



The Whole Dog Journal™

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A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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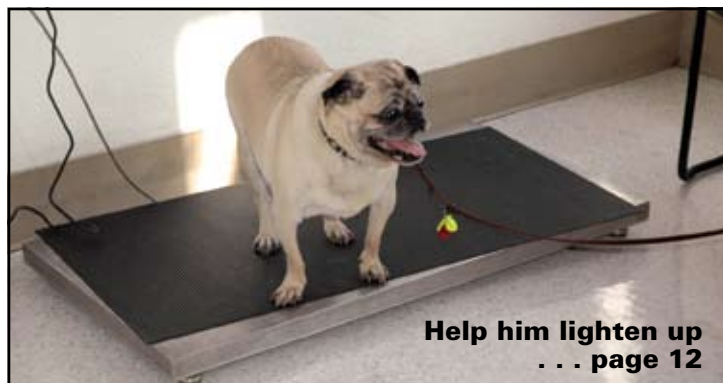
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Miraculous

Exercise, training, and counter-conditioning.

BY NANCY KERNS

When I visited my brother and his very pregnant wife last month, to take pictures for "Family Planning," our August article about getting dogs ready to live with children, I noticed that their dog, Hannah, was quite a bit fatter than I had last seen her. I was surprised; Keith told me that he had been spending much more time walking Hannah than in previous months. The goal was to tire her out (a tired dog is a good dog) and to work on her training before the baby arrived.

Playing pet detective, I asked Keith if he had been giving her many treats on their walks. "Of course!" he replied indignantly. "We read WDJ!"

"What sort of treats are you are giving her?" I asked – and the mystery was instantly solved. The treats were biscuit-style cookies, each about the size of an Oreo. A handful of these each day would certainly add up to quite a few extra calories for Hannah, even considering the extra exercise she was getting. Keith said he had been breaking the cookies so he could feed Hannah a greater number of small pieces, but I noticed that the biscuits were so hard, they were difficult to break into more than two or three segments.

I praised Keith for using positive reinforcement and classical conditioning on his walks with Hannah. But I also suggested that he use much smaller treats, and that he alternate between bits of biscuits and *tiny* high-value treats like pieces of chicken or cheese. My trainer friend Sandi Thompson describes the ideal training treat as a "tiny burst of flavor" in the dog's mouth.

Keith admitted that he liked using biscuits as treats because they didn't get his pockets all gooey. Aha! I had a perfect gift for him in the car: my "bait bag," a fully lined nylon pouch that straps around the waist and can hold greasy, yummy treats and a plastic bag or two, too. Of course, I had to go buy another bait bag for myself; I don't take my dog, Otto, anywhere without a



mix of kibble and high-value treats to use for training and counter-conditioning.

My advice to Keith and Leslie was off the cuff; I hadn't yet read WDJ contributor Mary Straus's article on how to help a dog lose weight. Since he's a regular WDJ reader, I'm sure he'll get far more information and advice from the article (which appears in this issue) than he did from me.

In spite of all this buildup, I haven't heard any reports about Hannah's current weight, because mostly what I've been talking to Keith and Leslie about is their newborn baby daughter! And, of course, how Hannah is coping with the loss of her "only child" status. I was proud when Keith reported that, as our August article had suggested, he had been bringing baby Ava's blankets and clothing home so Hannah could smell them, days before Ava herself came home from the hospital. And I was absolutely thrilled when he told me that all the training he and Leslie had been doing was really paying off; Hannah was calmly going "to her spot" when asked to do so.

Best yet, while she initially acted concerned and curious when Ava cried, Hannah was easily distracted by the treats that the new parents liberally dropped for her as they attended to the crying baby. It's a winning tactic for counter-conditioning a dog who is anxious about a baby. WDJ contributor Lisa Rodier recently sent me a note about her friend Samantha Fogg, a positive trainer from Georgia, who had a baby in March.

"Samantha just started teaching classes again, with her baby, Emma, strapped to her chest. Her students have been instructed that any time the baby shrieks or cries, to feed their dogs. She told me last night that the dogs are now starting to look at their owners as soon as Emma makes a noise. How cool is that?" Very, very cool.

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The Whole Dog Journal™

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

EDITORIAL OFFICE

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

SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

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

BACK ISSUES, WEBSITE INQUIRIES

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

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NEWSSTAND

Jocelyn Donnellon, (203) 857-3100

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Missing the Mark

Five things to do when your dog . . . “marks” in the house.

BY PAT MILLER

Marking is not the same behavior as “my bladder is full and I have to pee.” Housetraining is just a matter of teaching your dog when and where to relieve himself. In contrast, marking is primarily a stress- or anxiety-related behavior, far more complex and challenging than housetraining. An occasional female will mark, but the culprits here are primarily male dogs. Here are five suggestions for dealing with marking behavior:

1 Manage your dog’s behavior with closed doors, baby gates, leashes, crates, and exercise pens so he doesn’t have the opportunity to mark in another room undetected. If you catch him “in the act,” interrupt him with a cheerful “Oops!” and take him outside. While marking is not the same as housetraining, you can still send him the message that he’s allowed to mark outdoors, but not indoors.

2 Reduce his stress levels. Identify and remove as many stressors as possible. This includes eliminating

the use of aversives in training or behavior modification and removing known stressors from his environment, as well as counter-conditioning and desensitization to stimuli that trigger fear, anxiety, arousal, or aggression responses in your dog. Hence the importance of *not* using verbal or physical punishment or trying to frighten him if you catch him in the act; you’ll be *adding* stress, and could actually *increase* the marking behavior as a result.

Other useful tools for stress reduction include calming massage; aromatherapy; Comfort Zone (DAP, a synthetic substance that mimics the calming pheromones emitted by a mother dog when she’s nursing puppies); and *Through a Dog’s Ear* – a CD of classical music specifically selected for its calming effects on dogs.

3 Thoroughly clean any soiled spots with an enzymatic product designed to clean up animal waste. Use a black light to find untreated spots. This will help you find undetected soiled spots from your own dog as well as dogs who may have lived in your home before you and

your dog moved in – a common trigger for marking. Do not use ammonia-based products to clean! Urine contains ammonia and the ammonia in the cleaning products may actually inspire your dog to urinate on the spot where the ammonia-based product was used.

4 Get him neutered. While this doesn’t always reduce or eliminate marking, it can help, especially if done sooner rather than later. Testosterone can be a significant stressor, particularly if there are females in season and/or other male dogs in the neighborhood.

5 Use a belly band. This is a soft band of cloth with a Velcro fastener, which you can wrap around your dog’s abdomen. For some dogs, the band inhibits marking behavior entirely. Others will happily soil the belly band, (you can attach a self-adhesive absorbent feminine pad to the inside the band to absorb the urine) but at least it protects your home environment from urine stains and odors. Change the pad as needed.



It’s one thing outside, but urine “marking” indoors must be stopped!

Note: Veterinary behaviorist Dr. Nick Dodman of Tufts University suggests that well-practiced marking behaviors can often only be resolved with the use of behavior modification drugs. If you are not successful in your efforts to modify and manage your dog’s marking, make an appointment with a behavior-savvy veterinarian to discuss the possibility of using anti-anxiety medication.

Your vet can also consult with a veterinary behaviorist elsewhere in the country by phone. You can find contact information for veterinary behaviorists at dacvb.org or avsabonline.org. 🐾

Pat Miller, CPDT, is WDJ’s Training Editor and author of many books on positive dog training. See page 24 for book purchase and contact information.

New Therapy for Canine Brain Cancer

Breakthrough experimental treatment includes surgery, gene therapy, and a vaccine

The University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine opened clinical trials in June 2009 for dogs with brain cancer. Any dog with a primary brain tumor (one that originates inside the brain) may be eligible. The program will cover almost all costs for dogs enrolled in the trial.

Batman is a 10-year-old German Shepherd-mix with an aggressive type of

brain tumor – one that usually causes death within a month of diagnosis. In August 2008, Batman was the subject of what has developed as a breakthrough experimental treatment. One year later, Batman has no evidence of the disease – a response so impressive that the National Cancer Institute is funding further research for 50 dogs. If additional grants

and donations come through, the number will be increased to 100 dogs. Without funding, treatment would cost between \$10,000 and \$20,000 per dog.

The new treatment consists of three phases. Surgery is done to remove as much of the tumor as possible. The site is then treated with a form of gene therapy designed to attract the dog's immune system to destroy any remaining tumor cells. Finally, a vaccine is made from the dog's own cancer cells and administered to prevent tumor recurrence.

Since Batman's success, eight more dogs have been treated. In each case, their tumors shrank or disappeared.

This new type of treatment has the potential to be used for many other forms of cancer in both dogs and humans. Two comparative oncology specialists are working together: one is a veterinary surgeon, and the other heads the university's neurosurgery gene therapy program. Their hope is that the lessons learned from treating dogs will lead to better treatment options for humans with brain tumors as well.

– Mary Straus

For more information:

University of Minnesota College of Veterinary Medicine, (612) 624-7441; www.cvm.umn.edu

PHOTO BY SUE KIRCHOFF, COURTESY UMN



Dr. John Ohlfest and Dr. Liz Pluhar with Batman, the first patient to undergo a new experimental treatment for brain cancer.

Veterinary Chain Stops Providing Cosmetic Surgery

Banfield, The Pet Hospital, will no longer crop ears, dock tails, or devocalize dogs

In July, the nation's largest chain of animal hospitals, with more than 730 locations and 2,000 veterinarians, announced that it will no longer perform ear cropping, tail docking, or devocalization on dogs.

Banfield, The Pet Hospital, based in Portland, Oregon, has determined that it's in the best interests of its clients' animal companions to stop offering these cosmetic surgeries. In doing so, Banfield is conforming with this position statement passed by the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) in November 2008:

"The AVMA opposes ear cropping and tail docking of dogs when done solely for cosmetic purposes. The AVMA encourages

the elimination of ear cropping and tail docking from breed standards."

The Canadian Veterinary Medical Association also opposes cosmetic surgeries. Ear cropping and tail docking are banned in Australia, Finland, Germany, Iceland, the Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, Sweden, Scotland, and parts of Austria.

The American Kennel Club, on the other hand, remains a loud voice of opposition to anti-cropping and anti-docking policies and legislation. The AKC position statement says, "The American Kennel Club recognizes that ear cropping, tail docking, and dewclaw removal, as described in certain breed standards, are

acceptable practices integral to defining and preserving breed character and/or enhancing good health."

The AKC further states, "Any inference that these procedures are 'cosmetic' and unnecessary is a severe mischaracterization that connotes a lack of respect and knowledge of history and the function of purebred dogs."

The Banfield announcement was released just in time to support the efforts of animal advocates working to ban devocalization of dogs in the state of Massachusetts, House Bill 344. That bill was scheduled to be heard in the state legislature in early August. – Pat Miller

Missing the Point

Removing or reducing a dog's teeth fails to address the cause of his aggression

In July, the *LA Times* reported on the story of Cotton, an American Eskimo Dog with aggressive behaviors, whose owners had opted for a procedure known as “disarming” – the removal or reduction of healthy teeth as a treatment for canine aggression. The owner had reportedly tried “everything” to eliminate the dog's aggression, including clicker training, high-pitched electronic tones, pepper spray, throwing soda cans filled with rocks, and two visits from Cesar Millan.

While watching an Animal Planet program on “extreme biters,” the owner found Dr. David Nielsen, a veterinary dentist based in Manhattan Beach, who talked about a miracle fix: the disarming procedure.

Instead of extracting canine teeth, Dr. Nielsen cuts away 4 millimeters of tooth using a CO₂ laser. He acid-etches the live pulp within, fashions a bell-shaped cavity that he packs with composite, and light-cures the top for a smooth, flat finish. He also blunts the sharp incisors.

The owners had the procedure performed on their dog at a cost of \$1,600.

They report that their dog still attempts to bite, but the worst damage he's done has been light scoring to the leather boot of their gardener, after “30 seconds of ferocious gnawing.” A month after Cotton's disarming, he still goes after strangers, but the severity of his bites have been reduced.

This approach has not been embraced by qualified, knowledgeable behavior professionals, nor do the results strike most positive trainers as a success.

Behavior studies confirm that canine aggression is best addressed through behavior modification programs that utilize classical counter-conditioning and desensitization; training that utilizes operant conditioning, such as the Constructional Aggression Treatment (CAT) protocol developed by behavior analysts Kellie Snyder and Dr. Jesus Rosales Ruiz, is also very useful for treating aggression. A combination of operant and classical conditioning, as described in Leslie McDevitt's book *Control Unleashed* or Emma Parson's *Click to Calm*, can also produce a positive change in a dog's behavior.

Behaviorists are not alone in their criticism of disarming procedure; the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) also recommends the use of appropriate behavior modification programs. The AVMA issued a policy statement on the removal or reduction teeth in June 2005:

“The AVMA is opposed to removal or reduction of healthy teeth of dogs as a treatment for canine aggression. This approach to managing aggression does not address the cause of the behavior. The welfare of the patient may be adversely affected because the animal is subjected to dental procedures that are painful, invasive, and do not address the problem. Removal or reduction of teeth for nonmedical reasons may also create oral pathologic conditions.

“Dogs may still cause severe injury with any remaining teeth, and removal or reduction of teeth may provide owners with a false sense of security. Injury prevention and the welfare of dogs are best addressed through behavioral assessment and modification by a qualified behaviorist.”

– Pat Miller

New DNA Test for Boxer Cardiomyopathy

Both carriers and affected dogs can now be identified with certainty

Cardiomyopathy is a form of heart disease that affects a number of different breeds, including Boxers, Doberman Pinschers, and Cocker Spaniels. Boxer Cardiomyopathy, or more specifically arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy (ARVC), is an inherited electrical conduction defect that causes an arrhythmia, or irregular heart beat. The affected heart does not pump blood efficiently, leading to changes in the heart muscle that can cause fainting and sudden death. Because the arrhythmia may occur infrequently, it can be difficult to detect on examination, even by a specialist.

In April, Kathryn Meurs, a veterinarian at Washington State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, announced that she had identified the mutant gene responsible for Boxer Cardiomyopathy. The gene is autosomal dominant; if a puppy receives it from just one parent, he can be affected.

Even a Boxer-mix with the mutant gene could be affected. (Affected parents *can* produce normal offspring; pups who do not receive the gene will not be affected.)

A DNA test to screen for this mutation is now available from WSU. The test can be completed with an in-home cheek-swab kit or a blood sample taken by your veterinarian, and costs just \$60.

The DNA test will be useful to breeders who can now hope to eliminate carriers from the breeding pool. It will also be helpful to pet owners, who can manage the disease even before any symptoms are seen, with inexpensive medications that can extend the dog's life. The average monthly costs for treatment are estimated to be less than \$100, according to Dr. Meurs. It could also be used to screen puppies before they are brought home.

– Mary Straus

For more information:

WSU College of Veterinary Medicine
Veterinary Cardiac Genetics Lab
See vetmed.wsu.edu/deptsVCGL/Boxer/test.aspx or call
(509) 335-6038



Canine Rehab? Go, Go, Go.

Dogs with pain or injuries benefit from veterinary rehab specialists.

BY LISA RODIER

About a decade ago, my then-young Bouvier, Jolie, had surgery to repair a herniated disc. From reading WDJ, I was vaguely aware that veterinary physical therapy or rehabilitation existed; these specialties were mentioned in “Recovery From a Fetch Injury” in the August 1999 issue, as well as October 2000’s “Swimming Back to Soundness.” I decided that a similar modality would help Jolie, and set out to find a veterinary rehabilitation specialist to help us with her recovery.

I asked the veterinary orthopedist who had diagnosed Jolie’s condition, but while he thought some sort of pool-based therapy might be useful for my dog, he didn’t know anyone who offered such a service. I was unable to locate anyone in Georgia to help Jolie, but finally found a practitioner in Alabama – Jan Steiss, DVM, PhD, PT – who was able to give us a variety of exercises to practice with Jolie to speed her recovery

and help with mobility, strengthening, and flexibility.

Fast forward 10 years, and the field of veterinary rehabilitative medicine, sometimes referred to as Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation (PM&R), has blossomed. Just as physical therapy clinics for humans have popped up across the country over the past several years, so, too, has the field of veterinary rehabilitation grown. Still fairly young, the specialty is unknown to (and perhaps not completely understood by) many consumers and even veterinarians.

It’s physical therapy (but don’t call it that)

Veterinary rehabilitation uses many of the same modalities and techniques for animals as physical therapy does for humans; the two are similar in almost every way. However, the specific term “physical therapy” is legally reserved in most states for use by licensed physical therapists and for licensed physical therapists who work with humans only. The term is frequently used erroneously in canine rehab.

The American Association of Rehabilitation Veterinarians (AARV) was formed in 2007 to educate veterinary surgeons, veterinarians, and the public about the role this specialist can play in our dogs’ health. The organization defines a physical medicine and rehabilitation (PM&R) veterinarian as a doctor of veterinary medicine who has advanced training, expertise, and experience in the management of pain and loss of function through injury and illness.

Many PM&R veterinarians have post-doctorate training in the areas of orthopedic surgery, pain management, acupuncture, chiropractic, and/or rehabilitation that has led to specialization and/or certification in these fields. The AARV website elaborates, “The PM&R veterinarian is trained to evaluate the whole patient and not just focus on the perceived injury or illness. Following evaluation the PM&R veterinar-

What you can do . . .

- Include your primary care veterinarian in your healthcare team; rehab specialists have the most to offer when they are confident your dog has been properly diagnosed.

- Look for a rehab veterinarian or educated, experienced rehab practitioner if your dog has any sort of mobility problems or weakness.

Ask about her training and experience; she should be proud to describe it!



PHOTO BY SAMANTHA FOGG, COURTESY OF CARING CANINE

Tye, a Pharaoh Hound, strengthened his hind end with exercises on a physio ball, just one of many tools the rehab vet has at her disposal.

ian can perfect a treatment plan, monitor patient progress, and adjust therapeutic recommendations to achieve success.”

In a further bid to bring light and credibility to the field, a group of veterinarians have dedicated the past several years to creating a board-certified specialty in the discipline, the American College of Veterinary Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation. According to M. Christine Zink, DVM, PhD, the initiative is now at the American Veterinary Medical Association as the AVMA solicits comment from the public and the profession. If approved, Dr. Zink anticipates that the board certification will become a reality within the next year.

Specializing in mobility

To learn more about canine rehabilitation, we talked with Evelyn Orenbuch, DVM, vice president of the AARV. Dr. Orenbuch has practiced veterinary rehab medicine in the Philadelphia area for the past seven years, focusing much of her time on sports



Evelyn Orenbuch, DVM, vice president of the AARV, says the field of veterinary rehabilitation has bloomed in recent years, with huge benefits to our dogs.

medicine for performance and working dogs. Several of her patients are nationally and internationally ranked agility and working dogs. Her next most commonly seen patient is the geriatric (usually arthritic) dog. Although soon to relocate to the Atlanta area, she took time to discuss this growing field with us.

WDJ: Why become a rehab vet? Why not an orthopedist or a “primary care” veterinarian?

A rehab veterinarian is someone who specializes in neuromuscular and musculoskeletal conditions. This is in contrast to an orthopedist, who is also highly trained in these areas, but uses surgery as his primary tool. Orthopedists are good at diagnosing, but they are typically not the ones who guide a client through correcting a condition or strengthening an area of the body.

Primary care veterinarians often don't understand the broad range of conditions with which the rehab vet is familiar. I think veterinarians as a whole are getting better, but I remember when I graduated from veterinary school 15 years ago – I didn't know how to diagnose a specific type of strain very well. Back then, we were told that if you didn't see it on an x-ray, then it's a soft tissue injury. But what type? A bicep strain? Iliopsoas? Medial shoulder instability? A bunch of different things

can be soft tissue injury and each should be treated very differently!

The typical protocol is to put the dog on a nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory (NSAID), and recommend rest for the dog; we call it “R&R”: Rimadyl and Rest. If they can do surgery, they do surgery. “R&R” might fix the problem, but often not permanently; it might just mask the problem. We'll sometimes see a chronic waxing and waning of the problem after using the R&R approach. Well, if it's a strain of the teres major (a scapulohumeral muscle) or medial shoulder instability, until you treat it appropriately, it's never going to get better!

Another classic scenario is when a dog has a little pain in his hind end, so he stops using it efficiently, and puts more weight on the front end. Then he becomes weaker and can't get stronger because of the pain and fatigue due to muscle atrophy. You've seen them – old Labrador Retrievers with huge shoulders and skinny butts. Unless we're proactive about strengthening the hind end, the dog is never going to come out of the spiral.

But now we have rehab vets. Ideally, when a veterinarian sees that the dog has a soft tissue injury, she'll send him to a rehab vet, realizing that the dog needs to see a musculoskeletal specialist. The bottom line is that the field is becoming a lot more like human medicine, in terms of specialization. There is just too much to know to expect one veterinarian to be able to do it all – and it's odd that we didn't realize it sooner.

What services and modalities should we expect a rehab vet to offer?

Because a good portion of what is going on during rehab is working on building strength, flexibility, proprioception, and range of motion, the means of addressing those issues will vary depending on who is administering treatment.

For example, I frequently use acupuncture and chiropractic. Other practitioners use those modalities and/or laser, ultrasound, electrical stimulation, hydrotherapy (underwater treadmill and/or swimming), massage, physio balls, wobble boards, land treadmills, cavaletti, weights, Thera-Bands, Chinese herbs, homeopathy, and nutrition. And that's not an exhaustive list!

What kind of training should I look for in a rehab vet?

Ideally find someone who has trained at

one of two schools in the U.S. The Canine Rehabilitation Institute (with locations in Florida, Maryland, and Colorado) awards the certificate of Canine Rehabilitation Therapist (CCRT) to veterinarians; the University of Tennessee University Outreach and Continuing Education Department, in conjunction with Northeast Seminars, offers a Certified Canine Rehabilitation Practitioner (CCRP) certificate.

But you might also find someone who has been practicing in the discipline for a long time. Maybe they don't have one of the certifications, but perhaps they've spent a lot of time learning on their own, working with physical therapists, and getting invaluable practical experience. As with any specialist, you've got to ask them! A good rehab vet also usually has another modality such as acupuncture or chiropractic in her toolbox. Those kinds of tools allow the veterinarian to get a lot more done, including the ability to deal with both the condition and pain relief.

What are the typical goals of rehab and what are some examples of injuries or conditions we might see treated?

With hip dysplasia, we can use rehab to help with strength and flexibility. We find that we're able to put off using pain medication and surgery to the extent that we're seeing a lot of cases that would have needed surgery, now don't need it.

If you know your dog has hip dysplasia early on, and you manage her, you can begin work early to prevent the hind end from becoming weak, and keep the pain at bay – pain that we often see in the low back and the muscles around the hips. Rehab can keep those areas loose, flexible, and strong.

After anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) surgery, we used to see protocols that called for the dog to start walking for five minutes one week, then 10 minutes the next, and so on. There wasn't anything else, and particularly nothing to address stretching and strengthening.

Now we can prescribe passive range-of-motion exercises to do at home; light weight-bearing exercises to practice early on; and starting hydrotherapy anywhere from two to eight weeks post-op. And sometimes we see the use of lasers, electrical stimulation, or ultrasound to help with tissue healing. With rehab, animals get better a whole lot faster; they return not just to functionality, but to the condition in which they were in, pre-injury.

When should I consider consulting a rehab vet?

Any time you have an animal who needs to work on increased strength, proprioception, and/or flexibility. And pain management is huge – it's a big part of rehab. In fact, there is a brand new pain management certification offered by the International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management (IVAPM) called the Certified Veterinary Pain Practitioner (CVPP). The need to recognize and address pain in our animals is essential to their healing and well-being.

Rehab and pain management go hand in hand. It's important to realize that you need both to get anywhere when dealing with pain. We can throw drugs at it, but if the animal is in significant pain, we need to be doing other things as well. For example, if a dog is stiff and painful, even doing things as simple as stretching and massage can be a big part of pain management.

How do I find a rehab vet and do I need a referral?

Both certifying courses (mentioned above) have websites that list graduate practitioners, but remember that these lists will include veterinarians, veterinary technicians, physical therapists, and physical therapy assistants, as the certifications are open to all of those disciplines. The AARV has a list of veterinarians who do rehab, and the American Canine Sports Medicine Association has a listing of rehab practitioners (see "Resources," page 24, for veterinary rehab organizations).

Usually a person can make an appointment to see a rehab vet without a referral. However, most rehab veterinarians I know would prefer to have a referral to ensure that the animal has been looked at, and know that the animal is healthy. On the flip side, the benefit of us being vets is that we can determine that!

How is a physical therapist (PT) or registered veterinary technician (RVT) who has earned one of the certifications best utilized?

The way I see it, the veterinarian is the "physiatrist" – a rehabilitation physician. She oversees and manages the case as far as the rehab aspect goes. She can then send the animal to a physical therapist (PT) who will help develop the rehab protocol.



Dr. Orenbuch believes that rehab vets should utilize complementary modalities such as chiropractic and acupuncture to best treat the dog's condition and relieve his pain.

Alternatively, a rehab vet can create the treatment and send the animal to a registered veterinary technician (RVT) who's been trained to carry out a rehab program. PTs can be an important part of the team; they are well trained in biomechanics and can be very good at coming up with appropriate exercises to strengthen a very specific muscle.

One of the issues we face if sending a dog to an RVT or a PT without a vet's supervision is that RVTs and PTs are not trained to specifically recognize or diagnose animal diseases. Therefore, if an animal is not being overseen by a rehab vet, we worry that conditions could be overlooked, affecting not only the rehab therapy but the overall health of the animal.

What are challenges facing the field?

The biggest challenge is educating our veterinary colleagues so that they understand when the rehab vet needs to enter the picture.

In what sort of case do you think your perspective as a rehab veterinarian is particularly helpful?

I've seen many cases in which a conventional veterinary approach leaves the client wanting; there is a lack of knowledge about the other tools that are available to us. Take intervertebral disc disease, for example. You might have a dog who is partially paralyzed or weak in the hind end because a disc is pressing on the spinal cord. Often, we can avoid surgery through acupuncture and rehab, by waking up nerves and bringing the dog back to function.

I've seen cases in which hip dysplasia was assumed because when the dog's hip was extended, it was painful, but the dog never had an x-ray! It might not even be hip joint pain – there are so many other things happening mechanically. It could be something going on up in the back. I see a lot of sacroiliac joint dysfunction and pain that can appear to be a hip problem, when it's really in the back or iliopsoas.

My practice is a lot of sports medicine. About 40 to 50 percent of my patients are agility or flyball dogs. A big part of rehab is keeping the dog in top shape. We have people who spend a lot of money on competitions – entry fees, travel, etc. – that the last thing they want to do is bring a dog who is not in top form to a trial.

A few weeks ago, I was at an agility trial and met a woman and her dog. She was completely distraught; her dog needed only one more "double Q" (a qualifying agility standard run and a qualifying jumpers run on the same day) to earn his MACH (Master Agility Champion) title. On day one of the three day trial, the dog tweaked something, and by day two she had to pull him from the trial.

I saw him at the beginning of the third day, and he was clearly sore, and head-bobbing lame. It appeared he'd injured his shoulder. I treated the dog once, then reviewed with the woman how to rest, stretch, and massage the dog, and she followed my protocol to a T. Less than two weeks later, they went to a trial and the dog was feeling so good that on the first day he went off course! But on day two, he earned his MACH. 🐾

Lisa Rodier lives in Alpharetta, Georgia, with her husband and two Bouviers. She is also a volunteer with the American Bouvier Rescue League.

Bring It!

A positive method for teaching fetch, whether your goal is a formal show ring retrieve or a casual backyard game.

BY PAT MILLER

Back in the day, when old-fashioned coercion training was *de rigueur*, it was generally accepted that if you didn't teach a "forced retrieve," you didn't have a reliable retrieve. Today, as the field of modern, science-based positive reinforcement training has incubated and matured, we know better. While you can still find die-hard trainers who are more than willing to inflict pain on a dog to force him to hold a fetch object in his mouth, you can also find a growing number of trainers who are teaching happy, reliable retrieve behaviors without ever even considering the use of pain.

When you stop and think about it, given the natural propensity of most dogs to want to put stuff in their mouths, it's pretty absurd to think you should have to force a retrieve. How hard is it to find ways to reinforce a behavior that our canine pals offer so willingly? Of course, back in the day, we used to punish our puppies a lot

for putting stuff in their mouths! Maybe that's why it was difficult, later, to convince them that we wanted them to pick something up.

Fortunately, those days are long gone. Whether you're training the next flyball champion, working toward your Companion Dog Excellent and Utility degrees in competition obedience, or just looking to play fetch in the backyard, there are fun, happy, force-free ways to teach your dogs to retrieve. Reliably.

Know your goals

Before you can start training your dog's retrieve, you need to be clear on your training goals, or more correctly, your criteria. If you just want to toss balls and discs for your dog in your backyard, your criteria – meaning how you want the retrieve to look – are a lot looser than the criteria you would set for an obedience retrieve, or flyball competitor.

What you can do . . .

- Reinforce your puppy for picking up things in her mouth. Don't punish her! That can suppress her retrieve behavior.
- Decide what kind of retrieve you want your dog to learn. Maintain a mental image of the behavior; create steps in your criteria that will produce that image.
- Whether you're aiming for a backyard fetch or a show-ring retrieve, keep it fun!



Let's compare the criteria of a couple of different backyard retrieves:

- **Low-Criteria Backyard Retrieve**
 1. Throw the ball.
 2. Your dog runs and picks it up in his mouth.
 3. Your dog brings it back and drops it at your feet.
 4. Tell him he's wonderful, pick it up, and throw it again.
- **Medium-Criteria Backyard Retrieve**
 1. Hold up the ball and wait for your dog to sit (because your trainer told you this "Say Please" behavior was a good thing to do).
 2. Your dog sits.
 3. Throw the ball.
 4. Your dog runs and gets it.
 5. He brings it back and drops it on the ground.
 6. Tell him he's wonderful, pick up the ball, wait until your dog sits, then throw it again.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KIM KILMER



Retrieves can be taught with positive methods, whether you want a casual game of fetch or a picture-perfect show ring retrieve over an obstacle, like this one by Nebriowa Number Two Genoa (Genny), HT, UD, CGC, TDI, Delta Pet Partner.

■ High-Criteria Backyard Retrieve

1. Hold up the ball and wait for your dog to sit.
2. Tell your dog to “Wait!” and toss the ball.
3. Tell your dog to go get it.
4. Your dog runs and gets the ball.
5. He brings it back and drops it into your waiting hand.
6. Hold up the ball and wait for your dog to sit again, tell him wait, throw it, and send him to get it again.

Each variety of retrieve has its own criteria. A flyball retrieve looks different from an obedience retrieve, and includes teaching the dog how to properly hit the box that delivers the ball to him. A service dog retrieve is different still, perhaps requiring that the dog be able to identify objects by name, and find them even when they’re not in plain sight. For each specialized type of retrieve behavior, you’ll need to determine what the criteria are and figure out how to apply the principles of learning to make them work for you, your dog, and your training goals.

Let’s look at how you could train the simpler version: the backyard fetch.

The puppy retrieve

Smart puppy owners start reinforcing their pup for picking up things, instead of punishing him for exploring his world with his mouth. Trade your baby dog a treat *every time* he has something in his mouth. He’ll start picking things up and bringing them to you, instead of running off to chew on them.

If your pup approaches you with something in his mouth that he shouldn’t have, offer him a treat, pick up the item when he drops it, give him his treat, put the item



Never punish your puppy for picking up items! Trade him a treat, and improve your puppy-proofing.

away, and make a mental note to do a better job of puppy-proofing! If it’s something he’s allowed to have, you can toss it for him to pick up again. Keep trading each time he brings it back, and in no time your pup will be a champion backyard retriever. If you make it a point to play the trade game with a variety of different “legal” objects early on – soft toys, rubber, plastic, metal, wood – you’ll have a dog who will happily retrieve anything you ask him to!

If your dog’s puppyhood is long gone, don’t fret. You can still shape your adult dog into a super retriever. If there are some things he’s willing to pick up, start with those. If nothing goes in his mouth except food, you can start shaping from scratch. Remember that this is supposed to be fun, so keep it light and breezy!

Shaping a backyard retrieve

Start by holding up a soft toy. If he looks or sniffs at it, “mark” the behavior with the click of a clicker (or a consistent verbal marker, such as the word “Yes!”) and give your dog a treat. Happy verbal praise after your click and treat helps your dog understand this is a fun game. Repeat this numerous times, until your dog is clearly intrigued by this new game.

Raise the criteria a little; perhaps now you only click and treat if he actually sniffs the toy. Repeat numerous times, until he consistently sniffs it every time.

Raise the criteria again; only click if he lightly bumps the object with his nose when he sniffs, putting a little more intensity into his sniffing behavior. Remember to keep it fun!

As he gets more intense about sniffing, occasionally he will open his mouth a little as he connects with the toy. When he’s opening his mouth more and more frequently, raise the criteria again, clicking only if his mouth opens, even just a little.

Eventually he’ll open his mouth on the toy every time. Now raise the criteria again, so he has to open his mouth a significant amount. Resist the temptation to stuff the toy in when his mouth opens, or you might intimidate him and make him back off. Let it all be his effort.

When he’s consistently putting his mouth all the way around the toy, start shaping for “duration of hold.” Raise your criteria just one second at a time; increase the duration of the “hold” only when he’s solidly performing at each new level.

Increase the duration – gradually! – until he will hold the toy for 5 to 10

seconds. If, eventually, you want him to drop the toy into your hand, make it easy for him by positioning your hand where the toy will usually fall into it, but don’t make that a required criterion yet; click and treat even if the toy misses your hand when he drops it.

Now place the toy on the floor and go back to the first step. Click and give your dog a treat for just looking at, then sniffing the toy, then putting his mouth on it, and eventually picking it up and holding it. The previous steps should go more quickly this time, as soon as he realizes it’s really the same game, just with the toy in a different place.



Penny, a German Shepherd-mix, was trained to a MB-CDX title by owner Dawn Bushong, of Braveheart Dog Training in San Leandro, California, only with positive clicker-based methods.

Next, toss the toy a short distance – a few inches – and repeat the previous steps, gradually tossing the toy longer and longer distances, until your dog is retrieving for you. If he starts dropping the toy instead of bringing it back, you may have increased the distance too much too soon. Go back to shorter distances and work on a longer duration of hold. Also, try backing away as your dog approaches; this encourages him to move toward you with more energy.

Finally, if you like, you can start asking your dog to “Wait” when you toss the toy, until you give him the cue to go get it. If you want him to deliver the toy to your hand, incorporate that piece into the shaping procedure early, as soon as he’s solid about holding the toy in his mouth for several seconds.

When the pick-up-and-bring-back behavior is solid and he’s enjoying the fetch game, you can raise the criteria again, and require that he deposit the toy in your hand before he gets the click and treat. Make it

easy for him to succeed by offering your hand for the toy, and only click and treat if it hits your hand-target.

If he gets too enthusiastic about fetch and starts jumping up for his toys, put a “Say Please” program into effect; wait for him to sit before you throw his ball, flying disc, or other fetch object.

So there you have it: a decent backyard retrieve. That’s just one way to teach it; there are many others. If you have a dog whose mouthing behavior has been so suppressed he can’t be shaped into picking something up, you may need to start by creating desire for an object (see “Creating Desire,” below).

In contrast, if you have a dog like my Bonnie, who is always looking for the accidental artifact that she can pick up and carry around in her mouth until you trade her for a treat, you can skip all the early shaping steps and leap right to putting all the pieces together for a formal retrieve.

The obedience retrieve

The formal obedience retrieve is a complex “behavior chain,” meaning a number of behaviors are strung together without a separate cue required for each one; completion of one behavior is the cue to start the next behavior in the chain.

For the obedience competition retrieve on the flat (not over a jump), you start with your dog in heel position at your left side, and tell him to “Wait!” while you toss the dumbbell. Then, on the single cue to “Take it!” your dog performs the following behavior chain:



Preserve the beauty of your dog’s keen and happy participation in training by keeping it positive!

- ◆ He goes away from you to the dumbbell.
- ◆ Picks up the dumbbell and holds onto it.
- ◆ Comes back to you with the dumbbell still in his mouth, and
- ◆ Sits in front of you, holding the dumbbell, without mouthing it.

Then cue your dog to “Give” the dumbbell (drop it into your hand) and “Finish” by returning to heel position. Since those behaviors require separate cues, they aren’t technically part of the behavior chain. In fact, obedience competitors have to be careful that their dogs don’t anticipate those two steps and add them to the chain, dropping the dumbbell and returning to the heel position without waiting for the cues to do so.

To avoid these anticipation errors, vary the amount of time that elapses between the “front” (when the dog sits in front of you), the “give” (when the dog releases the

dumbbell), and the “finish” (when you ask him to return to heel).

To teach the complete obedience retrieve, you would train separately those segments that aren’t retrieve-dependent: Your dog should already be solid at the “Heel” behavior and thoroughly understand the “Wait!” and “Finish!” cues before you incorporate them into the retrieve.

You can use shaping and other positive training methods to create the precision you’re looking for in a competition retrieve – perfecting the position of the sits, adjusting your dog’s speed as he runs to the dumbbell

and back, increasing the distance to the retrieve object, and fading any mouthing or tossing of the dumbbell. When each is perfected, strengthen the chain by practicing the behaviors in order, while fading any interim cues in the chain.

Remember that even if you’re working on a competition retrieve, with serious titles and trophies in your future, the training program should still be buckets of fun for your dog – and for you!

Thinking about a flyball career, or service dog work? Find out what the criteria are for those retrieves, break them down into all the appropriate pieces, and get started! Or find a good positive trainer who can help you with them. 🐾

Pat Miller, CPDT, is WDJ’s Training Editor and author of many books on positive dog training. Miller lives in Hagerstown, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. See page 24 for book purchase and contact information.

Creating Desire

- ◆ Slice open a stuffed toy and pull some of the stuffing out, or purchase a “food toy” with a Velcro opening, designed for this purpose. Place the toy where your dog can see it but not reach it. Several times a day, go to the toy and play with it – tossing it in the air; letting it fall to the floor and “grabbing” it; letting your dog watch you put treats in it.
- ◆ When your dog is starting to show interest in the toy and your activities, create interaction. (It works best to do this when he’s somewhat hungry.) Sit on the floor and let your dog see you stuff the toy with treats. Toss and catch it a couple of times, then let it fall, or drag it around the floor.
- ◆ If your dog approaches the toy at all, open up the toy and let him eat all the treats, telling him what a good boy he is.

- ◆ Repeat two more times, then put the toy away, out of reach but where he can see it. If you use your dog’s regular kibble in the toy, you can even feed your dog all his meals this way for a week or so.
- ◆ Gradually be slower and slower to “help” your dog by opening the toy. You should see him begin to take more initiative himself – perhaps touching the toy with his nose or paw, eventually picking the toy up in his mouth or trying to rip it open to get the treats. Continue to open the toy for him as he becomes more motivated to interact with it, until he’s enthusiastically interacting with it.
- ◆ When you have desire and enthusiastic interaction, then go back to shaping your retrieve with that toy. When his retrieve is solid with that toy, you can start using other toys. Keep the sessions short and fun for your dog!

Counting Calories

How to help your dog lose weight.

BY MARY STRAUS

When Ella, a five-year-old Norwich Terrier, first came to live with me a few months ago, she weighed a svelte 10.8 pounds. But within two months her weight had ballooned by almost a full pound, and there was no way you could call her anything but plump.

How could this happen? How could I have let my new dog get fat – me, the one who perpetually preaches the benefits of keeping dogs lean? And what the heck was I going to do about it?

The answer is that it happened because I'd never owned such a small dog before, and it turned out I was massively over-feeding her, particularly when I counted all the treats she was getting. And I would do whatever it takes to get her back to the weight she should be, and keep her there. Here is what I learned during my struggle to help Ella lose weight.

What's the big deal?

Why worry about one extra pound? On a big dog, one pound wouldn't matter, but for Ella, that's 10 percent of her body weight, and it's noticeable on her small frame. But it's her health, not her looks, that concerns me.

Lean dogs live longer, healthier lives than those who are overweight. A 14-year study showed that dogs fed 25 percent fewer calories than their free-fed litter-mates lived nearly two years longer and showed fewer visible signs of aging. They also were a full three years older before they needed treatment for arthritis.

Health problems that are more common in overweight dogs include pancreatitis, diabetes, heart disease, disc disease, ruptured cruciate ligaments, hip dysplasia and other forms of joint disease, surgical complications, compromised immune system, and even many forms of cancer.

What you can do . . .

- Reduce the amount you're feeding gradually every week or two until your dog begins to lose weight.
- Weigh all the food you feed to give you more control over your dog's diet.
- Monitor your dog's weight regularly to be sure your weight loss program is on track.
- Watch for calories from treats, chews, leftovers, and other extras that you may not be counting.
- Increase exercise gradually as your dog becomes more fit.



As many as half of all dogs in the U.S. are overweight, but the majority of their owners are in denial. A recent study found that veterinarians considered 47 percent of their patients to be overweight, yet only 17 percent of the owners agreed. If you can't easily feel your dog's ribs and shoulder blades, her waist is not discernable (a tuck behind the ribs), or there's a roll of fat at the base of her tail, it's time to face reality and put your dog on a diet.

Because we're so used to seeing overweight dogs, many folks think a dog at his proper weight is too skinny. However, as long as the hips and spine are not protruding and no more than the last rib or two are slightly visible, he's not too thin. If in doubt, ask your vet for an opinion, or go to an agility competition to see what fit dogs look like.



PHOTO BY ERIKA MAURER

It's difficult for many owners – even author Mary Straus! – to keep their dogs at a healthy weight, but it's worth the effort it takes. Mary's new dog, Ella, quickly ballooned to 11.8 pounds before Mary got her diet under control.

Types of food that are best for weight loss

Most prescription weight loss diets are excessively high in carbohydrates and low in both fat and protein. The same is true of many commercial weight loss diets, though some companies have recognized that this is not the best way to help dogs to lose weight and have changed their tactics.

Protein and carbohydrates supply the same number of calories, but protein is preferentially used to build lean muscle, while carbs are more likely to be stored as body fat. L-carnitine, an amino acid derivative found in meat, fish, and dairy products, helps to burn fat.

Dogs thrive on high-protein diets and find them more satisfying, while they have no nutritional requirement for car-

bohydrates. Diets to help your dog lose weight should be high in protein and low in carbs.

Fat has more than twice the calories per gram of protein or carbs, so the amount you feed should be limited. Fat, however, is also what satisfies the appetite best. A diet that is too low in fat will leave your dog feeling hungry all the time, making it harder for you to stick to the diet plan and potentially leading to food-stealing or even poop-eating. It's better to feed a diet with moderate fat and reduce the portion size as needed rather than feeding a low-fat diet.

If you are feeding kibble or other dry food, look for a minimum of 25 percent protein. More is better: generally, the higher the protein, the lower the carbs. There is no harm in feeding high protein

diets to puppies, seniors, or healthy adult dogs; there are only a few specific health conditions that require protein to be limited. (See "Diet and the Older Dog," WDJ December 2006, for more information on this topic).

Look for fat percentage around 12 to 16 percent. Some dogs have had success losing weight with reduced portions of even higher-fat foods that are also very high in protein, probably because these foods are quite low in carbs.

Avoid foods with excessively high (more than 5 to 6 percent) fiber, the indigestible part of carbohydrates. Increased fiber will not help your dog feel satisfied, and too much can interfere with nutrient absorption. Hill's Prescription r/d dry dog food (its weight-loss formula) has an

Counting Calories: Not As Difficult As You Might Think

Resting energy requirement (RER) is the number of calories per day your dog requires for just basic needs, and a good amount to feed most dogs to encourage weight loss. To determine your dog's RER, convert his ideal weight in pounds to kilograms by dividing by 2.2, then multiply that number by 30 and add 70. For Ella, I used 10 pounds as her ideal weight, which is 4.5 kg, multiplied by 30 is 135, plus 70 is a total of 205 kcal/day. This is what I should feed in order to help her lose weight.

This amount may need to be adjusted in some cases. Dogs who are substantially overweight may do best with an interim target weight to start with. Very active dogs may require up to 1.4 times their RER to keep weight loss at a safe rate of no more than 5 percent per month.

Here's another approach: 3,500 calories = one pound of weight. If your goal is for your dog to lose one pound every two weeks (appropriate for a dog who should weigh 50 pounds), you must reduce calories by 3,500 per two weeks, or 250 calories per day.

An even easier method to arrive at the same result is to multiply your dog's ideal weight by 5, then reduce daily calories by that amount. For a dog that should weigh 50 pounds, 50 times 5 is 250 calories per day, the same amount calculated above.

CALORIE CALCULATORS

Many calorie calculators significantly overestimate the calories most non-working, neutered dogs need (as do the feeding recommendations on many dog food labels). One calorie calculator I found said Ella should be getting up to 400 kcal per day, but when I researched this further, I discovered that my goal should be closer to 200 kcal if I wanted her to lose weight, and likely no more than around 270 kcal to maintain her ideal weight. Remember to use your dog's ideal weight, not his current weight, to estimate caloric needs.

HOW MANY CALORIES IS YOUR DOG EATING?

NutritionData.com provides the number of calories in a variety of human foods. They offer several serving sizes, but you may have to do further calculations to match what you feed. For Ella, I converted most foods to kcal per ounce, but used kcal per item for things like eggs and treats. If NutritionData.com doesn't offer a portion size in ounces, divide kcal per 100 grams by 3.5 to get kcal per ounce. Beware of volume measurements, such as kcal per cup, which will not be as accurate as measuring by weight.

I also feed raw meaty bones and some commercial dog foods and treats that aren't listed at NutritionData.com. For the raw meaty bones, I used a variety of sources to get an idea of how many calories they contain. For the commercial foods and treats, I looked on the packaging, product websites, or contacted the companies to find out how many calories each contained. See "Calories in Selected Foods and Treats" on page 15 for what I discovered.

Keep in mind that the foods you feed may vary in calorie content from those shown in the chart. Always check the labels of packaged foods to verify the calories they provide. See "Measurements Conversion and Calculation," page 14, for how to convert those values to match the amount you feed.

GUARANTEED ANALYSIS:	
Crude Protein Not less than	28.0%
Crude Fat Not less than	19.0%
Crude Fiber	
Moisture	
Calorie Content: This food contains 2,887 kcal/kg or 4.0 kcal/ounce ME (metabolizable energy) on an as fed basis (calculated).	

Ideally, every food and treat you feed your dog will list its calorie content in an easy-to-understand manner.

GUARANTEED ANALYSIS:	
Crude Protein	80% min
Crude Fat	5% min
Crude Fiber	1% max
Moisture	4% max
CALORIE CONTENT (Calculated)	
Metabolizable Energy	3900 kcal/kg

Most treat labels contain no calorie information whatsoever; you have to contact the manufacturer to determine how much the treats may be contributing to your dog's weight gain! Others, like this treat, provide information that requires conversion.

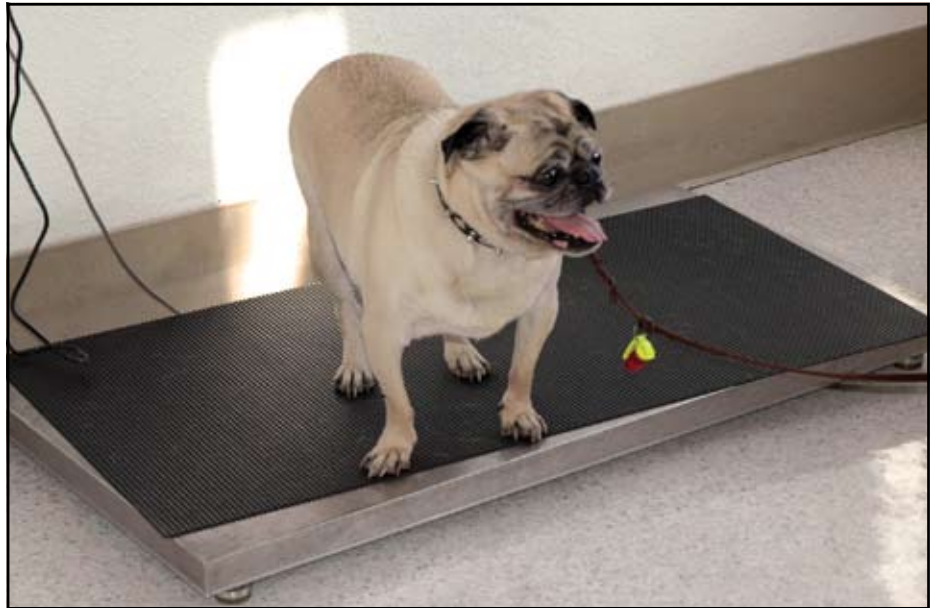
astounding 26 percent fiber, including 10.4 percent cellulose (essentially sawdust!). Over one quarter of what you're paying for is indigestible.

Examples of good food choices include Wellness CORE Original (34 percent protein, 14 percent fat, 4 percent fiber) and Orjijen Adult (40 percent protein, 16 percent fat, 2.5 percent fiber).

For canned foods, subtract the moisture percentage from 100, then look for protein that is at least one third the remainder, and fat that is one quarter the remainder or a little less. Usually that means protein is at least 8 percent and fat is around 5 to 6 percent, but these values may be slightly lower for foods with very high moisture content (80 percent or more).

Many (though not all) grain-free foods are high in protein and low in carbs, though a number of them are also high in fat. The majority of senior and light diets are still high-carb and low-protein. However, a number of newer formulas now use higher protein (which means fewer carbs), and are lower in fat than adult maintenance foods. Canned foods are usually higher in protein and lower in carbs than dry foods.

If you feed a homemade diet, feed lean meats, low-fat dairy, and green vegetables in place of most grains and starches. Remove the skin from poultry, but feed the dark meat rather than very low-fat breast



The scale at your veterinarian's office is ideal for weighing your dog; it will give the most accurate weight. This is also a good opportunity to desensitize your dog to vet visits. Give him a few low-calorie treats for sitting quietly on the scale.

meat. Remove separable fat from meats, and avoid fatty meats such as lamb, pork, and high-fat beef, or cook them to remove most of the fat. It's okay to include eggs in the diet in moderate amounts. You can also use these foods to replace part of a commercial diet, which will increase the amount of protein and decrease the amount of carbs in the overall diet.

How much to feed

Reduce the amount you feed gradually rather than making drastic changes all at once. Cutting the amount of food too dramatically will change your dog's metabolism, making it harder to lose weight and easier to gain it back. Slow, steady weight loss is more likely to result in long-term success.

If you continue to use the same food you're feeding now, start by reducing the amount by about 5 per cent, or around 1 ounce per pound of food, or 1/8 of a cup per two cups of food, depending on how you measure what you feed. Weigh your dog in one to two weeks. If your dog has not lost weight, reduce the amount of food by another 5 per cent. Continue to reduce the amount of food you feed every week or two until your dog begins to lose weight, then continue feeding that amount.

If you switch to a new food that is considerably higher in protein and fat than your current food, cut the quantity of food by up to one third, as these foods are more nutrient dense and will provide more calories in smaller portions. Even though the total amount of food your dog gets is less than before, you may find he is more satisfied.

It's critical to accurately measure the amount of food that you feed. I learned the hard way that when I try to eyeball my dogs' food, they gain weight. The only way I've found to achieve consistent weight control is by using an electronic

Measurement Conversion and Calculation

To convert pounds to kilograms, divide by 2.2. A dog who weighs 11 pounds also weighs 5 kilograms ($11 \div 2.2 = 5$).

To determine your dog's resting energy requirement (RER), or kilocalories each day, multiply your dog's *ideal* body weight in kilograms by 30 and add 70. For example, if 5 kg is Ella's ideal weight, then she should receive around 220 kcal per day ($30 \times 5 = 150 + 70 = 220$); this amount should help her lose weight until she attains her ideal weight.

To convert kcal/100 grams to kcal/oz, divide kcal/100 grams by 3.5. For example, if white rice has 130 kcal per 100 grams, it has 37 kcal per ounce.

To convert kcal/kg to kcal/oz, divide by 35. For example, if raw ground beef with 10 percent fat has 1,760 kcal/kg, it has 50 kcal/ounce.

To convert kcal/lb to kcal/oz, divide by 16. If Primal Beef Grind has 1,226 kcal/lb, it has 77 kcal/oz.

To convert kcal/kg to kcal/gram, divide by 1,000. If one scoop of The Honest Kitchen's Preference weighs 8 grams (a little over 1/4 ounce) and Preference has 3,510 kcal/kg, divide 3,510 by 1,000, and then multiple by 8 to get 28 kcal per 8 gram scoop.

postal scale to weigh everything I feed. You can find these scales at office supply and kitchen supply stores, department stores such as Target, and online at places like Amazon. Most can handle up to five pounds with accuracy to the tenth of an ounce, and will also allow you to switch to grams when needed for more accuracy with very small measurements.

Monitoring your dog's weight

You must weigh your dog frequently, especially when first starting a weight-loss program. Aim for weight loss of 3 to 5 percent of body weight per month, or one percent per week. A 50-pound dog should lose about half a pound per week, or 2 pounds per month.

Because Ella is so small, I couldn't get an accurate weight by picking her up and weighing us both on my bathroom scale, then subtracting my own weight. Instead, I bought a shipping postal scale that weighs up to 55 pounds. I put a box on the scale and zero it out, then put Ella in the box to measure her weight to the nearest half ounce (a small treat afterward makes her a willing participant).

If your dog is too heavy to pick up, you'll need to go to your veterinarian's office in order to get an accurate weight. This is also a good time to help desensitize your dog to vet visits, by feeding small bits of low-calorie, high-value treats while you're there.

Once your dog begins losing weight steadily, you can go longer between weigh-ins, but recheck at least monthly to make sure you're still on the right track. It's easy to slip back into giving too much food and undo much of the good you've done if you rely solely on how your dog looks and feels. By the time you notice a difference, your dog could have gained a lot of weight back. Caloric needs can also change over time as your dog ages, after neutering, or if his activity level varies seasonally. If you're weighing your dog regularly, you'll be able to catch any weight gain early and react before you have a bigger problem.

What about treats?

When Ella continued to gain weight even with reduced meals, I realized that I needed to consider the calories she was getting from treats, particularly since, like any new dog, she needed a lot of training.

I used treats to reward behaviors that I wanted to encourage, such as potty training outside and learning to use the dog door. I

fed her cooked chicken breast to counter-condition her shyness around strangers that we met on our walks. I put treats in a Kong toy when I left the house, to reduce any anxiety she might feel about being alone. I used clicker training to improve our communication. Altogether, those treats added up to a lot of calories.

Dogs care more about the *number* of treats they get than the *size* of each treat: it's more rewarding for a dog to receive

several small treats than one big one (dog's don't generally savor treats; both a tiny treat and a larger treat take only about a second to swallow!). Using small treats allows you to reward your dog without adding too many extra calories.

For a dog Ella's size, this means using *really* tiny treats. I cut already small Zuke's Minis into four pieces and a single Zuke's Jerky Naturals into 25 to 30 pieces to use for clicker training.

Calories in Selected Foods and Treats

Here are the calorie calculations I made for many of the foods and treats I give Ella, along with the calories in some common supermarket treats.

FOOD	ORIGINAL MEASURE OF KCAL	KCAL
COMMON INGREDIENTS IN HOME-PREPARED RAW DIETS		
Chicken necks (skinless)	535 - 745/lb	33 - 47 per ounce
Chicken necks with skin	910 - 1,212/lb	57 - 76 per ounce
Chicken backs with skin	944/lb	59 per ounce
Turkey necks (skinless)	527 - 613/lb	33 - 38 per ounce
Chicken breast (skinless)	110 - 165/100 grams	31 - 47 per ounce
Egg, 1	Small, Medium, Large	54 / 63 / 71 per egg
Ground beef, raw (10% fat)	1,760/kg	50 per ounce
Ground beef, raw (15% fat)	2,150/kg	61 per ounce
Ground beef, raw (20% fat)	2,540/kg	72 per ounce
Pink salmon	1,375/kg	39 per ounce
Sardines	94 - 200/100 grams	27 - 57 per ounce
Yogurt, plain	120 - 173/8 oz	15 - 22 per ounce
White rice	130/100 grams	37 per ounce
HIGH-QUALITY COMMERCIAL DIETS THAT CONTAIN WHOLE FOOD INGREDIENTS		
Country Pet (all)	3,840/kg	109 per ounce
Primal Beef Grind	1,226/lb	77 per ounce
Primal Chicken Grind	794/lb	50 per ounce
Primal Turkey Grind	735/lb	46 per ounce
Primal Turkey Mix	654/lb	41 per ounce
Primal Lamb Formula	1,194/lb	75 per ounce
The Honest Kitchen's Preference	3,510/kg	100 per ounce
HIGH-QUALITY COMMERCIAL TREATS		
Zuke's Mini Naturals	2 per treat	2 per treat
Zuke's Jerky Naturals	17 per piece	17 per piece
Charlee Bear Treats	3 per treat	3 per treat
Itty Bitty Buddy Biscuits	3.4 - 3.5 per treat	3.4 - 3.5 per treat
Liver Biscotti	1 per treat	1 per treat
Redbarn Bully Sticks	29 per inch	29 per inch
COMMON "SUPERMARKET" TREATS		
Milk-Bone Biscuit	Small / Medium / Large / Extra Large	10 / 40 / 115 / 225 per treat
Pedigree Dentabone	Small / Medium / Large	105 / 188 / 300 per bone
Purina Busy Bone	Small / Large	309 - 600 per bone
Flavored rawhide	283 / 100 grams	81 per ounce



It's much more difficult to reduce the weight of a dog who has been permitted to get obese than one who is just a bit overweight. Start on your dog's weight-loss program as soon as you notice she is heavier than she should be.

Avoid treats that are high in fat and calories, such as cheese, hot dogs, and peanut butter. Raw vegetables and some fruits make excellent treats. I give baby carrots to my small dog. Broccoli, celery, zucchini slices, or any other crunchy vegetable your dog likes can be used, as can small slices of fruit such as apple, banana, and melon. Don't feed grapes or raisins to dogs, though, as these can be dangerous to their health.

You can make your own treats out of low-fat meats such as heart and liver. Add anise seed for a flavor that dogs love. Never use xylitol, a lower-calorie sugar substitute used in baking that can be fatal to dogs.

Feeding part of your dog's meals as treats is another option, but be sure to reduce the meal size accordingly.

Remember that affection and exercise can be used to reward your dog and show your love. Going for a walk, playing a game of tug, and throwing a ball are great substitutes for treats.

Don't forget chews

Ella loves to chew, and she surprised me by completely consuming smaller chews, such as dried tendons and steer sticks, in a single session. But when she found a 12-inch "bully stick" that my old dog had left behind, it lasted almost two months, even with her working on it every night. This provided chewing pleasure without adding a lot of calories.

Avoid chews that are high in fat, such as pig ears, and look for chews that last your dog a long time. Bully sticks (or the thinner steer sticks, for dogs who are less aggressive chewers) are mostly protein with little fat. Himalayan dog chews are made from yak and cow milk and have less than 1 percent fat. Deer antlers are another low-fat, long-lasting option. If you use rawhide, look for high-quality, thick, unbleached or lightly bleached (not white) rawhides without added flavorings or smoking, made from one solid piece, and preferably made in the U.S., such as those made by Wholesome Hide. (See "Finding the Right Rawhide," May 2009, for more information on how to choose healthy rawhide chews.)

Fresh bones can also be used for chewing. Bones, like any hard chew, have the potential to break teeth, particularly in older dogs whose teeth are more brittle. Bones such as knuckles, however, that are too big for the dog to get between their molars and chomp down on, are less likely to cause problems than marrow bones, which are also filled with fat and therefore not a good choice.

Other extras

I've always shared my food with my dogs, giving them a little bit of anything good for them when I'm done (never while eating, as that rewards begging). I realized this was another way that Ella was getting extra

calories, particularly since I was used to sharing with larger dogs and was giving her too much.

Share only foods that are not high in fat, and keep portions small. If your dog gets extra "people" food, cut back on his next meal to help balance things out. Make sure other family members understand how important it is to control the amount of food that your dog gets so they don't subvert the process. Watch out for visitors and neighbors who may be feeding your dog snacks you don't know about.

Could your dog be eating the cat's food (or worse, raiding the cat's litterbox)? Keep cat food up high and the litter box behind a baby gate where the dog can't reach it. If your dog raids the garbage, get a locking can, cabinet locks, or a motion-activated alarm to keep him out of the trash.

Try writing down every piece of food that your dog gets in a week, including from other family members. You may be surprised at what you find.

Exercise

Regular exercise is also an essential component of a successful weight-loss program. Proper exercise not only burns calories, but also helps to convert fat into muscle, improving body condition. As your dog loses weight and gains muscle, he will become more active, which will further speed up the process.

If your dog is a couch potato, don't try to do too much too soon. Start with very short sessions tailored to your dog's capabilities, such as on-leash walks that gradually lengthen as your dog's exercise tolerance increases. Safe areas where your dog can run off-lead will provide even more benefit.

Moderate exercise is good for dogs with arthritis, as muscles help to hold the joints in place and reduce the amount of wear, but don't exercise your dog to the point where he is sore afterward. Non-weight-bearing exercise, such as swimming, is ideal for dogs with joint problems, and for other dogs as well. Again, start slowly, using a dog life jacket if that helps him to feel more comfortable in the water.

Chasing a ball is great exercise, but sudden stops and turns can be hard on joints, so don't overdo games of fetch, especially while your dog is still overweight. Remember to keep sessions short until he's in better shape.

If your dog is older or has health problems, consult with your veterinarian before

beginning an exercise program. If your dog really doesn't want to exercise, it could be a sign that something's wrong. A trial of pain medication can help you figure out whether your dog's lack of activity is related to discomfort.

Ella is athletic despite her small size. We walk two miles every day, and she gets more strenuous exercise chasing her lure: a real raccoon tail (from cleanrun.com) tied to the end of a lunge whip. At least I was doing something right.

A satisfied dog

There's a common misconception that replacing a large portion of the diet with green beans will help your dog not feel hungry. While there's no harm in adding some green beans or other non-starchy veggies to your dog's diet, the extra bulk won't help your dog feel satisfied if you're feeding too few calories or too little fat. It is fat that helps the most to satiate your dog; just adding bulk isn't enough. Replacing too much food with green beans can also lead to protein deficiency, causing loss of lean muscle rather than fat.

Feed smaller portions more often to help your dog not feel hungry. Replace some dry food with canned or fresh, high-protein food so he thinks he's getting something special. Put all his meals in a Kong, Buster Cube, or other food-dispensing toy so he has to work for them, leaving him feeling more satisfied. Freeze his wet food, or dry food mixed with nonfat yogurt, in a Kong toy to make a meal last even longer. Give long-lasting chews and low-calorie treats such as carrot sticks to prevent your dog from feeling deprived.

Exercise will distract your dog from focusing on food and relieve stress that can drive some dogs to overeat.

If your dog acts very hungry but is losing weight slowly or not at all, then try changing foods. A diet that is higher in protein and possibly fat, particularly if you're currently feeding a low-fat or low-protein diet, will help your dog feel satisfied with fewer calories.

Diet aids?

In 2007, the FDA approved Pfizer's Slentrol (dirlotapide), a drug that suppresses the appetite and blocks fat absorption. If your dog is severely overweight and you just can't make the changes needed to help him lose weight, or you need to get weight off very fast due to an orthopedic



Take your dog outside for vigorous exercise at least several times a week; it will benefit you as much as your dog! Start out slow and increase the pace and distance as you both gain fitness.

emergency or similar situation, this drug may be an option, but it's not a substitute for proper diet and exercise. The safety of Slentrol has not been evaluated beyond one year. Once you stop the drug, your dog may regain all the weight he lost even with continued reduced caloric input. Slentrol is also quite expensive.

Many supplements are touted for helping people lose weight without dieting or exercise, but none have proven to be both safe and effective. There is no way to know if weight loss supplements sold for people are safe for dogs. Some common ingredients, such as caffeine, are dangerous for dogs. To be safe, avoid supplements that claim to help with weight loss, and stick to the tried and true: diet and exercise.

What if nothing works?

If you've done everything recommended and your dog still is not losing weight, or if you have to feed even less than your dog's "Resting Energy Requirement" (RER; see "Counting Calories" sidebar) to achieve

weight loss, have your vet check your dog for underlying health problems. Hypothyroidism can lead to weight gain despite consuming few calories. Both diabetes and Cushing's disease can cause increased appetite and weight gain accompanied by excess thirst and urination. In rare cases, a tumor of the pancreas called an insulinoma can also cause increased appetite.

My chubby little dog

Yes, it sounds funny to say my dog is pleasingly plump, or cute and cuddly, or any of the other euphemisms we use to describe our overweight pets, but the health risks from Ella's extra weight are real. Ella is now losing one to two ounces per week, a steady, gradual weight loss that should soon return her to her original weight. I weigh her every week, and continue to cut back on the number of treats and extra food she gets if she hasn't lost any more.

I have no doubt that Ella will reach and maintain her ideal weight, as I am determined to do everything in my power to ensure that she leads a long and healthy life. I love her too much to let her suffer from all the problems caused by being overweight. 🐾

In memoriam: Mary's dog Piglet passed away peacefully in March at the age of 17. Controlling her weight kept her mobile to the end, despite severe degenerative joint disease in both elbows.

Mary Straus does research on canine health and nutrition topics as an avocation. She is the owner of the DogAware.com website. She and Ella live in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Resources Mentioned in This Article

Association for Pet Obesity Prevention – (910) 579-5550; petobesityprevention.com

Slentrol, made by Pfizer Animal Health – (800) 366-5288; slentrol.com

Ultraship 55 Lb Digital Shipping & Kitchen Scale, made by My Weigh – (602) 253-2214; myweigh.com (also available from Amazon.com)

Raccoon tail toy from Clean Run Productions – (800) 311-6503; cleanrun.com

Wholesome Hide rawhide chews – (888) 872-1110; wholesomehide.com

K9 Raw Diet, source for Himalayan dog chews (himalayandogchew.com) and Lucky Buck deer antlers (luckybuckantlers.com). (818) 888-6983; k9rawdiet.com

Sights Set on Racing

“Lure coursing” is a thrilling sport for running and chasing fanatics.

BY TERRY LONG • PHOTOS BY JIM WALLACE

For just a minute, imagine you are a dog, a predator animal, with thousands of years of selective breeding to gaze upon the horizon and chase anything that moves. Let yourself feel the anticipation of that initial sighting and the blast of adrenalin as you take off and tear up the ground between you and your prey. Your front feet and your rear feet meet under your body as you coil tightly before exploding into full stride. As you hit top speed, your stride lengthens, enabling you to run 30-plus miles per hour. There is nothing you would rather be doing. The world outside your chase ceases to exist. You are in your element.

This is lure coursing.

You don't need to be a sighthound to experience the thrills of a good chase, but if you are, you are built for speed off the start line, resilience to overheating, and a reluctance to give up the chase. If you are a terrier with similar predatory instincts, you'll do fine as well. If you are a bit on the bigger, heavier side, you might enjoy the chase just as much, but you'll be slower and tire more quickly.

Regardless of your size and structure, if you like to chase things that move, you'll love lure coursing.

The game

The lure is either a bit of fleecy material or a plastic grocery bag. It is tied to a line (often double-braided fishing line) that is wound around a number of pulleys. The pulleys are motorized by starter motors and car batteries. The operator of the pulley makes sure that the lure moves fast enough ahead of the dog to incite chase, but not too fast so the beginner dog can't see it and stay motivated to chase. In competition lure coursing, pulley speeds of up to 40 miles per hour are used. Those sighthounds can run!

Often standing on a ladder, to afford a good view of the entire course, the lure operator moves the line with the lure into



Three Rhodesian Ridgebacks are alight with the joy of running in a lure coursing trial; the dogs chase inanimate lures that are pulled along cables.

place ahead of the start line. Dogs are held at the start line, many of them straining, yelping, and barking to be let go. As the pulley whips the lure ahead, the dogs are released for the chase.

In competition lure coursing, the “course” can cover between 600 and 1,000 yards, and the lure takes several sharp turns to simulate the changes of direction a jack rabbit might take.

Dogs are scored for speed, agility, endurance, enthusiasm, and “following” (as opposed to taking short cuts across the field). There is also a limited amount of time for the handler to get control of his dog at the end of the course. At one lure coursing competition I observed, it took about six people and several minutes to convince a young Basenji to return to his handler. This can be dangerous as well as slow down the smooth running of a trial, so points are deducted.

In recreational coursing, there may be speed bumps and low tire jumps to hurdle, as well as several changes of direction. The first run for many dogs is pretty fast, but it's the second run that shows how they've

figured out the game. My 10-pound Rat Terrier, Pretzel, clocked in at 22 seconds in her first try at lure coursing, but her second race was 12 seconds. She had learned how to cut yardage off the corners, or turns.

Most lure coursing competitions race two or three dogs against each other, sometimes all of the same breed (Ridgebacks competing against other Ridgies), sometimes of different breeds. So how do you tell who is who in the blur of racing dogs? Each dog wears a brightly colored “coursing blanket.” These are light-weight, brightly colored shells, each color assigned before each run.

This is a highly arousing sport; however, it is unusual for dogs to stop racing and fight with each other. Part of this is early training, but it's also partly a result of genetics; sighthounds were bred to run in groups after prey. A handler can choose, however, to run her dog in a muzzle if she has any concern about her dog displaying aggressive behaviors at another dog.

To help avoid undue competition for a single lure, there are three lures placed several feet apart along the pulley line.

History

Lure coursing has been around for thousands of years since hounds were used to find prey not by scent, but by sight. Egyptian tombs from 4,000 years ago contain paintings of long-legged hounds chasing prey. These kinds of hounds were selectively bred for both speed and “gaze” and were used to kill small game such as rabbits.

The oldest U.S. organization to sponsor competition is the American Sighthound Field Association (ASFA), which was officially launched in 1972. The American Kennel Club (AKC) established their standards for competition in 1991. A new organization, the National Lure Coursing Club, had its inaugural race in January of this year.

These organizations specify which sighthounds can compete in their events. They typically include Afghans, Basenjis,

Borzoi, Greyhounds, Ibizans, Irish Wolfhounds, Italian Greyhounds, Pharaoh Hounds, Rhodesian Ridgebacks, Salukis, Scottish Deerhounds, and Whippets.

Recreational and/or “all breeds” lure coursing events are also available, but are less common than sighthound-only events. Recreational lure coursing events encourage all breeds and all mixes to participate, and events are usually held in conjunction with another dog-related event.

Lure coursers' attributes

Lure coursing is a demanding sport. The course, whether it is for competition or recreation, requires dogs to turn abruptly and sharply. This can put a lot of pressure on a dog's knees – especially dogs who are, let's say, pleasantly plump. The more fit a dog is, the less pressure is placed on joints. Some dogs with short noses (the bracycephalic breeds such as pugs, French



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

Lure coursing is not just for sight-hounds! Author Terry Long's Rat Terrier, Pretzel (shown here on the start line), is a zealot for lure coursing!

Snapshot of the Sport: Lure Coursing

- **What is this sport?** In lure coursing, dogs chase a mechanically operated “lure” that simulates prey.
- **Prior training required?** Minimal.
- **Physical demands?** On the dog: High. On the handler: Mild.
- **Best-suited structure?** Sighthounds such as Greyhounds, Salukis; small, compact terriers; herding dogs.
- **Best-suited temperament?** High-energy dogs with a high chase response.
- **Cost?** Low.
- **Training complexity?** Low.
- **Mental stimulation?** High.
- **Physical stimulation?** High.
- **Recreational opportunities?** Low.
- **Competition opportunities and venues?** Moderate.
- **For further information on competitive lure coursing:**
 - American Sighthound Field Association (ASFA)**
(614) 365-4100; asfa.org/index.htm
 - American Kennel Club (AKC)**
(919) 816-3904; akc.org/events/lure_coursing/
 - National Lure Coursing Club (NLCC)**
(414) 317-7989; nationalcoursing.com
- **For information on “all dogs welcome” recreational lure coursing:**
 - Course-a-Lure**
(801) 706-6659; coursealure.com
 - Luratics**
(619) 749-0304; luratics.com (Note: This site has a link to a pulley machine for home use!)
 - Lure Coursing Fanatics**
(262) 859-2369; lurecoursingfanatics.com
(Note: This site is very helpful in getting new groups started in lure coursing)
 - Mixed Breed Dog Club of America (MBDCA)**
(740) 259-3941; mbdca.org



A Saluki, Pharaoh Hound, and a Whippet race together.

bulldogs, etc.) must be watched for overheating in hot weather. Dogs can slip and fall when they are not accustomed to the sharp turns and how to navigate them.

That said, if your dog drives you nuts chasing squirrels and other fast-moving animals, he will probably enjoy this sport. There are other dogs who just don't get what all the hubbub is about.

A case in point: I tried three of my dogs at lure coursing a few years ago. Moka, a herding breed-mix, could not believe her good fortune at being let go to chase the lure – until she caught up to it and discovered it was a white plastic bag on a string. No interest after that.

My terrier-mix, Kiwi, who gleefully will chase every stray cat out of my yard, showed absolutely no interest when we stood outside the course, watching other dogs run the course. As we got closer,

he slowed down and started sniffing the ground – a classic sign of stress.

In contrast, my young Rat Terrier, Pretzel, started screaming her head off as soon as she saw and heard the racing. Lure coursing continues to be her favorite activity.

California dog owner Verial Whitten has experienced similar reactions even among her sighthounds. “My first Saluki, Giselle, began luring when she was four years old; we just didn't try earlier and were surprised at how much fun it was for her. I have had four other Salukis since, with Reah being the latest; she absolutely loves it and is doing quite well. Rikah would never run the lure, Eliana ran for her Junior Courser title but would not run in competition with other dogs, and Kai, my 16-month-old puppy is not agile enough yet to start.”

Test your dog. Get an old horse whip (this is a better use for it, anyway), tie a piece of fake sheepskin or other fleecy material on the end, and drag it around the yard, making it leap and dart like prey. Did your dog go “ho-hum”? Or did his eyes dilate, his body burst into motion, and his activity continue until he caught and pounced on his prize? The latter is the dog who will probably enjoy lure coursing.

Handler attributes

This sport does not require a lot of physical activity from handlers. The start-line set up requires you to be able to hold back your dog from breaking away early so this can place some wear and tear on aging backs. And you may have to dart around a bit to get your dog back on leash at the finish, but this is a sport that does not put undue physical stress on handlers.

Chasing Away the Fears

Verial Whitten contacted me when she was looking for professional help for her Saluki, Reah (pronounced ray-uh). A long-time Saluki owner living in San Clemente, California, Verial had several Salukis before Reah, who was found as a stray and brought to a rescue organization. Verial Whitten and Barbara Nackerud adopted Reah in 2008. Reah got along fine with Verial's young male Saluki, but would raise her hackles, snarl, bark, and lunge at dogs she encountered on walks.

Over the course of several months, Verial learned how to convince Reah that the presence of other dogs was not a threat. As a result, both Reah and Verial became more relaxed around other dogs on-leash, learning how to accept the approach of other dogs. During this time, Reah was also introduced to carefully selected dogs off-leash; she surprised Verial by attempting to solicit play from one of them.

Verial remembers Reah's progression from a timid, reactive dog unlikely to be able to participate in the sport Verial knew she would love:

“When I realized how reactive Reah was when she simply *saw* another dog, I didn't even consider lure coursing, although I had enjoyed the sport with my other Salukis. Reah's behavior around other dogs made walking her unpleasant and stressful.

“We learned positive methods for decreasing her reactivity. I learned to watch for earlier cues from her that she was uncomfortable around other dogs, instead of waiting for her to growl or lunge. That way, I could signal her earlier to offer an alternative behavior, such as sit, as the other dog passed by. With repetition, she relaxed more at the sight of dogs.

“Without working through her issues to find appropriate ways to deal with her fear of other dogs, we would not be hav-

ing the fun that we do now, competing at lure coursing. You can ask anyone who saw us at the first luring events I brought her to about the changes they saw in Reah. In the beginning, she would press herself against me around other dogs and vocalize from the safety of my car. She was best initially with other Salukis (never overly friendly, just okay), then okay with Whippets, but the larger breeds, especially Rhodesian Ridgebacks, were very unnerving for her. What helped was she really *loved* running the lure.

“She ran alone for her Junior Courser title and then participated in three other trials as the pilot dog (who runs the course alone before the start of scoring to make sure the course doesn't need adjustments). Then I ran her with one Saluki who had been in her foster home. At that owner's advice, we let the other Saluki leave the line first to evalu-



The joy (and distraction) of running helped Reah get over her fear of being around other dogs.

ate how Reah would be passing a dog. That went well and then they ran stride for stride without incident.

“Since then, Reah has competed in three trials, has two Best of Breeds, and one Best in Field. In her first BIF, she ran with a Ridgeback, and when she won, she was with a Pharaoh Hound and a Borzoi. She is focused on the lure, untroubled by the other dogs, and smiling the whole time she is running.

“On walks, she is less troubled by other dogs. As for me, initially, I did keep her on a short, tight leash and would have to make myself loosen up so that my own anxiety did not increase hers. As she relaxed, so did I!”

Equipment and supplies

Very little gear is needed to practice lure coursing:

■ **Rewards** – Tug toys and fleecy material on a rope work well in training young pups to chase a lure. Most dogs who really love lure coursing are motivated by reaching the lure, so treats are not typically used in this sport.

■ **Miscellaneous supplies** – Collar and leash, crate or exercise pen, water bowl, ice chest for your drinks, a chair, and a canopy to shade you and your dog are all you need for recreational lure coursing.

If you plan to compete, you will also need coursing blankets and a coursing slip lead. Coursing blankets come in three different colors: hot pink, bright yellow, and cyan blue. They are very light-weight and form a shell around the dog's shoulders, chest, and ribs. They are used by the judge and handlers to distinguish the dogs from each other; it's difficult to pick out your dog from the others when they are running at a great distance from you!

The collar or neck piece of a coursing slip lead is very wide and padded so that a dog who strains against it doesn't gasp for air. A coursing slip lead also allows the handler to instantly release the leash so the dog can get a fast start.

Coursing blankets and slip leads are widely available online by searching for "lure coursing blankets" or "lure coursing slip leads." One good source is Deborah Butler's Sighthound Gear (sighthoundgear.com; 515-352-3659). Some clubs provide loaner blankets and leads to competitors, and some competitors make their own.



Spectators watch the pulley system being installed before a lure coursing event. The operator stands on the ladder for a better view, so he can adjust the speed of the lure.



Kids can compete, too! Youths are coached on how to prepare their dogs for release off the start line.

Expenses

This is a relatively inexpensive sport since most people practice with clubs that provide the pulley system. The biggest expense is travel to the events.

Training

This sport works best for dogs with an instinct to chase. Not much training is required. In fact, if you choose not to compete, no training is required. Just go out and get your dog on the start line and let go!

Levels of competition

Dogs must be at least one year of age and certified as an acceptable breed with the sponsoring organization before entering a trial. Local breed clubs host trials sanctioned by one of these sponsoring groups.

It's best to visit these organization's websites to learn more about their specific titling requirements. There are significant differences in the titles available.

An example of how judges score each run is found in Section 7 of the AKC's regulations. Scoring begins from the time the dog enters the field to the time he leaves the field with his handler. A total of 50 points are available, with 10 points possible in each category: overall ability, following (as opposed to short-cutting across the field), speed, agility, and endurance.

Generally, dogs compete against other dogs of their own breed, as well as against other breeds. The only dog that is not allowed to compete against other dogs is the Italian Greyhound which, due to its size and speed, might be mistaken for prey by the larger sighthounds. Novice dogs

race alone; they must earn eligibility to compete stride by stride with other dogs by running alongside a "testing hound" without losing enthusiasm for coursing the lure – and without coursing the testing hound! Interfering with the other dog, playfully or aggressively, is cause for disqualification.

How to get started

Most people who want to compete with their sighthounds join a local breed club to train and practice. You can locate clubs by going to the

ASFA or AKC websites.

If you do not have a sighthound that can be certified by one of the sponsoring organizations, contact one of the recreational coursing organizations. Also keep your ears open for large, multiple-sport, or fundraiser events in your area. Sometimes they host lure coursing as an added feature. It will be worth the drive just to watch the variety of dogs who love this game, and you can give your dog a try at it.

Is this sport for you?

If your dog loves to chase things, this sport is probably for you. Give it a try, and you'll probably be hooked, and so will your dog. Saluki owner Whitten says it best. "Reah loves lure coursing. When she is fulfilling the natural desire to course game, she puts her heritage to work and just to see her smiling is worth it. While there is some subjectivity in scoring, there seems to be less 'politics' as might be in conformation showing. It also gets us out in the fresh air around some very nice people. It would be nice to see more venues available for all dogs. My Labrador was a maniac for the lure!"

As usual, have fun, train positively, and revel in the relationship with your dog, not the ribbons on the wall. 🐾

Author Terry Long would like to thank the San Diego Rhodesian Ridgeback Club, photographer Jim Wallace, and Verial Whitten for sharing their time, knowledge, and enthusiasm about lure coursing.

Terry Long, CPDT, is a writer, agility instructor, and behavior counselor in Long Beach, California. See "Resources," page 24, for contact information.

Blossoming Dogs

Readers use positive methods to bring out the best in their dogs.

I was so pleased to receive my August issue containing a piece (“Your Dog Nose No Bounds”) about scent training, K9 Nose Work, and specifically reference to Jill Marie O’Brien and Amy Herot. I am currently attending one of their classes and it is truly amazing work. The concept that I love the best is that, while most other dog activities are micromanaged by the human, scent work is the opposite, allowing the dog to be totally a dog and be rewarded for following her instincts! I cannot wait to take my other dogs through the program.

I stumbled upon this sport by accident. I train dogs and also foster for a local rescue group; my current foster is Clara, a nine-year-old female Rottie. Clara had pneumonia when pulled from the shelter and had never lived indoors. Her nails were long; Lord only knows how she walked. She suffers from chronic arthritis and spondylosis. I wanted to offer Clara an activity that she could participate in but her physical limitations really curtailed what she could do.

While she moves *uber* slow I noted that her nose was always going full speed, sniffing the ground, checking the air, finding the latest hidey hole of our cat. Search and rescue and tracking came to mind.

I started asking around and was told to check online for a fun version of tracking – K9 Nose Work. A bonus: Jill Marie O’Brien is attached to it. I first met Jill Marie in 1999 when she temperament-tested my first bull breed rescue. I subsequently saw her at training/behavior workshops held at SPCA LA, where she is the director of training and behavior. Jill and Amy Herot co-teach and they are knowledgeable and informative about scent work.

When Clara came to our home in April she was grumpy and shut down, not very confident, and unsure about people. Attending K9 Nose Work classes has helped her personality blossom! It is a sport in which any dog can participate, whether a pure breed or mixed breed. It is perfect

for Clara because she can work in the ring and check the boxes at her own *slooooooow* pace and gets rewarded for doing what she is already programmed and inclined to do anyway – smell!

Clara will not be going into K9 Nose Work competitions but she has become a winner by gaining confidence and a new interest in life and people. She now has so much more to take with her when her “forever home” materializes.

Sandi Mineo-Rust
Los Angeles

Your article about getting the family dog ready for children (“Family Planning,” August) sounds like my three-year journey with a rescue, Tibby, my teacher dog. I want to share a tip that turned her from a child-fearing snapper to a child-seeker. We had dozens of neighborhood children swirling constantly, a stressful situation for me and the dog. I had the children, one by one, hold (with both hands) a jar of meat baby food under the dog’s nose.

It worked because the child was engaged and *not* jumping around, waving his/her hands, making noise, trying to pet the dog, nor reach over her head. The children had to be still to hold the jar and were fascinated watching Tibby eat. They stood in line to get their turn, rather than crowd around the dog. The dog’s mouth was in the jar, rather than in the children’s hands (as it would be when taking a treat). The children learned that they could get

Tibby’s attention by being silent and still. We now have a dog who tries to go up to every child she sees for attention.

Joan MacKenzie, CPDT
Springfield, VA

In the 10 years I’ve subscribed to WDJ (kept them ALL and refer often) I’ve never had anything hit as close to home as “Bleeding at Both Ends” (July). My Aussie, Cloudy, started with bloody diarrhea last Monday, then went the route with bloody vomit. First thing Tuesday morning, I was at the vet’s office; they heard “bloody diarrhea” and hustled her into a room to start testing for Parvo. Naw, it’s not Parvo, thinks I. After an x-ray, CBC, Parvo titer, subcutaneous fluids, and a bill for almost \$600, we left with some Flagyl tabs. When I got home and e-mailed Cloudy’s breeder to whine, she essentially called me a ninny and told me to re-read “Bleeding at Both Ends.”

Okay, brain death sets in when I’m under stress. Then all the tests made sense and I settled down to care for my dog. Good thing I had Cloudy to practice on because two days later my Corgi went through the same ordeal. I’m in the 10 percent of “same household occurrences.” The article helped me understand and cope with what was happening. I’m most grateful that it allowed me to stop beating myself up trying to figure out what I’d done wrong. This week both dogs are happy and healthy.

Lyn Mehl
Via e-mail 🐾

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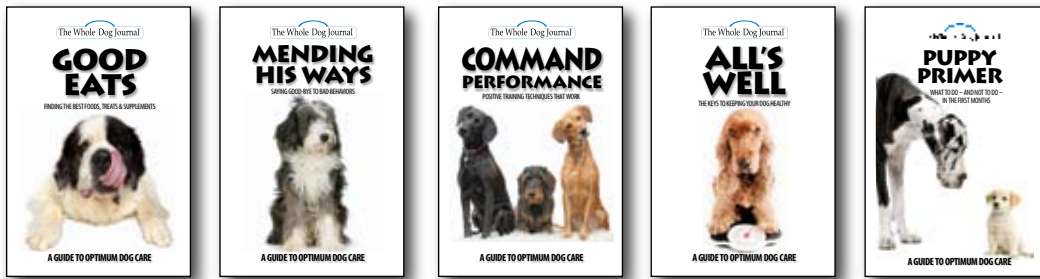
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University of Tennessee, University Outreach and Continuing Education Department. Offers a Certified Canine Rehabilitation Practitioner (CCRP) certificate to qualifying veterinarians, veterinary technicians, physical therapists, and physical therapist assistants. Maintains a list of qualified CCRPs. (800) 272-2044; canineequinerehab.com

International Veterinary Academy of Pain Management (IVAPM). Offers a certification program leading to a title of Certified Veterinary Pain Practitioner (CVPP, for vets or Licensed Vet Techs) or Certified Animal Pain Practitioner (CAPP, for Physical Therapists or Physical Therapist Assistants). Maintains a list of qualified CVPPs and CAPPs. (615) 522-5276; ivapm.org

VETERINARY REHABILITATION: REHAB PRACTITIONER LISTINGS

American Association of Rehabilitation Veterinarians (AARV). The best, most expedient way to search for an AARV-member veterinarian near you is on this website: rehabvets.evetsites.net. Those with no computer access can contact AARV President Dr. Julia Tomlinson at the Twin Cities Animal Rehabilitation Clinic in Burnsville, MN at (952) 224-9354. If you are a veterinarian or veterinary student interested in joining AARV, send an e-mail to holisticdvm@anet.com.

American Canine Sports Medicine Association (ACSM). The ACSM is an association of veterinarians, physical therapists, trainers, and other professionals devoted to addressing the medical and surgical problems encountered in the canine

athlete and the working breeds. Website lists practitioners and other resources. PO Box 07412, Fort Myers, FL 33919. No phone number available; acsma.org

Able Pet is a source for rehabilitative and assistive products for animals with special needs. The website also lists some rehabilitation practitioners. (908) 439-9139; ablepet.com

Handicapped Pets, “Everything you need to help you care for your special needs pet.” Website lists “pet rehab centers.” (888) 811-7387; handicappedpets.com

BOOKS

WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of *The Power of Positive Dog Training; Positive Perspectives: Love Your Dog, Train Your Dog; Positive Perspectives II: Know Your Dog, Train Your Dog;* and *Play with Your Dog.* All of these books are available from DogWise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com

HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

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

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

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