

# RUFFDRAFTS

the DOG WRITERS ASSOCIATION of AMERICA

FALL 2025

PAGE 5

*Writing Contest News*

PAGE 12

*When Dogs Stop Listening,  
Detecting Hearing Loss*

PAGE 18

*Legislative Updates*

PAGE 27

*A Change for the Better,  
Fighting Ageism  
in Adoption*

DOGS AND TECHNOLOGY

## Ruff Drafts

Send all material to Merrie Meyers  
at: [rdeditor@dogwriters.org](mailto:rdeditor@dogwriters.org)

### ISSUE DEADLINES

Spring 2025, February 14  
Summer 2025, May 16  
Fall 2025, August 15  
Winter 2025, November 14

### OFFICERS

#### THERESE BACKOWSKI

PRESIDENT  
[theresebackowski1@gmail.com](mailto:theresebackowski1@gmail.com)

#### BILLIE GROOM

VICE PRESIDENT  
[billie@upwarddogology.com](mailto:billie@upwarddogology.com)

#### MARSHA M. PUGH

TREASURER  
[marsha\\_pugh01@comcast.net](mailto:marsha_pugh01@comcast.net)

#### EMELISE BAUGHMAN

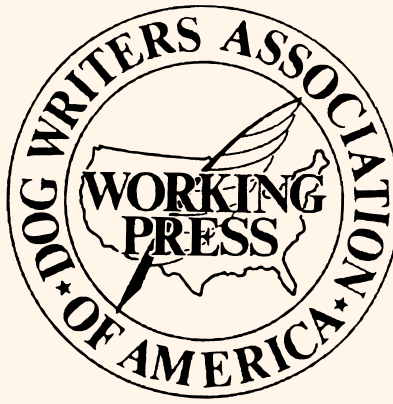
SECRETARY  
[emeliseb@yahoo.com](mailto:emeliseb@yahoo.com)

#### CAROL BRYANT

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT  
[fidoseofreality@gmail.com](mailto:fidoseofreality@gmail.com)

#### IDA W. ESTEP, ESQ.

LEGAL COUNSEL  
[iwestep@earthlink.net](mailto:iwestep@earthlink.net)



### BOARD MEMBERS

#### LISA BEGIN-KRUYSMAN

CLASS OF 2026  
[lbkauthor@gmail.com](mailto:lbkauthor@gmail.com)

#### MERRIE MEYERS, PH.D., APR, FELLOW, PRSA

CLASS OF 2025  
[merrie.meyers@gmail.com](mailto:merrie.meyers@gmail.com)

#### PAT CRUZ

CLASS OF 2027  
[lacruz928@optonline.net](mailto:lacruz928@optonline.net)

#### JOEL GAVRIELE GOLD

CLASS OF 2027  
[dr.joelgold@gmail.com](mailto:dr.joelgold@gmail.com)

#### KAREN HARBERT

CLASS OF 2025  
[aelwydcwc@aol.com](mailto:aelwydcwc@aol.com)

#### LAURIE C. WILLIAMS, CPDT-KA, CDTI

CLASS OF 2026  
[lauriecwilliamsk9@gmail.com](mailto:lauriecwilliamsk9@gmail.com)

### COMMITTEES

#### AWARDS BANQUET

TBA, Chair

#### BLOG

Therese Backowski, Chair

#### BUDGET AND FINANCE

Ida Estep, Chair

#### BYLAWS & LEGAL

Ida Estep, Chair

#### YOUNG WRITERS ON THE WEB

Ted Slupik, Chair

#### HALL OF FAME

Joel Gavriele-Gold, Bryna Comsky

#### LIAISON WITH CAT WRITERS ASSOCIATION

Susan Ewing

#### MEMBERSHIP

Christine Caplan, Chair

#### WRITING COMPETITION

Merrie Meyers, Chair

#### RUFF DRAFTS

Merrie Meyers, Editor  
Leslie Brown, Assistant Editor  
Maggie Marton, Assistant Editor  
Angela Capodanno, Designer

#### SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: Lisa Begin-Kruysman  
Twitter: Dawn Taylor  
Instagram: Dawn Taylor

#### WEBMASTER

Angela Capodanno



## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

ADVANCES IN HUMAN HEALTHCARE technology are increasingly common. This includes AI-informed diagnostics, virtual reality training, robotic-guided procedures, 3D-printed prosthetics and even wearable tech for monitoring critical conditions.

The “One Health” concept provides a bridge between these two fields of medicine. The cornerstone of “One Health” is that human, animal and environmental well-being are interconnected. As such, research findings and technological developments are often transferred between the two fields.

Many years ago, as a Licensed Veterinary Technician, I thought I was brilliant because I could analyze blood samples. The field has come a long way since those days, and for that I am very grateful. Current veterinary practices encompass the use of AI, robotics, 3D prosthetics and wearable sensors.

Veterinarians often adopt practices pioneered in human medicine for use in animals.

This includes off-label drug use, adapted surgery such as joint replacements, similar treatment protocols, and shared medical technology.

Dogs have many of the same cardiac problems as their human counterparts. Some of those issues have surgical solutions, and some can be resolved with a pacemaker. It comes as no surprise though, that a life-saving pacemaker isn't cheap. A new pacemaker can cost anywhere from a few thousand dollars up to twenty thousand. This isn't something that an average dog owner can manage. I can't think of anything more heart-wrenching than having to choose between feeding your children or saving you dog. According to Rebekah Brandes of Health News, “three million people have pacemakers.”

The average shelf life of a new pacemaker is ten years. They cannot be used in humans if they are going “stale.” Just as it is silly to throw away a jar of expired mustard because the “best by” date stamped on the lid doesn't work for you, those new, but unused pacemakers were being thrown away. That's changed.

Medtronic, a pacemaker manufacturer, donates their “stale” pacemakers to veterinary hospitals offering cardiac repair for dogs. It isn't legal to reuse a device on humans, but it is perfectly acceptable to save a dog's life with one. There are thousands of documented cases of dogs who are living long and busy lives with these pacemakers.

Medtronic isn't the only source for pacemakers either. Many veterinary hospitals that do cardiac repairs will accept donations of used pacemakers from individuals who no longer need them, or their families. Individuals with an implanted pacemaker can even include donation of the device to a veterinary school or hospital in their will.

Needless to say, the cost of the device is considerably less than for a brand new one.

Let's write about this, so that more people consider this life-saving donation.

*Therese Backowski*

**Therese Backowski**

DWAA President



Therese Backowski  
and her dogs, Lucy  
and Hank

# RUFFDRAFTS

## FALL 2025

### DOGS AND TECHNOLOGY

**3**

President's Column

**5**

2025 Contest News

**6**

Letter from the Editor

**7**

If Only You Knew

**8**

Dog Barks vs. Technology  
– Non-fiction!

**9**

When I Talk to You

**10**

Canine Intuition Outsmarts  
Technology

**12**

When Pets Stop Listening

**14**

Nary a One Left

**16**

Rescuing the Rescued

**18**

AKC Government Relations  
2025 Legislative Review

**21**

My Keyboard Has Magic  
Keys

**22**

Pet Therapy Symposium

**24**

Modern Technology: the  
Leash

**26**

Tips & Tactics  
HOW TO BEGIN WRITING

**26**

The Dog Show Traveler

**27**

Opinion  
A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER

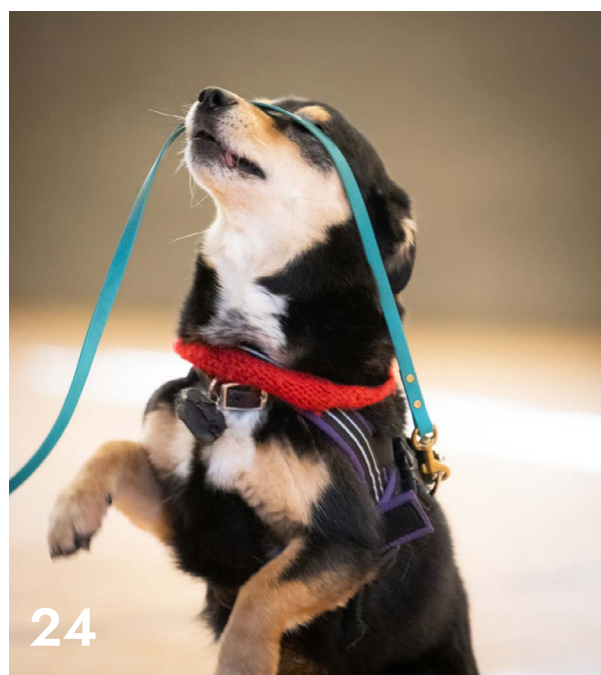
**28**

Member News

MAGGIE MARTON	28
BILLIE GROOM	28
DÉDÉ WILSON	29
ELLEN FINNIE	29
DR. GUILLERMO CAVAZOS	30
JENNY RUTH YASI	31

**32**

When Dogs Google



# 2025

# CONTEST NEWS

MERRIE MEYERS

— 2025 Contest Chair —

## Writing Contest Begins

THE 2025 DWAA Writing Competition is now open and we are waiting for your entries. Each year, writers (fiction and non-fiction), photographers and illustrators, print, broadcast, and digital content creators submit about 600 entries, which are judged by their peers. After submitting their entry in one regular category, as required, contestants may also submit it in one or more special category. While winning entries in regular categories receive a certificate, a Maxwell medallion and bragging rights, Special Category winners receive certificates and cash awards, and of course bragging rights as well. We are grateful to our sponsors who provide the cash for the special awards.

In today's media environment, everything published in print is also online. So, we've eliminated the distinction between those two formats. Instead, the regular categories are now: the Written Word, the Spoken Word, Visual Communication and Books. Check the [list](#) to see which category best suits your work.

There are also new special category awards. You can find those listed below the regular categories at the link above.

This contest would not be as successful as it is without the generous support from our colleagues who judge the entries. Contestants can judge, just not the categories they enter. Please consider volunteering to judge. The process is simple and completely online. Call for judges will go out next month. Be on the lookout for an email and social media posts inviting you to sign up.

If you have any questions about the contest or judging, please feel free to reach out to me at [2025dwacontestchair@gmail.com](mailto:2025dwacontestchair@gmail.com). ■



[dogwriters.org](http://dogwriters.org)



Email Contest Chair



## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR



BY THE TIME YOU READ THIS issue of Ruff Drafts, our annual writing contest will be underway. Throughout the summer, we've been working behind the scenes to get ready for it. Now we're off! Good luck to everyone who submits an entry.

The theme of this issue is the growing presence of technology in the lives of our dogs. The use of technology has gone from a rarity to commonplace. I recently adopted a puppy and I am amazed at the ways technology is already part of our life together.

Mojo, my pup, came to me already microchipped by the vet and registered with AKC Reunite by the breeder. Once I brought him home, I attached an Apple Air Tag to his collar and updated the app on my phone. I've even downloaded an online training app to give me a refresher on obedience commands.

But there are many more tech devices that can help with the things we do with

our canine companions. Health and fitness trackers can be incorporated into smart collars, pet cameras offer remote monitoring, interactive toys can stimulate brain development and/or reward good behavior.

Perhaps the most promising innovation is the use of technology in veterinary medicine. Growing numbers of pet parents are gaining access to vet care through telemedicine. While telehealth isn't a substitute for hands-on vet care, it is useful when you and your dog are far from home or experiencing an emergency.

Speaking of hands-on, traditional surgical interventions are being augmented by robotic devices. The da Vinci surgical system, popular in human procedures, is now being used by veterinary schools to train practitioners in the US and abroad. When surgery isn't the solution, 3D printing may provide an answer. Veterinarians can design customized prosthetics that are lightweight, affordable and durable, just by scanning the limb and missing area.

In the future, AI may help with diagnostics, analyzing healthcare data from smart trackers to pinpoint any stress or illness. Researchers are also working to use AI to translate dog sounds into understandable patterns.

These innovations can improve the health of our dogs and strengthen the human-animal bond. But for now, I'm content to be able to keep Mojo close, knowing that I can track his adventures on my phone and watch him on the doorbell camera.

*Merrie Meyers*

**Merrie Meyers, Ph.D. APR, Fellow PRSA**

Ruff Drafts Editor

▲  
Merrie Meyers  
with Mojo and  
Danny



▲  
Introducing  
Mojo Meyers

▼  
Mojo attended his  
first July 4th parade  
from the safety of  
my lap



MADELINE MALE

## *if only* YOU KNEW

At your feet, I chew on my bone,  
While you open your tablet,  
And put on your headphones.

You start up the rest of it:  
Desktop, laptop, smartwatch too —  
Aren't you a little obsessed with it?

You stare at the screens,  
Typing away, "just getting things done"  
With these digital means.

Minute by minute, I see it get worse.  
The electronics keep pulling you in . . .  
But don't fear, I'll save you from this tech  
universe!

I launch into a dramatic parade  
Of little barks, nose nudges,  
And puppy eyes — sure to persuade.

At last, you glance up and meet my gaze.  
I jump at the chance to offer my leash,  
Fully bringing you out of your daze.

So we're off to the park to play fetch;  
For now, the danger's through.  
Oh, the lengths I go to save you  
From those hypnotizing screens — if only  
you knew! ■

“

Dogs feel very strongly that they should always go with you in the car, in case the need should arise for them to bark violently at nothing right in your ear.

DAVE BARRY



ANNE MARIE DUQUETTE (WGA, DWAA)

# Dog Barks *vs.* Technology – Non-fiction!

## Regular Door Bell

Dogs go ballistic. Ear Shattering Barking. Perfectly normal expected reaction.

## Vacuum Cleaner

Yawn.

## TV Door Bell

Same violent reaction as hearing a regular door bell. Human must hover over TV remote mute button and anticipate any doorbell scenes, especially pizza delivery commercials and the Hall-mark Channel, where flowers are constantly being delivered to the heroine.

## Car Wash AKA The Leviathan

Silent snuggling when the long wash strips hit the windshield. Could bark, but holds it in.

## “Wheel of Fortune” TV game show \*

More barking at all bings and bongos. “It’s another doorbell!” alert. You can only watch this program with no sound and closed captions.

## Smart Watch Earthquake Alert Chime

What’s the point of barking? The quake has already happened. Back to the chewy bone.

## “Family Feud” TV game show\*

See above. (Does everything on TV sound like a doorbell?)



**Smart Watch Fire Alert**

Pricked ears for three seconds. Mom's not panicking. Subsequent beeps ignored. No reason to bark.

**Carpet Shampooer**

Kill, kill, kill! Attack, bite and throw themselves on the plastic casing. Throw themselves against the door when locked up. Murderous barking during the whole cleaning process.

**Native American Flute Sleep Music on UTube**

Howling Arooooooooooooo to those wolf ancestors.

**Celtic Harp Sleep Music on YouTube**

Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z Z

**Full Body Scan to see if I.D. Chip has Travelled Elsewhere**

Single warning muffled "Woof."

**Microwave Ding**

Run to the kitchen! Leftovers await!

**Beep on "Weigh the Dog" Vet Scale**

Oh, no! Mom is leaving me with the enemy! Beep sets off non-stop barking from drop-off to pick-up time. It can be hours long. Relieved sighs from aggravated vet techs at pick up. We take our "Air Raid Siren" back to the car. So embarrassing.

**Cell Phone "Get out of Bed for Work" Alarm**

100% Deaf Dog until three hours later.

**Mom's non-tech Voice**

The sweetest sound in the world! ■

Anne Marie Duquette is a multi-published fiction book writer living in Southern California with two companion dachshunds. A 2023 Maxwell winner and 2024 winner of the "Second Chance" category, her website [MiniGems.net](http://MiniGems.net) contains free, all-dog short stories for her readers. Her credits can be found at [PaperBackGems.org](http://PaperBackGems.org).

JAMES COLASANTI JR.

# When I TALK TO YOU

MY CURRENT SHELTER RESCUE dog, Buttons, navigates a world of darkness.

He lives with me without sight in his new safe home.

When you have a dog, words matter. The spoken word, a cognitive technology, refers to the tools and techniques humans use to solve problems. It provides a system of communication to share information and ideas with others.

Because of my words, my verbal commands, my dog is now a confident companion. His life is enriched by the symphony of sound he has learned to live with and to respond to. It has made him a much better dog.

'Come here' are my words to Buttons when it is time to leash up to go potty. His Control Leash, a device similar to a harness, wraps around his waist and attaches to his collar. It has taught him not to pull when we walk as the band will tighten around the middle. When that happens he will immediately slow down to get in step with me.

And it works both ways. I listen to him. If Buttons decides he needs to go out at an unscheduled time of day, he leaves his dog bed, and sits in front of the apartment door he finds with the change in air pressure. He then chortles and these are his words to me, "I need to go potty," and I know to get the leash. It has been accurate every single time, and it was not something I taught him. And I do know how to pay attention and not dawdle.

When it is time for eats, he hears me yell, "dinner," and he knows to head for his food dish and water bowl.

Communication is a learned experience, and we have both been progressing very well with it. A friend asked what I liked best about Buttons, and I told her, "Watching him sleep." You can tell he feels safe and at home, and it gives me a good feeling to know I got him out of a bad shelter situation which he couldn't even see, only hear. It had to have been a very scary situation.

As the days go by with each of us fermenting into an unconditional love relationship, I cherish each moment we are together. As a dog dad we all know, love is the bark heard on the other side of the apartment door when you put in the key. ■

BARBARA E. MAGERA MD

# Canine Intuition Outsmarts Technology

S

HE THOUGHT SHE WAS just unmotivated. The type of feeling when your enthusiasm just walks out the door and never comes back. The dogs demand walks and playtime but she noticed her ability to interact with them physically became more difficult. Perhaps the humidity and extreme temperatures characteristic of Southern summers were to blame. Gradually over an 18-month period she realized something was amiss. Maybe a thyroid check would explain her inertia or laziness to accomplish anything which involved physical activity.

After a thorough exam, her doctor handed her a copy of her ECG and asked "Do you see any P waves in there?" Both knew the underlying diagnosis. "You're lucky you didn't have a stroke," he said. She nodded her head in disbelief and agreed to start his prescription of Eliquis as soon as possible.

She lies in a hospital bed with her husband at her side. The monitor blinks out a normal ECG above her head. "Gosh, I really feel better but my throat is on fire".

"It's because of the prolonged intubation," her husband replies.

She tries to focus on the digital clock. "That clock is wrong," she whispers. "It's not 7:20pm. The two-hour procedure was over by noon."

"No, my Dear", reports her physician husband. "Your procedure took over eight hours and required 96 hits to control the atrial fibrillation". She drifts back to sleep.

Nurses check her groin wounds and vitals every hour then every couple of hours. She only dozes between nursing checks but asks the same question "Am I in normal sinus rhythm?"

Throughout the night their answer is the same, "Yes".

At home her faithful pack of canines lie quietly on the floor near her bed. Instinctively, no one jumps to play or tries to crawl on her bed. Everyone quietly lies on the floor with large dark eyes fixated on her face. She falls back to sleep. Her faithful canines do the same.

She is in the Cardiologist's office getting another ECG which reveals normal sinus rhythm. She mentally sighs a sign of relief.

"Any symptoms?" he asks.

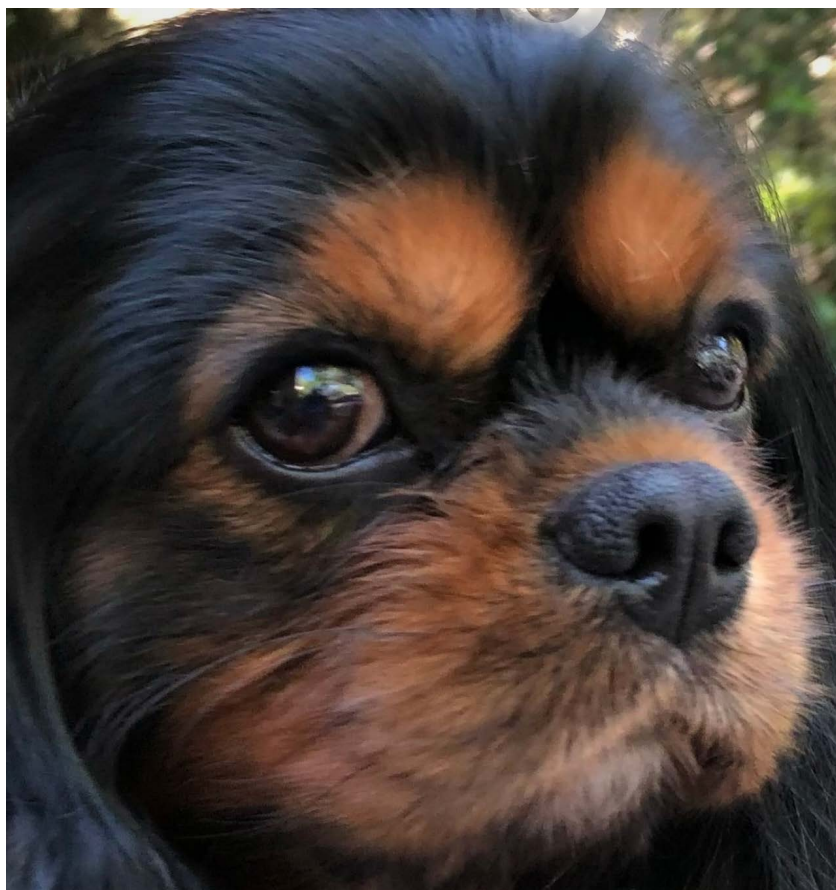
"Just tired but less so than before," she cautiously answers.

"Let's get a two-week Holter just to make sure you're not having any arrhythmias especially when you're asleep", he suggests.

Modern technology is a whole lot different than decades ago. The mini Holter continuous ECG monitor (Figure 1) is very lightweight and measures only about the length of her thumb. While wearing it she hardly notices its existence.

In the middle of the night, her companion dog starts whining. She lovingly pats his head and drifts back to sleep. Several minutes later, he begins pawing her arm then initiates a barking frenzy.

Startled her husband inquires "What is going on here?" As these words of concern fall off his lips he notices "The Holter is blinking a red light." A phone call to a 24/7 call center at Boston Scientific reveals the Holter is not working. Luckily, she is wearing her Apple Watch. A quick 30-second ECG check reveals an abnormal rhythm which is not atrial fibrillation. She repeats the recording several times. Initially, aberrant configuration occurs every third beat but then morphs into an abnormal every other beat pattern. The several minutes of 30-second ECG recordings are now available on her phone and iPad. Both her husband and she



◀ My soulmate dog and protector

▼ Figure 1, Mini Holter



study the aberrant electrical pattern. Could these be the progression of abnormal ventricular beats? A wave of intense fear and fatigue return. Her husband transmits the ECG snippets to the Cardiologist on call at the university hospital who requests her immediate admission to the CCU.

She wakes up in the CCU Unit. Her Cardiologist quietly appears in her room and states, “Post procedure PVCs are not unusual. Did you have any chest pain? What woke you up in the middle of the night? Did your smart watch alert you?”

“No chest pain and no smart phone alarms”, she says. “What woke me up is my dog. My soulmate dog understood something was wrong. He was whimpering then pawing me. When I wouldn’t wake up, he went into a barking frenzy.”

The Cardiologist explains that the IV antiarrhythmic drug he started a few hours ago quelled the aberrant ventricular arrhythmia. She questions whether she was at risk to progress into a lethal arrhythmia.

“Yes” her Cardiologist quietly but sternly answers. “You were very lucky that your dog woke you up and you came to the hospital. From the time you called the Cardiac crisis center to your

arrival was less than 15 minutes. Waiting longer could have been a bad outcome.” They both understood this could have been her demise.

Today, she walks her leashed canines in the afternoon sunshine. Ten months have passed since her second ablation for the ventricular arrhythmias. She is thankful her cardiac condition has stabilized; however, additional Holter recordings are still warranted. To ensure her safety, especially during sleep, the canine who alerted her on the night the Holter failed, has become her constant companion. His personality has evolved into a role of constant protector and, more importantly, he demonstrates a heightened happiness.

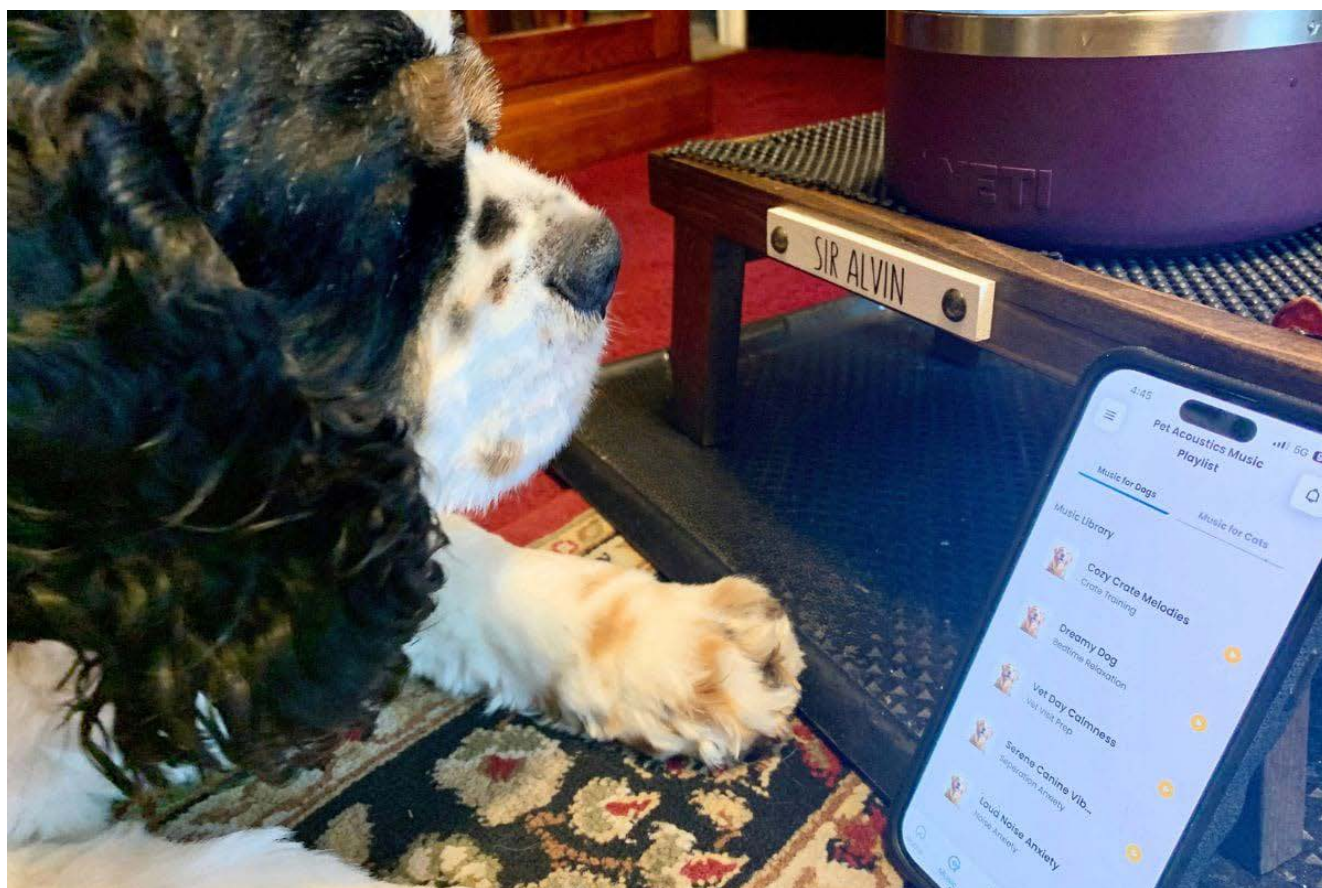
Her nighttime prayers routinely include thanksgiving for her canine hero. Because of his intuition and persistence, her life was blessed with extended quality time to enjoy her life with dogs. ■

**Barbara E. Magera MD, PharmD, MMM (Carcaleeb)** is a Cavalier fancier, exhibitor and breeder, photographer and writer who lives and practices medicine in Charleston, SC.



CAROL BRYANT

# WHEN PETS STOP LISTENING

A BREAKTHROUGH *in* DETECTING HEARING LOSS

Sir Alvin  
selecting his  
play list

**F**OR YEARS, veterinarians have relied on simple tricks to check a dog's hearing. They clap behind the dog, drop an object on the exam room floor, or look for wax, infections, or injury inside the ear canal. It's basic, imperfect, and often misses the early signs of hearing decline. Dogs and cats, masters of compensation, can go months or years before their owners notice what's really happening: their pet is losing the ability to hear.

Now, thanks to one pioneering sound behaviorist, there's a different way.

Janet Marlow, M.A., a fifth-generation musician turned animal acoustics expert, has spent

decades studying how pets experience sound. She is the founder of Pet Acoustics, Inc., a company recognized by Entrepreneur Magazine as one of the Top 100 Brilliant Companies. Her latest innovation, the Pet Acoustics+ app, puts the world's first mobile hearing test for pets directly into the hands of pet parents, complete with calming music tailored to canine and feline ears.

"It's about more than hearing," Marlow explains. "Sound shapes how animals feel, how they respond to their world. When you understand what they can hear — and what they can't — you open a whole new level of care."

## When Silence Creeps In

Pet parents often mistake early signs of hearing loss for stubbornness or distraction. I know because I did. When my Cocker Spaniel, Brandy Noel, stopped reacting to squeaky toys and her name, I assumed she was ignoring me. Only after our veterinarian tested her in the exam room by dropping objects, clapping, and receiving no response, did I learn the truth: Brandy wasn't tuning me out. She simply couldn't hear me anymore.

Age-related hearing loss affects as many as 80 percent of dogs. But it's not just seniors who are at risk. Puppies can be born with congenital deafness, particularly in breeds like Dalmatians and Australian Shepherds. Chronic ear infections, trauma, noise exposure, and even certain medications can cause hearing damage in middle-aged dogs.

Until now, the gold standard for testing has been the BAER (Brainstem Auditory Evoked Response) exam, typically performed by veterinary neurologists under anesthesia. Effective, yes, but costly, time-intensive, and stressful for pets.

## An App That Listens

Pet Acoustics+ is designed to change all that. Free to download for iOS and Android, the app guides pet parents through a hearing test in less than a minute. The process is simple: enter your pet's details, select dog or cat, and play a sequence of sounds. Unlike harsh tones or beeps, the app uses animal vocalizations and embedded sine waves calibrated to canine and feline hearing ranges. Pet parents then note their pet's reaction, and results are emailed instantly, complete with suggestions for next steps.

When I tried it with my Cocker Spaniel, Sir Alvin, the test felt almost like a game. He perked up his ears at the mid-range sounds, tilted his head at the higher pitches, and ignored the lowest ones entirely. Within moments, I had a baseline record of his hearing health, which is something I could share with my veterinarian or simply keep on file to track as he ages.

## More Than a Test

What sets Pet Acoustics+ apart is what comes after. Using the hearing profile generated by the test, the app creates customized playlists of species-specific, clinically tested music. Unlike the



“dog relaxation” tracks scattered across YouTube, Marlow's compositions are scientifically filtered to align with pet hearing ranges and reduce stress.

The music has proven effective in shelters, vet offices, and homes worldwide. A controlled study comparing silence, classical music, and Pet Acoustics compositions found that dogs wearing biometric collars had lower heart rates and displayed calmer behavior with Marlow's music.

▲  
Janet Marlow,  
creator of Pet  
Acoustics

## SITUATIONS WHERE THE PLAYLISTS SHINE INCLUDE:

- Vet visits
- Car rides
- Grooming sessions
- Nail trims
- Fireworks and thunderstorms
- Everyday downtime

For as little as 33 cents a day, Pet Acoustics+ subscribers can stream this calming library via Bluetooth speakers, transforming stressful moments into opportunities for comfort.

## The Woman Behind the Sound

Marlow's journey to pet acoustics began in concert halls, not clinics. A professional jazz guitarist and composer, she noticed her dogs gravitating toward her instrument during practice sessions.

See PET ACOUSTICS pg 29 ►



KATE KULIGOWSKI

NARY *a* ONE LEFT

“

WE CURRENTLY HAVE no specialists in New Mexico equipped to care for your husband's current critical condition.” That was the hospital administrator's warning to me as they wheeled my 62-year-

old husband, Wally, out of emergency surgery in January, 2023. Our adopted niece, Kim, was accompanying me as I followed the gurney to his designated hospital room.

“Aunt Kate!” she exclaimed as she grabbed my arm to stabilize me while I staggered, while trying to emotionally recover from the physician's formidable statement. “I've got it. I will find medical care for Uncle Wally in Colorado. Don't worry. He will be in expert hands.”



Kirk and his Golden Doodle Doc, photo courtesy of Kirk

Kim, a long-time employee at Anschutz Hospital in Denver, was true to her word. By January 23, our son Kurt had helped us to move with our canine rescues Oscar, Burton and Jake-o, from our gracious home of 58 years into a new Colorado house, perfect for our current situation. Wally was seen by a specialist within 3 days of our arrival. Kim's knowledge, care and contacts helped to extend my honey-heart's life for more than 2 enjoyable years. I am forever grateful!

During his last few months, during which he was in hospice, Wally's RN, Kirk, Wally and I developed a lasting friendship. Kirk, too, was a big-time dog lover and had continually demonstrated his undaunted respect for animals.

Kirk met his future wife Robyn in California when Kirk was residing on the horse ranch, T Bear Ranch, where Robyn was boarding her horse. It was because their dogs were so fascinated with each other that steered their friendship to dating and on June 16, 1990, Kirk's birthday, to marriage.

Kirk's dog, Kit, a shy border collie-Australian shepherd cross, and Jesse, Robyn's love, a red burl Australian shepherd, had become best buds. But then the newlyweds moved to Boise and were occupied with their jobs. Jesse adjusted well but Kitt, lonesome for their company, needed to find another outlet. Predisposed by her genetic makeup, she began to slip away from their apartment to gently herd the neighborhood children on the nearby playground. Once satisfied with her accomplishment, this ever-vigilant pup would lie in place and gleefully wag her tail. One student even accused her of smiling! She became



so famous for her “herding” that a resident sheep rancher even offered to purchase her from Kirk. That became the defining moment!

Robyn and Kirk decided to start their own business venture where their two loving dogs could be with them twenty-four seven. They purchased a feed store located in Vernal, a small mountain community in northeastern Utah. Because of their respect for animals, their Ponderosa Feed and Tack store specialized in show food for all creatures: lizards, hamsters, ferrets, fish, chicken, ducks, turkeys, cats, dogs, horses, sheep, cows, and mules.

Kirk laughed, saying “We called it our hard-working vacation, six twelve-hour days, blessed to have dogs by our sides. Kitt and Jesse laid claim to our warehouse, the adjacent room where the food was stored. Never leaving the premises, both served as our security and official greeters, always friendly but cautious of people.

“In no time we were well-acquainted with the employees of the local Uintah County Animal Shelter, consisting of only 35 kennels. Their few employees worked diligently to find suitable and permanent homes for their homeless wards. It was rewarding to work with their director, Brett, whose principles negated euthanasia of any of their pets. If a pet neared the time where it would be shipped out for this purpose, Brett simply adopted them himself. His crew of “unadoptables” usually numbered about ten and were content to be rehomed on his five-acre plot.

“During our first Christmas season in Vernal, we discovered that nine shelter dogs, mostly short haired, mix-breed and over twenty pounds, had failed to be adopted. It was hard to imagine that these great, loving dogs were not wanted, so our feed and tack store advertised on the radio that Ponderosa and their county shelter were co-sponsoring an adoption event on December 2023.

We did not place these adoptable canines in kennels but allowed them to run free in the feed warehouse, which was attached to the retail center of the store. That way, the dogs could choose their human. Never was there any aggression or attempt to eat the food on display. It was almost as if these wonderful creatures sensed they were there for a reason.

Within 18 hours, all dogs left with new loving humans. Each came with a Christmas gift from Ponderosa: leashes, toys, food, water bowls and a 35- pound bag of quality food. What an honor it was for us to be involved in finding loving homes for these overlooked canines!”

This Ponderosa-Uintah event was repeated successfully every Christmas, usually resulting with nary a one left, emptying their shelter of dogs except once.

“In 2006, ten dogs scurried through our store as Christmas music greeted our customers. Most were rehomed except one, an energetic five-year-old black and white, wide-eyed Pekinese mix named Tiny. Because she was so small, our fostering experience with this adorable lap dog was an education. In weeks, the perfect family found this darling little girl.”

Kirk explained further, “Brett kept us informed about all the community projects that helped animals. We delved in. It was the right thing to do.”

In 2007, this area of Utah experienced a devastating fire in the Milford Flat Fire, burning over 363 acres of rangeland and displacing hundreds of wild animals and livestock. Once rescued and placed in a safe area, they experienced an urgent need for food and supplies. Ponderosa donated 3 tons of grains, approximately 150 bags of feed.

The feed and tack store experienced great pride in their yearly sponsoring of one or two of FFA’s livestock projects. This gave Ponderosa the opportunity to be the first bidder on an animal who had reached maturity and was being shown. Ponderosa’s policy was to donate the animal back to its owner.

After the passing of Robin, Kirk sold Ponderosa and later became an RN for Optimal Health in Colorado. He lives there with his caring wife Sarah and remarkable therapy dog, a goldendoodle named Doc. A man whose compassion should be emulated, Kirk stands as an example of unselfish respect for animals. ■

Courtesy of the U.S. Dog Agility Association

# RESCUING *the* RESCUED

CEDAR AND KELSEY THIMM



ELSEY THIMM of Vancouver, Washington, adopted Cedar in October of 2018 from the Faith and Hope Foundation in Corpus Christi, Texas. The organization finds adoptive homes for dogs in the Pacific Northwest, then transports them once a month to their new homes.

**But the young pup almost didn't make it to her destination.**

Cedar was 12 weeks old during her transport. As the van carrying her and other dogs traveled through Douglas, Wyoming, it was struck at about 100 mph by another vehicle whose driver had fallen asleep at the wheel. The van drivers were taken to the hospital, but before being removed from the scene, they begged the policemen to save the 47 dogs aboard the van.

The police chief contacted the mayor, whose wife ran the local animal shelter (which could house 15 dogs). The town rallied together and opened the community center to all the dogs, providing crates and food and making sure they were never left alone.

After the dogs received veterinary attention, Dog Is My CoPilot then stepped in to fly all of them from Wyoming to the Seattle Humane Society so they could be united with their adopted families. Founded in 2012, Dog Is My CoPilot is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to transport animals from overcrowded shelters to adoption centers throughout the country. They have two planes in the fleet to ensure at-risk pets are given the chance to find their forever homes year-round.

**When Cedar finally made it to Kelsey, they quickly became a team.**

"I took my first agility class with Cedar in the fall of 2021 as something fun and active to do

during the pandemic and pretty quickly realized that we should pursue competitive agility together," Kelsey said. "She is my first agility dog, and a lot of our challenges have come from me learning how to support her as a novice handler. A few trainers have noted that learning the sport of agility with Cedar is like learning to drive in a Ferrari. She gives 120% of enthusiasm to anything she's doing and can be pushy when not consistently held to her training criteria.

"We just started trialing with USDAA® in March of 2024," she continued, "and Cedar is only a few qualifications away from her first PDCH (Performance Dog Championship)! We plan to compete at a few Regional events throughout this year and potentially attend her first Cynosport® in October." ■

Photo of Cedar by PixPup Photography, courtesy of Kelsey Thimm

Cedar (second from the left) in a crate with her siblings, about to be loaded onto a plane to travel from Wyoming to Seattle





REPRINTED FROM TAKING COMMAND

— Courtesy of AKC —

# AKC Government Relations 2025 Legislative Review

THE FIRST 6 MONTHS

*All 50 state legislatures, Congress and many cities and counties have already met in 2025 to deliberate on a broad variety of issues – and animals were once again a high priority.*

M

OST STATE legislatures are either adjourned for the year or on summer recess. The American Kennel Club (AKC) is tracking over 1,700 bills impacting dogs and dog owners across the country. This is an increase of

approximately 300 bills over what the AKC government relations team tracked at the same time in 2023 (the last time all 50 state legislatures were in session).

## Top Issues Tracked

Issues ranging from shelter populations to breeder and kennel regulations to appropriate care and training of all dogs have been considered across the country.

**ANIMAL CRUELTY BILLS** - Not surprising, the top issue once again is animal cruelty, comprising over 270 of the total state and federal bills monitored this year. Many of these bills addressed increased penalties for those who commit cruelty. Others, such as Kansas Senate Bill 130, would have required those accused of cruelty to pay for bond if their animals were seized, **but** provided no remedies or recourses for those wrongfully accused. AKC met with key legislative members and were successful in ensuring this bill did not receive a hearing.

Not all bills on this issue were opposed by AKC. For example, West Virginia's legislature sought to clarify and provide updates to the state's animal control laws. The bill introduced (HB 3130) contained AKC suggestions for reasonable requirements and language to protect dogs in extreme weather conditions. This bill has not advanced.

**VETERINARY ISSUES** – Veterinary issues are also a top issue in legislatures, over 200 bills were filed. Many bills addressed licensing and other updates requested by state veterinary boards. AKC did closely monitor **regulations and subsequent legislation** regarding the California Veterinary Medical Board, because it could potentially remove a current provision allowing owners to provide some vaccines and basic wound care. Following feedback from club members and AKC, this exemption remains.

New York S. 3026 would have banned the practice known as “debarking” or “bark softening”. AKC supports the section that prohibits individuals who are not vets from performing this procedure but opposes a prohibition on allowing veterinarians to perform the procedure when warranted. This bill passed the Senate but was held in the Assembly. Another example, California AB 867, which, as introduced, sought to ban cat declawing, but would also have banned removing a dog's dewclaws. AKC worked with the author to amend the bill.

**WORKING DOGS** – As lawmakers continue to realize the tremendous value that dogs provide to the lives of many; a growing number of bills were filed regarding working dogs, including police canines, service dogs, therapy dogs, and search and rescue dogs. Among the more than 260 bills monitored on this issue is Montana SB 300, supported by AKC, which increases protection for service dogs and their handlers, and Connecticut HB 6964, which seeks

to create a task force to study how emergency medical professionals could treat police canines injured in the line of duty.

## Federal and Congressional Activity

**BREEDER REGULATION UNDER THE FEDERAL ANIMAL WELFARE ACT (AWA)** - Bills impacting dog ownership and dog breeding are typically filed at the state and local level. When introduced at the federal level – generally as amendments to the federal Animal Welfare Act (AWA) – they can have an outsize potential to impact all breeders in the United States. The AWA is designed to regulate commercial enterprises, but regulatory definitions have impacted many hobby breeders as well. A rule of thumb for understanding which breeders are subject to federal AWA rules is to consider that anyone who maintains more than 4 intact females and sells offspring “sight unseen” (either via shipping or a middleman) is subject to licensing by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

### UNDERSTANDING THE FARM

**BILL:** Historically, it has been common for proponents of federal dog legislation to attempt to pass their bills as part of Federal agricultural program reauthorizations that take place in the “Farm Bill” every five years. For the last generation, every Farm Bill has served as a vehicle to change federal laws pertaining to dog import or breeding. The current Farm Bill, originally due in 2023, was not written that year. In 2024, a House version passed that chamber but stalled in the Senate. A full Farm Bill is unlikely in 2025, and there is question as to whether this model will change in the future. In the meantime, if it does advance, it is likely to continue to serve as a vehicle for canine policy change.

### CURRENT CONGRESSIONAL

**ACTIVITY:** There is ongoing discussion on issues ranging from detection and service dogs, to canine imports, breed-specific rules in federal housing and proposed breeder restrictions. Measures of particular emphasis include the following:

- The “Better CARE for Animals Act” (HR 3112/S. 1538). Humane World for Animals (formerly HSUS) is advocating strongly for this measure. The Better CARE for Animals act would significantly expand the federal courts’ jurisdiction to unilaterally prosecute violations of AWA regulations. Currently, the USDA has jurisdiction over breeder licensing. AKC is concerned that this measure includes provisions that would allow the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), which traditionally deals with criminal violations – not animal oversight – to circumvent USDA animal expertise and oversight related to breeder oversight. Current provisions in the bill would allow the Attorney General to bring a civil action in federal district courts, including restraining orders, injunctions, seizure of animals, and significant civil penalties against breeders deemed to be in violation of the USDA breeder licensing rules and regulations. It could also potentially remove current licensing exemptions for groups such as hobby breeders.
- The “Puppy Protection Act” (H.R. 2253), seeks to establish a number of one-size-fits-all federal mandates for USDA licensees including: prohibitions on the number of litters bred; prohibitions on breeding age; one-size fits all kennel engineering standards; mandated veterinary approval before breeding; mandating unrestricted access from primary enclosure to outdoor exercise yards large enough to achieve full stride; specific mental stimulation and socialization and annual dental exams, and more. AKC GR staff is actively working to educate about the harmful unintended consequences of one-size-fits all approached like the arbitrary requirements in this measure.
- Goldie’s Act, HR 349, would amend the AWA to redefine “violations” of the act by removing the distinction between care and welfare (direct) violations and paperwork/ non-welfare-related (indirect) violations. Removing this distinction undermines priority for the care and wellbeing of animals. While zero violations of any rules or laws should be the goal, AKC believes that care and wellbeing of animals should always be the priority. Additionally, Goldie’s Act would require inspectors to destroy or remove an animal if they believe it is suffering, among other things, “psychological harm”. However, the bill does not determine how psychological harm would be determined or by whom.
- AKC continues to advocate for advancement of the Healthy Dog Importation Act (HR 3349/S. 1725 ) This measure would require owners/importers of all dogs imported into the U.S. to submit a valid health certificate from a veterinary agency recognized by the USDA, demonstrating that dogs are microchipped and fully vaccinated or protected against contagious diseases and pathogens of concern, including rabies. Dogs and records would also be subject to inspection/ verification upon entry. Unlike the CDC rule imposed in 2024, passage of this measure focuses on the health status of individual animals, multiple threats in addition to rabies, and would not arbitrarily restrict importation of personally owned animals under 6 months of age.

## State and Local Legislative Trends Successes and Cautionary Tales

In addition, other key legislative trends and bills include:

- New Jersey S. 3814 sought to license and regulate all trainers and establish one training philosophy for the state. This would impact professional training facilities, handling, agility, CGC, and basic obedience classes. After receiving substantial written and in person testimony opposing provisions of the bill, the sponsor decided to put it on hold. The bill is not yet technically dead for the year, however, and similar bills have been filed in other states over the past couple of years.

### REGULATIONS ON HOBBY/HOME-BASED BREEDERS-

A growing trend in 2025 is a push to regulate home-based and hobby breeders, and in some cases treating them the same as large-scale commercial operations. A few examples include:

- Florida SB 1830 and HB 1481 would have imposed registration and inspection requirements on anyone who owns an intact female dog over 6 months of age.
- Connecticut House Bill 5902 would have required any individual involved with breeding activities to be registered with the state and require the Department of Agriculture to develop comprehensive breeding guidelines, among other provisions.
- Oregon SB 1076 would have established licensing for breeders who sell one dog.
- Rhode Island S. 325 sought to significantly limit the scope of the

state's definition of "hobby breeder", thereby considering many hobbyists as commercial breeders.

- New York A. 8653/S. 8252 included clarifying language to enforce the new ban on pet stores, but as introduced would also have required anyone who breeds and sells or offers to sell 9 animals born and raised on residential premises to be licensed and regulated as commercial pet dealers. It was unclear if this would be 9 animals in a year, or over the breeder's lifetime.
- Illinois HB 1902 sought to require all breeders to "have their dogs genetically tested for diseases that cause early death or physical impairments." If a "genetic defect or mutation" is found that would cause this, it would require that the dog be sterilized immediately.

While many of these bills were defeated or amended, as lawmakers seek to address concerns with shelter populations and the humane care of dogs, hobby breeders and fanciers are not immune to additional regulations. This is also not an issue confined to state legislatures. On the local level, for example, Greenville County, SC, passed an ordinance this spring requiring any person or entity in unincorporated areas of the county that are engaged in the breeding and sale of dogs to register as a business, and comply with new regulations on breeding.

### ANIMALS AND HOUSING -

While lawmakers are seeking solutions to address shelter population concerns, several efforts focus on regulating responsible breeders, despite studies, media, and anecdotal evidence from shelters that one of the primary reasons for shelter overcrowding is limited housing for people with pets. So far in 2025, AKC GR has tracked approximately 50 bills relating to pets and housing.

### DANGEROUS/NUISANCE DOGS-

In addition to general shelter population concerns, many lawmakers are also interested in ensuring public safety by regulating dangerous and nuisance dogs. AKC worked closely with state lawmakers to ensure proposals provide appropriate requirements on dogs that are truly dangerous, while not so broad as to encompass safe, acceptable behaviors. For example,

- Ohio lawmakers are currently considering a comprehensive rewrite of the state's dangerous dog laws after a series of tragic dog attacks in the state. AKC has worked closely with the sponsor to develop strong policies for dangerous dogs, while ensuring that regulations regarding dogs at large do not impact events and training, so long as dogs are acting in a safe manner. HB 247 passed the House unanimously before summer recess.
- In Texas, HB 1346, 2806 and SB 155 all sought to regulate dangerous dogs. At AKC's request, a problematic/broad definition of "bodily injury" was removed that could have caused even a playful puppy nip to be considered dangerous.
- Maine L.D. 133 sought to amend the laws regarding nuisance dogs by seeking to regulate barking statewide, without allowing local governments to adopt rules appropriate for their specific regions. The bill did not pass. ■

**Editor's Note:** There are many groups working on animal welfare issues, both through legislation and community action. If you are a member of a group working on these issues and want to share some of their information, please let us know.





LESLIE BROWN

# My Keyboard Has Magic Keys

A STORY FROM *the* CRAFTY CANINE

My mother gave me a different kind of keyboard the other day. It wasn't for writing stories - it had four magic keys.

She said if I pressed the keys while she was away, I wouldn't feel so scared or lonely. I wasn't sure about that, but I gave it a try.

The **T** key was for **TREATS**. When I pressed it, the key lit up and then two biscuits jumped out of my treat box. Just like that. They didn't break when they fell on the floor either.

But the key only worked a few times. After that, it just made a clicking sound when I pressed it. I guess my mother did that so I wouldn't keep eating biscuits all day.

The **B** key was for **BALL**. When I pressed it, the key lit up and some tennis balls flew out of my toy basket and rolled onto the floor. I'm not kidding. No one had to be there to throw them.

The **M** key was for **MOTHER**. When I pressed it, I could hear my mother's voice from somewhere. It was a little spooky because I couldn't tell where she was. But I did hear her say 'good dog' and 'I'll be home soon'. It made me feel better.

I wasn't sure what the **PAW** key did. It was bigger than the other keys. I think my mother used it to turn the keyboard on and off. Maybe the key did some other magic things. But if I tried to press it, nothing happened. Not even a clicking sound.

Now when my mother leaves me alone, I don't feel so sorry for myself. I don't sleep all the time. I have too much fun playing with the magic keys. Sometimes I can't wait until she leaves. ■

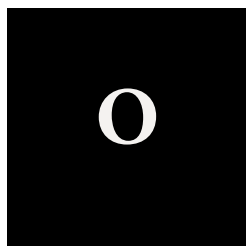
For more stories by the Crafty Canine, visit 'A Dog and a Keyboard' at (<https://dogandkeyboard.com/>).

CAROLINE KAY

# Pet Therapy Symposium

DWAA PARTNER TO PROMOTE PET THERAPY

Editor's Note: DWAA is proud to support the Therapy Dog Symposium, the work of the National Dog Show. DWAA is a symposium communication partner, promoting the program through DWAA's media platforms.



ONE OF THE most important developments in the American therapy dog visitation movement is the establishment of the National Dog Show Therapy Dog Symposium. Thanks

to a wonderful convergence of circumstances, this seven-year-old event is based at Rowan University, a New Jersey state institution located just outside of Philadelphia in Glassboro, New Jersey.

The catalyst for the creation of the symposium was David Frei, an expert analyst for the National Dog Show, Michele Pich, an animal-assisted interventions department head, and Steve Griffith, who had the vision to explore the possibility of making the symposium a reality. Frei's inexhaustible dedication to therapy dogs and visiting various healthcare facilities for countless hours with his own dogs, led to the establishment of his charity, Angel on a Leash. The charity is a nonprofit organization that provides volunteer therapy dog handler teams to a variety of locations including schools, nursing homes and hospitals. In his role as a TV analyst for the Westminster Kennel Club and subsequently the National Dog Show, he was able to stress the important role therapy dogs can play in healthcare, helping spark growth in the therapy dog movement that continues to this day.

Frei's visits to the Ronald McDonald House in New York City, along with his National Dog Show duties, eventually led him to the Ronald McDonald House in Philadelphia. There, he met Michele Pich, then an animal-assisted intervention program director and a veterinary grief counselor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine as well as an assistant director and faculty member at Rowan University. Together, they founded the National Dog Show Therapy Dog Symposium at Rowan University in conjunction with the National Dog Show. It was hosted by the Kennel Club of Philadelphia, the annual November all-breed dog show in Oaks, Pennsylvania, just outside the city.

Thanks to Pich, the symposium found a welcoming home at Rowan University, where it exists under the auspices of the Shreiber Family Pet Therapy Program. The program provides therapy dogs to students, faculty and staff, thanks to a generous donation from Gerald Shreiber, former President and CEO of J&J Snack Foods of Pennsauken, New Jersey. Pich was hired to build and oversee the Shreiber Family Pet Therapy Program and she marshalled the fledgling event into the embrace of Rowan and its resources.

When the symposium debuted in 2019, almost 200 attendees flocked to the event, where therapy dog advocates, healthcare professionals, experts and more came together to discuss, learn and share best practices for managing therapy dog

programs within the community. It was a wonderful success, and attendees were already looking forward to the second annual event.

Then came adversity. The COVID-19 pandemic took hold in early 2020, and almost everything was sidelined, changing the way the world operated. Within the therapy dog community, programs were shuttered as visitation at schools and healthcare institutions were severely restricted. Undaunted, the symposium transitioned to a virtual format and Rowan used its state-of-the-art technology to host over 200 attendees from around the world via livestream in both 2020 and 2021.

In the following three years, the symposium became a staple of the Rowan University infrastructure. The topper came again through the philanthropy of Shreiber, whose \$30 million gift made the Shreiber School of Veterinary Medicine at Rowan University a reality. The symposium fits neatly into the veterinary school's programs. Rowan University has embraced the endeavor wholeheartedly, joining as a co-sponsor of the event in recent years.

This year, the symposium will be held at Rowan University's Chamberlain Student Center, run by the Shreiber Family Pet Therapy Program, part of the University's Wellness Center. Information and registration for the National Dog Show Therapy Dog Symposium at Rowan University can be found at: <https://sites.rowan.edu/wellness/pettherapy/national-dog-show-therapy-dog-symposium-at-rowan-university.html>.

The symposium will be held on December 2, 2025. It will be the final event on a fall calendar that includes the National Dog Show ([www.nds.nationaldogshow.com](http://www.nds.nationaldogshow.com)), hosted by the Kennel Club of Philadelphia on November 15 and 16, 2025, and Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 2025, when the National Dog Show Presented by Purina airs nationally on NBC from noon to 2 p.m. in all time zones. Each year, Frei mentions the symposium during the two-hour special, which draws a total audience of over 20 million.

"It's been quite a journey," said Frei, who is America's most prominent therapy dog advocate.

"We are proudest of the way we navigated the pandemic, allowing us to continue sharing insight from key experts in the animal-assisted interventions and services field, and now have a program

that will thrive here in perpetuity," added Pich, who's responsible for the day-to-day management of the event.

The symposium benefits from the all-volunteer event planning committee working year-round to make sure the symposium is current on best practices and shares insights from some notable speakers. Past keynote speakers included: Dr. Marty Becker, David Frei, Dr. Rise Van Fleet, Ann Howie, Dr. Carlo Siracusa, Dr. Temple Grandin, and Dr. Aubrey Fine. ■

▼  
David Frei inducts Cindy Pearce, and her dog, Bella (Great Pyrenees), into the National Dog Show Therapy Dog Ambassador Team. Cindy is on the symposium planning committee and part of the Shreiber Family Pet Therapy Program.





TARA CHOATE

# Modern Technology: *the* Leash

**R**UN AGILITY NAKED. That was the motto I worked from when I started in dogs. I would remove the collar from Sean, my black labrador mix, and we would fly around the agility course. Leash handling meant getting him to the start line.

Transferring to nose work meant a new level of equipment handling. Canine scent work allows dogs to wear almost anything into the search area: collars, booties, cameras. Most dogs compete wearing a harness, allowing the dog to follow scent without getting a correction at sudden turns or stops. While some search areas are allowed to be run off-leash, most of the time a road or other potential hazard is too near.

Archeologists have evidence of leashes being used 8,000-9,000 years ago in the Arabian Peninsula as a method of getting valuable scent dogs to hunting sites and freeing up hands to hold weapons. As dogs were domesticated between 15,000-30,000 years ago, this indicates leashes were a technological innovation.

Leashes may be a venerated tool, but there was something about having a fifteen-foot line that made me panic. The disaster possibilities were endless when combined with furniture, vehicles, and trees. My trouble seemed to stem from my arms; I had them and I couldn't figure out a method of arranging them so that the leash was available but out of the way.

Walking my dog wasn't a problem. I have more than thirty years of practice at that. Except for occasional off-leash romps, a leash and pick-up bags are *de rigueur*. I teach my dogs that if I drop the line on one side of its body, we are changing direction, similar to neck reining in horses. I frequently wiggle the leash obnoxiously when Key

gets stuck--leg up and sniffing pointedly--for an absurdly long time.

A dog will follow body movement; if I turn, my dog turns. I also understood working distance; most dogs want to perform their task at a distance that allows them to see and hear their handler. Working distance can vary greatly between dogs.

In scent work, it is important the handler provides room for the dog to follow scent. If the handler is too close, it's possible to block the source with their body. Too far away and the dog may pull off the scent to follow the handler. Learning to handle the leash meant being available to release line when my dog needed it, but gather it up when he didn't. My arms needed to be calm, not flailing about to keep the tether untangled.

Key and I had reached a semi-permanent plateau in our training, so I signed up for a class on handling with a new instructor. The first day--the first run--the instructor stopped me and discussed leash handling. The instructor had me hold the line while letting the extra trail behind. Then she showed me how to choke up on the strap when not in scent, still letting the cord trail behind. The last step was learning to loop the leash in my non-dominant hand while managing changes with the other. I learned to drop the leash rather than fight a tangle, grabbing it again as soon as possible.

Late last year, Key and I managed to get our NW3 Elite title. It took twenty trials. While I have heard of other teams taking longer, twenty is at the long end of that particular bell curve. I'm honored to be at the dumb end of this team's leash. I just wish I wasn't quite *so* dumb. ■



Photo by  
Creek Walker  
Photography  
(David Leer)



# TIPS & TACTICS

MERRIE MEYERS

## How *to* Begin Writing

HOW DO YOU PREPARE TO WRITE? Are you a planner? Do you plot out ten scenes, a timeline and create character sketches before sitting down to write? Or are you a “pantser?” This is a phrase commonly used to describe those who write by-the-seat-of-their-pants.

When my writer’s group discussed the topic of how to start writing, there were varied responses. One member uses an Excel spreadsheet to note the characters, their backstories and how they interact throughout the story. Another uses color-coded index cards with phrases to describe each character and key segments of the plot. Still another creates outlines using **mind mapping**, drawings that vaguely resemble the sentence diagramming process you learned in school.

While I admire the discipline of my colleagues who use any of these approaches, I’ve never tried any of them. My brain’s default setting is **free writing**, the practice of just getting things down on paper without worrying about style, grammar or sequence. I think it’s a holdover from my days in the news biz, working against a deadline with the comfort of knowing that an editor would review my work and suggest a reorganization plan<sup>1</sup>.

If I do organize my thoughts, I use a preparation or rough outline format, heading, subheading, bullet points, etc. It’s a format familiar to public speakers everywhere. A classic speech and essay outlining process. Some people like to write each item in complete sentences for each item. Others, including me, use key words or phrases for each point. This leaves openings (or gaping holes if

you prefer) for my mind to fill in the blanks as I approach those sections.

You can also include a summary sentence about your story before beginning the outline. This is similar to the intended use statement that goes at the top of the public speaking outline.

A quick search yields a multitude of resources on the topic, each focusing on different parts of the process.

Jayne Ann Krentz, a romantic suspense writer, posted on WritersDigest.com that **identifying the core story** and the universe in which it exists will lead you where you want to go. Krentz says themes and emotional conflicts are universal and they can be molded to fit any setting. What did Shakespeare say? There are only seven basic plots in literature?

According to Reedsy.com, nothing should be set in stone. Regardless of the outline, it will change before you’re done writing. Whether a plotter or a pantser, the plot will evolve as you work through it. The site offers a **nine-step process** for outlining a novel.

The **NY Book Editors**, suggest that less planning can mean more opportunity. Theorizing that writing is an art, not a science, NYBE says you don’t need to be prescriptive to succeed. In fact, they suggest that by using a discovery process while writing, we can ask questions of ourselves (and the characters).

Another perspective is the idea that shorter pieces may serve as building blocks or stepping

See TIPS & TACTICS pg 31 ►



# OPINION

COMMENTARY BY KATE J. KULIGOWSKI

## A Change *for the* Better

DOG RESCUES, incorporated or unincorporated, were founded by compassionate individuals who respected and understood the importance of dogs in our lives, in our world. Because of this awareness, their members have donated their time, energies, talents, monies, and emotions so that millions of abandoned, abused, lost, injured, and forgotten dogs have been rehomed in loving, caring homes throughout America. Their incredible volunteers are gifted with that unique psyche that recognizes the fundamental fact that it is the right thing to do.

Each group has a written policy containing adoption guidelines to best protect the adoptable dog in its new home. Most are similar and stringent, listing a variety of directives from the condition, size, etc. of the property to the age of the potential adopter. It is the latter with which I take umbrage. If all other standards are met, a potential adopter, if they are considered elderly (75 or older?) because of organizational discriminatory policies, are denied ownership of a rescue dog. Yet many of these applying elderly individuals are still very capable of caring for an adoptable dog. This age-restriction policy, incorporated in most rescue association guidelines, should be not be written as a hard and fast rule, but be replaced with a cautionary policy guiding their leadership to always take into consideration, in each case, the health, mental awareness, physical abilities, and restrictions of the potential adopter, while suggesting age guidelines for both adopter and dog to be adopted.

This current restrictive policy of rescue groups has left many individuals, only because of their age, dogless and emotionally craving a canine friend. I became one of those, as when we moved (with our 3 dogs) for my husband's medical needs to Colorado, we lost two of our older rescues to cancer. It is easy to surmise why my emotional

well-being requires permanent canine companionship. Dogs have defined my life, one which reflects the hundreds of dogs my families have rescued in New Mexico since even before its 1912 statehood. Although I was born in 1939, I have retained my physical and mental acuity, so I was shocked when my applications for a dog adoption were refused in eight of nine different Colorado dog rescue organizations. The reply to my inquiries was always, "due to my age." This reason for denied pet adopter applications has, in the past, been repeated hundreds of times to hundreds of able senior citizens in most states. Sadly, it will continue to act as a form of discrimination until we, as members of these rescue organizations, recognize the importance of senior citizens and their emotional needs for a pet, and insist that written policies are changed to erase that prejudice. By adopting this change, hundreds of older dogs will find new homes (not previously available), and hundreds of seniors will have their lives enhanced with an older pet, not previously allowed by policy...a win-win situation for all: undeniably a change for the better. ■

## MEMBER NEWS



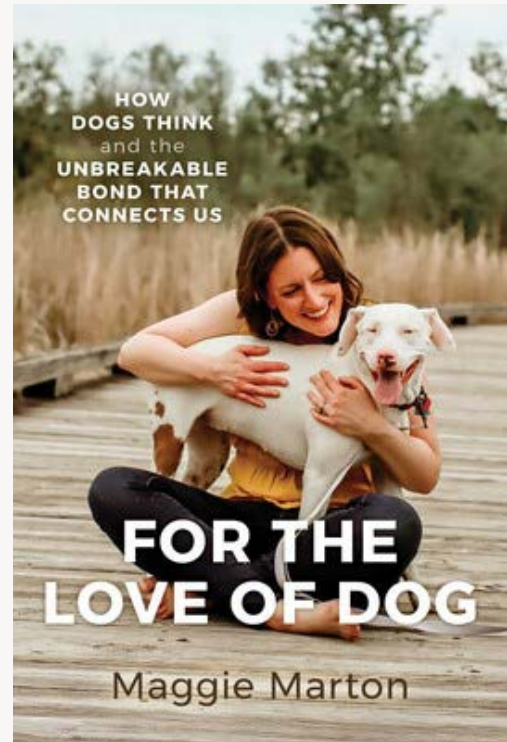
## MAGGIE MARTON

Maggie Marton's new book, "For the Love of Dog" (Regalo Press, distributed by Simon & Schuster), will be published on September 16, 2025.

Dogs and humans are buddies on an evolutionary scale. Our histories intertwine so inextricably that we can't separate our lifelines from theirs over the past 20,000 years. But, despite those tens of thousands of years of coevolution, it turns out we still have a lot to learn from dogs. (They, however, have us pretty well figured out.)

As a shy introvert and hardcore people-pleaser, Maggie wanted to move through life unseen. Invisible. But, when she adopted three dogs, you simply couldn't ignore them. Emmett, a gentle giant pit bull or Lucas, a three-legged shepherd mix or Cooper, a wiry and neurotic staffie—they blew her cover. She was no longer invisible. While tackling anxiety, cross-country moves, stray kittens, dog bites, and cancer, Maggie learned to advocate for them. In turn, they helped her find a voice. She used her newfound strength to champion them and others like them.

"For the Love of Dog" weaves together research on dog behavior and canine cognition of Maggie's experiences with her four-legged boys. This book gets to the heart of why we



first fell in love with dogs, why we still love them thousands of years later, and why they've always loved us right back. Prepare to look at your own pup in a whole new light.

Pre-orders are available now wherever books are sold. Or visit [MaggieMarton.com](https://MaggieMarton.com) to learn more!

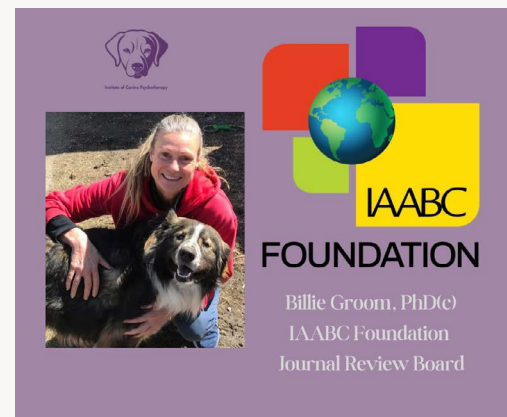


## BILLIE GROOM

DWAA Vice President, Billie Groom, has accepted a role at IAABC Foundation on the Journal Review Board.

IAABC Foundation (International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants) is a renowned organization established to provide dog trainers and animal consultants with a variety of educational resources.

The Journal is a well-respected and impactful resource providing evidence-based, progressive and ethical information that inspires dog trainers and behaviorists to advance



their education and succeed in an industry that can be challenging to navigate.

## MEMBER NEWS

### NEW MEMBER

#### DÉDÉ WILSON

Dédé Wilson is a lifelong dog lover whose passion for purebred dogs runs deep; her family has three generations of Bull Terrier lovers, honored by her Legacy kennel name. Today, Dédé is an active preservation breeder, exhibitor, and advocate for ethical breeding practices. She is a member of the Bull Terrier Club of America and serves as Corresponding Secretary and New Member Chair for the Miniature Bull Terrier Club of America. Both she and her son have had Best of Variety/Breed winners at The Westminster Kennel Club Dog Show, yet her commitment extends beyond the show ring; she champions education on responsible ownership and the importance of Breed Standards, and has titled dogs in Performance sports, including Scent Work, Rally, and Fast CAT, proving that form and function go hand in hand. Her current MBT, Nora, also has her CGCA and is as the first Miniature Bull Terrier to attain Platinum Owner-Handled status. Whether mentoring new enthusiasts or supporting club initiatives, Dédé's mission remains the same: to protect and celebrate dogs and human companionship.



### NEW MEMBER

#### ELLEN FINNIE

A retired librarian, new member Ellen Finnie now focuses on two lifelong passions: dogs and writing. She has decades of experience as a therapy dog volunteer and instructor with Dog B.O.N.E.S: Therapy Dogs of Massachusetts and has been certified as a dog trainer and as a Certified Animal Assisted Intervention Specialist. She currently shares her life with two Golden Retrievers, Gracie and Leo, both certified therapy dogs. She and Leo volunteer at an elementary school as a therapy dog team.

Ellen is the author of *The Ten Perfections: Spiritual Lessons from a Life with Dogs*

She writes about dogs (and sometimes other subjects) on Substack at: <https://ellenfinnie.substack.com>.



## Pet Acoustics

► Continued from pg 13

Their attentiveness sparked a question: What are they hearing that I'm not?

That question led her into psychoacoustics, the study of how sound is perceived, and eventually to developing species-specific music for pets. In 1994, she founded Pet Acoustics, bridging her expertise in music with groundbreaking animal research.

"Dogs hear up to 45,000 Hertz, cats up to 85,000," Marlow notes. "That's two to three times what humans can perceive. Once you know that, you realize how much of their world we've been missing."

### A New Era in Pet Wellness

With over 30,000 early adopters already using the app, Pet Acoustics+ is poised to become a staple in pet care. Veterinarians, trainers, groomers, and shelters are adopting it as both a diagnostic and wellness tool.

For everyday pet parents, it's an empowering resource: a way to monitor hearing, reduce stress, and better understand what life sounds like to the animals we love.

Pet Acoustics+ marks a turning point: hearing care for pets is no longer confined to the exam room. With a free app and a few minutes at home, any pet parent can monitor hearing and reduce stress through science-backed sound. That's not just progress; it's a revolution in pet wellness.

Pet Acoustics+ is free to download on the App Store and Google Play, with subscription options unlocking extended music content. For more, visit [PetAcoustics.com](https://PetAcoustics.com). ■

Carol Bryant served as President of the Dog Writers Association of America for two years and is the recipient of multiple Maxwell Medallions and awards. She is the founder of [FidoseofReality.com](https://FidoseofReality.com) and [SmartDogCopy.com](https://SmartDogCopy.com). She trademarked the saying, "My Heart Beats Dog," and permanently wears the mantra on her left bicep.



## MEMBER NEWS

### NEW MEMBER

#### DR. GUILLERMO CAVAZOS

From a very early age, new member, Dr. Guillermo Cavazos demonstrated a penchant for writing. At the age of 12 he was named state champion in a poetry contest, in addition to being correspondent for his school newspaper, writing articles on social topics.

He was raised in family of animal lovers, became a member of the local kennel club, and went to his first dog show as steward. He spent many years showing his dogs and those of family members and friends. He assisted at many seminars set it up by the Mexican Kennel Club (FCM) and shown many dogs, getting his first BIS all Breeds in December 1994. Completing his studies for a DVM degree, he authored a thesis entitled: "Care and Grooming of a Dog's Harsh Coat" in which he elaborated in detail on the diseases, as well as the grooming, of 56 different breeds.

In 1995, he spent time in the US, working under the guidance of renowned handler Clay Coady, learning about the grooming and the condition of many breeds. Upon his return to Mexico, he became a full-time handler, showing many breeds, obtaining several BIS and multiple BISS. In 1997, his Mastiff finished as the top winner all-breed, with a total of 27 BIS and the Mexican Kennel Club named him Handler is the Year.

He has shown dogs in the USA, Guatemala, Salvador, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Finland, finishing dogs in all these countries and wining many groups and several BIS. He met his wife, Marlene Mastellari, a breeder, at a dog show in Costa Rica. They opened Pet Place, a Vet Clinic with full grooming facilities in Guadalajara, Mexico.

The couple moved to the US in 2005 to expand opportunities to work and show dogs across the west coast of the US. He founded Dogcommunity, a group dedicated to the promote and educate about the pure breed dog sports and to improving the quality of owner-handling, offering weekly classes.

In 2013 Guillermo became a judge. He is licensed to judge all breeds. He has shown dogs or judged at shows in Mexico, Canada, USA, Guatemala, Salvador, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Jamaica, Brazil, Argentina, Colombia, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Portugal, Spain, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Finland, Croatia and England.

In 2021 he started "Platicas Caninas" (Canine Talk), consisting of the first video-podcast in Spanish, dedicated to



the sport of purebred dogs, and a YouTube channel with more than 180 videos. Among the videos are specialty shows and all-breed dog shows, including the 2021 (Brno), 2022 (Madrid), 2023 (Geneva), 2024 (Zagreb), and 2025 (Helsinki) World Dog Shows, and the 2022 and 2023 Crufts Dog Shows.

In 2022 he was accepted as a member of The World Dog Press Association, based in Belgium, in recognition of his articles published in multiple dog media, including, El Canofilo and Perros Pura Sangre, the official gazette of the Mexican Kennel Club (FCM), Molosos Arena (Spain), Gaceta Canina (Colombia), Best in Show (USA) and Show Beagles Worldwide (Czech Republic).

## MEMBER NEWS

### NEW MEMBER

#### JENNY RUTH YASI

Jenny Ruth Yasi, BFA., CPDT-KA, CCUI, Fear Free Certified Professional (Trainer) had to feed rabbits, milk goats and catch the dog before going to school. Catching the dog was a problem, and that led to a life-long interest in animal behavior.

She was performing as a singer-songwriter, studying first social welfare, then music and creative writing, at the University of Maine when she met and married Albert Presgraves. They moved to an island three miles off the coast of Maine, had two children and Jenny's writing was published in magazines such as Clean Run, Mothering Magazine, Chronicle of the Dog, and Sing Out! Jenny completed a self-designed program in Behavior Science and Character Development at Naropa College of Norwich University and opened Whole Dog Camp to offer humane dog training and care (now located in Freeport, Maine).

Signal Training: Leading to Freedom (Head Halters, calming caps, muzzles and tricks for safer loose leash walking), published in 2025, is the first in a series of train-it-yourself manuals that reflect 25 years of experience training powerful dogs in Maine. Yasi won the OMNI International Peace Writing Prize for her first novel, *The Whole Stunned World Between Boston and Burma*, and the Richard Carbonneau prize for short fiction at the Stone Coast Writers Conference. Jenny continues to write new fiction as well as non-fiction. Find her blogs at [www.jennyruthyasi.com](http://www.jennyruthyasi.com), [www.wholedogcamp.com](http://www.wholedogcamp.com), video training demos on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/@Wholedogcamp>), Facebook and Instagram <https://www.instagram.com/yasijenny/>



## Tips & Tactics

► Continued from pg 26

stones to get to the longer narrative. However, less words do not mean less work. One author<sup>2</sup> wrote, "I didn't have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead," emphasizing that being brief and concise is more challenging than crafting rambling prose.

Short writing allows us to try out effects, tones, feelings, dialogue and writing style. By focusing on one event or a series of tightly linked events, with just a few characters, we can see if anything is missing. Making every word and every sentence count in the overall storyline is undoubtedly a big task, but one that will result in better writing.

In addition to the fact that writing short pieces will help hone your skills, it's also an opportunity to build up your work and your chances of getting published. There are more opportunities to get smaller pieces published in traditional journals and literary magazines than publishing a novel.

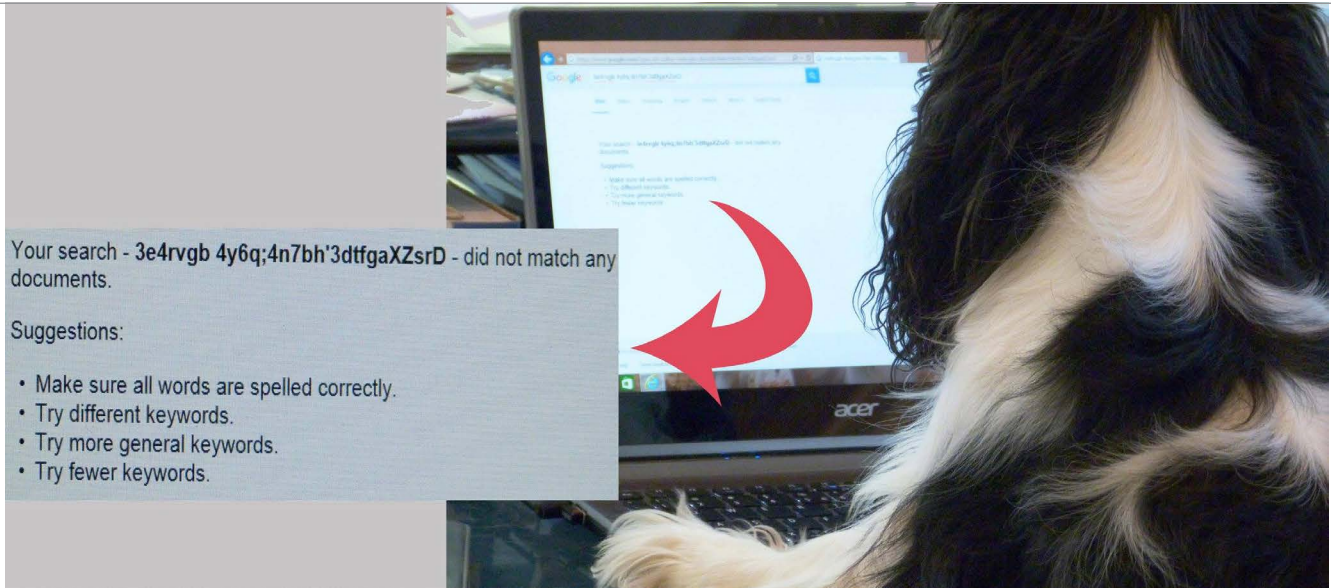
Although writing is decidedly a low-tech process, albeit one that is aided by technology, there are **software programs** - beyond the autocorrect gremlin- that can help. You probably have several at your fingertips already, including **Grammarly** and **Microsoft Word**. And there's more, each with a different feature. Your individual style of work and budget will determine the choices you make. **Google Docs** allows collaboration, and **Scrivener** lends itself to organization, especially for longer pieces. **Dabble** offers both organization and an outlining process that help you go back to portions of your story without scrolling through every page.

Everyone has an idea of which software works best, but the only opinion that matters is yours. So, whether you feel more comfortable plotting or plodding, just get going! ■

<sup>1</sup> *Fun Fact.* While in high school I wrote a column for the *Neighbors* section of the *Miami Herald*, our daily newspaper. My mother was my pre-submission editor. She ruthlessly critiqued my work and often made me cry. Organization and grammar weren't my thing. However, my columns sailed through the editing process when they arrived "downtown," typed on the one popular three-part carbonless copy sheets.

<sup>2</sup> By the way, for those who are keeping score, that quote, often attributed to Mark Twain, was actually part of *Lettres Provinciales* by Blaise Pascal in 1657.





CHARILE WEIDIG

## *When Dogs* GOOGLE

One morning, I walked into our office/family room, and found our somewhat crazy Cavalier girl, Kodak, sitting at our computer. The computer had already been turned on, and she had her paws on the keyboard. The inset in the photo shows exactly what was on the screen. Kodak had apparently managed to enter a search string and then pressed the Enter key. I'm still not sure if it was gibberish, or something coded in canine language, meant for her eyes only.

▲  
Kodak Googling




---

Emelise Baughman, Secretary  
455 Chapman Road  
Chapman, NE 68827-2736