, and I couldn’t do the kind of tracking that I usually do when some food crisis happens that I’m really interested in. I was all over the country, and barely able to keep up with the travel, so most of what I knew about it was from *USA Today*. The *USA Today* reporters, by the way, did a fantastic job with the story.

When I finally sat down to work on what I *thought* would be an appendix, it was July 2007; the first recall happened in March. Our research assistant had prepared a timeline of the events for someone else, and I asked her for her sources, because it didn’t make sense in a lot of ways. One of the questions I had right away was, “Why did it take Menu Foods so long to issue the recall?” I was *so* curious about that; it seemed to me a rather long wait, and I couldn’t understand why.

In trying to sort out the timeline, I went to the PetConnection.com blog about the recall, starting from the most recent posts and working my way back. I spent several days doing that, just reading the day-to-day posts on the events. I couldn’t believe how much information they had there – news-

paper clippings, FDA hearings, other blog posts – just an amazing accomplishment.

WDJ: *You must have felt like you fell down a rabbit hole . . .*

MN: Yes and no. The fact of a food recall is one thing. But there were so many holes in the story that was publicly available! The story of melamine, for example. From the press accounts, it seemed as if no one could possibly imagine what melamine might be doing in pet food – or whether it could be responsible for the effects in dogs and cats that had been seen.

WDJ: *How were you able to come up with so much information about melamine and cyanuric acid?*

MN: I was able to write about the toxicity and use of melamine and cyanuric acid, thanks to my ability to read – and I'm being only a little sarcastic.

One of the things I came across on the PetConnection blog was an abstract from the *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association (JAVMA)*, referring to a study on melamine that had been done in the 1960s. I'm trained in research, and one of the first things you learn when you do research is never to believe what you read in an abstract of a study, or, for that matter, anyone else's account of what's in a paper; you *have* to read the whole thing yourself. I found the study in the Cornell veterinary medical library; it was about deliberately feeding melamine to sheep and finding out that high doses formed crystals that blocked their kidneys.

WDJ: *One of the first things Dr. Nesheim said to me when I met you two was that he had access to these amazing research tools that hardly anyone uses: books. In today's world, everyone looks to the Internet, and if what they are looking for is not there, they assume it doesn't exist.*

MN: In this case, the Internet had the abstract, but the abstract didn't say why they did the study, and the reason they did the study was absolutely crucial. We read the study, and then all the ones in the references, just like they teach you to do in grad school.

The 1960s investigators knew that

melamine contains nitrogen, and they wanted to find out if ruminant animals like sheep could use melamine nitrogen to make protein. That would have been a legitimate use if it had worked, but it killed the sheep. But melamine is a lot cheaper than protein, which is why it was used fraudulently by the Chinese wheat gluten manufacturers.

What was amazing about that old research was that the toxicity of melamine was so well worked out by the 1960s. There were incidents of melamine-contaminated feed – fish food – in the 1970s and 1980s. But nobody was talking about any of this. The FDA commissioned a big toxicology review that didn't cite those old papers.

We submitted the findings of our literature review as a letter to the editor of *JAVMA* – as an academic exercise, really. One of our Cornell colleagues took us to



In *Pet Food Politics*, nutrition and food industry expert Marion Nestle, PhD, shines a bright light on the 2007 pet food recalls – probably to the pet food industry's dismay. Photo by Larry Cohen.

task over this. He wrote us a “disappointed” letter saying that the old studies didn't mean anything, that veterinarians were thoroughly aware of the studies; they just didn't think they were relevant. Well, Mal and I thought they were relevant. The amounts of melamine that killed sheep in the 1960s weren't all that different from the amounts in the recalled pet foods.

WDJ: *From the perspective of an average consumer, the initial message that *Menu Foods* and the FDA put out seemed to be*

that we were dealing with “contamination” . . . not fraud. The recall was announced on March 16. According to your timeline, it wasn't until April 6 that the FDA mentioned the possibility that melamine could be a “deliberate adulterant.”

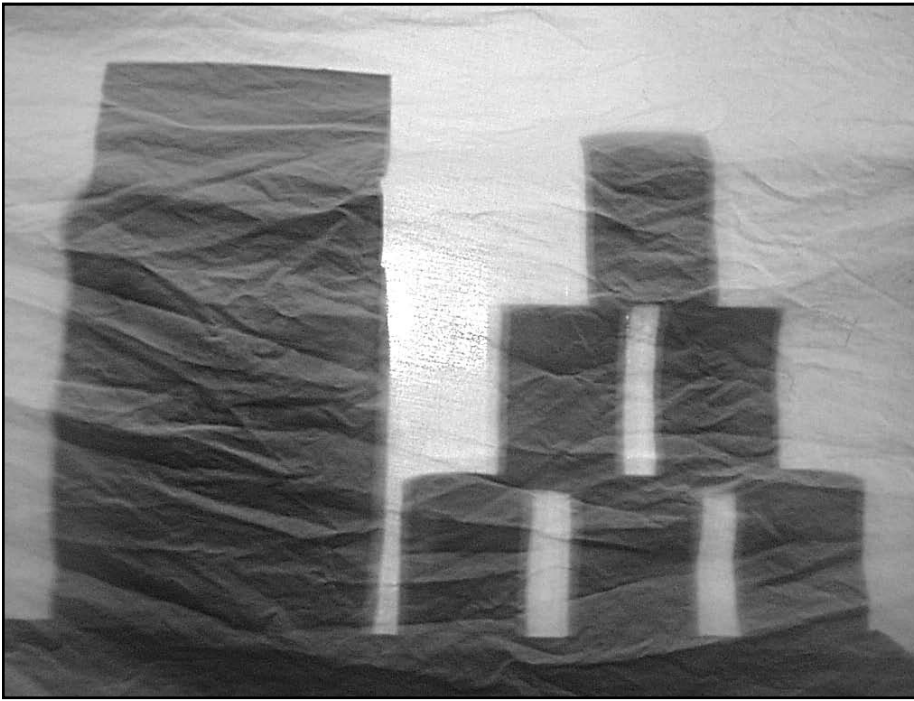
MN: Mal is an animal nutritionist. As soon as we heard that melamine was in the foods, we looked up its structure and saw how much nitrogen it contained. He knew right away that it must have been put there deliberately. Part of it was because he's of a certain age; we're really old! (Laughs). He remembers the old days when animal feed was routinely adulterated.

WDJ: *I have to admit, it makes me angry and frustrated to learn that any animal nutritionists “of a certain age” would immediately understand the potential significance of melamine “contamination” – and yet, no pet food industry people would suggest fraud as a possibility; the industry really closed ranks neatly on that possibility. It wasn't until the New York Times article – “Filler in Animal Feed Is an Open Secret in China” – came out on April 30 that this was openly discussed.*

MN: I'm with you. But perhaps I'm more suspicious than most. I wrote a book about the human food industry, called *Food Politics*, where I looked at how food corporations influence food choices. They don't just advertise. They also lobby federal agencies and Congress, and do everything they can to convince food and nutrition professionals never to suggest that people would be healthier if they didn't eat so much.

WDJ: *Given your experience with human food companies and government, was the response to this recall different from what you would have expected if something similar had happened to a human food company?*

MN: Yes! First, the FDA didn't really get involved in this in a serious way until they thought there was a potential threat to the human food supply. My initial impression from both government and industry was that they viewed the problem as “just pets.” The pet food companies should have known better. I can't think of anything more inflammatory to anyone who



Pet Food Politics describes what was going on “behind the curtain” during the pet food recalls of early 2007 – with the FDA and other regulatory agencies, as well as the feed companies. Among many other things, Dr. Nestle explains how it turned out that some foods did not contain what their labels said they contained.

owns a dog or cat than the expression “just pets.”

The FDA eventually realized that if melamine was in pet food, it could also be in the human food supply. And then, of course, it was. Who knew that surplus pet food was fed to pigs and chickens, or that wheat gluten is in fish food. That was one of the many surprises.

The others? One company made more than 100 brands of pet food, from the cheapest to the most expensive. Pet food companies had no idea where their ingredients came from. Lots of the ingredients came from China. And nobody was minding the store.

WDJ: *Not to brag, but WDJ’s readers knew about co-packers. Although the size of that particular co-packer was a surprise even to me.*

MN: The scale! One of the things I have in this book is a list of the brands that were involved – not even all the lines made by each brand, just the list of brands – it’s a very long list.

WDJ: *In terms of the companies involved: What would you have expected if this sort of thing had happened to a human food company?*

MN: Forgive me, but some of the companies that were involved *are* human food companies! We’re talking about Procter & Gamble here! [Editor’s note: Procter & Gamble makes Iams and Eukanuba, which were among the brands of foods that were recalled.]

These companies know exactly what they are supposed to do! They’ve heard food safety experts talk. They know about recalls. You document everything, you immediately go public with everything that you’ve got, you take your licks, and you move on. And the quicker you come clean, the better it goes. This one dragged on forever. From March 16 to the end of May, notices about affected products were still dribbling in. What were people who needed to buy food for their pets supposed to do? And didn’t anyone care? It didn’t look like it to me.

WDJ: *So what sort of conclusions have you drawn about the pet food industry as a whole?*

MN: They have a lot of growing up to do. They have to take what they are doing much more seriously. This is a \$17 billion a year industry, soon to be a \$20 billion a year industry. This is big.

But I think that the corporate giants see pet food as a relatively small money generator. The pet food divisions are extremely profitable, but they represent just a few percent of the companies’ total revenue. Our next book, *What Pets Eat*, discusses this issue much further. The level of profit for these pet food giants is hefty. The ingredients are relatively cheap; by-products are waste products and don’t cost much. The companies can package pet foods and market them in all the fancy ways they add value, and make a very nice profit on them.

The other conclusions have to do with the Chihuahua part – the early warning about deep problems with FDA regulation and food trade, especially with developing countries. We’ve already seen that with the recent heparin poisonings.

What I keep hoping is that some good will come of all of this. At the pet food meetings we went to this year, we heard company after company talking about how they were now paying more attention to what goes into the foods, how they are trying to source ingredients from places they can actually inspect, and how they are sourcing better ingredients. Maybe they are doing this because they learned a lesson, or maybe they are just reading the handwriting on the wall: sales are up on foods with no by-products and with sources identified, and lots of people are doing home cooking. That’s not so good for the pet food business, but it may be just terrific for pets.

WDJ: *Thanks for your time. We look forward to What Pets Eat next year! 🐾*

A Word to Our Readers: Whole Dog Journal’s Mailing List Policy

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Build a Good Partnership

Your relationship with your dog is built in thousands of tiny moments.

BY PAT MILLER

Like most positive trainers, I constantly remind my students that, whether they are conscious of it or not, they are training their dogs every moment they spend together. Whatever you choose to reinforce -- even when you're not in a formal training session -- will affect your dog's future behavior. The things that your dog does that you frequently reinforce are likely to increase, so it makes sense to reinforce him as frequently as you can for the behaviors that you enjoy.

Here's an interesting and powerful side-effect of frequent positive reinforcement: This practice can not only influence your dog's behavior in a way that you like, but also improve your relationship in a sort of positive feedback loop. When a dog (or anyone!) is rewarded, it makes him feel good -- about himself *and* the person giving the reward. And when your dog feels good about you, it tends to make him want



Sarah Richardson, a positive trainer in Chico, California, practices what she preaches by frequently reinforcing her dogs for calm, polite behavior. While watching TV, she takes a moment during a commercial to tell Quaid he's a good dog.

What you can do . . .

- Try to notice and respond to your dog's polite bids for your attention, such as when he makes eye contact with you, or offers a sit when appropriate.
- Offer varying reinforcements whenever you notice your dog doing something that you like to see him do, without being told to do so.
- Keep a journal to make yourself aware of how much you do (or don't) take advantage of opportunities to enhance your relationship with your dog.



to be with you more, and it motivates him to try to earn even more reinforcements. Said simply, frequent positive reinforcements strengthen the relationship between you and your dog.

The Center for the Human-Animal Bond at the Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine defines the bond that connects us to our beloved canines as "...the dynamic relationship between people and animals in that each influences the psychological and physiological state of the other." It also says that "People in the presence of animals are often perceived to be more happy and healthy." But what about the happiness and health of the animals? If we do a good job as caretakers on our side of the dog-human bond, our dogs should be happier and healthier in *our* presence as well.

This leads us to the underlying foundation of the positive training philosophy (training without force, pain, or fear) where the goal is to create dogs who are joyful and willing partners in our activities. It also underscores the contrast with old-fashioned thinking: "My dog should do what I ask because he 'loves' or 'respects' me -- not because he might get a treat." Those who espouse this anti-treat position usually train with prong collars, choke chains, and even shock collars. Ultimately their dogs' performance has nothing to do with love, and everything to do with pain avoidance and fear of unpleasant consequences.

How simple it is to help our dogs be healthier and happier -- and well-trained -- by remembering to reinforce them frequently during our interactions with them throughout the day, especially when we

take advantage of the wide range of reinforcers available to us. The bond isn't just about food – although food, because it's a strong, primary reinforcer for most dogs, is certainly a part of it. Other powerful reinforcers include toys, play, attention, touch, and the sound of your voice.

Relationship-building opportunities

Psychologist John Gottman, a marital and relationship researcher based at the University of Washington, has conducted dozens of studies in which the interactions between a couple are recorded and analyzed, in order to try to predict the ultimate success or breakup of the relationship.

Gottman's researchers closely observe the subjects' body movements and posture, facial expressions, tone of voice, and content of their speech, and each minute expression is categorized into either a

positive, affirming category, or a negative category.

Further, Gottman and his researchers look for and tally what they call "bids" – moments in which one of the partners attempts to seek out attention or affirmation from the other. These bids can be a verbal question, a look, an affectionate touch, or any single expression that says, "I want to feel connected to you," says Dr. Gottman. A response to a bid can be a turn toward, away, or against the other's request for emotional connection.

Gottman stores this data, then tracks the couples over time, to see which ones end up separating or divorcing and which ones stay together. He then analyzes all the data, looking for interactions that predict whether or not the couple succeeds in staying together. He now claims that within five minutes of observing a couple interact, he can predict, with 91 percent accuracy,

whether the couple will ultimately separate or stay together. What is he looking for? In short, more positive expressions than negative ones, and more positive responses to the partners' bids for attention than moments in which these bids are ignored.

Interestingly, Gottman found that people who (consciously or unconsciously) *ignore* their partners' bids more often than they respond to them are just as unsuccessful in their relationships as people who are negative with their partners. Husbands who eventually were divorced ignored the bids from their wives 82 percent of the time, compared to 19 percent for men in stable marriages. Women who later divorced ignored their husbands' bids 50 percent of the time, while those who remained married only disregarded 14 percent of their husbands' bids.

What on earth does this have to do with positive dog training? Studies of this kind

Jean's Bonding Suggestions

This article idea sprang from a suggestion from one of my students, Jean Mammen, who lives with Robbie, a yellow Labrador Retriever, in Washington, DC. Their home is much more of a suburban/urban environment than our farm, but she has found numerous things to do in her daily routine that, over time, have made a big difference in her relationship with Robbie and their quality of life together. Jean's suggestions include:

- Implement a "say please" program (also known as a "nothing in life is free" program) from the beginning, as a way of life, not just to solve a problem. "Say please" is sitting to have the leash put on, sitting to make the door open, sitting for treats, sitting for attention and petting, sitting for dinner, etc.

- Touch your dog non-aversively (this will vary depending on your dog) every chance you get. Do a little massage when you put on his harness. Scratch behind the ear or under the chin when you attach the leash. Run your hand down his side when you're stopped at a corner waiting for the light to change. Make sure his response is positive, that he moves into your touch and toward you; if he moves away, ducks out from under, or looks pointedly away, he's telling you he does not like that type of touch.

- Carry treats at all times, even (especially!) when you're out walking with your dog, and use them to reinforce appropriate behaviors, keep your dog's attention when there are big distractions, and give him a new, positive association with things that make him nervous (counter-conditioning).

- Use real life rewards: door opening for desirable "wait" behavior (reward = dog gets to go out and play), door closing

for unwanted "charge through the door" behavior (negative punishment = opportunity to go out goes away).

- Play with your dog. There's nothing like engaging in activities that are fun for both you and your dog to enhance and strengthen your relationship.

- Say your dog's name before feeding him a treat – reinforcing his response to his name (and giving his name a positive association), and attention. With multiple dogs, this reinforces their attention and gives each a positive association to his or her name, but also lets each dog know when it's his or her turn to get a treat.

- Give your dog a special treat when you're leaving the house – a stuffed Kong, a long-lasting chew, or hide several treats and give him the "Go find it!" cue as you walk out the door.

- Take advantage of any opportunities that present themselves. They are there all day. Tell him "Good morning!" when you wake up. Say "Good night!" when you go to sleep. Tell him you love him, just because you do.

"So," Jean says, "Daily life. Maximize all the little games and interactions with your dog you can fit into your day – including and especially during walks. Just as you wouldn't go out without a poop bag, don't go out without some treats."



Photo by and courtesy of Dog Scouts of America, dogscouts1.com

Jean Mammen and her Labrador, Robbie.



Sarah takes a moment from her work on the computer to reward Lenny, with a few chest rubs and some warm praise, for resting quietly on her office floor. If he had been nudging her elbow or whining for attention, she would ignore him.

have not been conducted with dogs, but based on my own anecdotal experience, I'm certain that similar statistics would emerge from a canine/human relationship study. I'd be willing to bet the farm that the more frequently a person looks at her dog with a happy, playful, or otherwise positive expression; engages her dog in a way the dog clearly enjoys (petting, running, sitting together); and rewards her dog with something the dog likes (food, praise, toys, play, petting), the more likely the dog is to be well-trained, well-behaved, and secure in that person's home for life.

Dogs are no different from humans; almost everyone responds positively to others who are attentive, interested, and responsive to us. So, to build a strong relationship with your dog, take as many opportunities as you can to respond to your dog's "bids" for attention, and reward him for responding appropriately to yours.

These moments don't have to be big; I'm talking about frequent, small gestures. For example, you can simply say "Good dog!" in a bright, happy tone when you notice your dog looking at you. Toss him a treat when you walk by as he's lying in the sun. "Catch him in the act" of lying quietly on his bed and rub his chest or tummy, as he prefers. Try to notice when he goes to the door and open it for him right away.

Give him something he likes – a toy, a quick play session, a treat – if he comes into the room when you are watching TV and offers a sit and eye contact. The point is to not ignore him during moments of potential interaction; reinforce him, even in a small or momentary way.

Of course, another tenet of positive training is that it's best to ignore – not reinforce in any way, with any attention whatsoever – those behaviors we would like to extinguish.

So if your dog's "bid" for attention is jumping up on you, persistently nudging your elbow as you try to work on the computer, or barking at you, the last thing you want to do is reward or reinforce him – even with so-called negative attention, such as yelling at him or smacking him. Ignore him, even if you have to turn away or leave the room to do so. And try to respond positively within a minute or two after he ceases the negative sort of attention-seeking.

Keep a journal

One way to make yourself more aware of the opportunities you have in your daily life to strengthen your relationship with your dog is to keep a journal – even if only for a day. Make a note every time you have a positive interaction with your dog.

If the number of notations for the day is very low – say, less than four or five – it should alert you that you are not being as reinforcing, enjoyable, or significant to your dog as you should be. Try to increase the number . . . try to discover what the highest number of positive interactions you can have in a day!

If you make steady progress in increasing the number of times you have small, reinforcing moments with your dog, you'll be sure to see his behavior, and your relationship improve.

My husband Paul and I have a pack of dogs – they are impossible to ignore! Seriously, though, we try to make sure that each dog has numerous positive interactions with us throughout the day. Here is a sample journal, so you can see what sort of interactions I'm trying to encourage you to have with your dogs!

6:00 am – The alarm goes off. Time to hop out of bed (or crawl, depending on my mood) to clean stalls and feed horses. As I stumble to the bathroom I pass Dubhy, our Scottish Terrier, lying on his foam pad by our bed. I give him a warm "Good morning Dubhy!" as I stoop to run my hands over his wiry coat, pet his furry face, scratch his ear, and rub his tummy when he rolls belly up for more attention.

6:10 am – I'm sitting on the bed, putting on my socks, and Missy, our Australian Shepherd, wanders over and sits with a beguiling look on her face. "Hi Miss Miss," I say as I scratch her behind the ear.

6:20 am – Dressed and ready to hit the manure fork, I greet Bonnie (Scottie/Corgi mix) and Lucy (Cardigan Corgi) as I let them out of their crates and we head down the stairs to the landing. There we pause while I trade Bonnie a treat for Paul's (husband) sock that she nabbed on her way out of the bedroom. "Bonnie, give. Yes!" and treat.

6:20 am – Now we play the "wait!" game on the stair landing while I descend to the bottom of the stairs, occasionally returning to the landing to award treats for good "wait" behavior. (This ritual is to save me from becoming entangled with 16 happy dog legs as we all troop down the stairs.)

Finally I reach the bottom of the staircase and invite them all to come down. Major reinforcement for the "wait" behavior: we're all headed for the barn!

6:25 am – Similar rituals happen at the back door as Lucy and Missy sit and wait to be let out, and Dubhy and Bonnie sit to be leashed and go out with me.

6:30-8:00 am – Tons of bonding moments, as Paul and I do barn chores. Some of the highlights:

- We kick and throw a ball endlessly for Lucy to chase and fetch.
- Dubhy gets to ride in the empty wheelbarrow (his favorite thing) on return trips from the manure pile.
- Bonnie and Dubhy get treats for waiting quietly while shut in the hay room, hanging out on the hay stack, while we move horses in and out.
- All four dogs park themselves outside a boarder's stall waiting for us to bring out her food bucket – this horse always leaves a little grain in her bowl and the dog's delight in cleaning up the bits of molasses-flavored grain when we dump the bucket out on the barn floor.
- Paul kneels and calls Lucy when he returns from feeding horses across the road. Lucy, delighted to see him, charges up the barn aisle and throws herself into his lap.
- I play the trade game with Bonnie again. This time she gets a chunk of dried beef liver in exchange for the fledgling sparrow she's retrieved from the indoor arena. The unharmed baby bird is stashed in a box until we're done with chores, at which time he'll be released to the care of his anxious parents.
- Paul loads water buckets into the wheelbarrow to dump them in the indoor arena. Lucy follows at his heels, eager to play one of her favorite games – “chase the water” as it flies through the air and splashes on the arena surface.
- Missy runs up to me with a sparkle in her eye, inviting me to take a break from sweeping the barn aisle to play “puppy rush” with her. I'm happy to oblige.
- Finally, done with chores, we troop to the tack room for another “wait at the door ritual” and head for the house.



Sarah waves goodbye to a guest, while giving Deveron the reinforcement he likes best (petting, especially on top of his head) for sitting politely at the door and not trying to run out.

I won't bore you with a moment-by-moment rendition of the rest of the day, but here are a few more highlights:

- Feeding time is happy time! Lucy gets a treat for “woo-woosing” instead of barking as she waits for her meal. Everyone does a sit/wait for food bowl delivery.
- Lunch time. I eat on the back deck and play with the dogs – tossing a disc toy for Lucy to retrieve while playing a “down/wait” game with Bonnie to prevent her from spoiling Lucy's fun (otherwise she'll try to play tug with Lucy's disc toy). Missy and Dubhy get random treats and massage.
- Private client with a reactive dog. Lucy, Missy, and Bonnie get to take turns playing “neutral” dog for counter-conditioning and desensitization practice. They love this game; they get lots of treats, too. Dubhy doesn't get to play; he has his own dog-reactive issues!
- Hike the farm – a favorite for all of us. Lucy, Missy, and Bonnie get to run off-leash. Lucy and Missy stay close. Bonnie

ranges farther afield but checks in regularly for family recall games. Dubhy, on a 40-foot long line, plays recall games in between checking out gopher holes.

- Evenings in the living room. Bonnie and Dubhy cuddle with me on the sofa while I type on my laptop. Lucy, at my feet or on the sofa, gets counter-conditioning treats when a cat enters the living room, or if a dog barks on television. All four cluster around Paul's recliner when he opens a box of pretzels; they know pretzel pieces will come flying their way. When the pretzels are gone, Lucy claims her favorite spot and falls asleep cuddled in Paul's lap on his recliner.
- Go to bed. Bonnie and Lucy fly up the stairs to their crates when they hear this bedtime cue. Dubhy waits on the landing for an extra bedtime cookie, and Missy follows at my heels up the stairs to bed.

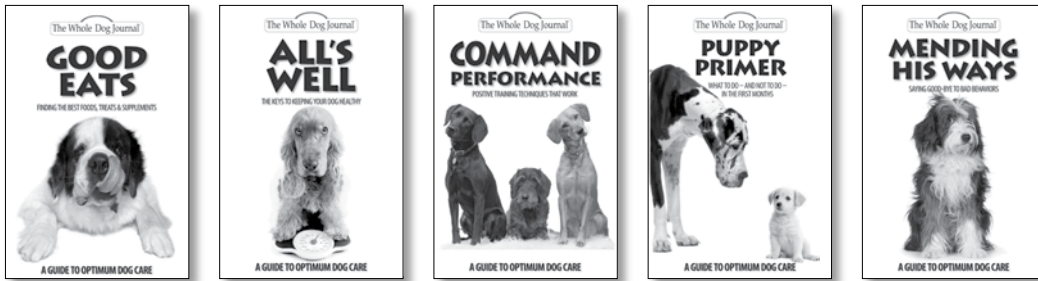
I give Lucy bedtime treats in her crate, then trade Bonnie treats for the sock she's taken to bed in hers. Missy gets a last scratch behind the ear along with her bedtime cookie. Dubhy hops up his bedsteps onto the bedspread, waiting for us to climb in and give him his bedtime massage, curled between us as we watch the Tonight Show.

Because I work from home, I'm fortunate to have endless opportunities throughout the day to do things that will enhance my relationship with my dogs. Even still, I sometimes feel I don't do enough. I should hike with my dogs every day – and I don't. I should groom each of them every day – and I don't. I should do formal training sessions with each of them every day – and I don't. But I *always* have dog cookies in my pockets. You never know when a bonding opportunity might present itself! 🐾

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

HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

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

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