

THIS JUST IN

Dr. Campoy Is a Leader says JAVMA’s ERAS report

Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) is a new area in veterinary and human medicine, and one of the leaders for veterinary medicine is Luis Campoy, MRCVS, chief of anesthesiology and pain medicine at Cornell.

ERAS is a new way of looking at getting pets back to their normal routine faster. Areas considered are how long pets need to be fasted and if pets should be getting medications to reduce stomach acid when they are fasted pre-surgery.

The main area of focus, however, is using nerve blocks to assist in pain management without oral medications, reducing the use of opioid systemic medications that can have side effects.

The emphasis on regional and local nerve blocks has been researched more in dogs and in orthopedic surgeries. Looking at soft-tissue surgeries, including abdominal surgeries such as spays, is also underway.

Many of the nerve-block treatments rely on ultrasound for exact placement of the blocking agents. This is an emerging area, and veterinarians may need special courses to fine tune techniques. Still, this is an exciting area as it holds many benefits for pets in the future. ■

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Grab Your Dog and Go Get Some Exercise	2
New AAHA Guidelines for Senior Pet Care.....	2
Tips for Handling Heat Cycles.....	3
Make Flea Prevention Count	4
Could Your Dog Have ADHD?	6
Dewclaws Require Attention.....	7
Dog Doesn’t Like Other Dogs.....	8
Prey Animal Problems.....	8

DCM Research Continues

The cause of non-hereditary DCM remains unknown, but reported cases have decreased significantly

In 2019, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) started looking at a perplexing increase in cases of canine dilated cardiomyopathy, or DCM, which is an enlarged heart. It can be fatal. DCM was largely considered a genetic issue, but without warning, cases started to appear at an alarming rate in dogs without a known genetic tendency.

The DCM case reports continued at high levels through July 2020, but have since decreased. This may be due to pet food manufacturers changing diet formulations, owners switching to different diets, or that highly susceptible dogs were identified.

Grain-Free Connection Unclear

Initially, grain-free dog food was considered a cause, so the FDA looked more closely at pulses and legumes such as peas and lentils, which were found high in the ingredient lists of foods consumed by affected dogs.

Although legumes and pulses have been used in pet foods for many years without problems, the FDA found that these ingredients were in many grain-free diets in greater proportions.

It’s a complex situation, and many factors are likely involved. A specific

Signs of DCM

Many dogs don’t show obvious early signs and dogs with an irregular heart rhythm may suddenly collapse or die. Signs of DCM in later stages may include:

- ▶ Increased breathing rate or effort
- ▶ Coughing
- ▶ Weakness
- ▶ Lethargy
- ▶ Weight loss
- ▶ Distended belly

FDA List of Possible Causes

- ▶ Genetic susceptibility
- ▶ Underlying medical conditions
- ▶ Digestibility of ingredients
- ▶ How the food is processed
- ▶ Exact formulations
- ▶ Bioavailability of nutrients
- ▶ Sources of ingredients
- ▶ How the food is fed

connection between those diets and cases of non-hereditary DCM is still unknown. Researchers are exploring the role of genetics, underlying medical conditions, and other factors.

Taurine’s Status

The FDA cautions that this is not straightforward like heart conditions attributed to taurine deficiency. Taurine is an essential amino acid for humans and cats and must be included in diets, but it is nonessential in dogs.

Where We Are Now

Many veterinarians have had good results in improving heart function in non-hereditary DCM cases. Some affected dogs are reported to have returned to normal cardiac function.

The work is ongoing. Updates will be released as new information comes to light about these cases. ■



Dogs genetically predisposed to DCM include Doberman Pinschers (pictured), Great Danes, Boxers, and Cocker Spaniels. Dietary carnitine deficiency may play a role in some cases of Boxer DCM, and taurine-responsive DCM has been identified in Cocker Spaniels.

Grab Your Dog and Go Get Some Exercise

Without exercise, the body's metabolism won't change

Overweight dogs fight the same uphill battle as people when it comes to weight loss. Calorie reduction is essential, but increased exercise is an absolute must. It's a combination of the two that makes a difference. And it's important to make it a lifestyle change.

A study out of Spain looked at weight reduction and its effects on genes that influence and regulate metabolism. Obesity is often related to glucose metabolism and insulin responsiveness. In this study (from 2015), researchers used two groups of 12 pet dogs. One group followed a plan of calorie restriction. The other group combined calorie restriction with added physical training at a mild level.

After 12 weeks, both groups of dogs lost weight with fairly similar results. The dogs who exercised, however, maintained lean muscle mass and showed positive changes in the metabolism of both muscle and fat tissues. This was a small study, but it reinforces the need for both exercise and calorie reduction for a successful weight plan for your dog. Unfortunately, just buying a low-calorie dog food is not quite enough.

The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) is the leading non-profit organization dedicated to the awareness, prevention, and treatment of pets with obesity and weight-related disorders. Their 2021 survey shows that while many pet owners think their dogs carry a few extra pounds, their veterinarians put the numbers far higher. (The 2022 APOP survey is being tabulated for release this year.)

Do numbers really matter? Yes! Most everyone realizes obesity is a health problem, but it's difficult to see it in your own pet. Ask your veterinarian for an honest evaluation and for advice on diet and appropriate levels of exercise. At your pet's annual exam, don't hesitate to ask your vet about your pet's current and ideal weights. ■



Get out and have some healthy fun!

New AAHA Guidelines for Senior Pet Care

The goal is to find problems as early as possible

The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) recently released its 2023 Senior Care Guidelines for Dogs and Cats with a focus on more frequent wellness exams and better screening diagnostics that will catch brewing problems faster. About 44% of all pets fit into the senior category.

Part of a senior wellness plan is doing diagnostics to catch any problems as early as possible. That means a twice a year physical exam, with some screening bloodwork suggested every six to 12 months. For a healthy senior, that is the best way to catch a change in health. Once health problems have been identified, your pet should have a custom health plan set up, which might include medications for any identified health conditions and changes you can make at home to your pet's environment and management to make those golden years a bit smoother.

Along with body condition scores and weight tracking, your veterinarian will look for changes in behavior that may be associated with aging and may recommend proven supplements, like joint products, that can help your older pet to age more gracefully and make life easier for everyone. Nutrition should be evaluated to see if diet changes are warranted. Assessments for pain and dental care are important as well.

Senior pet care also includes thinking ahead to end-of-life decisions such as hospice care and/or euthanasia. These updated guidelines will help your veterinarian help you and your older pets. ■

Cornell DogWatch

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Tips for Handling Heat Cycles

Avoid having any “oops” litters in your house

Whether you are choosing to keep your female dog intact for showing purposes or simply waiting to spay her until she is physically mature, you can ride out heat cycles with minimal drama.

The Facts

Female dogs typically come in heat for the first time between 6 and 12 months old. Heats typically last about two-three weeks, but individual females may vary in the length of their heats and the timing of ovulation.

As your puppy starts to come in heat, you may notice increased moodiness or mild aggression toward other dogs. You may also notice increased licking of the genital area, and a mildly swollen vulva. Vaginal discharge can range from clear-ish to bloody.

As she progresses into estrus, the time when she is receptive to males, she may flirt with other dogs and flag her tail to the side. You will see vaginal discharge and a markedly swollen vulva.

Toward the end of estrus, vaginal discharge will resolve and she again becomes less tolerant of male dogs getting close. Behavioral changes will resolve, and after a few weeks you can all get back to your normal lives.

Until the cycle repeats, that is. Most dogs come in heat every six to seven months, but some can cycle as frequently as every four months and others as rarely as once a year or every other year.

Family Trends

If you got your puppy from a breeder, ask when the puppy’s mother and other close relatives had their first heats and how often they cycle. While each dog is an individual, there are often family trends, and it may be helpful to know. If your dog’s mother had her first heat at a year old and comes in season every eight months, that is the most likely schedule that your dog will follow.

Keeping Clean

Many females are fastidious about keeping themselves clean, but others are not. “Heat panties” are readily available in pet stores and online and come in a wide range of colors and styles. Pants will have a hole to accommodate your

Quick Tips

- ▶ Track when each heat cycle begins so you know when to expect the next one.
- ▶ Keep females away from intact males for a full 28 days to be sure an accidental breeding doesn’t occur.
- ▶ Have a minimum of two barriers between an in-heat female and an unneutered male.

dog’s tail and often have a reinforced crotch. Although disposable options are available, washable pants are more environmentally friendly. You can use women’s panty liners or pads to absorb discharge and protect the fabric.

Most dogs tolerate wearing “pants,” however, you should try them out with your dog before her brain and body are full of hormones. Use treats and praise to make wearing the pants a positive experience.

Word to the wise: Don’t forget to take the pants off when you let your dog outside for a walk.

Lockdown Protocol

Once you suspect your girl is coming in heat, initiate lockdown. Plan on keeping her away from unneutered males for a full 28 days to be certain an accidental breeding doesn’t occur. This is usually

a little overkill, but some dogs ovulate earlier or later in their cycle.

Outside, your dog should either be on a leash or supervised in a fenced yard. She should not be allowed to run loose and should be watched when in the yard. Some females may roam in search of a mate, and male dogs can detect your female from a mile away. A persistent male could easily climb over or dig under your fence to gain access to your girl.

If you have intact males of your own, keep two barriers between the boys and your dog at all times unless they are under direct supervision. Dogs can and will succeed in breeding through crate bars, baby gates, and fences.

Behavior Changes

Your dog’s behavior may change throughout her heat cycle. Some dogs don’t change at all, others become extra cuddly and affectionate, and some may become snippy or aggressive. To keep everyone safe, separate the in-heat girl from all other dogs (intact or not) when you are not around.

Some females also experience a pseudopregnancy, or false pregnancy, after coming in heat even if they have not been bred and are not pregnant. These females may show nesting behaviors and sometimes even secrete milk.

A female going through a false pregnancy may show resource guarding behaviors around food and favorite resting spots, and some even claim toys as “babies” and guard them. This will pass. Keep your other dogs away from her “den” and “puppies,” and encourage her to participate in normal activities such as walks, play time, and training. ■



Choose panties that have a hole for her tail, which makes them more comfortable.

Make Flea Prevention Count

Not following dose instructions on flea/tick products can waste money or even harm your dog

No one likes when their dog brings home some six- or eight-legged “friends.” But keeping up with flea and tick preventives every month can get exhausting and expensive. You might have wondered: Is it really necessary? Yes, it is.

Evaluating Risk

The Companion Animal Parasite Council recommends year-round flea and tick prevention for all dogs to prevent parasite infestations in your home and to protect both you and your pets from vector-borne diseases.

We think of ticks as an outdoor parasite that dogs will only encounter in the woods. While ticks do enjoy a nice dense forest, they also thrive in fields and leaf litter. And the brown dog tick will happily live in your house year-round.

Never Use a Dog Product on a Cat

We realize this is *DogWatch*, but this is important: **Never use a flea or tick medication for your cat unless the label specifically says that it is intended for use in cats.** Cats process medications differently from dogs, and things that are perfectly safe for a dog can be deadly for cats.

For example, permethrin is extremely toxic to cats. Dog products containing permethrin can cause itchiness, drooling, pawing at the mouth, tremors, and seizures in cats. If untreated, it can lead to death. Cats can receive a toxic dose from brushing up against a dog that has been recently treated, or from sharing bedding.

To protect your cats, keep them separated from your dogs after applying any topical product. Wait until the product has completely dried and absorbed into the dog’s skin before letting them interact. If you give your dog oral flea and tick products, store them somewhere that your cat cannot access. This will prevent her from eating a potentially dangerous dose.



Choose a product that is correct for your dog’s weight. Ask your veterinarian about products known to work in your area.

The northeastern United States is famous for the black-legged tick, which carries Lyme disease, but every region boasts a local tick species or two. And with climate change, tick species such as the Lone Star tick are expanding their territory.

Fleas thrive in indoor environments and can be easily passed from animal to animal. Adult fleas may not survive a cold winter outdoors, but their eggs can. Flea eggs and pupae can also live in pet bedding or in the floors and furniture in your house.

Your dog may pick up fleas outside, but she can also bring them home from a boarding kennel, dog park, or doggy daycare. Fleas can also be brought in on your clothing from someone else’s house or brought in by your other pets.

Depending on where you live and your pets’ lifestyle, you may be able to get away with only using a flea and tick medication part of the year. Just keep in mind that it only takes one warm day for critters to thaw out and become active again even in the winter. Discuss this with your veterinarian.

Know How the Product Works

The first thing to check before using any flea and/or tick medication is the size and age requirements. Products are not one-size-fits all, and larger dogs will receive larger doses. Some products are also labeled for specific ages (for example, the three-month Bravecto chews are not appropriate for puppies under 6 months

old). Puppies are smaller and more sensitive, so it is critical to make sure the product you are using is safe for your puppy’s age and weight.

Different products have different methods of action. Some products kill parasites on contact, while others require the parasite to bite your dog before they can work. Some products target adult fleas, while others contain growth inhibitors that target flea pupae to prevent them from hatching into adults. Products may repel fleas, preventing them from getting on your dog in the first place (this is rare for ticks).

As well as how the product kills unwanted guests, you need to know how long it works. For example, Capstar is great at killing adult fleas quickly, but only continues to work for a matter of hours. The product label recommends repeating once a day if you continue to see fleas. This quickly becomes impractical, so often a better solution is to start with a dose of Capstar and follow with a longer-acting option.

Read product labels or consult with your veterinarian to find out how the product kills or repels parasites and which parasites it is effective against. For example, the oral product Trifexis works great against fleas and internal parasites but will not help with ticks.

Monthly Means Monthly

Every product lists how long it is effective. Many products are good for 28 to 30 days, and the adult formulation of Bravecto is good for 12 weeks (there is also a puppy Bravecto that lasts for one month). The collar Seresto is good for eight months but may only be effective against some tick species for a shorter length of time, especially if your dog swims or is bathed frequently.

It can be tempting to stretch the intervals between doses. This is a dangerous game, especially if you are already dealing with an infestation.

When you give or apply a flea/tick medication late, the previous dose will “run out” and become less effective. That gap could be enough time to allow an infestation to take hold, especially if the product you are using only targets one stage of the flea life cycle.

For example, the chewable product Comfortis is labeled to give once a month to prevent fleas in dogs (and cats). This product starts working quickly and kills adult fleas. If you forget to reapply until eight weeks after the first dose

(up to a month past the recommended dosage frequency), any eggs and pupae that hatch into adult fleas in your house will cheerfully start snacking on your poor dog. These adults—or any new adults brought in from outside—will also reproduce and lay more eggs, perpetuating the cycle.

Treating All Pets

One of the biggest challenges to eradicating a flea or tick infestation is multiple pets. Every single dog and cat in your house can be a host. If you find fleas or ticks on one pet, all of them must be treated. Otherwise, the fleas will just focus on the untreated pet(s).

Most veterinarians recommend treating all pets in the household for at least three consecutive months to clear any infestation. This plan gives enough time to catch fleas at multiple points in their lifecycle, whereas if you only treat for one month, some pupae may outlast the medication. Treating all the pets prevents any of them from bringing in parasites or acting as a safe harbor for the existing issue.

You may also need to enlist the help of an exterminator, especially in the case of brown dog tick infestations.

Flea Allergies

If your dog is one of the unlucky canines with a flea allergy, even one flea bite can cause her skin to erupt in itchy, scaly unpleasantness. It is critical to keep dogs with flea allergy dermatitis on a year-round preventative to protect them from allergy symptoms.

It is also strongly recommended to keep up treatments for all other pets in the household. Other dogs and cats who go outside can easily bring home more fleas. Remember that it only takes one bite to trigger an allergy. Even if the flea dies immediately after biting your dog, your dog is still going to be uncomfortable.

Regional Differences

Unfortunately, not all products work the same in all areas. Some ticks are more resistant to many drugs than others—the Lone Star tick and Asian longhorned tick are notorious for being tougher than other tick species.

Veterinarians are noting regional drug resistance in fleas and ticks. Ask your veterinarian which product(s) are still effective in your area before purchasing one. ■

Handling Adverse Reactions

Most are slight, but all should be reported to your veterinarian and the EPA

Any medication can cause unwanted side effects. If you are using a new flea or tick treatment for the first time, give or apply it at a time when you will be around to supervise your dog. All of these products go through safety testing before they can be sold, but individual dogs can react to things differently.

Potential symptoms of an adverse reaction include:

- ▶ Irritated skin
- ▶ Itchiness
- ▶ Lethargy
- ▶ Vomiting
- ▶ Diarrhea
- ▶ Trembling
- ▶ Seizures

Side effects are typically mild and will resolve on their own quickly, but err on the side of caution. If you think your dog is having a bad reaction to a flea or tick treatment, read the product insert for instructions on what to do and call your veterinarian.

For collars, remove the collar promptly.

For topical treatments, bathe your dog with a mild soap and rinse thoroughly with lots of water. This will dilute the medication, break up the oils, and help wash it off your dog's skin and coat.

For oral medications, follow the instructions from your veterinarian or call a pet poison helpline.

Severe reactions may require veterinary attention and supportive care to treat symptoms and protect your dog's organs. Seizures require immediate treatment.

Reporting Reactions

If your dog does experience an adverse effect from a flea or tick medication, report it. Look for the manufacturer's contact information on the product label or insert. Manufacturers are required to collect this information and report it to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Remember, pet owners and product manufacturers both want the same thing: a product that does what it is supposed to do, safely. After all, no one is going to buy something if they think it will harm their dog.

As stressful as it is to have something go wrong, try to refrain from blaming the manufacturer. There is nothing in the world that is safe for everyone all the time, and there will always be individuals who do not tolerate something well. The company is not trying to harm your dog. They want you and your dog to be happy as much as you do, if for no other reason than to keep you buying their product.

Safety testing can only evaluate a product in so many animals. When a new product hits the open market, it will be used by many more dogs with a much more diverse health and lifestyle background. The EPA tracks adverse event reports so they can pick up any trends that might require changes in how a product is used or marketed.

NexGard and other isoxazolines are an excellent example: When it became obvious that this class of drug can be problematic for pets who have seizures or other neurological disorders, that warning was added to the labels.



If you apply a flea/tick product and the dog becomes itchy, that may be an adverse effect.

Laure | iStock

Could Your Dog Have ADHD?

Most behavior experts agree that true ADHD in dogs is rare—the dogs just need more exercise and training

Your 18-month-old Labrador is tearing through the house, leaping on and off furniture, hesitates when you call his name, and is off again on a wild zoom. Is this behavior normal or are these symptoms of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)? Don't jump the gun in making that diagnosis.

What is ADHD in Dogs?

ADHD in humans is marked by hyperactivity, impulsive behavior, and lack of attention. A study out of Finland with over 11,000 dogs suggests that ADHD is seen in dogs as well, and the signs of ADHD in dogs are similar.

ADHD may be coupled with obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD) and, in both people and dogs, the condition is more common in males. Not surprisingly, it is more noticeable in young dogs. The study included 22 breeds and mixes. The researchers estimate that 12% to 15% of dogs have hyperactivity and impulsiveness, while 20% show an inability to pay attention.

However, this study was based on data collected from owners, which can skew the results. In practice, most behavior experts agree that ADHD in dogs is rare. While there may be physiological and genetic defects underlying these behaviors, they are strongly influenced by the environment, including owner involvement.

The researchers found that some environmental factors figured into the responses from the dog owners. Those who spent more time with their dogs, provided more exercise, and did some training had lower reports of behaviors fitting ADHD than owners with dogs who spent most of their time alone and got minimal exercise and training.

The study also found that experienced owners were more likely to catch ADHD behaviors in their dogs, which is not surprising, since these owners are more skilled at reading behaviors. In addition, experienced owners may choose more challenging dogs, particularly if they are into dog sports.

If you believe your dog has ADHD, start with your veterinarian. Medications



Researchers found it interesting that the Rough-Coated Collie (pictured) had one of the lowest scores in hyperactivity/impulsivity, while the Smooth-Coated Collie had one of the highest hyperactivity/impulsivity scores.

are a possibility, and we discuss that below, but either way you should find a fear-free/force-free professional dog trainer to work with you and your dog.

Choosing a Dog

Always choose a dog appropriate for your lifestyle. If you aren't into dog sports, don't exercise much yourself, or don't have a large fenced yard, don't choose a dog bred to be active. Look for a breed developed for companionship without a lot of energy required. Working breeds have better trainability due to higher attention spans, says the study, but they also have high activity levels.

If you're at a rescue, talk with the

staff about dogs you are interested in adopting. The goal of most shelters is to fit dogs with the right owners.

Many herding and hunting breeds, some hounds, and northern breeds like Siberian Huskies are usually selectively bred to be intense and very active. Some toy breeds and non-sporting breeds prefer to sit with you by the fire as opposed to romping through snow drifts. Be realistic when considering what you want in a canine companion.

Consistent, Kind Training

Once you have a dog, be aware of an individual dog's need for activity, mental engagement, and exercise. An active dog needs a regular routine of exercise, training, and consistent house rules. You must have some exact training criteria and not waffle on things like whether the dog is allowed on the couch. Everyone in the household must be on board with the same criteria.

Mental exercise is as important as physical exercise. Some of the best ways to engage your dog include tricks, scent games, and food puzzles. Ideally, you will be interacting with your dog.

Extra Help

For the environment, consider a pheromone diffuser such as Adaptil for a calming atmosphere. Lavender scent is believed to be calming as well, but you may need to experiment. If you live in a busy neighborhood with lots of activity outdoors, a white-noise machine may help block some of the stimuli. ThunderShirts and similar wraps often help calm a dog, too, especially when you can predict lots of stimuli.

Some dogs may benefit from a quiet companion animal, but it may take trial and error and fostering other animals to find the right fit.

Your veterinarian can prescribe medication to help control or at least

Belgian Malinois

A gene known as A22 has been associated with hyperactivity and potentially aggressive behavior in some Belgian Malinois, particularly dogs with two copies of that gene.

While dogs with two copies can be excellent military and law enforcement working dogs, most of them are beyond the average family as pets.



Finnish Study Sheds Light on Breeds

The Finnish study found some dogs and breeds did not fit all the criteria to be diagnosed with ADHD. For example, Border Collies and German Shepherd Dogs both had great attention but tended toward hyperactive and impulsive levels of behavior. Additional breeds that showed hyperactivity and impulsive behavior included Cairn Terriers, Jack Russell Terriers, and Staffordshire Bull Terriers.

Breeds with the lowest scores for these ADHD behavior traits were Chinese Crested Dogs, Rough Collies, and Chihuahuas.

It is important to recognize that while breed trends have been noted, individual dogs may not fit that profile. Individual dogs who scored high for aggression or fearfulness tended to have higher scores for hyperactivity and impulsivity.

When it came to inattention, Cairn Terriers, Golden Retrievers, and Finnish Lapphunds ranked highest while Spanish Water Dogs, Miniature Poodles, and Border Collies scored as attentive overall. In all breeds, attention scores improved with age.

Sulkama, S., et al. Canine hyperactivity, impulsivity, and inattention share similar demographic risk factors and behavioral comorbidities with human ADHD. Transl Psychiatry 11, 501 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41398-021-01626-x>

calm some behaviors. Methylphenidate (Ritalin) has been used off label for hyper dogs. It is a behavior modifier that can give affected dogs more focus. However, methylphenidate is also a stimulant.

“Treatment with methylphenidate is an easy way to test for ADHD. Dogs who do not have ADHD will become hyperactive on this drug,” says Katherine Houpt, VMD, PhD, James Law professor emeritus, behavior, Cornell University’s College of Veterinary Medicine. In addition, the drug will not calm a dog who is hyper for other reasons.

Many companies offer over-the-counter calming treats and herbs, but it’s important to discuss the ingredients with your veterinarian to ensure they are safe for your dog, won’t interfere with other medications, and aren’t a total waste of your money. ■

Dewclaws Require Attention

They’re not useless appendages you can ignore

Dewclaws are the claws on your dog’s wrist above the paw. These claws may seem like an annoyance, but they serve a purpose for your dog and can cause problems if not cared for properly.

Little Thumbs

Almost all dogs are born with a dewclaw on each front foot. These claws are the equivalent to our thumbs and are anchored to the leg with bones, muscles, and ligaments.

Although dewclaws don’t touch the ground when your dog is standing, dogs do use them. The article “Working Dog Structure: Evaluation and Relationship to Function,” published in *Frontiers of Veterinary Science* in 2020 by renowned rehabilitation veterinarian Christine Zink and Marcia Schlehr, discusses several ways that dogs use their dewclaws:

- ▶ Added stability when running and jumping
- ▶ Gripping items
- ▶ Extra traction when running on ice or when climbing

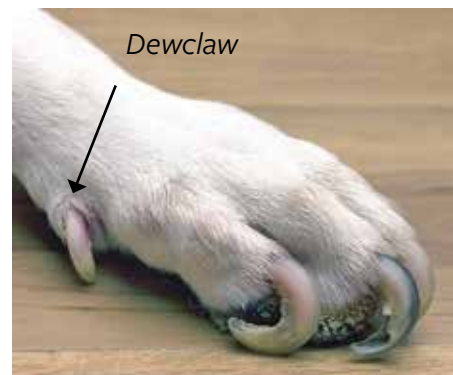
Whenever there is high pressure exerted on your dog’s front legs, such as while running or trying to scramble over a barrier, the pasterns—the area below the wrist but above the foot—flex, causing the dewclaws to contact the ground or surface.

The muscles that connect to the dewclaw even allow your dog to move it individually. Granted, not with the same range of motion that we move our fingers, but dogs’ toes also have a decreased range of motion compared to our fingers.

Proper Care

Dewclaws do require a little extra attention from us. Most domestic dogs living modern lives do not wear down the claws on their feet naturally, let alone their dewclaws. Keep all claws trimmed regularly. Untrimmed dewclaws can grow unimpeded, ultimately circling around and growing into your dog’s leg. This is painful and can lead to infection.

Long dewclaws can also pose a hazard for your dog, as they can get caught as he runs or plays. A properly trimmed dewclaw will stay tight to the leg, ready for use when your dog needs it but less likely to get injured.



This dog’s claws are badly in need of a trim including the dewclaw (see arrow). Notice that they’re starting to curl into the dog’s pad.

Dewclaw Removal

Breeders may choose to remove the dewclaws from their puppies. This procedure is usually done at a few days of age by a veterinarian. Reasons for this practice vary from purely cosmetic for a “cleaner” appearance of the legs to prevention of dewclaw-related injuries.

Dr. Zink and other working dog experts have raised concerns that preemptive removal of the dewclaws is unnecessary and that doing so can increase the risk of arthritis later in the dog’s life. Removing the dewclaw does change the relationship of several of the muscles in the front leg, as the ones that supported the dewclaw will no longer have a job and become atrophied. More veterinarians are recommending leaving the dewclaws in place.

Rear Dewclaws

Rear dewclaws are a different story. In the majority of dogs, rear dewclaws are vestigial and do not firmly connect to the main leg. They tend to flop loosely. Because of this, rear dewclaws are much more likely to get stuck on something and become injured.

For most dogs, rear dewclaws are frequently removed at a few days of age to prevent issues. A few breeds, including the Great Pyrenees, Beauceron, and Norwegian Lundehund, have more developed rear dewclaws and are required to have them to compete in the show ring. For these few breeds with developed dewclaws that are firmly attached to the leg, the dewclaws are generally left alone. ■

Dog Doesn't Like Other Dogs

The condo environment makes things worse

My dog, Harley, is a senior Yorkie approximately 9 years old. I have had him about three years. He's never really liked other dogs and has always been very nervous around them. He loves people, however.

I live in a condo complex where there are dogs around and, in most cases, he goes ballistic. I pick him up and move him away from the situation, but I'm just wondering how I can make him behave a little differently and be less scared. He has congestive heart failure, so I don't want him to get too upset.

My close friend here has a Sheltie. We would like to take them on a walk together, but the dogs just stare at each other until one starts the frenzied barking. If they're on our laps, they tend to ignore each other.

I could write a book about the problems of dogs in condos. They are not the best idea for a territorial species like a dog because each dog believes the whole complex is theirs and acts accordingly. The approach you have been taking in avoiding situations may be the best you can do, but here are some suggestions:

Try to observe when people are walking their dogs. My guess is that 5:30 p.m. is a popular time for working people. You can choose the time of day when the fewest dogs are present for his exercise and enrichment walks but take very short excursions for potty breaks.

You might be able to walk your dog with your friend and her Sheltie. At the end of her visit to you, take your dog out with your friend and her dog. If you start together walking parallel rather than toward one another, they may be fine.

Of course, you can try to teach your dog that the approach of other dogs means good things by popping a treat in his mouth as soon as you see the other



Condo life can be tough on a dog.

dog while saying, "See the nice doggy!" He is not too old to learn.

If you cannot find a veterinary behaviorist in your area, call your nearest veterinary college and ask if a student could help you pro bono with your dog's behavior problem. Alternatively, your primary care veterinarian may prescribe a drug that would lower his anxiety, but not interact badly with his cardiac medications.

Prey Animal Problems

And it's worse with cats

Lady was surrendered to our local shelter at the age of 3. She was terrified at the shelter, hiding under her only possession, her much loved bed that had been donated with her. I volunteered to foster Lady and adopted her the first week. The DNA test says she is 58% Chihuahua and 42% Jack Russell.

But that 42% is sparking her prey drive. We are doing well while out walking and can control reactivity to birds, squirrels, and deer. We work on continuous check in. If I stop walking, she knows she needs to check in. I use this for the prey drive or the resulting

pull on the leash. Her reward is eye contact and a pat, which she loves.

But I can't overcome her reaction to cats. If we are walking, it's nearly impossible to gain control and, if the cat approaches, I have to pick Lady up. She tries everything to get out of my arms and down to the cat. I also have barn cats that occasionally come up to the house, which drives Lady out of control. In the house, I can make eye contact and calm her down, but I'm afraid as spring comes on and windows are open she could see a cat and push through the screen before I can control her. How do I desensitize Lady to cats?

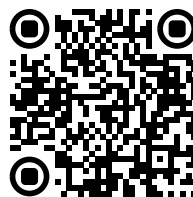
Prey drive directed at cats is almost as common as that directed at squirrels. Because she is little, you should be able to keep her from seeing cats out the window. She probably perches on the couch to look out the window. Rearrange the furniture so she can't see outside or use window film to block her view but not yours. The more she practices aggression to cats, the more likely she is to exhibit the behavior, which is why I want her to not be able to see the cats. Also, it will save your screens. When you take Lady for a walk, you might want to use a Thundercap, which is a veil that will make it harder for her to see cats.

If you are really the dedicated owner you seem to be, you could try to counter-condition her. We want her to learn that cats mean good things, not a chance to chase. Persuade one of your barn cats to enter a carrier and bring the carrier to the house. Ask Lady to sit and reward her for that. Now you will have to determine experimentally how close Lady can be to the cat and still obey. I hope it is 6 feet not 600 feet. Once Lady learns that if she sits quietly in the same room as the cat she will be rewarded, you can teach her to sit quietly closer and closer to the carrier. You can use different cats, so she generalizes to the whole species. You were very nice to take in Lady so I hope you will be able to cure her fascination with all things feline. ■



Do You Have a Behavior Concern?

Send your behavior questions to Cornell's renowned behavior expert Katherine Houpt, VMD, Ph.D., shown here with Yuki, her West Highland White Terrier. Email to dogwatcheditor@cornell.edu or send by regular mail to DogWatch, 535 Connecticut Ave., Norwalk, CT 06854-1713.



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