

Your complete guide to natural dog care and training

Whole Dog Journal™



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Minimum order 1,000

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WHOLE DOG JOURNAL DOES NOT
ACCEPT COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING

B *Whole Dog Journal* (ISSN #1097-5322) is published monthly by Belvoir Media Group, LLC, 535 Connecticut Avenue, Norwalk, CT 06854. Robert Englander, Chairman and CEO; Timothy H. Cole, Executive Vice President, Editorial Director; Philip L. Penny, Chief Operating Officer; Greg King, Executive Vice President, Marketing Director; Ron Goldberg, Chief Financial Officer; Tom Canfield, Vice President, Circulation. Periodicals postage paid at Norwalk, CT and at additional mailing offices. Copyright ©2019, Belvoir Media Group, LLC. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is strictly prohibited. Printed in U.S.A. Revenue Canada GST Account #128044658. Canada Publishing Agreement Number #40016479.

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Subscriptions: \$39 annually (12 issues).

Bulk rate subscriptions for organizations and educational institutions available upon request.

Postmaster: Please send address changes to

Whole Dog Journal,

PO Box 8535, Big Sandy, TX 75755-8535

In Canada, send address changes to

Whole Dog Journal,

PO Box 39, Norwich, ON, N0J 1P0



If You Are Angry, It's Not Training

The truth might hurt; feel it anyway.

Not long ago, I got to take a weekend off in San Diego. On the first day, quite by accident, I ended up at a gorgeous little beach at sunset – and it turned out to be a legal off-leash dog beach. Dozens of social, friendly dogs romping in the waves, chasing each other through the super-soft sand, and making new human and canine friends – heaven! I made plans to go back early in the morning, before the day's agenda had begun, just to take pictures. It was so lovely!



The next morning, I was smiling my head off as I made my way to the water and started taking pictures. I loved everything about the day (I'm on vacation with loved ones!), the place (gorgeous!), and all the dogs (big ones, little ones, fast dogs, fat dogs, purebreds, and who-knows-whats), all having fun on the beach, against a backdrop of incomparable blue skies and white waves. Wow, wow, wow.

And then it happened. With my lens, I had been following a few particularly charismatic dogs as they ran and dodged and wrestled, and one of my favorites was a young white Standard Poodle. She was one of the most playful and rambunctious dogs on the beach, involved in the fastest chase games and a *little* rough play. As my camera followed her group as they ran past, she made a little grab for the neck of one of her playmates, and the other dog whirled and snapped at her. “Grrroff!” he seemed to say, and she complied, still bouncing along the beach. And that was that; they all kept running along. But her owner, who *also* was watching her closely, didn't like that interaction. He called her over – she went to him willingly, out of play! – and he loudly told her to SIT!, grabbed her by her chin hair, leaned into her face, and proceeded to sternly tell her BAD! and NO! and dog knows what else. I wanted to cry! Mood spoiled, I left not long afterward.

No, I didn't intervene. I have never had much luck at talking to angry people. Also, it wasn't *abuse*, it wasn't *cruel* – it was just ignorant! What had she done wrong? It was a very normal dog-dog interaction, but he was *mad* about it. What I *did* do was continue taking pictures of him, and the woman who was with him noticed this and quickly clipped the dog's leash on, and they left the beach.

The only things the dog could have learned from the man's behavior: Maybe don't go to Dad the next time he calls; he's scary and unpredictable! There is no way she could possibly make a connection between her brief encounter with the other dog and this minute-long, intense interaction with her owner.

Now, it's *possible* that the lovely Poodle has a tendency to get aggressive as she gets tired and overstimulated, and time-outs help her. But a show of physical strength and angry words don't teach dogs anything but to avoid you next time they see signs that you are upset. That's *not* training!

NK



“No-Look” Reinforcement

How to get your dog to “check in” with you – even when you are checked out!

Remember when you were a kid and your mom would catch you doing something you weren’t supposed to be doing, even though she wasn’t even looking at you? How did she do that? It was magic!

When we were little, we thought our parents must have eyes on the back of their heads, and this may well have influenced our behavior. We could never be certain that an authority figure like a parent or teacher couldn’t see what we were doing, so in order to avoid punishment we might try to be on our best behavior, just in case.

The same principle can be applied to *positive* reinforcement techniques. A child – or, in our case, a dog, can learn that he can be rewarded for good behavior even if the behavior takes place while a parent isn’t looking directly at him. Let’s consider how we can use this “magic” to obtain and hold our dog’s attention, even in the midst of some pretty exciting distractions.

WATCH ME WATCH YOU

You may have learned to reward your dog for looking at you or for tossing unprompted glances your way. This important behavior is

often referred to as “checking in,” and I encourage everyone to reward it generously and frequently so that your dog learns to look to you for guidance in any number of situations. (See “Train Your Dog to ‘Check In,’” WDJ March 2017.)

When you’re teaching this basic skill, one element in particular easily stands out: Every time you reward your dog for checking in with you, you are also checking in with him. In other words, you are looking back at him.

While your dog’s attention is an *excellent* thing to reinforce, you can increase the power of the check-in behavior by adding just one more element of difficulty, which I will describe right after I explain why it’s worth your while to try.

Through training, most dogs learn to pay attention to us when we’re paying attention to them. They learn that when we’re focused on them, they have a very good chance of receiving some reinforcement. So they pay attention! They watch for cues, or they offer behaviors they know have been rewarding in the past. Clever pooches!

This is why when you practice the check-in behavior, you soon find you’ve got a dog

If you’ve done any training with your dog at all, you have probably managed to train your dog to pay attention to you when you are paying attention to him, as seen in the first photo. It’s even more advantageous to teach him to be attentive to you when you have to take your eyes off him, in order to manage some other task. Read on! We’ll show you how!



staring at you or trying to get in front of you to make sure you can see them being a Very Good Dog.

But what happens after your attention is turned elsewhere? Well, most often, your dog goes back to whatever he was doing before, because “Oh, it seems we’re done here.” From your dog’s point of view, your lack of attention or eye contact *usually* means the opportunity for food or play has stopped.

If you’re working on a behavior that requires your dog’s attention, such as loose-leash walking (staying close to you rather than straining at the end of his leash to greet a person or another dog), you might find that as soon as you’re done delivering a treat and you turn your gaze away from your dog, he goes right back to doing the behavior you’re trying to eliminate. If you’re not looking at him, he’s off the hook and he disconnects. Take these scenarios, for example:

■ You’re teaching your dog to stand politely next to you while you stop in the street to chat with someone. During training, as you stand with the other person, your eyes are on your dog as you reward him for good behavior. The session goes well and you end it. Later, when you think your dog has the behavior down pat, you stop and talk to someone. As your eyes and attention are focused on the person, not your dog, your dog jumps up on the person.

■ You’re standing in line at a newsstand with your leashed dog by your side. You’re glancing at him often and he’s being a Very Good Dog as you reward him for good behavior. When it’s time to pay for your purchases and, just for a few moments, you turn your attention away from your dog and to the cashier, your dog starts to pull away, wanting to go check out something on the street a few feet away.

■ You’re in a group training class and your dog is doing wonderfully while you’re working with him. As soon as you turn your attention toward the instructor who is speaking to the class, your dog turns his attention to Fifi, the cute little number who’s lying down quietly a short distance to the side.

These are just examples; you can probably think up more scenarios from your own experiences. What’s happening here is quite normal. If we only deliver rewards to our dogs when it’s clear we’re paying attention to them, then it stands to reason that they will figure out pretty quickly that if we’re not paying direct attention, there’s no possibility for reinforcement from us and they’re free to find it elsewhere, whether through social contact, getting to sniff around, or other important dog stuff.

Here’s a simple technique that can help you ensure that your dog becomes a pro at checking in with you

– and maintaining that attentiveness – even when you’re not looking at him.

TREAT-DELIVERY WITH EYES FORWARD

The first exercise sounds easy enough, but it can actually be a bit of a challenge. It involves being with your dog on-leash and feeding him treats without ever looking at him – like, *at all*. Your attention will be focused on something else, anything else, as long as it’s not your dog. You can use your peripheral vision to steal glances if needed. You will:

1 Stand quietly with your dog in a low-distraction area. It can be in the heel position if this is important to you, but it’s not necessary for the purposes of this exercise.

2 Look forward or to the side, but don’t look at your dog.

3 Have some treats ready either in a pouch, a pocket, or in your hand. You can count on using about 15 treats for this exercise.

4 Feed one treat after another to your dog – blindly, without looking at him. Some dogs will remain close enough to you to make this easy. Some won’t and will already be wandering off somewhere (because he knows you’re not looking at him!). That’s why we want him on-leash, so he can’t get any farther than the length of the leash.



It might feel odd at first, trying to give your dog a treat when he’s not paying attention and you aren’t looking at him. Shorten the leash a little if you need to, and use your peripheral vision.



At some point, he’ll get clued in and realize that you have reinforcement possibilities available, even though you aren’t looking at him. Make sure your treats are more valuable than whatever distractions are present.



Once your dog is on board, and you have practiced the physical skill of finding his muzzle without looking for it, you should be able to pay attention to other things while simultaneously feeding him treats.

5 Don't call him, don't make kissy sounds, and don't look at him, even if you feel him moving around. He's not going anywhere, he's on-leash. Use your peripheral vision to find him and feed him.

In a nutshell, you will be delivering free treats straight into your dog's mouth without looking at him. Don't peek! If you reach down and his muzzle isn't there, use your peripheral vision and your hand to find it.

If your dog isn't engaging at all, try either increasing the value of the treat, shortening the leash a little to keep him closer, or moving to a quieter space to decrease the level of stimuli in the environment. If you still have no luck, consider starting this exercise in a seated position (you, not your dog).

TREAT-DELIVERY WITH EYES FORWARD AND COUNTING FINGERS: MULTI-TASKING SKILLS

This step is an adaptation of a brilliant educational nugget I picked up from the fabulous Emma Parsons at Clicker Expo in Washington, D.C., in the spring of 2019. I call it an adaptation because the original exercise incorporates the use of a clicker, where a clicker is clicked immediately before a treat is delivered. I don't require the use of one, and in fact I prefer that nothing whatsoever gives the dog a hint as to when a treat will be made available to eat.

This exercise involves the blind treat-delivery skill (described above), and it throws in an extra-special feature: Counting fingers while you continue to feed your dog.

The blind feeding and the counting tasks are not connected at all. There is no order or sequence between the two activities. The counting is just an extra activity for you to practice in order to develop and refine your ability to multi-task.

Before you take on this added level of difficulty, however, make sure your blind feeding skills are super solid, because the *last* thing you want to do is lose your dog's attention. Here's what the exercise will look like:

1 Set yourself up as you did in the previous exercise: You have your dog, on-leash, and a handful of treats in a low-distraction area.

2 Start blind-feeding your dog, like you were doing above. Deliver the treats in a steady, calm manner.

3 Have someone stand several feet in front of you where you can clearly see them, and ask them to flash random fingers from one hand in a steady, rhythmic fashion. You will announce how many fingers they are holding up at the same time that you are busy feeding your dog the treats.

In other words, it's not a matter of calling out a number then feeding a treat, calling out the next number

and feeding a treat, etc. They are completely separate events occurring randomly. What you're aiming for is being able to feed your dog continuously and also once in a while calling out a number you see before you. There is no loop, no predictable sequence. You're training yourself to multi-task.

Part of your brain should be busy feeding your dog without looking at him. The other part should be engaged with counting fingers and saying the numbers out loud. One activity could be proceeding at a faster speed than the other; they are two distinctly different things for you to focus on.

Why? Because in real life with your dog, you are focused on many different things at once. If your attention is super-focused on something other than your dog, like using the ATM machine or keeping an eye on those off-leash dogs heading your way, you need to be able to teach your dog to stay connected with you nonetheless (and maintain that behavior over time).

As a bonus, you'll note that through these exercises, you are indirectly teaching a type of "stationing behavior" whereby your dog learns to stay close if you're standing still. He also learns to be aware of your movements while on-leash. This type of attention is especially handy in a crowded area or under very exciting conditions like an activity where there are lots of other dogs.

As an additional and unexpected bonus, I can almost guarantee you will laugh and giggle through many of these practice sessions. It's the dog-training equivalent of rubbing your tummy and tapping the top of your head at the same time. Enjoy the process, and reap the rewards when you finally have a dog who checks in with you even when your attention is elsewhere! 🐾

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Multi-tasking: Practice "no-look" feeding your dog while simultaneously calling out the number of fingers a helper holds up. Can you feed and count at the same time?



Canned Advantages

Wet dog food has a lot to offer your dog – if you can pick the better varieties out of a lineup and can afford it.

We can help with the first part!

Canned dog foods represent only about 15% of the overall pet food market. Why don't more people feed their dogs canned food? It has a lot going for it:

■ **Dogs love it!** The high palatability of canned food is due to a number of factors, including a high inclusion of meat, high fat content (usually), high moisture content, and freshness (especially relative to dry food, which oxidizes over time). This makes it a great tool for stimulating the appetite of dogs who don't want to eat, whether due to illness, the side effect of certain medications, anxiety, or any other reason. It can be a valuable tool to maintain the blood sugar level of sick puppies or senior dogs and to make bad-tasting medicines more palatable.

Our favorite use of canned food is for use in classic Kong toys and Toppl Treat toys (made by West Paw Design). We like to fill the toys with canned food and freeze them; we give them to our dogs when we want to

distract them or keep them busy for a while, or just as a special treat. It can take a half-hour or more for them to lick and chew all the frozen food out of the toys.

■ **The high moisture content of canned food is closer to a dog's "natural" diet than dry food.** Canned foods generally contain from about 76% to about 82% moisture. Uncooked meat contains anywhere from about 66% (raw chicken) to 73% (raw beef roast) moisture. In comparison, dry foods contain only about 10% moisture – and as they soak up digestive juices in the dog's stomach, the individual kibbles expand to twice or more their size in the dog's stomach.

We're not aware of any studies proving that the relative dryness of kibble causes health problems for dogs, but there are definitely cases where a high-moisture food is beneficial (for dogs with any sort of urinary tract disease or who are prone to urinary tract infections, as the best examples).

Not all of the foods shown here are ones we would buy. A few don't meet our selection criteria. Some are prohibitively expensive to be fed as a sole diet (except, perhaps, for one very small, beloved dog). Which ones would you buy?



Workers at the Lotus Pet Foods canning facility add several tubs of freshly shredded beef to the mixture that will imminently fill cans of Lotus Beef Stew. Most canned dog foods contain more meat than any other ingredients, but read the label! Some products contain grain, legumes, potatoes, and/or other carb sources.



■ **Canned foods generally contain fewer synthetic chemicals than dry foods.** Because they are cooked in their anaerobic containers, canned foods don't require any preservatives. They don't usually contain any artificial colors. While some concern has been raised over certain ingredients used to thicken canned foods – ingredients like agar agar, guar gum, xanthan gum, and carrageenan – only the latter has much compelling evidence to suggest it could cause deleterious health effects (and manufacturers have, accordingly, moved away from using carrageenan).

In general, dry dog foods are far more likely to include synthetic additives than canned.

■ **Canned foods last longer on the shelf than dry foods.** One of the things we always recommend that owners do when buying dry food is to check the date-code on the label, to make sure that the bag is relatively fresh. The fats in dry food oxidize (become rancid) over time, and the vitamins degrade.

Again, as long as the can is sealed, the fats can't oxidize. Low-acid canned foods (most meat-based products fall into this category) stay "fresh" for up to five years. No pet food company will put a "best by" date that distant from its date of manufacture – they want the product to be sold and consumed well before that – but they *could*, and neither we nor our dogs would likely be able to tell the difference.

■ **Canned dog foods are less-processed than dry dog foods.** Most (though not all) dry dog foods contain rendered meat meals. Rendering is a highly complex process, in which the animal products are essentially boiled,

the fat separated and skimmed off to varying extents, and the remainder is dried to about 10% moisture and ground up. Meat meals can contain varying amounts of bone, and this will affect their quality and "ash" content (non-nutritional mineral residue, mostly from bone).

Meat meals are not usually found in canned foods; instead, mostly fresh/frozen meats are used. The meats are uncooked when they go into the can; while the ingredients that go into the food might be mildly heated during the mixing process, they are "cooked" in the canning process. (It's called "canning" whether the cook – the bacterial kill or sterilization step – happens in a steel can, a plastic tub, or plastic pouch.)

So, while canned food might seem "processed" to us, relative to dry dog food, the ingredients are much more lightly handled and processed.

■ **Most canned foods contain more meat.** If your goal is to feed your dog a cooked commercial diet that contains mostly meat, but is also complete and balanced, canned food is your best bet. But you have to read the ingredients list and other facts on

the product label; some canned foods include grains and other carbohydrate sources. In our opinion, dry foods are a better and more economical source of carbohydrates. We would probably feed a canned food that contained grain, potatoes, or legumes if the canned food was the dog's only source of food, perhaps due to severe dietary restrictions due to multiple food allergies. Otherwise, we'd look for a product that contained mostly meat, and feed it as part of the dog's diet, with a dry food providing the balance.

WHAT'S THE CATCH?

Canned foods have a couple of strikes against them, too:

■ **High cost.** I don't care how much you love your dog, or how much money you make; the cost of canned foods tends to be prohibitive. This is, in part, due to the generally higher quality of the meats used in the foods, and partly due to the cost of shipping the heavy product. Unless you are feeding very tiny dogs, it's hard to imagine being able to feed good-quality canned food as an exclusive diet.

■ **High fat levels.** Canned foods tend to contain higher fat levels than dry foods – so much so, that many products may be downright dangerous to feed to dogs who have a tendency to develop pancreatitis.

This is another time when you really need to read the label: Look for the guaranteed analysis. Note the amount of fat and moisture. Now, convert the “as fed” fat content of the food (the amount that’s on the guaranteed analysis) to the amount of fat on a “dry matter” (DM) basis (see “Conversion Therapy,” right, for instructions on how to do this). This is important, because if you don’t understand how a canned food that contains 9% of fat *as fed* actually contains 40% fat on a dry matter basis, you could harm your fat-sensitive dog with just one meal.

Before you switch your dog from a dry food to a canned one, or begin to add a significant amount of canned food to his diet, you should also check the amount of fat in the dry food you are feeding your dog. Convert that amount to a DM percentage, too, so you are comparing apples to apples, so to speak.

SELECTING APPROPRIATE FOODS FOR YOUR DOG

Onboard and ready to go shopping for food? Let’s talk about how we’d go about the task.

Before you hop in the car or fire up your computer browser (if you’re planning to shop online), you should have a few parameters in mind, having to do with your dog’s individual needs.

■ **Appropriate calorically.** Are you looking for a product that will be your dog’s main diet? If so, it’s critical that the food you choose is calorically appropriate for your dog’s age and activity level. If you choose an excessively high-fat (high-calorie) food, you risk making your dog gain too much weight – a very unhealthy proposition. (Fat dogs tend to have more health problems as they age, including mobility issues – and they don’t live as long as leaner dogs. If

Conversion Therapy

How to compare the nutrient levels in canned foods with those of dry foods (you have to convert!)

The percentages of nutrients shown in the guaranteed analysis section on a pet food label (protein, fat, fiber, moisture) are expressed “as fed” – meaning, as the food is delivered in its package. Some percentage of the food is comprised of moisture (water), which of course contains no protein, fat, fiber, or any other nutrient. Kibble generally contains about 10% moisture; canned foods usually contain about 78% moisture.

So, when a canned food label says that a food contains (for example) 9% fat, in order to *really* understand how much fat you are thinking about feeding to your dog, you have to remove the moisture from the equation; you want to know how much fat (in this example) is in the *food* part of the food – the “dry matter.” Any serious discussion of nutrition, or comparison of dry and wet diets, requires the conversion of the nutrient values from “as fed” to “dry matter.”

To calculate the nutrient levels in a food as dry matter (DM) percentages, first determine the amount of dry matter in the product. You do this by subtracting the percentage of moisture from 100. Then, divide the “as fed” percentage of the nutrient you are curious about by the amount of dry matter; that will give you the dry matter percentage.

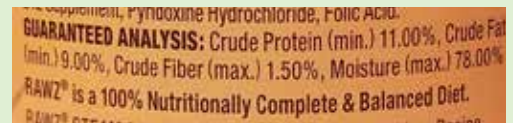
For example, if a canned food has 78% moisture and 9% fat as fed (as seen on the guaranteed analysis):

- $100 - 78 = 22\%$ dry matter (DM)
- $9 \div 22 = .40 = 40\%$ fat DM (on a dry matter basis)

To compare that product to a dry food, do the same calculation for the dry food you may have been feeding. We’ll use the numbers from a bag of food our dogs are currently eating; the guaranteed analysis says it contains 10% moisture and 13% fat.

- $100 - 10 = 90\%$ DM
- $13 \div 90 = 14\%$ fat DM

So the canned food contains a little more than three times the amount of fat than the dry food does, on a dry matter basis. Yowsa! We’d be careful if we were considering adding some of this food to our dog’s diet – we’d add only small amounts – and we certainly wouldn’t switch quickly from the dry food to this canned food. Doing so would just be asking for digestive upset, and could provoke a pancreatitis attack in susceptible dogs.



you really love your dog, don’t let him get fat!) Yes, it’s possible to just cut back the amount you feed him, but with a very high-fat food, in order to feed him an appropriate number of calories, you may have to reduce his portion size so much that he’s not actually getting enough of the vitamins and minerals he needs. Plus, he’s probably hungry all the time!

If you plan to feed him the canned food as a sole diet, it would be wise to choose a food that has more moderate fat levels.

Because canned foods are so expensive, many of us use them, instead, to simply augment a diet that includes dry dog food and/or home-prepared fresh food.

Unless you have experience and

guidance with home-prepared diets, we'd recommend that unbalanced additions of fresh foods make up no more than about 25% of what you feed daily. Few people who augment their dogs' diets with fresh food are aware of a dog's mineral needs, and end up feeding a diet that is far too low in calcium. While we have nothing against owners feeding "human foods" to their dogs, we encourage them to keep the additions as a quarter or less of the dog's daily diet – *unless* they know that the foods they are adding are providing appropriate amounts of calcium.

In contrast, all "complete and balanced" canned foods can be added in whatever percentage one likes to a diet that otherwise consists of "complete and balanced" dry food, as long as the foods are calorically appropriate for the dog's body condition and activity level.

■ **Your dog's tolerance.** When shopping for a dog who has food allergies or is intolerant of certain food ingredients, you *have* to read the ingredient portion of the label to make sure the food doesn't contain the ingredients that disagree with your dog. If your dog is allergic to or



You have to read the ingredients panel! Is your dog allergic to chicken? Then don't buy this "Beef, Pea, & Carrot Stew," because, in addition to the beef it contains, it also contains chicken and chicken liver. Also: What's up with the pea protein in this food? We'll answer our own question: It's propping up the total protein in the food with a protein that is less expensive than beef or chicken – a protein that is less complete in terms of the amino acids that dogs need. Tsk, tsk.

intolerant of chicken, for example, it's not enough to look for a food with "beef" in the name; the food may well contain chicken, too. It's common for pet food manufacturers to use several animal protein sources in a product whose name may include only one of those animals.

Also, not to belabor this point too much, but if you have a dog with a serious food allergy or who is seriously intolerant of certain ingredients, you should probably check the ingredients list *every single time* you buy a food that seems to

work for her. Manufacturers do tinker with their formulas, and many a dog owner has been in despair at some point about their dog's new outbreak, only to discover the maker has changed the formula of the food that had been proven to be safe for the dog in the past. Been there, done that!

■ **Your dog's "life stage."** One last thing to check on the label that relates specifically to *your* dog: the nutritional adequacy statement, a.k.a. the "AAFCO statement." AAFCO stands for the Association of

Canned Food Is Not Bad for Dogs' Teeth!

If you ever want to see us develop a twitch when asked a question, ask us something about the teeth-cleaning ability of kibble.

First, you need to be aware that a great number of dogs don't even (or just barely) chew their kibble. And even for the dogs who do chew their chow, there just isn't any significant tooth-scraping that happens from eating regular kibble. (Some companies make "prescription" diets that are clinically proven to help keep dogs' teeth clean. We wouldn't recommend feeding any of them to a dog long-term, however. The foods are very high in fiber and fat and very low in protein, among other issues.) Expecting kibble to clean a dog's teeth is like expecting granola to clean yours; it doesn't work!

Tartar on a dog's teeth forms from an accumulation of plaque; plaque forms from an accumulation of bacteria on and between the tooth surfaces, above and especially below the gums. The bacteria actually benefit from carbohydrates – typically present in higher amounts in kibble than canned food.

Sustained chewing on toys, raw meaty bones, or any safe, chewable substance can help reduce the amount of plaque on a dog's teeth, but only brushing removes plaque reliably. Sorry!

A dog's diet can affect the rate of accumulation of dental plaque – but it doesn't have anything to do with the physical action of crunching the food; it has more to do with the nutritional and chemical composition of the food. Low-carbohydrate diets are associated with lower gingival and periodontal inflammation (which should be a boost for canned diets, which are almost always low in carbs). A dog's diet can affect the pH of his saliva (at least temporarily) and the pH of a dog's saliva can affect the rate of plaque formation – but no one has yet formulated a diet that keeps the dog's saliva at a level that has proven to reduce plaque and tartar formation. (Oral rinses that accomplish this, in contrast, have proven to be effective at helping combat these causes of dental disease.)

Bottom line: Regular dry foods don't keep dogs' teeth any cleaner (free of plaque and tartar) than canned foods.

American Feed Control Officials. This is the organization that developed the standards the industry uses to determine what constitutes “complete and balanced” nutrition for dogs (and cats). Every pet food label has a statement on it somewhere that references AAFCO, and whether the food is meant for “intermittent and supplemental feeding only” – meaning it’s *not* complete and balanced – or whether it provides complete and balanced nutrition for “adult maintenance” only, or whether it can be fed to dogs in “all life stages.”

“All life stages” includes puppies, pregnant or lactating mothers, adults, and seniors. If the AAFCO statement says the food is complete and balanced for “growth and reproduction,” it has met the same standard as “all life stages.”

If you are feeding a puppy, you do *not* want a food with a nutritional adequacy statement that says the food is for “adult maintenance” – and a surprising number of canned foods are labeled exactly that, so check the statement. (You might need a magnifying glass; we routinely use the zoom feature on our mobile phone camera for this task!) Foods that are formulated for puppies – this includes foods formulated for dogs of all life stages – contain higher levels of protein, fat, calcium, and phosphorus than foods formulated for adult maintenance only.

■ **Large-breed puppies.** One last thing, important for owners of large breed puppies to note: The AAFCO statement might say the food is formulated for growth or dogs of all life stages “*including growth of large-size dogs (70 pounds or more as an adult)*” or “*except for growth of large-size dogs (70 pounds or more as an adult).*” You need to select a food that has the statement that’s appropriate for your puppy.

The ideal level of calcium for large- and giant-breed puppies is *lower* than the ideal level of calcium for smaller puppies. Too much calcium can cause the bones of large-breed puppies (defined by AAFCO as those who are likely to mature at more than 70 pounds) to grow too

quickly. Improper calcium levels during the growth phase of their lives can predispose large-breed pups to arthritis, hip and elbow dysplasia, and other kinds of joint and bone problems as adults. So, again, if you have a large-breed puppy, it’s critically important that you find the AAFCO statement and make sure the food you are considering is appropriately formulated for your dog.

WDJ’S CANNED FOOD SELECTION CRITERIA

So far, we’ve mentioned only the things you need to check to make sure a prospective food is right for your budget and your individual dog. Let’s turn our attention to the things you need to scrutinize to make sure the food contains better-quality ingredients and *doesn’t* contain worrisome or low-quality ingredients: WDJ’s basic dog-food selection criteria.

The ingredients in your dog’s food, just like the ingredients in your own food, must be listed on the label in descending order by weight; in other words, *by weight*, there is more of the first ingredient on the label than anything else in the food. It may surprise you to see broth or “water sufficient for processing” first or second on the ingredients label of canned foods. In order to mix the food and pour it into cans, the manufacturers really do have to start with big vats of water; they aren’t trying to rip you off!

The following are the things we consider as requirements for foods we feed our dogs – hallmarks of quality:

- A whole, named animal protein in one of the first two positions on the ingredients list. “Whole” means no by-products. “Named” means a *specific* animal species – chicken, beef, pork, lamb – as opposed to “meat” or “poultry.”
- Look for products with the highest possible inclusion of top-quality animal proteins (as far as one can tell by their presence close to the beginning of

the ingredients list). We prefer animal-sourced proteins to plant proteins, *especially* in a canned food.

- If a separate fat source is present, it must be named (“chicken fat” rather than “animal fat”). We prefer animal sources of fats to plant-sourced fats.
- If vegetables, grains, or other carb sources are used, we prefer to see them whole, rather than by-products (for example, potatoes rather than potato starch).

DISQUALIFIERS

We avoid canned dog foods that contain the following:

- Unnamed animal protein or fat sources, such as “meat,” “poultry,” or “animal fat.”
- Meat by-products or poultry by-products.
- Animal plasma (blood) as a protein source.
- Wheat gluten, which may be used as a cheap source of plant protein, a thickener, and/or a binder, holding together artificially formed “chunks” of ground meat.
- Sugar, molasses, dextrose, or other sweeteners.
- Artificial colors, flavors, or preservatives.

YOUR CHALLENGE

Be aware that there is no food on the face of the planet that is “best” for all dogs. All dogs have different needs. All *owners* have different needs! We all own different numbers of variously sized dogs, and we have different family priorities, responsibilities, and budgets. The most important attribute of a food should be its ability to nourish your dog without causing illness or discomfort, at a price you can afford.

We've known purebred, champion show dogs who have been fed what we would consider low-quality foods for their entire lives with nary a sign of a problem. We've also known former street dogs who required the cleanest, highest-quality diet imaginable in order to keep from breaking out in hives or with diarrhea. Most dogs are somewhere in between; you have to try different foods to see what agrees with your dog and budget.

We will emphasize budget again, because, as we have said before, canned foods are expensive! It's one thing to buy \$4 cans of food when you are feeding one five-pound dog (who might eat one can for days), and another thing entirely if you, like us, are feeding two active 70-pound athletes (who would require at least two cans a day each, if that's all they were fed).

But, unless you have a dog with *super* special needs, you don't need to buy the most expensive food. Just look for products that agree with your dog (appropriate calorie level, no ingredients that bother him, correct "life stage" formulation/nutrient levels) and that suit your budget.

You may end up with a product that hits all those notes, but contains chicken by-products instead of a whole named meat – that's *fine*.

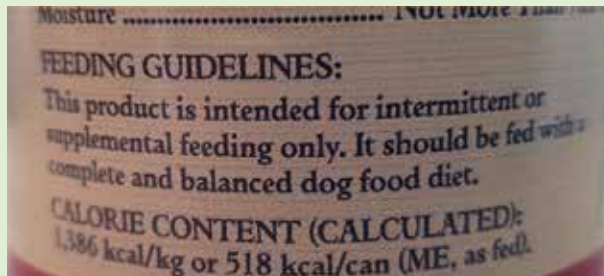
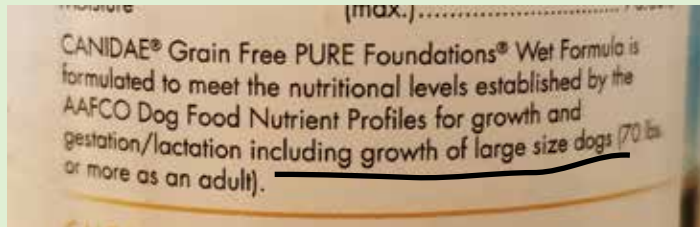
But what if the product you would like to feed your dog contains no whole meats, only chicken by-products, "meat by-products," and pea protein? Oy, that's going a bit too far. A better-quality dry food would probably be a more economical and nutritious choice than a low-quality wet food for most dogs.

On the next two pages is a list of companies that make canned foods that meet our selection criteria. Keep in mind that any manufacturer may make a product or two that does *not* meet our selection criteria. If you compare the ingredients with our list of criteria, you will easily identify the few products that contain some wheat gluten or pork plasma. But if they meet the criteria above, they fit your budget, and suit your dog, they have our blessing. 🐾

Read the Label!

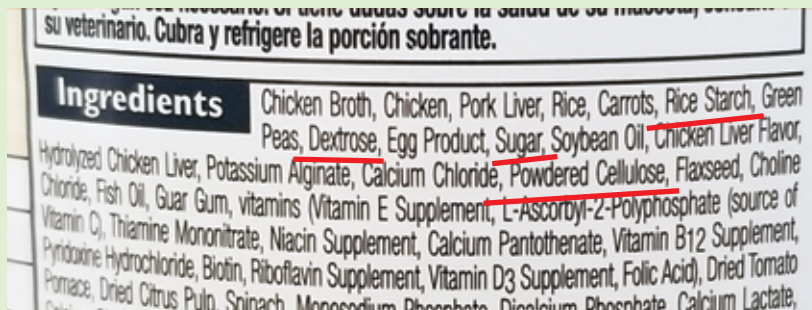
Be alert for details that can affect the quality and suitability of the food for your dog's specific needs

Got a large-breed pup? Then you want to see [this AAFCO statement](#).



This is not a "complete and balanced" diet. Foods that do not contain all the required nutrients in appropriate levels must carry this statement.

We've always told our readers to look for whole named meats at the top of an ingredients list, and this food meets that requirement. But you can't stop reading there! If you are paying a premium price for a canned food, you want premium ingredients. We buy canned food in order to give our dogs a diet that's mostly meat. If we wanted legumes and plant proteins, we could more economically buy them in the form of a dry dog food. (And that's not even getting into the dried citrus pulp.)



Can't tell you how many times we've been told that you can't go wrong with Hill's Science Diet – they are the science people! They use feeding trials to ensure the nutritional adequacy of their foods! Well, that's nice – but what's up with those ingredients? Rice! Carrots! Starch! Peas! We don't want this much of these kinds of ingredients in canned food. And if we wanted to give our dogs sugar, we'd... we'd... Well, we'd just give them a strawberry or piece of apple or something. A canned food should not need sugar (much less two types of sugar) to get dogs to like it.

WHOLE DOG JOURNAL'S 2019-2020 APPROVED CANNED DOG FOODS

Products appear alphabetically by best-known name. In some cases, this is the name of the company that makes the food; in others, it's the name of the food line.

PRODUCT NAME Company Information	# of Varieties # Grain Free	All Life Stages or Adult Maintenance	Range of Protein % Range of Fat %	PRODUCT NAME Company Information	# of Varieties # Grain Free	All Life Stages or Adult Maintenance	Range of Protein % Range of Fat %
ARTEMIS OSOPURE Gardena, CA (800) 282-5876 artemiscompany.com	5 GF	All ALS	8% 4-6%	EAGLE PACK Wellpet Tewksbury, MA (800) 225-0904 eaglepack.com	4	All ALS	9% 6%
AVODERM Breeder's Choice Walnut Creek, CA (925) 948-4000 avodermnatural.com	13, 7 GF	11 ALS, 2 AM	5-9% 3-8.5%	ELEVATE American Pet Nutrition Ogden, UT (800) 564-1455 elevatepet.com	5 GF	All ALS	8.5-9% 5-7%
AZMIRA Tucson, AZ (800) 497-5665 azmira.com	3	All ALS	10% 5%	FIRSTMATE, KASIKS Firstmate North Vancouver, Canada (800) 658-1166 firstmate.com	13, 11 GF	All ALS	8-14% 3-8%
BLACKWOOD Lisbon, OH (888) 843-1738 blackwoodpetfood.com	4 GF	All ALS	9.5% 8.5-9%	FROMM Mequon, WI (800) 325-6331 frommfamily.com	21, 17 GF	All ALS	7-9% 2-6.5%
BRAVO Manchester, CT (866) 922-9222 bravopetfoods.com	3 GF	All ALS	9.5% 4.5-5.5%	GO! Petcurean Chilliwack, British Columbia (866) 864-6112 petcurean.com	8, 4 GF	All ALS	8-10% 3.5-8%
CANIDAE Norco, CA (800) 398-1600 canidae.com	29, 25 GF	23 ALS, 6 AM	5-9.5% 1.5-8%	HOUND & GATOS Gott Pet Products St. Francis, WI (888) 896-2951 houndgatos.com	11 GF	All ALS	10-13% 3.5-10%
CASTOR & POLLUX (ORGANIX, PRISTINE, ULTRAMIX) Merrick Pet Care Hereford, TX (800) 875-7518 castorpolluxpet.com	28, 25 GF	6 ALS, 22 AM	7-9.5% 2-6%	LOTUS Torrance, CA (888) 995-6887 lotuspetfoods.com	16 GF	All ALS	8-14% 4-10%
CHICKEN SOUP FOR THE SOUL Cos Cob, CT (800) 658-0624 chickensouppets.com	7, 4 GF	1 ALS, 6 AM	7.5-9% 2.5-8%	HALO Tampa, FL (800) 426-4256 halopets.com	14, 5 GF	2 ALS, 12 AM	8-11% 3.5-10%
CLOUDSTAR St. Louis, MO (800) 361-9079 cloudstar.com	5 GF	All ALS	7% 3%	HEALTH EXTENSION Melville, NY (800) 992-9738 healthextension.com	16, 14 GF	All AM	7-11% 2-9%
DAVE'S PET FOOD Agawam, MA 413-789-2259 davespetfood.com	30, 26 GF	12 ALS, 18 AM	7-10% 4-9%	HOLISTIC SELECT Wellpet Tewksbury, MA (800) 225-0904 holisticselect.com	6 GF	All ALS	11-12% 6-7%
DOGSWELL NUTRISCA St. Louis, MO (888) 559-8833 dogswell.com	4 GF	All ALS	8% 4%				

PRODUCT NAME Company Information	# of Varieties # Grain Free	All Life Stages or Adult Maintenance	Range of Protein % Range of Fat %
INSTINCT Nature's Variety St. Louis, MO (888) 519-7387 instinctpetfood.com	19 GF	16 ALS, 3 AM	8.5-11.5 2-8.5
KOHA Delray Beach, FL (800) 478-7713 kohapet.com	22 GF	7 ALS, 15 AM	8-12% 3-11%
MERRICK (a div. of Nestlé Purina) Amarillo, TX 806-364-0002 merrickpetcare.com	55 GF	31 ALS, 24 AM	7-10% 3-7%
NATURAL BALANCE (a div. of J.M. Smuckers) Burbank, CA (800) 829-4493 naturalbalanceinc.com	26, 14 GF	6 ALS, 20 AM	5.5-12% 2-7.5%
NEWMAN'S OWN Westport, CT (203) 222-0136 newmansown.com	14, 10 GF	6 ALS, 8 AM	8-14% 1.2-12.5%
NULO Austin, TX (512-) 476-6856 nulo.com	22 GF	10 ALS, 12 AM	9.5-10.5% 3-9%
PARTY ANIMAL West Hollywood, CA (855) 727-8926 partyanimalpetfood.com	11 GF	All AM	8-11% 5-12%
PETGUARD Sewickley, PA (929)-515-1436 petguard.com	8, 1 GF	All ALS	7.5-9.5% 4.5-8%
PET-TAO Franklin, TN (615) 934-3832 pettao.com	2 GF	All ALS	8% 6%
PINNACLE Walnut Creek, CA (866) 500-6286 pinnaclepet.com	3 GF	All ALS	7.5-8.5% 6-8%
RAWZ York, ME (844) 480-8672 rawznaturalpetfood.com	10 GF	All ALS	9-11% 6-10%
REDBARN Long Beach, CA (800) 775-3849 redbarninc.com	15 GF	All ALS	8-11% 3.5-9%

PRODUCT NAME Company Information	# of Varieties # Grain Free	All Life Stages or Adult Maintenance	Range of Protein % Range of Fat %
SOLID GOLD Chesterfield, MO (800) 364-4863 solidgoldpet.com	16, 13 GF	13 ALS, 3 AM	9.5% 5%
TASTE OF THE WILD Diamond Pet Products Meta, MO (800) 342-4808 tasteofthewildpetfood.com	5 GF	All ALS	7.5-9% 3.5-4.5%
THREE DOG BAKERY Kansas City, MO (800) 487-3287 threedog.com	2	All ALS	8% 5%
TIKI DOG Chesterfield, MO (866) 821-8562 tikipets.com	32 GF	14 ALS, 18 AM	7-17.1% 2.7-12%
ULTRAHOLISTIC Nutro (a div. of Mars) Franklin, TN (800) 833-5330 ultraholistic.com	19, 16 GF	3 ALS, 16 AM	7-10% 3-7%
VERUS Abingdon, MD (888) 828-3787 veruspetfoods.com	11, 4 GF	All ALS	7-8.5% 5-7%
WALK ABOUT DOG FOOD Alpha Lamda Group Fairfield, CA 717-519-7622 walkaboutpetproducts.com	5 GF	All AM	7.5-8% 2%
WELLNESS (COMPLETE HEALTH, CORE, SIMPLE) Wellpet Tewksbury, MA (800) 225-0904 wellnesspetfood.com	53, 47 GF	18 ALS, 35 AM	6-12% 2-9%
WERUVA Natick, MA (800) 776-5262 weruva.com	20 GF	All AM	6-10% 1.2-6%
WHOLE EARTH FARMS Merrick Pet Care Amarillo, TX (800) 323-3353 feedgoodness.com	13 GF	All ALS	8-10% 3-6%
ZIGNATURE Pets Global Valencia, CA (888) 897-7207 zignature.com	13 GF	All ALS	8-11.5% 4-7.5%



Winter Woes and Wags

Cold, rain, snow, and ice can complicate our dogs' exercise and training plans – but winter weather shouldn't cancel them!

It can be very challenging to keep your canine family members happy during the ravages of winter. Even those who live in the warmer southern states may face long stretches of forced idleness from winter rains. Without ample enrichment activities, weeks and months of short, dark days can turn even a calm canine into a hyper hound.

Fortunately, the ever-creative modern dog training world has come up with countless ways to keep our dogs happy in inclement weather, so that dogs and humans can spend more time snuggled together in front of the warm fireplace and less time worrying about frostbite or drowning (see “Winter Warnings,” next page).

KEEPING ACTIVE IN WINTER

One of the best ways to stave off your dog's winter crazies is to provide her with a wide variety of enrichment activities. Some are easy and can be implemented immediately, while some take a little more investment in time and resources. Let's start with easy:

■ **Indoor Fetch.** If there's only one of you and your dog will fetch, you can stand at the top of the stairs and toss her ball or toy to the

bottom, have her run down to get it, run back up to you. If she will chase it but not bring it back, have a laundry basket full of toys or balls, call her back, and just keep throwing new ones. When you have thrown them all, go down the stairs, collect them, and bring them back up. If you don't have stairs (or she can't do stairs) use a long hallway. Get added benefit by putting barriers across the hall for her to jump over as she runs back and forth.

■ **Jump the Jumps.** When I was a wee child, I used to take broomsticks and mop handles and lay them across chairs all around the house, and then run with my Rough Collie, Squire, as he sailed over my makeshift jumps. You can do the same! If you prefer, you can get sections of PVC pipe at a hardware store. Start with the poles on the ground and use a treat to get your dog to walk over them, then trot over them.

When she is ready for more, use poles to make low X-shaped jumps before you use straight poles to make higher jumps. (Note: Young puppies shouldn't jump until they are old enough not to be harmed by the repeated impacts. Check with your vet to make sure jumping is a safe activity for your pup.)

While it's hard to convince some dogs, there are plenty of ways to stay active and well-behaved in winter! As long as you are alert to the various cold-weather dangers that can injure dogs, there is no reason that your dog's training and fun should diminish in winter.



Photo © Valeri Kolomiets | Dreamstime.com

Winter Warnings

■ **Round Robin Recall.** You need at least two humans and a dog who loves to come when she's called for this game. The larger your house and the more humans (within reason!), the better.

Put Billy (B) on the third floor, Janey (J) on the second, Mom (M) on the ground floor, and Dad (D) in the basement. (If stairs are not safely carpeted or dog has trouble with stairs, put all humans in different rooms on the same floor.) Each human has yummy treats and a toy that the dog likes for reinforcement when the dog arrives. Write up a random calling order and give each person a copy to ensure two humans aren't calling her at the same time, and let the fun begin.

Be sure each person has a fun party with the dog when she gets there! This not only burns off dog energy, it gives the kids something to do, and it helps improve your dog's recall.

■ **Ball Pit.** For this one you need a kiddie wading pool and a generous supply of non-toxic, sturdy ball-pit balls. Put a towel down to cover the bottom of the pool (so the sound doesn't startle your dog), fill the pool with balls (no water!), and let the fun begin! If your dog doesn't take to it immediately, toss treats and favorite toys into the pool and let her – or help her – dig for them.

■ **Snuffle Mat (and other food toys).** Interactive food-dispensing toys are a simple solution to many dogs' winter blues. We particularly like "snuffle mats," where you bury treats in the cloth fingers of a textured mat and let your dog go to it. If you have a dog who wants to eat the mat or, in contrast, just isn't interested, there are many other options, including treat-dispensing toys your dog pushes around, and puzzle toys she has to solve to get the treats. (See "Play with Your Food," WDJ April 2019).

■ **Flirt Pole.** This is simply a sturdy pole with a rope fastened to one end and a toy fastened to the rope. You can make one or buy one. To play,

One might think that growing up in Illinois, Ohio, and Wisconsin would have inured me to the effects of bitter cold, hip-deep snow drifts, and blinding blizzards, but I think it did the opposite and sensitized me to those frigid conditions, instead. I freely admit I am not fond of winter. My aversion to winter is not without just cause. Here is a partial list of cold-weather dangers:

- **Hypothermia and frostbite.** These are very real concerns in frigid climates. Signs of frostbite include discoloration of the affected area of skin (this discoloration is often pale, gray, or bluish); coldness and/or brittleness of the area when touched; pain when you touch the body part(s); swelling of the affected area(s); blisters or skin ulcers; areas of blackened or dead skin. Severe cases of frostbite can result in permanent disfigurement or alteration of the affected tissues, or worse, amputation or surgical removal of the necrotic (dead) tissues.

Signs of hypothermia can include strong shivering and trembling followed by no shivering; acting sleepy, lethargic, or weak; fur and skin are cold to the touch; body temperature is below 95° F; decreased heart rate; dilated pupils (the black inner circle of the eye appears larger); gums and inner eyelids are pale or blue; trouble walking; difficulty breathing; stupor, unconsciousness, or coma.

- **Antifreeze poisoning.** Spilled antifreeze presents a serious danger to your dog. Dogs are attracted to antifreeze because of its sweet taste, but just a lick or two can be deadly. There are antifreeze formulations that contain a bitter substance intended to deter ingestion, but they are still toxic if consumed.

Antifreeze poisoning happens in two stages. In the first, which happens three to six hours after ingestion, your dog appears drunk – staggering, vomiting, falling down, and peeing a lot. Then your dog may appear normal, until the second stage begins, when the body starts to break down the ethylene glycol into other chemicals such as aldehyde, glycolic acid, and oxalate. This stage is dangerous because it can cause severe to fatal damage to the kidneys. If you suspect your dog has ingested antifreeze, get her to a veterinarian immediately.

- **Ice-melting chemicals.** The calcium and sodium chloride in rock salt that is used to treat roads and sidewalks is toxic to your dog. Dogs get the salt on their paws and fur, and lick it off to clean themselves. Signs of salt toxicity include extremes in water consumption (your dog may either drink excessively or stop drinking altogether); vomiting; diarrhea; lethargic or "drunk" behavior; seizures.

While "pet-safe" salt is safer than regular rock salt, like "pet-safe" antifreeze, it is still not completely safe. Take precautions to avoid ingestion, and contact your veterinarian if you think your dog might have salt toxicity.

- **Falling through ice.** Every winter brings tragic stories of dogs falling through pond or river ice, and drowning or freezing to death. Sometimes the tragedy is compounded by the death of the human who tried to save the beloved dog. If your dog doesn't have a rock-solid recall, keep her safely on leash when you are around frozen water. If she does fall through, call 9-1-1 rather than trying to rescue her yourself. If you must rescue her, study up on ice-rescue safety precautions well in advance, and be very careful!

- **Heaters.** A chilly dog can become a heat-seeking missile and may try to cozy up to the heaters in your home. Caution: She can burn herself on a wall heater or wood-burning stove, or knock over a space heater and start a fire. If your dog is prone to trying to get as close as possible to the source of your home's heat, use management tools to prevent her access to any heat source that might be dangerous. Provide her with a pet-safe heating pad; these products have chew-resistant cords, and heat up only to a pet's internal body temperature. Alternatively, give her a cozy den with plenty of warm blankets she can burrow under.

stand in one place and swing the toy around for your dog to chase. (You can also practice “Trade” to get the toy back once your dog has grabbed it; see “Trade Agreements,” WDJ February 2017).

If your dog tends to bodyslam you (or your kids) while playing this game, stand inside an exercise pen for protection while your dog chases the toy around the outside of the pen.

These toys are available in better pet supply stores and from online sources such as Chewy.com and Amazon.com. Outward Hound makes one called the “Tail Teaser” and sells it with an extra replacement toy for about \$13; Chewy.com also sells one called the Pet Fit for Life Plush Wand Teaser Dog Toy for \$11.



Woody chases the Tail Teaser with typical intensity. Be careful about baiting your dog into too many tight turns with these toys if she has knee or other joint issues.

■ **Nose Games.** Scent work is surprisingly tiring, and because

most dogs love to sniff, it’s also very satisfying for them. It’s also usually an easy game to teach. Have your dog sit and wait (or have someone hold her collar). Hold up a treat, walk six feet away, and place it on the floor. Return to your dog, pause, and then say “Search!” Encourage her to run out and eat the treat.

After a few repetitions, let her watch you “hide” the treat in an easy spot (on the floor behind a chair leg, etc.). Return and tell her “Search!” Gradually hide the treat in harder places, then multiple treats, and eventually have her in another room while you hide treats. This should keep her quite busy and tire her out nicely. (For much more information, see “How to Teach Your Dog to Play Nose Games,” WDJ September 2019.)

Reluctant to “Go” Outside in Winter?

It’s fairly common for dogs to decide that it’s just not worth the trouble of dealing with rain, snow, or freezing temperatures in order to relieve themselves in the winter; they’d prefer to relieve themselves indoors, thanks very much! Of course, that’s just not acceptable to most of us! Here are some suggestions to help your reluctant canine pal maintain proper toilet etiquette in bad weather:

- *Create an outdoor sheltered bathroom area – a shed with a dirt floor, a lean-to, a tent – some space that you keep cleared of snow and that is sheltered from blowing snow and rain.*
- *Keep a path shoveled to the above-mentioned sheltered bathroom area so your dog can access it easily.*
- *Initially go out with your dog to the sheltered area on a regular bathroom routine until he learns to go there on his own, just as you initially would with a pup when first housetraining.*
- *If your dog has a short coat or gets cold easily, consider a jacket and boots. Remember to spend some time conditioning him to them so he loves them.*
- *Alternatively, you can create an indoor bathroom for your dog. We tend to think of litter boxes as a cat-thing, but it really might be the right answer for some dogs as well. There are some well-constructed commercial canine litter boxes – I personally prefer the ones with artificial turf to the ones with real grass (it’s easier to keep the artificial grass clean than it is to keep replacing the turf) and I’m not a fan of the basic pee pad. It may be difficult to convince your well-house-trained adult dog to use an indoor litter box; you might start by getting him to use the litter box outdoors and then bring it inside.*



■ **Treadmill.** Now we're getting into activities that require more investments in time and resources. First, of course, you need a treadmill. Be sure to get one that is safe to use with dogs. Dog-specific treadmills generally are smaller than human products (some are made just for small dogs!) and have appropriately sized siderails (for safety, to keep the dog from falling off on the sides).

You will need to do a very gradual introduction, associating the machine with treats and toys until your dog is very comfortable being near it, and then *on* it, before you even *think* of turning it on. Be sure not to overdo the exercise; check with your veterinarian about how much exercise is appropriate for your dog to start with and how you should increase the time (gradually!).

■ **Cognition Training.** Those winter shut-in months are a perfect time to experiment with cognition training for your dog. You don't need a lot of room, and this brain exercise is surprisingly tiring. You can teach your dog to imitate your specific behaviors (see "Copy That," October 2013); explore choice (see "Pro-Choice," November 2016); learn to demonstrate object, shape, and color discrimination and even read! (see "Are Canines Cognitive?" October 2017), and much more.

■ **Indoor Parkour.** If you really want to get creative, you can set up an indoor parkour course for your dog, made out of household items. After you've taught your dog each of the various obstacles, put them all together into a complete course. Here are some suggestions for obstacles that you can train your dog to navigate:

- **Laundry Leap:** Get a laundry basket that's an appropriate size for your dog, and teach him to jump into and out of it.
- **Hoop-De-Do:** Best use of a hula hoop ever! Hold it up for your dog to jump through, or

wedge it between a chair and a wall for a fixed jump.

- **Sweet Roll:** Roll up a carpet runner and let your dog unroll it with her nose. (Teach this one by placing treats inside the rug as you roll it so she finds them as she unrolls it.) This would be especially fun if you had a red carpet that your dog could unroll for special guests!
- **That Was Easy:** A smack of the paw lets your dog share her editorial opinion. These buttons are available from Staples stores and its website – or you can find a variety of wonderful talking buttons at this online site: speaktomecatalog.com (select "buttons").
- **Go 'Round:** A simple orange traffic cone makes a perfect loop-stacle to send your dog around the bend in a different direction.
- **Walk the Plank:** Place an eight-foot long 2x8 board across two low stools and let your dog walk the plank! Increase the level of difficulty with narrower planks.

- **Tunnel o' Chairs:** If you have a smaller dog, start by teaching her to crawl under one folding chair, then add a second chair, then a third, eventually making your crawl tunnel as long as you want it to be!

Whatever your fancy, there should be some activities here that you and your dog can enjoy together when the weather outside is frightful. Stay warm, stay safe, and have fun! 🐾

Pat Miller, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, is the owner of Peaceable Paws Dog & Puppy Training in Fairplay, Maryland, as well as WDJ's Training Editor. Miller is also the author of many books on positive training. See page 24 for information on her classes and book purchasing details.

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Canine Cancer Resources and Hope

The final installment in our series on canine cancer offers some additional information resources and encouragement.

The photo directly below is the author's dog, Duncan, fully anesthetized, intubated, and prepped for a dosage of palliative radiation therapy intended to reduce the size of his nasal carcinoma. It looks brutal, and yet, hours later, he'd be fully recovered and asking to play a game of catch with his favorite ball.

For each of the past six months, I've written an article for WDJ about the cancers that most commonly afflict dogs. It's my sincere hope the articles will help any dog owners who find themselves in a fight for their own dogs' lives understand what they are up against, learn about treatment protocols and median survival times, and where to find clinical trials for and cutting-edge research on the various cancers.

Gathering the information for the series took a huge amount of time and work, but it's been a labor of love – a way of paying back the many dedicated, knowledgeable veterinary professionals who helped me get through the illnesses of my two previous dogs.

Unfortunately, both of my beloved dogs ultimately succumbed to their diseases. But we enjoyed many wonderful days together while we lived with cancer.

IT'S A PERSONAL FIGHT

My Border Collie, Daisy, was diagnosed in 2010 with transitional cell carcinoma, a rare form of cancer, accounting for about 2% of cancers that occur in dogs. I threw myself into researching the disease and treatments and was fortunate to have a group of amazing veterinary specialists on her team.

I was petrified prior to Daisy's first treatment, but her primary veterinarian, Dr. Jeffrey Bryan, assured me that severe reactions were rare and this treatment would provide the best opportunity for an extended life span with good quality. My trust in her good doctors was not misplaced; Daisy lived with great quality of life for 2½ years after diagnosis, undergoing chemotherapy during most of that time (see "Chemotherapy Can Be Kind," WDJ October 2011), even playing with a flying disc after every treatment.

Then, in 2015, my other Border Collie, Duncan, was diagnosed with nasal carcinoma – another rare form of cancer in dogs, accounting for about 1% of all canine neoplasia. It was inoperable, but radiation therapy provided the best chance at reducing the tumor size and providing an extending survival time.

Even after the experience with Daisy,



radiation therapy frightened me: my 14-year-old dog had to be fully anesthetized every day for five days in a row to receive a therapeutic dose of radiation to his head. Duncan was a very sensitive soul; I worried about how these all-day experiences would affect him, not to mention the risks of all that anesthesia.

To my surprise and delight, Duncan enthusiastically embraced the daily road trips of two hours each way and adored his veterinary technician. He happily left me in the waiting room to go with her for treatment. I'd wait for hours in a bookstore, buying way too many books and drinking way too much tea.

At the end of the day I would pick him up and we would journey home. By the time we arrived home, he had completely recovered and was ready to play ball for hours (in his heaven, balls rain from the sky). He felt better after those radiation treatments than he had in the weeks prior. There is something to be said for the pain-relieving properties of radiation therapy.

We had hoped for a good year. We got a great month. Yes, I would do it again in a heartbeat.

NOT FOR THE FAINT OF HEART

I have to admit that the research for this series left me discouraged; 50 years of scientific investigation into cancer has resulted in only moderately improved treatments – options that, sometimes, extend patients' lives for just a few months at sometimes incredible cost (physical, emotional, financial).

For perspective, I turned to someone who has been studying, researching, and treating canine cancer for more than 15 years, Jeffrey Bryan, DVM, PhD, DACVIM Oncology – yes, the same person I was lucky to have as my dogs' first vet. Dr. Bryan is no longer in private practice, having long since decamped for research and academia. He is now a professor of oncology at the University of Missouri's College of Veterinary Medicine, and director for the school's Comparative



Dr. Jeffrey Bryan in 2000, when he was still in a general practice veterinarian in San Francisco. Coincidentally, he's examining a patient he had been treating for mammary cancer.

Oncology and Epigenetics Laboratory. When I first met Dr. Bryan, he was working in a veterinary practice in San Francisco. He impressed me with his warmth and knowledge way back when, and he's only gotten warmer and more knowledgeable with time in this challenging field.

I asked Dr. Bryan whether he still feels hopeful about treating canine cancer, and he said he absolutely does. "What gives me hope is the fact that we make progress every year," he told me. "I watch brilliant young clinicians and researchers become attracted to oncology every year, making me optimistic for creative new solutions. Companies come along with new approaches to treating cancer all the time. Some of these work very well."

Dr. Bryan reminded me, however, that it's fruitless to hope for the "end" of cancer. "Cancer will always be with us, I'm afraid," he says. "It's an evolutionary disease. We need to continue to get better at recognizing it early, addressing it comfortably, and fitting the most effective treatment to each patient."

Dr. Bryan's observations reflect some of the newest approaches to cancer treatment, whether it be for humans or canines. Some researchers are moving toward reframing cancer as a chronic illness, one where patients can coexist with cancer cells (as long as the cancer is prevented from growing unchecked). It is hoped that

new diagnostics can be developed to provide the earliest identification possible and then eradicate cancerous cells at inception, thereby preventing them from developing into an untreatable malignancy.

As depressed as I am about the prevalence of canine cancer, I do find hope in the work of Dr. Bryan and all of his colleagues working in the specialty of veterinary oncology.

Remarkable advances have been made in treating our canine companions, supported by the developments in affiliated fields such as imaging, rehabilitation, pain management, and pharmacology. Advances in the fields of palliative care and immunotherapy have grown exponentially; the latter is especially promising.

A FEW MORE CANINE CANCER RESOURCES

In my five previous articles, I described the latest diagnostic tools and treatments for the most common canine cancers: mast cell tumors (July 2019), osteosarcoma (August), lymphoma (September), melanoma (October), and hemangiosarcoma (November).

There are myriad resources available to learn *more* about canine cancer – the above-mentioned types and others that we have not written about – and this information, like the disease itself, is constantly changing.

If your dog (like my two Border Collies) is diagnosed with an uncommon type, an internet search will bring up a multitude of results; do research but be discerning in your approach. Look for reputable sources and scientific support for any claims. Many veterinary colleges and specialty clinics have websites with sections for pet owners to learn more about various diseases and treatments; these are credible sources for information. On the next pages, you'll find some more starting points for reliable information.

■ **Veterinary oncology specialists.**

While an experienced general veterinary practitioner who has a special interest in canine cancer will be a huge asset to you, I can't recommend it strongly enough that you seek out help from a board-certified veterinary oncologist.

These specialists have received extensive oncology training after veterinary school, passed examinations, and completed publication requirements to receive certification by the American College of Veterinary Internal Medicine (ACVIM). When they become certified in oncology by the ACVIM, they will add the letters DACVIM after their names (the "D" is for Diplomate).

You can use a feature on the ACVIM website to search for board-certified veterinary specialists (find.vetspecialists.com). If there are no oncology specialists in your area, your veterinarian should be able to consult with specialists located farther afield to develop an appropriate treatment plan for your dog.

■ **Clinical Trials.** In order to improve detection and treatment of disease, the most promising experimental or investigational therapies need to be tested in clinical trials. The safety and efficacy of these therapies and procedures have often been evaluated first in laboratory animals and the therapy is considered to be of potential benefit to the patient. Your dog may or may not benefit from participation in a clinical trial, but these studies advance veterinary science and have the potential to improve the outcomes of future generations of dogs.

The American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) maintains the AVMA Animal Health Studies Database, which provides information on veterinary clinical trials reported by researchers. Searches for relevant studies can be done using the parameters of diagnosis, location, species, and field of veterinary medicine (such as oncology). See ebusiness.avma.org/aahsd/study_search.aspx.

The American Kennel Club Canine Health Foundation funds

scientific research with the goal of improving the health of dogs. For a link to the trials they fund, see akcchf.org/research/participate-in-research/clinical-trials.html.

In addition, the Veterinary Cancer Society website maintains a page with links to many of the organizations that offer veterinary clinical trials. See vetcancersociety.org/pet-owners/clinical-trials/.

■ **Books.** There are a number of books that are very helpful for advancing your understanding of canine cancer. My favorites are:

- *The Dog Cancer Survival Guide*, by Demian Dressler, DVM, with Susan Ettinger, DVM, DACVIM Oncology (Maui Media, 2011). A comprehensive guide for practical, evidence-based approaches to canine cancers, including conventional, integrative, and alternative treatment options, supportive care, financial considerations, and resources to help owners optimize lifespan and quality of life.
- *Speaking for Spot: Be the Advocate Your Dog Needs to Live a Happy, Healthy, Longer Life*, by Nancy Kay, DVM (Trafalgar Square Books, 2008). An invaluable resource for pet owners to help navigate veterinary care and decisions.
- *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Biography of Cancer*, by Siddhartha Mukherjee (Scribner, 2010). The quintessential book about cancer – its history, discoveries, setbacks, treatments, and hopes for the future.
- *The First Cell and the Human Costs of Pursuing Cancer to the Last*, by Azra Raza (Hachette Book Group, 2019). An exploration of the cancer "industry" and a call for change in research and treatment.

■ **Websites.** There is no shortage of sites with information about canine cancer. The list of sites with up-to-date, credible, understandable information is shorter. These are a few of my recommended sources of information for pet owners.

- drsuecancervet.com and [facebook.com/DrSueCancerVet](https://www.facebook.com/DrSueCancerVet). Dr. Sue Ettinger is a practicing veterinarian and board-certified cancer specialist, international speaker, book author, and vlogger (video blogger). Her information is up-to-date and extremely accessible.
- dogcancerblog.com. A great resource covering everything from the latest in cancer news to resources to comprehensive articles, featuring Dr. Demian Dressler and Dr. Susan Ettinger, authors of *The Dog Cancer Survival Guide*.
- morrisanimalfoundation.org. The Morris Animal Foundation bridges science and resources to advance the health of animals. The foundation is at the forefront of funding cancer studies in dogs, including the Golden Retriever Lifetime Study, one of the largest, most comprehensive prospective canine health studies in the United States. The study's purpose is to identify the nutritional, environmental, lifestyle, and genetic risk factors for cancer and other diseases in dogs.
- ccr.cancer.gov/Comparative-Oncology-Program. The Center for Cancer Research is a division of the National Cancer Institute under the National Institutes of Health. In 2003, the Comparative Oncology Program was launched to aid research in furthering the understanding of cancer and improving the assessment of treatments for humans by treating companion animals.

Comparative oncology is the study of naturally developing cancers in animals as models for human disease. Through these trials, pets gain access to cutting edge research and therapeutics; the results then support the further development of human clinical trials. The site also provides disease information, links to clinical trials, news, and publications.

- wearethecure.org/tag/pet-cancer/. This site has a “Canine Cancer Library” that provides detailed information on an ever-expanding list of types of cancers. The Foundation’s blog presents latest canine cancer news and related stories.

- merckvetmanual.com/special-pet-topics/cancer-and-tumors. General veterinary information about cancer in pets.

- scholar.google.com. An easy-to-use free search engine that accesses the full text or metadata of scholarly literature across an array of publishing formats and disciplines; a great resource to look for published research on canine cancers.

HOLISTIC (INTEGRATIVE) VETERINARY CARE

In all the articles about canine cancer published here, I never had an opportunity to discuss holistic care for dogs undergoing treatment for cancer. It’s a huge topic, and one I hope to write about in a future issue.

Holistic veterinarians embrace a broad approach to care, not only examining the patient, but also the patient’s environment, behavior, relationships, and disease patterns. Veterinarians who self-identify as holistic, integrative, or complementary may have a variety of educational experiences and training; they may



The author’s Border Collie, Daisy, asking to play Frisbee immediately after one of her chemotherapy treatments.

augment their conventional veterinary medicine with chiropractic, acupuncture, herbs, and/or other modalities. Their treatment protocols, then, will depend on their education, training, and experience.

Note: Veterinarians who identify as offering “alternative” medicine might not use conventional veterinary medicine or collaborate with conventional veterinary practitioners. Make sure you are clear about what they do and don’t offer.

My primary veterinarian is a holistic practitioner and was a valuable member of Daisy’s team. Throughout Daisy’s illness, he supported her with acupuncture, low level light therapy, nutrition, and medicinal herbs. He worked closely with her oncologist to ensure safe and beneficial integrative care. Complementary therapies can be of great benefit to pets with cancer, and holistic veterinarians can help create these personalized support plans.

To locate a holistic veterinarian near you, visit the website of the American Holistic Veterinary

Medical Association, a group of member veterinarians and allies who are elevating the veterinary profession through innovation, education, and advocacy of integrative medicine. Go to ahvma.org/find-a-holistic-veterinarian.

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

One last resource – an important one. Most cancer treatments for dogs are expensive, as are the diagnostics and supportive care. I was fortunate; at the time when my dogs were stricken, I had the funds to treat both of my dogs. I don’t have those financial resources now, but I *do* have pet insurance for my current dogs.

If you have neither the funds nor pet insurance, there are a number of financial resources available for dogs with cancer; the Humane Society of the United States keeps a current list of national and state-specific pet financial aid organizations at the following page: humanesociety.org/resources/are-you-having-trouble-affording-your-pet.

AGAIN: IT’S PERSONAL

The decision to treat (or not treat) a pet for cancer is a personal decision; there is no right or wrong approach. Cancers are a group of very complicated and diverse diseases with each oncology case being medically unique. I opted to treat both of my dogs and I was fortunate to have gained more time with them. More time to eat ice cream together. To play ball and Frisbee. To cuddle on the sofa. To share synchronized breathing while falling asleep together. To dream together. Every moment is a gift. 🐾

Having lost two dogs to cancer, longtime WDJ contributor Barbara Dobbins follows cancer research news closely.

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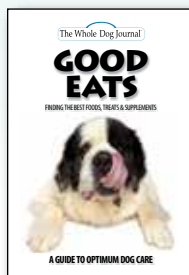
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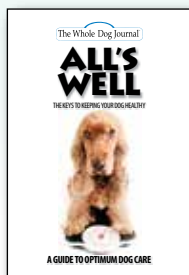
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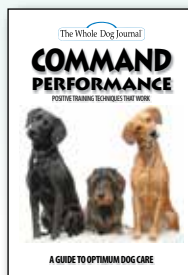
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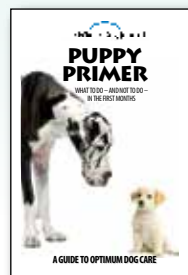
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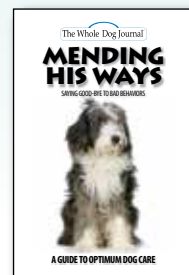
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