

chronicle

The APDT Chronicle of the Dog



Summer 2025

The Association for Professional Dog Training International

Coexisting with Coyotes • Sniffspotting • Mohawked Mutt Soothes Students

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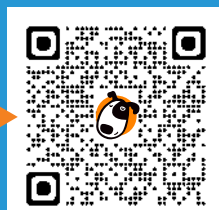
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The APDT International Chronicle of the Dog



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Print to Pixel

Chronicle of the Dog Embraces Digital Future



After many wonderful years in print, the *Chronicle of the Dog* is entering an exciting new chapter —starting with the FALL 2025 issue, we're transitioning to a fully digital format.

COTD's history began as the 8-page quarterly APDT Newsletter in 1994, becoming bi-monthly by 1995. In 2003,

the APDT Newsletter was renamed *Chronicle of the Dog* and adopted its current quarterly publishing format in 2012.

While reading a physical magazine continues to hold a special place in our hearts, this change allows us to bring you an enhanced reading experience accessible anytime, anywhere, expanding *COTD's* reach across a global audience. Transitioning to a more fluid medium will also allow the amazing stories and information to reach a wider audience of people who love dogs as much as we all do.

It's been a natural transition, with more and more APDT International members choosing our digital format over the print version. In its new format *COTD* will be more than just a digital copy of the magazine. It will continue to evolve into more of an interactive space, improving reader engagement through video, and articles presented in a number of new formats which you will also be able to share with your colleagues, peers and clients.

If you're a current subscriber, don't worry, there is nothing you need to do to continue your subscription online. Not subscribed yet, but want to be? More details for how to access this exciting new way to experience all the things we have loved about *Chronicle of the Dog* through the years, and more!

And speaking of amazing stories, the SUMMER issue is filled with them! Angela Fonseca writes about the complex dynamic of living with coyotes as humans – with their pets – have encroached upon their habitats. That story begins on **page 10**.

We also have submissions from two award-winning Dog Writers Association of America authors. Peggy Swager writes about her journey (**page 18**) going from working with horses to training dogs and what she has learned from that experience. Rachel Brix introduces us to Sniffspotting (**page 14**), a way of expanding your dogs' outdoor experience by renting time at participating locations, sort of doggie version of a private dog park. It's a great opportunity to give reactive dogs a chance to explore a new location without the stress of other dogs.

Rachel also writes about the shock of learning her dog Emmie had brain cancer. The story, beginning on **page 27**, is heartfelt and emotional, but also addresses how dogs often give us signs that something is wrong before a diagnosis.

Therapy dogs come in all shapes and sizes, but for one New Mexico pooch, she doesn't let diabetes or blindness keep her from spreading smiles among students at an Albuquerque school. Sporting a scraggly mohawk, Izze came to the therapy dog business a bit late in life, but she's making an impact in her community. That story begins on **page 24**.

Meg Harrison, an occasional writer for *COTD*, writes about the use of flower essence to help ease compassion fatigue that affects trainers, rescuers, and shelter workers. That article begins on **page 32**. Meg is also presenting a webinar on the topic, and will be hosting the Comfort Zone at the 2025 APDT International conference in Richmond.

The conference this year is bringing back an evening social event on Thursday, Nov. 6. It will be an opportunity to sample craft brews and tasty tidbits while networking and then have a special presentation that can earn attendees an additional CEU. The evening will close out with music and dancing. Read more on how to sign up for this event on **page 48**, which is followed by a tentative schedule for the 2025 conference (**pages 49-55**).

Please take a few moments to check out this SUMMER edition, our final that will offer both a print and digital version. We deeply appreciate your support over the years and can't wait to share *COTD's* new journey with you.

Devon Hubbard Sorlie

Devon Hubbard Sorlie
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Enhancing Your APDT International Experience

Your board and staff are continuously working on new opportunities



I am halfway through my term as the 2025 Chair of the Association for Professional Dog Training International, and I'm thrilled to share some exciting new updates that the board and staff have been working on these last few months. Our ultimate goal is always to uncover opportunities to

enhance your experience and the value you receive as part of our global community.

2025 CONFERENCE IN RICHMOND, VA

The 2025 APDT International Conference is coming to Richmond, Virginia. This beautiful town was named CNN's #1 town to visit in 2024 because of its top-notch museums, dynamic neighborhoods, diverse food scene, and ready access to the surrounding wine country. Join us Nov. 5–7 for an exceptional event that offers unparalleled opportunities to expand your knowledge, build meaningful connections, and immerse yourself in industry-leading education.

This year, we're proud to offer a versatile conference format — attend virtually from the comfort of your home or join us in-person for maximum exposure to fresh ideas and collaboration opportunities. Don't miss our special pre-conference workshops on Tuesday, Nov. 4. Some are hosted in cooperation with the outstanding Richmond SPCA, providing you with hands-on experiences and direct access to some of the brightest minds in dog training.

Our conference showcases an unparalleled array of educational tracks, captivating live demonstrations, and thoughtfully curated networking events designed to foster enduring professional relationships. Check out our new VIP Night on the Town event on Thursday. Attendees will also have access to a premier expo hall featuring cutting-edge products and services from top vendors, each selected to help elevate and support your continued success as a professional dog trainer.

CHRONICLE OF THE DOG: ENTERING A NEW DIGITAL ERA

This edition you're holding marks a significant milestone—the final printed version of the *Chronicle of the Dog*. Starting with our next issue, the *Chronicle of the Dog* is evolving into a fully digital publication. We recognize the emotional connection many of us have to the printed magazine; however, the sustainability and accessibility benefits of digital publishing are undeniably valuable. Going digital enables us to reach a broader international audience, offer fully searchable archives, enhance ease-of-use, and create dynamic content experiences. Moreover, shifting to a digital platform opens exciting new avenues for sponsorship and contributor opportunities, strengthening our fiscal health as an organization and enriching the value we deliver to our members.

Rest assured, the *Chronicle of the Dog* isn't going anywhere — it's simply stepping into an innovative new era. We're excited about the limitless possibilities this transition brings!

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES—SHAPE THE FUTURE OF APDT INTERNATIONAL

APDT International thrives because of passionate volunteers who generously dedicate their time and expertise. Right now, we're actively seeking committed professionals to contribute fresh perspectives to several committees, including Border Collies (volunteers) at conference, and both the Education and Membership committees. We encourage experienced and driven individuals who want to positively influence our organization and the industry to step forward. If you have new ideas, a desire to contribute to our future, and want to give back, we'd love to hear from you. Visit our committees and workgroups page at apdt.com/committees-and-workgroups to learn more and apply.

EXPANDING MEMBER BENEFITS—INTRODUCING EZACCESS MD AND MORE

We are committed to providing our members with practical resources and exceptional benefits. As a mom and business owner, I know how hard it can be to pay for and find time to get to medical appointments for myself and my family. That's why I'm thrilled to highlight our newest benefit: EZAccess MD. This comprehensive telemedicine service provides 24/7 virtual and in-person healthcare access for one low monthly fee — available exclusively to APDT International members. From urgent care needs to routine wellness visits, EZAccess MD covers the types of appointments that often fall through the cracks for busy professionals. It's a game-changing resource designed with the realities of dog training professionals in mind. Learn more at apdt.com/telemedicine.

We're continuously looking to expand our benefits portfolio. If you have connections or ideas for additional member perks — such as retirement planning services, insurance, legal support, educational discounts, business resources, software discounts, or financing opportunities tailored to solopreneurs or small business owners like dog trainers—please reach out. Submit your suggestions via our “Contact Us” form on the website or email our executive director directly. Your active involvement and innovative ideas drive APDT International forward. Together, we will continue to elevate professional dog training worldwide, ensuring that our members are empowered, equipped, and inspired.



Ines McNeil, B.S. Biology, CPDT-KA
Chair, Association for Professional Dog Training International
Founder, *The Modern Dog Trainer*

Embracing Evolution:

Transforming the Future of Dog Training and Pet Care



Change is never easy. But evolution—real evolution—means growth, and growth often comes with discomfort. In our profession, we are in the midst of a transformation. The landscape of dog training, behavior support, and pet care more broadly is expanding rapidly, fueled by shifting societal values, economic growth in the pet sector,

and the ever-deepening bond between people and their dogs.

Despite ongoing global marketplace instability and political uncertainty, the pet industry continues to defy odds. In 2023, worldwide pet industry sales hit \$355 billion, growing at nearly 7% year-over-year. The U.S. alone saw a surge in pet ownership, with 94 million households now living with at least one pet — an increase of 12 million households in a single year. These numbers are staggering, but they tell a story we in this field already know — animals are more central to our lives than ever before, and that bond is driving demand for ethical, effective, and science-informed care, including training and behavior services.

This is a moment of profound opportunity. But as with any inflection point, we are also feeling the growing pains. With the increasing demand for professional dog training, there is a corresponding need for our profession to enhance organization, communication, collaboration, and leadership capabilities. The days of working in isolation, of drawing hard lines between professions, or of limiting ourselves to small circles of peers are fading. The future of our profession is interdisciplinary, inclusive, and international.

At APDT International, we're embracing this evolution. We are reimagining what it means to be a professional organization in a world where trainers, behavior consultants, veterinarians, shelter staff, pet sitters, groomers, researchers, and pet guardians are all part of the same ecosystem. Our work touches each of these groups in some way, and the best outcomes for dogs — and their people — come when we acknowledge and embrace those intersections.

Chronicle of the Dog has long been a source of information, learning and insight for the profession. As we explore how we can expand the reach of the publication and its potential impact on the world around us, a change in format has presented an opportunity. While opportunity in change may not be immediately evident to some, we are very excited about the growth *COTD* can achieve going forward. The organization continues to learn how we can best serve our current audiences as well as engage in meaningful dialogue with others.

Not all evolution feels comfortable. As we strive for higher standards, increased transparency, and greater access to education,

we may bump up against resistance — sometimes from within our own community. That is not failure. That is friction. And friction is often a sign that movement is happening.

It is important in these times to remember that no one grows without challenge. Just as we understand that behavioral change in a dog requires patience, consistency, and thoughtful engagement, so too does change within a profession. We must lean into this moment with humility and curiosity, not with fear. We must continue to share facts, listen to new voices, and be willing to let go of practices that no longer serve us — or the dogs in our care.

Just as we understand that behavioral change in a dog requires patience, consistency, and thoughtful engagement, so too does change within a profession. We must lean into this moment with humility and curiosity, not with fear.

We are also being called upon to think more globally. As APDT International expands its reach and invites in new perspectives from around the world, we are not only building bridges — we are strengthening our foundation. Professional dog training is no longer a niche, regionalized effort. It is a global movement. And with that comes responsibility: to be stewards of quality, advocates for humane practices, and champions of lifelong learning.

Looking ahead, the forecast is clear: by 2030, the pet industry is expected to reach \$500 billion globally. What will our profession look like by then? Who will we welcome into our community? How will we define excellence, credibility, and ethical care? The answers lie in the work we do now — how we mentor, how we build community, and how we respond to the inevitable changes that lie ahead.

At APDT International, we remain committed to guiding this profession forward with clarity, compassion, and purpose. We are not just reacting to change—we are shaping it.

Let's continue the work. Together.

Matt Varney

Matt Varney
Executive Director



ON-DEMAND WEBINAR

Fundamentals of Learning Theory

CEUs: 1 (CCPDT, IAABC, KPA)

Learning theory is fundamental in dog training, as it helps trainers understand how dogs acquire new behaviors.

Instructor: Dr. Tammy McClain

pathlms.com/apdt/courses/87510



APDT INTERNATIONAL:

ONLINE EDUCATION COURSE

Dog Training 101: What every trainer needs to know

September 3 - October 7, 2025



13.5 - 20 CEUs

Sarah Filipiak,
CDBC



Register at APDT International's Learning Platform:
www.pathlms.com/apdt/courses/106582

Welcome to APDT's Newest Members!

APDT International is proud to be an industry-leading association for trainers to network with each other, provide educational opportunities, and grow professionally within the dog training and behavior profession. We salute your commitment to strengthening the professional dog training industry and honor your commitment towards furthering your education through continuing education.

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Beyond Fear

Rethinking the challenges of the dog-coyote relationship

By Angie Fonseca, CPDT-KA, UWAAB, FFCEP

Before your alarm has a chance to wake you, your best friend plants a wet one on your cheek. Warm puffs of breath and the insistent nudge of a damp nose leave no room for debate; you rise from the cozy embrace of your covers to start the day – by making your dog's day. You throw on sweats and grab the shoes that signal it is finally time for The Walk. You wouldn't think of denying your dog this treasured ritual. But this morning, you hesitate to step outside into the cool dawn. Yesterday, your neighbor told you they saw a coyote in the neighborhood who "was huge and didn't act afraid of anything." You know coyotes are around. Yet, you suddenly feel unprepared, realizing you don't know what steps to take if you and your dog cross paths with a coyote, let alone what to do if one approaches you. But your pup's expectant eyes are persuading you to walk, and you just hope today isn't the day you need to know what to do.

It's a familiar scenario, whether you've lived it yourself or your clients have. Pet parents are often fearful after hearing stories on the news, social media, or from neighbors about coyotes harming beloved pets. Despite the emotional challenges associated with coyote encounters,

understanding the causes and mechanisms behind these interactions is crucial for developing coexistence strategies that ensure the safety of both pets and coyotes.

Although coyote attacks on humans are rare, a persistent fear exists, rooted in historical and social values that have been passed down. These negative views may have been fueled by the late 19th-century U.S. federal government initiative to eliminate predators in North America, which included a campaign against coyotes. With a serious misunderstanding of their ecological importance, millions of large carnivores were killed, and wolves were successfully exterminated as a result of this program. Coyotes found an opportunity in the absence of wolves, leading to a substantial expansion of their territory.

Today, coyotes share every corner of North America with us, and many people, especially those with pets, have had firsthand experiences with them. Even in the most densely populated cities, coyotes are present, and their role as top predators promotes a

Because human populated places offer a constant food supply and shelter, coyotes are drawn to them, resulting in increased contact with humans and dogs and a rise in the potential for conflict. Coyotes generally live peacefully alongside us, but the dynamic between us is complex, particularly due to our shared lives with their domestic canine relatives.

valuable ecological balance. Coyotes help mitigate the spread of diseases and protect vegetation by preying on rodents, rabbits, and gophers. Through resource competition, coyotes limit the abundance of other urban carnivores such as raccoons, skunks, and feral cats, which helps to increase wild bird populations. A reduction in coyote numbers can set off a chain reaction, allowing smaller carnivores to thrive and alter prey populations.

Coyotes exhibit exceptional behavioral flexibility, enabling them to adjust their behaviors to changing environments. This adaptive trait is essential for coyotes to successfully navigate encounters with human-made environmental conditions such as roads, buildings, novel foods, and domestic pets. Over time, we've witnessed coyotes effectively adjust to the changes we've imposed on the environment as well as the ways we manage wildlife in urban areas. Because human populated places offer a constant food supply and shelter, coyotes are drawn to them, resulting in increased contact with humans and dogs and a rise in the potential for conflict. Coyotes generally live peacefully alongside us, but the dynamic between us is complex, particularly due to our shared lives with their domestic canine relatives.

FAMILY TIES

Domestic dogs (*Canis lupus familiaris*) and coyotes (*Canis latrans*) are members of the Canidae family with a close evolutionary connection. They share a common ancestor and certain characteristics but are two distinct species. As social and territorial animals, canids tend to be more aggressive towards outsiders, which may explain some of the conflicts that take place between dogs and coyotes. Much like dogs, coyotes may engage in defensive behaviors if they're cornered or injured. Despite what the media might suggest, coyote-dog interactions are not solely defined by attacks on domestic dogs. Dogs have been observed killing coyotes as well. While coyote-dog interactions may include predator-prey behaviors, they also engage in social behaviors, including mating and play, which can

be misinterpreted as aggression. Often, dog behavior plays a role in whether or not a coyote engages in a confrontation. There are a variety of additional factors that influence the type and outcome of interactions between dogs and coyotes.

FACTORS INFLUENCING DOG-COYOTE INTERACTIONS

- **Who's bigger:** Coyotes usually weigh between 18 and 30 pounds. They are less likely to make physical contact with a dog bigger than they are; however, small dogs may appear as prey.
- **Reproductive status:** Spayed or neutered, in estrus (yes, dogs and coyotes can reproduce).
- **Time of year:** Breeding season (Winter) and rearing season (Spring and Summer).
- **Time of day:** Urban coyotes are visible most often from dusk to dawn, but it is normal for them to be active and visible during the day too.
- **Age:** Young coyotes may be more naive and curious.
- **Health:** Sick or injured coyotes may be more defensive.

LIVING WITH COYOTES

We've created an ecological opportunity for coyotes, much like the one we created for wolves long ago, where living alongside humans offers advantages. While coyote domestication is unlikely, some scientists suggest natural selection still favors boldness in wild



canid populations that live near people. In other words, fear and flight responses are not suitable in an urban setting, and individuals have a better chance of survival and reproduction if they are confident and exploratory. Although this may be true, people don't usually appreciate bold coyotes, and reports of conflict increase when they encounter a coyote that doesn't seem fearful. Habituation, or a lack of fear of humans, can happen when people feed coyotes, and intentionally feeding coyotes perpetuates this process. Unintentional feeding, such as leaving trash unsecured or putting food out for other wildlife, can have the same consequences.

Since coyotes are considered opportunistic and will supplement their diet with what's available, such as small pets, pet food, seeds from bird feeders, and unsecured trash, their diet mainly consists of rodents and plants. With access to a variety of food resources, urban and suburban coyotes don't need to consume dogs. Various studies that investigate coyote diets by analyzing their scat corroborate that they are only consuming domestic dogs in very small amounts. One scat analysis study found that when reports of dog-coyote conflicts increased, dog consumption did not. This data supports the hypothesis that competition, not predation, explains coyote attacks on pet dogs. Coyote attacks on dogs may increase during denning and pupping seasons and are likely a coyote's attempt to remove a perceived threat to their food sources, territories, dens, and mates.

Communities must learn and practice coexistence strategies together to keep neighbors safe and coyotes wild. Living with coyotes means pet parents should always be vigilant in their efforts to ensure their dogs' safety. High fences may help keep coyotes out of yards, but fences are not coyote-proof, and therefore, dogs should never be left unsupervised. Dogs should always be leashed for walks and hikes to avoid escalating dog-coyote encounters, especially during denning season. Although off-leash walks may be enjoyable, the leash is the best way to manage a dog during a coyote encounter. Retractable leashes should be avoided so that dogs can be kept close and away from bushes.

AVOIDING TROUBLE IF YOU SEE A COYOTE

- Pick up dogs that can be lifted; otherwise, pull them in close to you.
- Maintain eye contact and back away slowly.
- Avoid cornering and always let a coyote run away.
- Do not approach or let dogs engage with a coyote.
- Do not offer food or feed a coyote, as this will attract them to you and others in the future.



IF A COYOTE APPROACHES

- Coyotes are much more likely to move away from you, and confrontational behaviors usually correlate with denning season. If one approaches, avoid running away.
- Pick up dogs that can be lifted; otherwise, stand in front of your dog to try and keep the coyote's attention on you and not your dog.
- Suggest to the coyote that you are unapproachable by making loud noises such as clapping, stomping, opening your jacket, waving your arms or a plastic bag, popping open an umbrella, or shaking a premade can with coins in it. This is called hazing.
- If possible, continue facing the coyote until it retreats.
- When in doubt, calmly leave the area.
- Choose an alternate route for future walks with your dog.

Remember, coyotes will most likely not pick a fight with a dog; doing so could be detrimental to their own health and well-being. If a coyote approaches your dog, it could simply be asking them to move away, so giving the coyote space is the best way to avoid escalating the situation.

Dogs, integral to our lives, and coyotes, essential to the ecosystem, must now coexist within our human-made world. Despite the challenges associated with this interconnection, communities can come together to design and implement targeted strategies for promoting a safe and healthy environment for everyone. It's our responsibility as pet professionals to raise awareness and educate clients about the reciprocal impact between domestic pets and wildlife.

While coyote domestication is unlikely, some scientists suggest natural selection still favors boldness in wild canid populations that live near people. In other words, fear and flight responses are not suitable in an urban setting, and individuals have a better chance of survival and reproduction if they are confident and exploratory. Although this may be true, people don't usually appreciate bold coyotes, and reports of conflict increase when they encounter a coyote that doesn't seem fearful. Habituation, or a lack of fear of humans, can happen when people feed coyotes, and intentionally feeding coyotes perpetuates this process. Unintentional feeding, such as leaving trash unsecured or putting food out for other wildlife, can have the same consequences.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Sniffspotting

These public yet private playgrounds for dogs provide new adventures

By Rachel Brix, CCBC-KA, CPDT-KA

I began taking my dogs to Sniffspots a few years ago. We've always had fenced in yards, but the idea of exploring new territories off leash quickly became part of the training plan for my reactive dog once I discovered this online company that rents private property for public use, billing them as "private dog parks." But only the people and dogs who reserve the time are allowed in the space for that booking, so there's no worry about a typical dog park scene where there could be issues with other dogs.

Sniffspot, the moniker of both the company and its spaces for rent, offers a win-win: property owners can make passive income by renting out their spaces to those of us who have dogs; and those of us with dogs get access to private spaces to go for enjoyment, enrichment, exercise, play, training, peaceful walks, water fun, meet ups and doggy dates. The company sets property owners up with insurance and rules are in place to ensure consistency, safety, and ease of use. The site is comprehensive and has a FAQ section, and a wealth of blog posts about various topics of canine interest written by trainers.

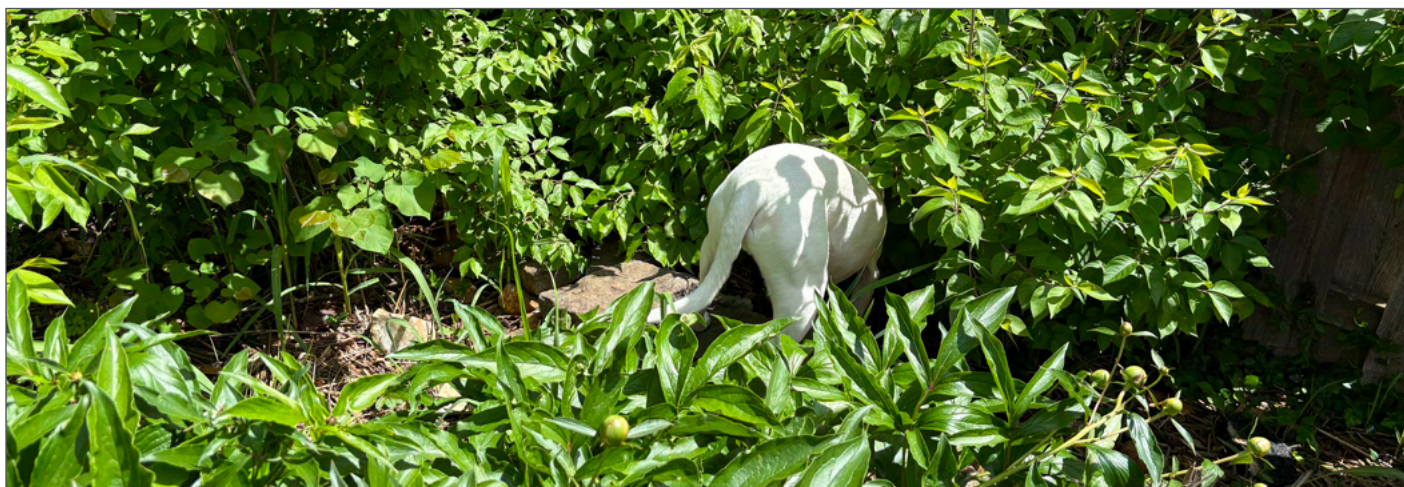
The site works much like Airbnb and VRBO sites, complete with filters for location and amenities and preferred containment (or lack of). For a nominal charge, usually between \$4 and \$10 per one-hour visit, patrons have the property to themselves. Some properties' costs can be a little higher and, depending on how many dogs you have, there may be additional charges. While there's no charge to use the website, you can purchase a subscription, called Sniffpass, which offers discounts and three different tiers for monthly billing. The calendar is very user-friendly and shows upcoming available dates/times and you can favorite certain sites.

You can read and post reviews of each property, similar to Airbnb and VRBO sites. Each Sniffspot listing highlights pertinent details, pictures, reviews, amenities, and you can message the host and book once you've registered and signed Sniffspot's participation waiver. Most of the hosts I have been in contact with have been very accommodating and responsive. I have only been to one where the gate did not latch properly, and the yard was in poor shape. All the others have had the grass mowed, the yards are tidy, and the fencing is sturdy with no gaps.

Filters also provide for choosing whether it's okay for other people, other dogs or pets, or other distractions to be around while visiting. Many spots are fenced, but filters also allow for searching for fully or partially fenced and even unfenced. I've seen unfenced options as large as 20 acres, which is a nice private walk (on leash for us) on private property. Personally, I always choose the completely fenced-in options so my guy can safely experience the many benefits of being off leash. At the time of writing, and according to Sniffspot's website, its catalog of available spots includes: 40,513 full fenced options;



The author's dog, Apache, enjoys exploring a Sniffspot property.



28,502 spaces ½ acre or more, 6,371 dog water parks, 2,234 dog hiking trails, 9,123 dog fields, and 2,818 dog agility parks.

Many sites have water features on the property, including creeks, streams, even beaches and sometimes pools. For those with natural water features, just be aware during the warmer summer months to look for the tale-tell signs of blue-green algae, which can be toxic to dogs. Signs of an algal bloom containing cyanobacteria include a shimmering paint-like or slime on the water's surface, although it may be harder to tell with lakes and larger ponds.

A lot of sites also provide toys, fresh bowls of water, poop bags and trash cans. I've even been to some that have agility equipment or parkour-type obstacles set up. Most do not have restrooms to use, but I have seen a handful that have portable toilets.

Users can search within any geographical area, and Sniffspot locations are easily found in and near most suburban areas in most states. When I was living in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, I did have to drive for more than an hour and a half to find one, but for me we enjoyed the nice drive and for my dogs to have fun for an hour was worth it. Now where I live in Missouri, I only travel about 10 or 15 minutes to a Sniffspot.

Typically, I look for at least an acre or more. I found a real gem in North Central Illinois that has five fenced acres. My reactive dog, Apache, had never seen that much space to explore off leash! We're heading to Fayetteville, Arkansas (about 2 hours from us) soon where I found one that is 4 acres. Sniffspots are fun (for me and my dog) and where we now live in Springfield, Missouri, there are several to go to in the evenings after work or on weekends. I enjoy finding new ones to go to, and planning day trips exploring and stopping at several spots throughout the day.

We also make regular use of Sniffspots when on the road traveling with my dog. Their app is user-friendly, convenient, and booking is easy and availability is usually a non-issue, even at last-minute. We prefer to stop at a Sniffspot for him and a rest area for me for our respective potty breaks. It's little extra planning, gas and two stops instead of one, but he enjoys the off-leash time in a new space with new sights and smells after being in the car for any length of time. I

love seeing him off leash, especially since he'd spent nearly 3 years in shelter. It's wonderful to see him so happy.

Regardless of a dog's breed, size, age or temperament, Sniffspot provides a way for all dogs to enjoy private off leash time. I have recommended several clients, especially those without fenced-in yards, to check out Sniffspots in their respective areas as part of our training plans. These areas are also perfect for practicing learned behaviors and generalizing. And don't just take my word for it: Sniffspot is publicly endorsed by well-respected colleagues Kim Brophey, Grisha Stewart and Michael Shikashio, among other experts in our industry.

All dogs need off leash time. Independent exploration provides agency and enrichment, affords opportunities for exploration and builds confidence. However, a lot of dogs don't have access to safe areas to be off leash, especially reactive dogs. And even those dogs who are lucky enough to have their own fenced-in yards at home, they can benefit from exploring new areas with unfamiliar smells, textures, and sights to see. And if you're interested in passive income and have a property you'd be willing to offer to other canine enthusiasts, you might investigate their process for becoming a host. As far as we're concerned there can never be too many Sniffspots. Happy sniffing!



Rachel Brix is a Certified Behavior Consultant Canine- Knowledge Assessed and Certified Professional Dog Trainer-Knowledge Assessed through the Certification Council of Professional Dog Trainers and has been working with humans and their dogs over 15 years. She has both managed and volunteered at shelters and is an advocate for animals at both the local and state levels. Rachel has also been nominated for several Dog Writers Association of America Awards and this year won the Maxwell Medallion for her article on trauma in dogs. She lives in Missouri with her goofy, adorable, resilient rescue, Apache.

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From Horses to Hounds

A Trainer's Journey to Tackling Challenging Dog Behaviors

By Peggy Swager

SUMMARY

A question I hear from many dog trainers beginning their careers, and from some who are looking for ways to improve their skills, is where can they find solutions to more challenging dog behavior issues. I learned the answer to this question when working with horse behavior issues while in college. I was working on my degree in biology and took many psychology courses. During the years I worked with horses, I had access to seasoned horsemen and was mentored by a veterinarian. This gave me an advantage when I transitioned to working with dogs who were showing undesirable behaviors. This article talks about my journey while sharing key information I've learned from other professional trainers who have helped me find potential resolutions for more challenging dog behavior problems.

NAVIGATING YOUR DOG TRAINING CAREER

I began my animal behavioral work with horses when I was in college earning my degree in biology and taking extra psychology classes. I was fortunate, in those days, to have mentoring from horsemen and a veterinarian. My transition to dogs began in the 1990s when I joined an obedience club where I learned from accomplished trainers and listened to guest lectures. As time went on, I did extensive reading of dog training books, viewed DVDs, and attended seminars and conferences. However, resolutions to more challenging behavioral issues were often found when I interviewed experienced dog trainers.

This article shares what helped with my journey and includes some of the key interviews with other trainers that helped me to support more challenging dogs.

Pikes Peak Obedience Club (PPOC) was a great resource for my canine training education. The Colorado Springs club contained skilled trainers who competed in the top levels of obedience. The club also offered lessons to the public and guest lecturers. Back in the 1990s, the trainers teaching classes were a mixture of people who used choke collars, and some who were beginning to use treats. I sidestepped using a choke collar and was fortunate to be trained to teach the puppy classes by a positive reinforcement trainer.

Many of the PPOC trainers who competed in obedience had a favorite breed to train. This enlightened me to the idea that some breeds not only trained more readily, but some individuals within the breed could be more cooperative with the trainer's efforts. That concept was driven home for me when my daughter and I decided to get Jack Russell Terriers, aka Parson Russell Terriers. I did so much research on Jack Russell Terriers, I ended up co-authoring a book on them with my dog's breeder. Many of the trainers at PPOC felt that in general, terriers were more of a challenge to train. As for the idea that some dogs within a breed could vary in trainability, our two Jack Russell proved that theory. My daughter's dog, Alexis, was very cooperative when it came to training and loved to work for treats. My dog, Cookie, learned just as quickly,



Can you guess which one is Cookie and which is Alexis?

but securing her compliance needed a different approach than simply using treats.

A particular problem I had with Cookie's sit was that the dog wouldn't comply with my command unless I first showed her the treat. I had done research on Jack Russell Terriers and learned they were independent working dogs used to chase foxes out of their dens. Their independent nature and breeding to take charge over another animal appeared to be what Cookie was doing with me — taking charge.

Seeking training solutions with Cookie, I asked different trainers at PPOC. One trainer in particular, Janice Dearth, who went on to be an author of training books and online courses, an AKC Rally and Obedience judge, as well as a lifetime member of the National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors (NADOI), had some ideas. Janice had successfully trained a Fox Terrier for obedience. Janice talked about the importance of the “watch” cue. But unlike some trainers who verbally gave a watch cue and then lured the dog's attention to their face with a treat, Janice taught her dogs to offer eye contact without a verbal cue.



Janis with Danny, her Fox Terrier

Many of the trainers at Pikes Peak Obedience Club felt that in general, terriers were more of a challenge to train. As for the idea that some dogs within a breed could vary in trainability, our two Jack Russell proved that theory. My daughter's dog, Alexis, was very cooperative when it came to training and loved to work for treats. My dog, Cookie, learned just as quickly, but securing her compliance needed a different approach than simply using treats.

Janice explained how she began the “watch” training at home. She'd slip some food for a treat in her own mouth, and when the dog chose to look at her, she'd spit out the treat for the dog. I tried this to get Cookie to choose to look at me, and found it helped to create a better, more cooperative relationship with my dog.

However, Cookie still wanted me to present a treat before she'd comply with commands. To solve this, I began to set treats around the house out of visual and physical reach of Cookie. I'd stop by a treat she couldn't see on the counter, turn toward my dog who now often watched me, and ask her to sit. Since I didn't have a treat in my hand, she still would not sit on my verbal cue alone.

I didn't say anything about her lack of response, but instead, I'd pick up the treat and repeated my request for her to sit. Seeing the treat in my hand, she sat, and I verbally marked her correct behavior. But before I fed her the treat, I'd put the treat down, then pick it up again. If she'd gotten up from her sit, I'd ask her to sit again, and again mark the sit again before handing over the treat. Soon Cookie anticipated me picking up a treat and began to sit on cue, without me having to show her the treat. Eventually, I was able to fade the treats altogether.

Cookie had other training challenges. In general, I'd say she had a “stubborn streak.” I got to thinking since mules have a reputation for being “stubborn,” perhaps an accomplished mule trainer could help me solve some of my training challenges. So I called up one of the top mule trainers in the country at that time. I talked to Brad about issues with “stubborn dogs” and asked him if he'd share tips he'd learned to train mules. Brad flatly said, “Mules aren't stubborn.” I rechecked my contact information to make sure I was



I not only found play as a great motivator for my dog Cookie, I found it useful in my puppy class.

talking to the top mule trainer in the country, the same one who did videos and seminars. I was. Not wanting to contradict this guru of mule training, I asked him to explain what he meant.

Brad told me that “stubbornness” is created when people use the wrong approach to training. The trainer had discovered mules often don’t want to do things unless they can see the value in complying and that trying to force compliance resulted in resistance.

After I hung up the phone, I realized that it wasn’t my dog Cookie who needed training, it was me. I worked to change my approach and made sure I let Cookie choose to work with me, rather than trying to force her. I also discovered that Cookie loved play as a reward during training, and coupled that with using the Premack Principle, which suggests more probable behaviors will reinforce less probable behaviors. Some trainers describe this as, “For the dog to get what he wants, he must first do what you want.” Cookie’s “stubborn streak” disappeared, and she became motivated to train with me. What Brad said about “stubbornness” was correct. Just like mules, dogs should not be coerced, threatened, forced, or punished into compliance. With Cookie, strategically using play gave her motivation to train with me and respond to my cues.

After addressing Cookie’s behavior issues, I soon found myself with a lot of Jack Russell Terrier owners as clients. I noticed a pattern in many of my clients with “problem dogs.” The owners had watched the sitcom “Frasier” and seen the Jack Russell named Eddie on the show. These owners wanted a dog just like Eddie: a cute dog full of antics that would be entertaining to own. What they found they had was an out-of-control dog that frustrated them.

At that time, I had recently read an article in Dog Fancy magazine about Eddie, whose real name was Moose. Ironically, Moose’s first owners had found this dog doing many of the same behaviors my clients were complaining about. Moose’s first owner was so

frustrated she gave the dog away to Mathilde de Cagny, who worked for Birds and Animals Unlimited.

I decided to call up Mathilde to find out if she could tell me what about her initial training helped with Moose’s motivation to train and follow cues. Mathilde said when she first brought Moose home, she put him in the trailer and left him there while she went to work. When she got home, she found him up on the counter. She said to him, “So, you like to jump.” She then took out a treat. Moose immediately jumped, trying to snatch the treat.

Mathilde recognized that Moose enjoyed the process of jumping, so she began to pair Moose’s jump with the word jump. She then went on to shape the behavior she wanted, which was to say the word “jump” and only reward the dog when he complied with the jump cue. This became the first verbal cue Moose learned to follow. Mathilde went on to leverage that initial training to create the well-trained dog people saw on “Frasier.”

At that time I wrote an article for True Grit magazine, explaining how Mathilde’s secret to success was using the Premack Principle. But it bothered me this dog was not motivated to work for a treat with his previous owners, no matter how high of value the treat. Yet somehow Mathilde had managed to change the dog’s motivations around working for food. I wondered if she found a different way to employ the Premack Principle. Nothing came to mind until years later when I was reading about intrinsic motivation.

I like the following Google definition for intrinsic motivation: “Intrinsic motivation is the drive to do something because it’s interesting, enjoyable, or satisfying, rather than for some external reward. It’s based on internal factors like natural interests, values, and passions.” If Mathilde had only tried using treats during training, Moose wouldn’t have been motivated to follow her cues. His original owners had that issue. But the pairing of a treat with an intrinsic behavior gave the treat a different value. I recently wrote an article for the *Chronicle of the Dog* (WINTER 2023) called “Adding Power to the Premack” to better explain this kind of training approach.



At first Leah races the fence because she is excited to see me, but then she transitions to intrinsically motivated jumping. Leah is totally enjoying the action of jumping, and even can’t resist doing a small one after I ask her to stop and settle.

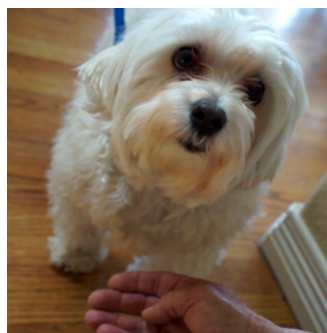
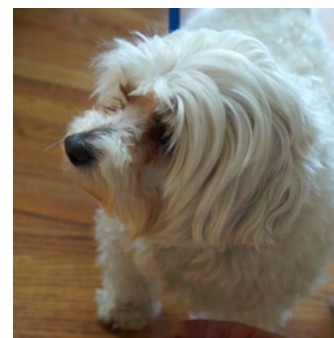
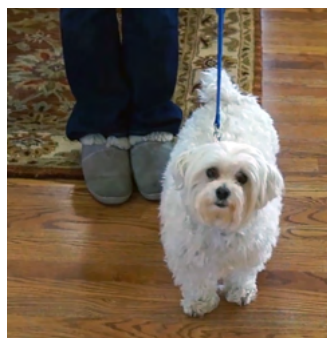
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I am a strong believer in reading books by highly successful trainers such as Turid Rugaas’ 2006 book “On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals.” That book teaches a lot about canine body language and its meaning. Just as important is how dogs use different signals to keep the peace, and at times can use their behavior and communication signals to help calm down a tense situation. I feel this book was helpful when working to try and better understand dogs.

However, a trainer I knew from agility competitions was the one who taught me how to use this body language and communication information in a much more functional way when working with dogs. My lesson began while waiting for my turn to run Cookie on an agility course. Kelly was up next with her Boston Terrier, Hoosier. Just as Kelly stepped forward to run her dog, Hoosier panicked, which resulted in the dog snorting and struggling to catch his breath. I hardly had time to think how there was no way this brachycephalic dog could run agility, when Kelly stepped in front of her dog, squared her shoulders and in a light, upbeat voice said, “Hoosier, get it together.” Hoosier calmed, which allowed him to catch his breath. Hoosier successfully ran the course, placing in the ribbons.

When I interviewed Kelly for an article called “Calming Signals: Reduce Stress Before Competition,” (COTD FALL 2019) what I discovered was that nervousness is a trigger for brachycephalic issues seen in dogs bred with too-short noses. After Kelly read Turid’s book, she experimented using calming signals with Hoosier, who sometimes had stress-triggered breathing issues at home. Hoosier learned how to calm down from cues Kelly taught him, giving her a tool when he got nervous before an agility run. After watching how Kelly used calming signals on dogs, I began to use them on fearful dogs and have also found success.

Years after owning our Terriers, I met a herding trainer when my daughter acquired a herding dog with the intention of competing. Rick was nationally recognized, and I found I could pick up tips simply by watching him work with my daughter’s insecure dog. One day when walking toward the outside pen to watch Rick train,



I used calming signals for my first encounter with a client’s dog named Benny:

Benny was known to bite people who entered the house. He looked at me and growled after I entered the house. I stood still and talked with the owner about the dog’s history. While talking, every so often I’d turn my head and yawn, a calming signal.

It took Benny a while, but finally he approached me in an arch. I stayed still except to offer my hand for him to touch. When he got close, he stopped and offered me a calming signal, the half head turn. I didn’t move my hand toward him, instead I offered him another yawn.

Benny finally looked at me with a look that seemed to say, “can we be friends.” I gave him a calming signal. Then he stepped forward and rubbed my hand. After that I could pet him affectionately.

I noticed a dog in a crate. When I looked directly at the dog inside, the dog reacted to my look as if I were causing her pain. After the lesson, I talked to Rick about this dog’s reaction. He said that even though this was his best herding dog, the dog was what he called extremely soft, which meant she struggled with human-to-dog interactions.

Rick mentioned that people who are harsh or punitive with dogs who may be more susceptible to generalized anxiety can lead to dogs who show aggressive behaviors, such as biting, because of a fearful underlying emotional state. My studies on soft, sensitive, and shy dogs also support the development of aggression resulting from too harsh interactions with these kinds of temperament in dogs.

What may surprise some people is what these dogs consider punitive, such as me looking directly at them. Although the dogs were bold when working sheep, the dogs found human interactions hard to cope with. For these dogs, it would take a lot of effort and time to build a good, trusting relationship.

Since learning this, I’ve been more attentive to how some dogs react to things we don’t typically perceive as aversive. For example,



Timid Arwin began her training with calm sheep, which was important due to her shy nature. Over time, Arwin became confident and readily faced down argumentative animals. The herding training gave Arwin more confidence in other interactions where she was originally insecure. I've seen agility training have a similar impact.

I've observed trainers marking a mistake with the word "no." Some dogs are fine with this, but others may not be. I knew of a dog who lowered his tail and ears when the trainer corrected a missed weave with a "no." The second time "no" was used to mark that mistake, the dog ran off the course. Although this dog was very bold when it came to misbehaviors, correction of those misbehaviors deteriorated his security with the dog handler.

Another kind of dog I learned about from Rick was what he called a "hard dog." Rick described a "hard dog" as one who has a very hard time taking any directions from a dog handler, making me wonder if Rick was thinking hardheaded when he came up with the term. Ironically, these dogs can often find owner affection reinforcing, to the point where they may become demanding for attention when it is withdrawn. However, when it came to compliance, these kinds of dogs may find people frustrating and as something in their way. The challenge is to teach and motivate the dogs to follow the handlers' guidance.

I've seen "hard dog" issues in a variety of breeds. For example, livestock guardian dogs. These dogs are bred to work independently. They are also bred to persist in getting their way with predators, even fighting to the death if needed. Without training the dog to accept guidance from a dog owner, the dog will not follow commands. Many people inaccurately label the

dog as alpha or dominant, and punishment is often used to solve issues. I have found that the key to this kind of behavior is to understand the dog finds his work very intrinsically motivating. I often find that coupling an intrinsic motivator with the Premack Principle brings compliance.

Rick agrees that "hard dogs" will resist force when it comes to compliance, leaving punishment or threats likely to fail. With "hard dogs," if you push on them or try and force compliance, too often they will push back and the dog trainer ends up in a power struggle. And in the case of livestock guardian dogs, they are bred to try to win in a power struggle at all costs.

What Rick found worked with these dogs was to control the reward. For herding dogs, the reward was getting to work the livestock, which is often an intrinsic reward for the dog. Rick would take away the herding opportunity until the dog earned it back with compliance.

Some people believe that punishment is warranted when seeking to change unwanted behaviors, citing outdated studies portraying roles of alpha and dominance in wolf packs. A newer study by senior research scientist David Mech revealed that infighting within a pack for dominance didn't happen. However, the beating given to this livestock guarding dog to correct unwanted behaviors resulted in the dog learning to show submissive behavior to appease the owner.

Learning dog training is a never-ending process, and sometimes it is the trainer who needs the training. I'm always on the lookout for techniques from other trainers, but those techniques need to be effective, welfare-friendly and be ones that work with the dog's individual needs, personality, and learning tendencies. I often do a Google search and look at what rescues have to say about



Appeasement behaviors do not signal a dog will change the unwanted behavior.



Otis was a mill dog rescue I fostered who was unadoptable due to aggressive behavior, such as biting. I was able to work him through his severe underlying fear that influenced his behavior.

how to succeed in training a breed, since different breeds can have different keys for training success.

As far as my need for information outside of regular training books, that came about because of my choice to work with more challenging dog behaviors and training cases. These kinds of dogs can often be found at dog shelters or as fosters. The time I invested in rehabilitating these challenging dogs resulted in valuable insights, enabling me to resolve the more complex issues presented by my clients.

These days, conferences, seminars, and classes online are more plentiful and can help trainers increase their knowledge. Networking with other trainers is also valuable. Although the PPOC was a training resource, I have added networking with local trainers through an online Facebook forum. What is important for dog trainers in their search for answers is to find the least adverse method possible to train the dog.



Peggy Swager has a Bachelor of Science degree in biology, minor in education, with undergraduate studies in psychology. Over the years, she received mentoring by animal professionals, including a veterinarian, on behavior and fear issues. Peggy has been teaching dog classes and working with problematic dogs since the 1990s. She is an award-winning author with multiple articles and books. To learn more about Peggy, check out her website at www.peggyswager.com.

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Students at Northpoint Charter School in Albuquerque, New Mexico, gather around Izze for their morning pets.

Mohawk-Sporting Mutt Brings Calm to Stressed Albuquerque Students

By Devon Hubbard Sorlie, COTD editor

When students at an Albuquerque, New Mexico high school are feeling a bit stressed, they will seek out their favorite stress-reliever – Izze. Sporting a scraggly mohawk and milky eyes that come with blindness, the nearly 14-year-old Chihuahua, terrier and poodle mix is a favorite among the students, who stop in at Donna Gallegos' office for a quick cuddle with Izze between classes at Northpoint Charter School. For Donna, a school social worker, the small dog is more than a pet; she is a partner in fostering resilience and tranquility in young minds.

"Children are very different now due to COVID," Donna said. "The pandemic has caused a lot of anxiety and depression. The students struggle every single day getting out of their homes into a different environment. For them, making the transition from home to school has been very stressful."

As a therapy dog through the Warm Hearts Network, Izze comes with Donna to Northpoint Charter once or twice a week. Izze's reputation for snuggling spread to the adjacent Renaissance Academy (grades 4-8), and some of those students will also pop in for a quick pet and marvel over Izze's wiry and distinctive hairdo. "The students

look forward to seeing her and ask for her, popping in to say 'I need Izze right now.' When she is here, there will be a crowd of students hovering around her, and you can just see the stress leave their minds and bodies," Donna said. "While I work solely with high school students, all of the students in the building know and love her."

For students struggling with anger, cuddling with Izze helps them calm down. "She's cute and fluffy and soft, all which helps change their mindset and ease their anger," Donna said.

Izze's impact isn't only emotional; she has also become a symbol of resilience. Three weeks after being diagnosed with diabetes at age 10, Izze lost her sight. Donna got a bumper harness for Izze to wear as she learned to navigate the house. After exhibiting signs of depression, Donna took her to an ophthalmologist for cataract surgery. "She was able to see for another two years, but started to go blind again,

"When she is here, there will be a crowd of students hovering around her, and you can just see the stress leave their minds and bodies."

which is common in dogs that are predisposed to that,” Donna said. “But she was able to learn the house and the steps and yard. She runs outside and around the yard. She no longer needs the bumper harness. When I take her with me to work, she’s so comfortable and is not stressed about being in a different environment.”

Donna learned about the Warm Hearts Network through a speech and language pathologist colleague at work who also has two therapy dogs through Warm Hearts, a not-for-profit organization that started after three women who worked at the Los Lunas Training School, a residential facility for adults with developmental disabilities, began bringing their well-mannered dogs to work with the residents. In 1990, these women registered as teams with their dogs through the Pet Partners program and began to recruit additional members. The greater Albuquerque/Los Lunas/Belen chapter was called the Warm Hearts Network, and it became its own legal organization in 2013. WHN has a working volunteer board of directors with experience in business, healthcare, disability, dog training and handling, animal assisted activities, animal assisted therapy, assistance dogs and more.

“I always knew Izze would make a great therapy dog, I just never knew how to go forward with it,” Donna said. “An appointment for an assessment was scheduled, and it was just a neat experience. It was a wonderful, kind group of dog-loving people.”

Izze was asked to perform a variety of commands, such as sit, stay, and walk on a leash. She also had to walk past a bowl of cheese and obey the ‘leave it’ command. Another challenge was remaining calm while a young man in a wheelchair took her for a spin around the room. The biggest test was having a German Shepherd Dog walk through the room to see how Izze would react. “She was calm about everything,” Donna said. “Everyone was so positive and amazed by her.” Typically, handlers leave the room while judges discuss the assessment results, but Donna was informed that Izze passed the assessment immediately after it concluded.

“It really was the most special thing to watch that sweet dog test,” Paula Willis, the president of the Warm Hearts Network said. “I know that in all the years I’ve been with Warm Hearts, we have never tested a dog with that kind of disability. The dog is completely blind, but she did a better job than some of our seeing dogs. I think she is going to make a big impact at the places she visits and will make an amazing difference in our community.”

Izze is eager to put on her therapy dog vest and patch that states: Pet Me, I’m a Therapy Dog. “Izze wears her vest very proudly,” Donna said. “She gets so excited when she knows the vest is going on. She runs to the door and waits to go to the car. She seems to know when it is Thursday...she doesn’t behave that way on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.”

Ironically, Izze’s biggest hurdle to becoming a therapy dog was convincing Donna to keep her after her son brought home an odd-looking puppy with scraggly hair. “We already had three other dogs, so I tried to find her another home,” Donna explained. “But Izze showed me how incredibly smart she is by learning obedience commands and tricks very quickly. She was showing me how amazing she is. I always knew I needed to do something with her, and then I heard about Warm Hearts. I just wish I had done it sooner. But even at the age of nearly 14, Izze puts a lot of smiles on the faces of children.”



Izze at work.



Despite her blindness, Izze enjoys going out and bringing smiles to students with her scraggly mohawk.

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The Tell-Tale Tumor

Navigating Grief and Guilt After a Devastating Diagnosis

By Rachel Brix, CCBC-KA, CPDT-KA

Emmie was officially diagnosed with her brain tumor on Valentine's Day last year, although I think she had self-diagnosed several months before. I don't know if I could've or would've done much differently, as it was inoperable, and I know I would never have put her through radiation therapy (she would've hated it); but I wish I had known sooner. She tried to tell me something was wrong, but I didn't quite get the message.

The tumor started whispering six months earlier when she began scratching her left ear to the point it bled. The vet evaluated her for bacteria and infection, found an exceedingly small amount of bacteria and put her on antibiotics. Em had always been extremely sensitive to her body, so it made sense she would notice a slight change in her ears, but scratching until it bled? The antibiotics didn't work, so the vet pivoted to allergies. This made sense also, as it was September by this time, and Emmie and my other dog, Apache, had seasonal allergies. We had also moved, and she had some skin issues the previous year, so maybe the allergies were manifesting in her ears in a new climate this time? Nevertheless, I sought a second opinion, especially since the allergy medication wasn't working either, and by now she was scratching both ears

rather heavily. Besides the scratching, Emmie appeared to exhibit mostly normal behavior.

The new vet tried different medications, which seemed to help, but by this time, it was well into winter, allergies no longer made sense to me, and indoor allergies had never been a thing for us. I sensed something else was to blame, but those thoughts subconsciously lingered in the land of make-believe, where dogs never get sick. That "something else" became obvious when Emmie's left side of her face atrophied. The tumor had spoken. From then on, she no longer scratched her ears.

I know Emmie knew something was wrong in her head, and all she could do was scratch at her ears to try to relieve the... sensation? Discomfort? Pain? She'd been trying to tell me, but I didn't understand. I never made the leap from ear scratching to brain tumor, especially with no notable behavior changes. I know that even if we had been able to diagnose her back in August or September, the options were few, but I still wish I had known. We could've focused on palliative care. Scratch that: I wish I had been more in tune with my dog. I didn't understand what she was trying to tell me, and it hurts. Like I failed as the primary caregiver to my

I know Emmie knew something was wrong in her head, and all she could do was scratch at her ears to try to relieve the... sensation? Discomfort? Pain? She'd been trying to tell me, but I didn't understand. I never made the leap from ear scratching to brain tumor, especially with no notable behavior changes. I know that even if we had been able to diagnose her back in August or September, the options were few, but I still wish I had known.



best girl. Failed as the one person who should have deciphered what she was clearly getting at. Failed to push the vets harder for more testing and further investigation. Failed as a canine professional.

A year later, I no longer blame myself (scratch that: not as much, anyway). So, I share Emmie's story as a plea to dig deeper into our pets' communication efforts. Observe as closely as possible, ask all the questions, probe, and collaborate with vets to investigate thoroughly. Even though we know dogs will hide pain or discomfort, Emmie wasn't trying to hide anything from me; she wanted me to know her secret, that her tumor was talking, but I didn't hear her.

PERIPHERAL NERVE SHEATH TUMORS

Emmie's facial atrophy was quick and obvious: it seemed as though it happened overnight. Alarmed and confused, I texted pictures to my vet. I also started furiously googling causes. These tumors are uncommon, and my vet admitted not having much experience with what we determined to be the cause: a peripheral nerve sheath tumor, which makes up only 27% of nervous system tumors in dogs. Usually malignant, nerve sheath tumors are considered sarcomas and occur in the periphery of the central nervous system, affecting nerves and tissues that surround the brain and spinal cord. As they grow, they put pressure on nearby tissue and can cause pain and mobility issues. Benign forms do exist, but they are far less common, as are nerve sheath tumors in the legs and abdomen. The cause of nerve sheath tumors is unknown.

Clinical signs include:

- Seizures (most common clinical sign)
- Behavior changes: jumpy, aggressive, staring into space, painful
- Circling/pacing (in the direction of the tumor)
- Head muscle atrophy
- Vision loss/blindness

- Trigeminal neuritis, or "dropped jaw." Some dogs have trigeminal neuropathy, where they have difficulty chewing, but this can happen without the presence of a tumor, and it doesn't necessarily happen when a tumor is present.

Treatment can involve surgery, but the location is problematic and risky, and regrowth is likely anyway. Radiation is another option. Survival times are typically 4-21 months after diagnosis, the average being 1 year. Emmie was at the low end: 4 months and 4 days.

Had we suspected a brain tumor and diagnosed her earlier, though, I don't think I would've changed anything. I wouldn't have risked surgery, and radiation would've diminished her quality of life without necessarily prolonging it. As it was, she had four great months almost to the day after her diagnosis. We continued our daily walks, weekend adventures, and trips out to run along the shore at the harbor, her favorite place. I could tell she was slowing on certain days, but her spirit never wavered. On her 13th birthday, we walked to the doggie bakery in town, did backyard agility, and played games. Ten days later, she would be dead.

LOVE AT FIRST SIGHT

I knew I was taking her home from the moment I saw her. Having recently lost 13-year-old Percy, my first dog as an adult, I was not looking for another dog. I was nevertheless convinced I was meant to have this hapless puppy because "surely she was husky/beagle like Percy was." It was 2011, and I was the Lead Dog Trainer at Petco. She was one of the rescues on Adoption Day, lying in a crate and looking very depressed. I called my then-husband and asked him to please come to my work to meet her. Afterward, we went to dinner, and I told him we were taking her home; her name would be Emerson, and we would call her Emmie.

Em was beautiful: tri-colored and fluffy and "looked like" a husky/beagle mix, but she was neither breed. She tested detectable breeds of Chow Chow, American Cocker Spaniel, Australian Cattle Dog, St. Bernard, Bull Terrier, Boxer, Harrier, Otterhound, Miniature Pinscher, and then 25% "Super Mutt," which included various

shepherds among other breeds. Not believing the sheer magnitude of the mix, I tested her DNA again with a different company, and the results were nearly identical.

Emmie had been dumped at the local animal control in Branson, Missouri, with a broken leg, giardia, and hookworm infestation. By the time I'd met her, she'd undergone surgery and had pins in her leg. She was only 10 weeks old. Emmie's operation and/or her mandatory post-op crate rest were unsuccessful. When I took her to the vet post-adoption, I found out her leg had not been healing properly, the pins had migrated, and she would likely always have a "bum leg," which included a luxating patella on top of the large chunk of femur she'd been missing due to the unknown injury. She wasn't a good candidate for additional procedures, but in hindsight, I wondered if I should've gotten third and fourth opinions. Despite having to overcompensate most of her life by extending her hock to stand balanced, Emmie thrived. She loved running the fence when deer came too close, long walks and hikes, swimming wherever and whenever, and digging in spots specially chosen; you just never knew where those would be or when her mood would hit.

Agility and swimming were her beloved activities. We took numerous agility classes over many years, and despite her special needs, she loved it. The A-Frame was her favorite. I always ran her Preferred, which allowed her to participate at 4 inches below the standard for jumps for her height and tacked on 5 seconds of additional time to complete any course. We attended a couple of competitions, just to see, and Emmie would get the zoomies, and that was that. We stuck to our classes, and we loved our date nights, complete with a stop for a Pup Cup or French fries.

She told me she loved swimming while on a leash walk as an adolescent. I'd absentmindedly tossed a stick into a stream, and she went in after it, dragging me with her. We had our usual swimming holes, and I'd gather just the right sticks, the bigger the better. From shore, I'd throw them out as far as I could into the water, and she'd swim for them and bring them back until she was tired, which she let me know by promptly lying down and gnawing on the stick. She also loved to dry herself off whenever wet: I'd lay down a towel and she'd flop onto it and writhe around until she'd scooted herself several feet off the towel.

Em didn't really have any behaviors I found inappropriate; she was just a really cool dog, and her quirks were endearing. Although I could've done without the random snout crotch-punching of passersby on our walks when in more crowded situations, but that would be nitpicking.

Considering whatever physical traumas she had as a very young puppy, she was very receptive to subsequent socialization and life skills training. She was very independent and never really exhibited any apparent signs of fear. In fact, she was a confident dog, modeled confidence for my other two rescue dogs, and served as a beacon of safety for them. As strong as she was, she was also sensitive to her body, which I assumed was the manifestation of her early trauma. If a fly landed on her, she instantly focused on its removal. I would know immediately if she had a minor scrape or lesion because she would

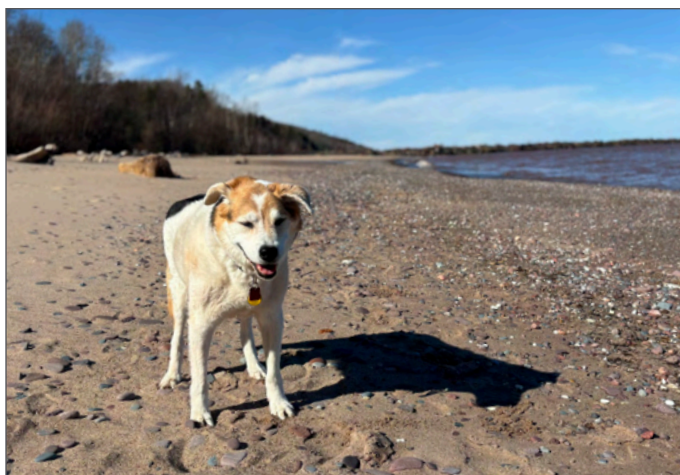
tend to it obviously and often. She alerted me to the few hot spots she'd had before I could even see or feel them present on her skin.

We tried several harnesses, but she was never comfortable with any of them, and even her collar had to be worn loosely. In general, she preferred not to be petted or touched, but on those rare occasions she wanted to cuddle or be petted, I was thrilled and eager to oblige. She did especially love darting under people's knees when they were seated (any person would do), and she would position herself so her lower back and bum would rub in said person's knee pit, and she would shimmy and dance "petting herself" as it were. I loved it.

We always kept her strong, especially her bum leg, with exercise and at-home physical therapy and monitored for any changes with X-rays. She always took supplements and periodic pain meds. But as she aged, she would let me know when her leg was bothering her. For example, she started to slow down and look sheepishly at me toward the end of our walks. So, we shortened our walks and modified her meds. One afternoon, she had the zoomies after her bath as usual, and her leg gave out. We were fortunate to find an excellent vet, not only a Certified Veterinary Pain Practitioner (CVPP) and Certified Canine Rehabilitation Therapist (CCRT) but also a 5-year residency at the American College of Veterinary Sports Medicine. Emmie underwent an extensive rehab program for 10 weeks after it was determined she had tears in her CCL, or cranial cruciate ligament (the human equivalent of an ACL). Due to the composition and nature of her leg, she was not a good candidate for surgery.

I sought a specialist for her leg; should I have sought a specialist for her ears, too? Would having done so have yielded a different outcome? Considering her propensity towards sensitivity and acute body awareness, it didn't surprise me when she began scratching her one ear during what had become allergy season with a move to a new climate. But also, because of her acute body awareness, I should've been more perceptive. Maybe I'm just mad and sad and guilt-ridden and all the things we feel when our dogs die.





THE FINAL CHAPTER

We had gone on our regular 90-minute Sunday morning walk. Walks had gotten a little slower, but the enthusiasm was constant. We went to Dairy Queen for ice cream and a drive on backroads. That evening, I caught her and Apache sharing a bed:, which was odd; it was the first time I knew of in the 6 years they'd lived together. Their relationship was respectful and tolerant, sprinkled with rare occasions of very brief play. They got along just fine but were not close. I captured a picture since it was "so cute," not knowing Emmie wouldn't ever be the same in a few hours, and I'd be making The Call. I don't know who lay down with whom, but by the positioning, I'd say Em lay down with him. I now believe they were saying goodbye. They knew what I didn't know.

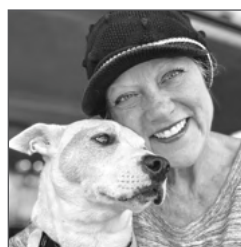
That night, around midnight, she got up and could barely stand but was determined to walk. I carried her down the stairs and outside, thinking maybe her leg was acting up and she had to toilet, even though she never woke up in the middle of the night to go out. In the yard, she shakily walked in slow circles, and she seemed confused. She did urinate, and I carried her back inside, and when she calmed, I lay with her. By now, the tumor was screaming. Screaming at me. Forcing me to acknowledge what I'd been blind to before: the tell-tale tumor would no longer be ignored. The evidence was in my face, seizing my Emmie, stealing her from me, and my powerlessness mirrored her helplessness, and we both succumbed. I suspect it had been screaming all along for Emmie, but for her, it now fell silent.

In the morning, it was more of the same: she could walk, but wobbly and erratically, and she could not control her movements effectively. And she was... vacant. She appeared confused and out of it. Emmie was no longer Emmie. Yet, she insisted on eating breakfast and unsteadily took part in the puzzle feeding with much gusto. I was grasping at routine, and I knew it, but it brought a small comfort. For a brief time, I tried to convince myself she'd be OK, half-believing she'd come out of it. She rested most of the day, and it seemed so... normal. I made her a cake. It was all I could think to do. I spent the day assessing the situation and trying to make her last day comfortable, but it felt futile. And permanent. Although I knew she had a tumor and her time was limited, it was devastating and yet a blessing at the

same time to go from our usual ice cream and a Sunday stroll to euthanasia in less than 36 hours.

I know it's not my fault Emmie had a brain tumor, but I feel as though I should've questioned more, investigated more, and done more. I can only imagine a dog's frustration, confusion, depression, knowing something is off, especially one who is as sensitive to what's going on with her body as Emmie and can only scratch her ears until they bleed, and her humans are not figuring it out. How lonely that must have felt for her. To know she suffered on some level in silence breaks my heart, guts me. And guilts me. Apache is giving me separate concerns as well. Three vets have taken similar approaches to his current issue: trying various allergy medications and topical treatments. I'm pressing harder. I don't want to be paranoid, but I don't want to miss anything this time if I can help it.

I'm so grateful Emmie's last four months were active and enjoyable. I'm so thankful she had so much fun, experiences, and love in her life. I'm so glad I always spent what some thought was "too much time" with her. I'm comforted to have shared part of my life with her. But I miss her. Everything aside, it is what it is. There's no blame to be cast, nothing that could've been done differently. My brain can come to terms with that. Now, I need my heart to catch up.



Rachel Brix is a Certified Behavior Consultant Canine- Knowledge Assessed and Certified Professional Dog Trainer- Knowledge Assessed through the Certification Council of Professional Dog Trainers and has been working with humans and their dogs over 15 years. She has both managed and volunteered at shelters and is an advocate for animals at both the local and state levels. Rachel has also been nominated for several Dog Writers Association of America Awards and this year won the Maxwell Medallion for her article on trauma in dogs. She lives in Missouri with her goofy, adorable, resilient rescue, Apache.

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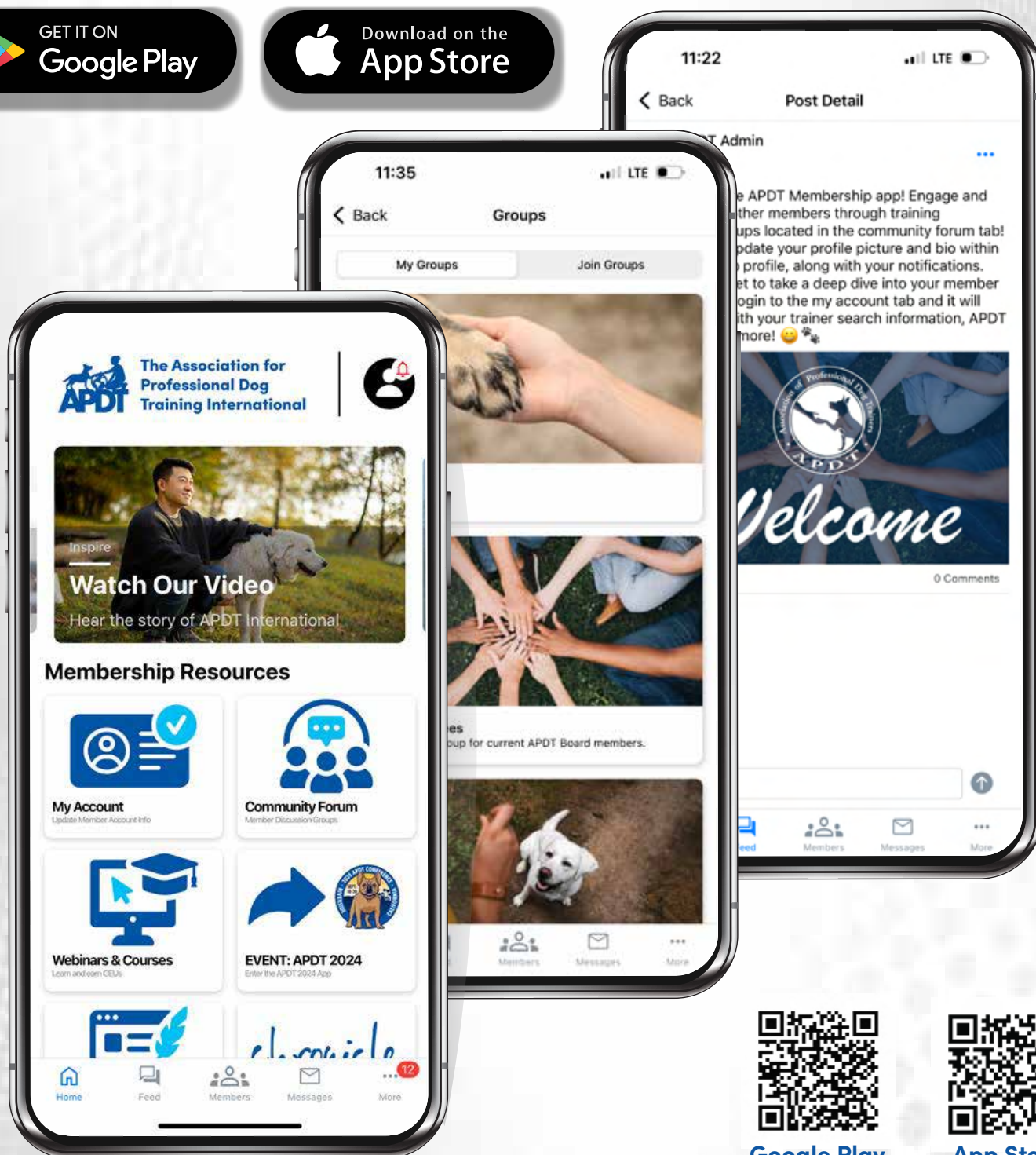
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Compassion Fatigue

Trainers, rescuers and shelter workers all face emotional challenges

By Meg Harrison, BlackWing Farms

Empathetic burn-out happens to individuals (and organizations) in our industry of animal welfare and can progress undetected until quantifiable damage begins to occur. This is the purpose of this article: to talk about a highly sensitive, personal phenomena known to some as the cost of caring.

We give and give, trying to improve the lives of others, because we care. Too much? I will leave that up to you for final analysis. Excessive concern can lead to several adverse consequences: 1) attrition, 2) physical and emotional injury to oneself and others, and 3) various forms of self-harm.

“We are optimists until we are not.” — Charles Darwin

Trainers, rescuers, and shelter workers have their own unique set of mental, physical, and emotional challenges when it comes to doing their jobs — helping others. Part of the challenge is our own personalities, character traits and partly our misguided expectations upon entering the animal welfare industry. Person(alities) who are drawn to animal welfare often share the following traits, based on my experience:

We are: Intelligent, Independent, Principled, Optimistic, Altruistic, Tenacious & Competitive

& Also: Empathetic, Compassionate, Caring, Generous, Forgiving, Tolerant, Honest

These personality attributes could be exhausting to maintain long-term.

Daily challenges include dealing with some level of trauma, exposure to physical danger, emotional demands from bosses, clients and their animals, working long hours, lack of support and recognition, possible neglect of our families and our own self-care. We often face extreme emotional demands from others, who may themselves be experiencing frustration, anxiety, or distress related to someone's (human or animal) behavior. These emotional pressures, combined with unrealistic expectations, can easily lead us to feelings of isolation, disengagement, and exhaustion if left unchecked.

GOOD WAY TO
STOP
IS TO
TAKE A BREAK.

HAVE SOME FUN.

GET SOME RELIEF.

EXPLORE
SOMETHING NEW.

BEFORE YOU FEEL LIKE
RUNNING AWAY
ALTOGETHER.

Attrition is a costly reality in the
Animal Welfare industry.



COMPASSION FATIGUE WARNING SIGNS (NOT IN ANY EXACT ORDER)

In the list below, note how much of these involve the emotional state of feelings, especially early on in the progression. Invisible, undefinable, indefensible feelings. Looking at this list; I cannot help but think about zoocosis or what we used to call shelteritis. We are all in this compassion-centric animal welfare industry together. These ever-changing emotional problems are multi-faceted, progressive, but also reversible and preventable to a certain degree.

1. Feeling overwhelmed, hopeless, helpless, or powerless when hearing of others' suffering
2. Feelings of anger, irritability, sadness and anxiety
3. Feeling detached from surroundings or from physical or emotional experience
4. Feeling emotionally, psychologically or physically exhausted, or numb
5. Physical symptoms such as nausea, dizziness, headaches
6. Feeling less empathy

7. Feeling hypersensitive or insensitive to stories we hear
8. Limited tolerance for stress
9. Self-isolation and withdrawal
10. Relationship conflict
11. Feeling less efficient or productive at work
12. Feeling less pleasure in activities we used to enjoy
13. Difficulty sleeping and nightmares
14. Difficulty concentrating, focusing or making decisions
15. Self-medicating and/or increase in substance use.
16. Feeling need for self-harm or risky behaviors
17. Suicidal ideations
18. Attempts

WAYS TO COPE

In times of stress or emotional difficulty, finding effective ways to cope can transform challenging experiences into opportunities for growth and healing. Whether through connecting with others, fostering kindness, or exploring new practices, these strategies can help nurture resilience, promote positivity, and provide solace in moments of need. Here are some thoughtful and uplifting approaches to consider:

- Find a companion/community/buddy/therapist
- Share out-of-the-ordinary solutions
- Anonymously help someone else
- Learn something new and positive
- Practice rigorous self-care
- Discover a new way to be of service
- Find a way to laugh whole-heartedly

DEFINITIONS

Behavior:

- (a) Anything an organism does that involves action, re-action, or response to its environment or stimulation.
- (b) The ability to survive and thrive in the existing environment.
- (c) A mentally guided emotion, action, or re-action.

Feelings:

- (a) An emotional state or reaction.
- (b) Capacity to respond emotionally, especially with the higher emotions.
- (c) The overall quality of one's awareness.

Trauma:

- (a) Injury to living tissue.
- (b) A force that causes trauma, injury.
- (c) Unusual mental or behavioral state resulting from severe mental or emotional stress.

Compassion Fatigue refers to the biological, physiological, plus social exhaustion and dysfunction that result from prolonged exposure to the pain and suffering of others. Burn-out and Secondary Traumatic Stress are two integral components of compassion fatigue.

Burn-Out/Empathetic Burn-Out emerges as a result of work-related stressors, marked by feelings of unhappiness, disconnection, and/or insensitivity towards the work environment.

Secondary Traumatic Stress is characterized by a negative emotional response, fueled by fear and/or work-related trauma.



“Laughter rises out of tragedy when you need it the most and rewards you for your courage.” — Erma Bombeck

Never underestimate a good laugh in its ability to lift spirits. According to a 2023 study by the National Institute of Health on Laughter as Medicine: A systematic review and meta-analysis of international studies evaluating the impact of spontaneous laughter on cortisol levels, “... our results support the ancient knowledge that spontaneous laughter is in fact good medicine (preventive or therapeutic) being associated with greater reduction in cortisol levels as compared with usual activities. These analyses demonstrated the potential therapeutic role of laughter-inducing interventions as a complementary strategy to improve everyone’s well-being and highlight the need for further research aiming to improve our collective sense of humor.”

WHAT DOES INTERVENTION LOOK LIKE?

Sometimes, all it takes is a single friend. While that might sound simplistic, there is nothing braver than someone approaching a seriously wounded individual or animal. Chances are great that they will be attacked for their efforts. Remember, not all violence is physical. Weighing the risks, most of us will go ahead with caution and safety on our side.

Problems shared by professionals interviewed for this article is three-fold. First, uplines and bosses are not always the best place to go for help since these people are, sometimes, within the spectrum of

burn-out themselves. Second, some bosses and peers feel responsible, somehow inadequate, or ashamed that ‘their people’ are suffering. Lastly, if that person is less skilled at communication and/or social cues; there is a chance of victim-blaming, possibly shaming the people who come to them and delaying help.

Good news is peer-led anonymous programs (AA, NA, CA, Alanon, etc.) have proven themselves vital for all kinds of harmful behaviors and/or addictions. This help can be found in almost every town worldwide, anonymously on-line, and on the phone 24/7/365. You can also dial 988 anytime from anywhere in the US for emotional support.

What we are trying to influence are invisible emotions, thoughts, and feelings that drive every individual and displayed in their unique personalities. Often we are unaware that there is a problem. Maybe there was no problem yesterday but today was the tipping point and we are lost in a downward spiral. Sure, it was paved and ready before when we could shoulder the burdens, and today – we cannot. Consider Flower Essences in all cases.

WHY WOULD YOU CHOOSE ESSENCES TO PREVENT OR INTERVENE?

Essences can change what we cannot see, such as stored, past negative memories. Animals generally heal from the inside out. Why would emotional health be any different? Dissolve the root cause or negative re-call of fear, confusion, mistrust, etc. and watch behaviors improve. In emergencies, feel free to use every few minutes until you see improvement.

Essences help re-balance personality extremes. Watch the subtle shift in personalities, physical reactions, emotions, responses to their environments and present circumstances. Essences have no negative side effects. Amazingly, they work to improve the emotional outlook of the entire family, pack, colony, herd – what I have come to call collateral repair.

Essences, when prepared properly according to tradition, are successful. If they fail to work, one reason could be what you are using is counterfeit and not truly an Essence or may not be using the formula necessary for this individual’s situation, meeting their particular needs. Pain and physical limitations are difficult to overcome with unrealistic expectations that the animal will cease reacting with the need to protect themselves or their painful bodies. If this happens, while at a safe distance, mist the formula nearby, and let it do its work. We do this with captured American mustangs, feral cats, and aggressive, unpredictable dogs. (Secret – also works well at staff meetings!)

POST-TRAUMATIC GROWTH PROMISES TRACTION

Positive outcomes are guaranteed when we try to help someone else (without expectations), learn something new (without judgement) and participate in radical self-care. Find what calls to you, what makes you a better person for taking part. And if you do not find anything, create your own... rescue, facility, even if it is unrelated to animals; we still need to relate to people.

Simple Benefits in a Complex World

Flower Essences can help even when nothing else seems to staunch the progression of negative thinking, emotions, and/or actions.

Here's how we can intervene/interrupt/disrupt this destructive escalation of feelings and Personality Extremes. MATCH Flower Essence's attributes with Animals' personalities to (re-)balance EXTREMES and thrive in the immediate environment, quickly. Examples:

Oak leaf is for the dedicated, protective, hard-working person and/or animal that helps everyone until there is nothing left to give, then exhausted, just topples over, forced to quit or slow down.

Mimulus for the delicate, caring personality persevering in harsh environments, unable to thrive.

Arnica Flowers are for the 'emotionally bruised' personality, misbehaving acting out from these stored memories of hurts and negative experiences - unable to unburden, find relief.

Angel's Trumpet a highly toxic plant, historically used for 'assisted suicide' conversely, is a wonderful Essence for 'never giving up' while seeing the best in the world and in each other.

Dandelion for the super pessimistic and sad — incapable of seeing much good or happiness in a given situation. Become more resilient, hardy, optimistic with this Essence.

Impatiens is for the personality that is irritable, impatient, restless, or discontent.

Yarrow (Achilles Millefolium) is for 'The Wounded Warrior' like Achilles who cannot slow the progression of their own downward spiral. The Hero who cannot stop until all are safe.

BlackWing Farms - Meg Harrison©



Meg Harrison, owner of BlackWing Farms Remedies in Valley Center, California, is a flower essence expert specializing in animal behavior. She has successfully helped thousands of behaviorally-challenged animals using unique blends of essences, essential oils and/or homeopathic remedies. Working with trainers, health care practitioners,

rescuers, fosters, clinics and shelters nationwide, she facilitates positive change in the vast majority of cases, no matter how difficult or emotionally damaged, which includes rescues in California wildfires, the aftermath of hurricanes, tornadoes, puppy mills, hoarding cases, court-ordered seizures, research labs, captured Mustang horses, dogs, feral and community cats, plus farm animals rescued from slaughter. She has advocated for more than 45 years for gentler, more effective ways to improve overall well-being and behavioral health of 24 species, including humans. She is the author of "Helping Humans One Animal at a Time." BlackWing Farms is sponsoring the Comfort Zone at the 2025 APDT International Education and Trade Show Conference Nov. 5-8 in Richmond, Virginia.

RESOURCES FOR PREVENTION

Resources for you, your colleagues, clients to explore here only scratches the surface of what is available. These were sent to me by individuals I know and trust.

- Heartmath Institute
- Mindfulness-based Stress Reduction (MBSR)
- Compassionate Mind Training (CMT)
- Accelerated Recovery Program (ARP)
- Safe and Sound Protocol (SSP)
- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Yoga, Pilates, Swimming, Hiking, Dancing, Running, Riding, Meditation
- Equine-Assisted Therapy, Laugh Therapy
- Peer-led Talk Therapy (i.e.: Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous)
- *Compassion Fatigue in the Animal-Care Community*, book by Charles Figley
- *To Save a Starfish: A Compassion-Fatigue Workbook*, by Jennifer A. Blough
- Join The Association for Applied and Therapeutic Humor (AATH)
- Flower Essence Therapy
- **Dial 988 for emotional support in the US 24/7**



Making dog training conferences work for you

By Veronica Boutelle, MA, CTC and Harriet Alexander

Let's be honest — professional dog training conferences can feel like drinking from a fire hose. Between the packed schedules, networking opportunities, and constant stream of new ideas, it's easy to end up overwhelmed rather than energized. But with a little strategy (and maybe some chocolate), you can turn these events into gold mines of inspiration and connection.

CHOOSE YOUR ADVENTURE WISELY

Before you whip out that credit card, take a breath. Not all conferences are created equal, and FOMO (fear of missing out) isn't a great reason to attend. Think about what you really need right now. Are you looking to level up your reactive dog training skills? Dying to connect with other force-free trainers? Or maybe you're ready to dive deep into the science of dog cognition?

Consider factors beyond just the speakers and topics. Is the location realistic for your budget and schedule? Will you have enough downtime between sessions to actually process what you're learning? Some conferences pack every minute with content, while others build in valuable networking time and breaks.

Pro tip: Check out past attendee reviews on social media, and don't be shy about reaching out to colleagues who've been before. Their insights can help you dodge events that aren't worth your time and money. Ask specific questions like "How applicable was the content to everyday client work?" or "Were there good opportunities to connect with other trainers?"

NETWORKING FOR THE NETWORKING-AVERSE

If the thought of networking makes you want to hide under a table with the conference facility's therapy dog, you're not alone. But here's the thing — dog trainers tend to be pretty awesome people, and many of them feel exactly the same way.

Start small. That person sitting alone during lunch? They're probably grateful when you ask to join them. That awkward moment before

sessions start? Perfect time to turn to your neighbor and ask what brought them here. Remember, you already have something in common — you're both dog nerds who geek out over learning theory and training techniques.

Some tried-and-true conversation starters:

- "What's the most interesting case you've worked on lately?"
- "Which session are you most excited about?"
- "Got any favorite management tools for [specific behavior issue]?"
- "What's the dog training scene like in your area?"

Pro networking tip: Create a simple system for following up with people you meet. Jot quick notes on business cards ("Met at lunch, discussed separation anxiety cases") or use your phone to record voice memos between sessions.

DEALING WITH INFORMATION OVERLOAD

You know that feeling when your brain is so full it might explode? Yeah, that's conference overwhelm. Here's how to handle it:

- Take strategic breaks. Missing one session to process your thoughts (or grab a coffee) is better than sitting through everything in a mental fog. Use this time to review your notes, chat with other attendees, or simply decompress.
- Create a note-taking system that works for you. Some people swear by the "two-column" method: main points on one side, implementation ideas on the other. Others use mind-mapping or key words. Whatever works for you is perfect—just make sure you can actually read/understand it later!
- Set realistic expectations. You won't remember everything, and that's okay. Focus on capturing the key points that resonate most with your business and clients.
- Use your phone's voice recorder or a notes app to capture quick thoughts between sessions. Future You will thank Past

You for these breadcrumbs of wisdom.

- Don't try to implement everything at once. Pick one or two key takeaways from each day to focus on first.

WHEN YOU DON'T AGREE WITH EVERYTHING

So that presenter just said something that made your eye twitch. Welcome to the dog training world! Rather than letting it ruin your day, try to:

- Focus on what you can learn, even if you disagree with the overall approach. Maybe their client communication style is brilliant, even if their training methods aren't your cup of tea.
- Use it as a chance to clarify your own philosophy and methods. Sometimes understanding why you disagree with something helps strengthen your own approach.
- Connect with others who share your perspective. These moments often lead to great discussions and valuable professional relationships.
- Remember that it's okay to be selective about what you incorporate into your practice. Take what serves you and your clients, leave what doesn't.

FROM INSPIRATION TO IMPLEMENTATION

We've all been there — coming home from a conference buzzing with ideas, only to have them fizzle out in the face of daily client work. Here's how to actually use what you've learned:

- Create an action plan before you head home. What are your top three takeaways? How can you implement them in the next month? Be specific—instead of "Use more enrichment activities," try "Introduce snuffle mat work in puppy classes."
- Proactively schedule implementation time in your calendar when you register for the conference. Block out specific hours for reviewing notes, updating handouts, or practicing new techniques before life gets crazy again.
- Share your learnings with colleagues. Teaching others helps cement new concepts in your own mind (and makes you look super smart). Consider hosting a lunch-and-learn for local trainers or creating social media content about your key takeaways.
- Test new ideas gradually. Maybe start with one trusted client who'd be perfect for that new protocol you learned about.

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR INVESTMENT

Conferences aren't cheap, so squeeze every drop of value from them:

- Record video messages or write notes to yourself about key insights while they're fresh. These are gold when you're trying to remember that brilliant leash handling technique three months later.
- Connect with new colleagues on social media before you leave. Follow the conference hashtag and engage with other attendees' posts.
- Join or create a post-conference study group to keep the momentum going. Even a monthly Zoom call with other attendees can help you stay accountable and inspired.

- Share your takeaways with local dog lovers who might be interested in your services. This could be through your newsletter, blog, or social media—just remember to credit speakers and the conference appropriately.

BUILDING LASTING CONNECTIONS

Here's what many people miss: the real value of conferences often comes from the relationships you build. That trainer you met at breakfast might become your future mentor, referral partner, or lifelong friend. Those hallway conversations between sessions? Sometimes they're more valuable than the sessions themselves.

Consider creating a "conference buddy" system with other attendees. Split up to cover different sessions, then share notes over dinner. This not only helps you catch more content but also builds deeper professional relationships.

Don't forget to nurture these connections after the conference ends. A quick email saying "Hey, I tried that technique you mentioned and it worked great!" can keep the conversation going.

MANAGING THE POST-CONFERENCE CRASH

Let's talk about something people rarely mention — the post-conference blues. It's common to feel a mix of exhaustion and overwhelm when you get home. The feeling of isolation in your work often creeps back in too. Plan for this by:

- Scheduling a rest and reflection day for your first day back, or at least a light client load
- Taking time to organize your notes and materials
- Setting realistic expectations for implementing changes
- Connecting with your new conference friends online

So pack your business cards, grab your favorite notebook, and get ready to learn. Just remember—you don't have to do everything, meet everyone, or absorb every piece of information. Focus on what matters most to you and your business, and let the rest be sprinkles on top.

And hey, if all else fails, there's occasionally a dog at these events who's happy to help you decompress. Because sometimes the best networking happens while you're both scratching a good boy's ears. The 2025 APDT International conference in Richmond, VA is a great place to put some of these things into practice - take a look!



Veronica Boutelle, MAEd, CTC is the author of *How To Run a Dog Business: Putting Your Career Where Your Heart Is*, and co-founder of *dogbiz*, whose business is to help yours succeed. **Harriet Alexander** is content curator for *dogbiz*. Learn all the ways *dogbiz* can support your success at www.dogbizsuccess.com.



Canine Behavior:

It's All in the Brain

By Melissa Bain, DVM, DACVB, MS, DACAW
Professor, Clinical Animal Behavior
University of California School of Veterinary Medicine

My cup is full! It's been two years since I attended our annual Veterinary Behavior Symposium in person, so I flew across the country to Louisville for our two-day meeting. Day one was 16 scientific presentations and 14 posters, followed by our Practical Behavior Forum, investigating the interplay between physical disease and behavior with the focus on the inter-relationship between GI disease, pain, and behavior, behavioral health in the Emergency Clinic and ICU, and the emotional health of pets before, during, and after surgery. This led to LOTS of time spent sitting and absorbing the information.

One exciting part was our keynote speaker, Dr. Erin Hecht, who presented on "Nature and Nurture in the Brains and Behavior of Domestic Dogs." A full hour of rapt attention by all attendees, even more impressive as this was right before our lunch break. Her focus has been on domestication and differences in brain structure based on breed, training, and even the equivalent of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES). So why focus on dogs?

As animal care professionals, we are constantly reading dogs by evaluating body language and listening to vocalizations. Wouldn't it be great if we could read their minds? I like to tell clients I'm the equivalent of a psychiatrist, not a psychic. But what if we COULD read their minds? Recent research in neuroscience is making this a possibility, giving us new insights into why dogs behave the way they do, and how domestication has shaped not just their behavior, but their brains themselves.

At the forefront of this exciting field is Dr. Hecht, a neuroscientist at Harvard University. The groundbreaking work uses magnetic

resonance imaging (MRI) to look at the brains of dogs from different breeds. Some of what they have found confirms what many of us already suspect: dogs are not just trained into certain behaviors. Many behaviors are hardwired into the brain through thousands of years of evolution and selective breeding.

Dogs have evolved alongside humans for eons. They have learned to be effective scavengers, which has led dogs to reside closer to people, and self-select for those that are less fearful around people. Historically dogs were not selected for specific jobs; however, over the years we have selected bred dogs for traits deemed beneficial to humans. Still, approximately 80% of dogs in the world remain "community dogs." These dogs are not officially owned but often have a name and receive some care.

Over time, we began selecting dogs for traits suited for specific jobs: herding; retrieving; guarding; or simply keeping people company. These selective breeding practices didn't just affect the way dogs look or act but also changed the physical structure of the dog's brain.

To explore these changes, Dr. Hecht and her team scanned the brains of over 60 dogs from many different breeds evaluating already-performed MRIs, in which the dogs were determined to have no diagnosable neurological problem. They looked at areas of the brain related to six factors: olfactory; drive and reward; olfaction and gustation; movement, eye movement and spatial navigation; social action and interaction; fear, stress, and anxiety; and olfaction and vision. The results were dramatic. They discovered that the structure of a dog's brain varies significantly depending on its breed, particularly in regions associated with behavior. These areas include the limbic system (involved with bonding and emotions), the cerebellum (involved with motor control and coordination), and the prefrontal cortex (involved with decision-making and social behavior). But what was interesting with these results is that the differences remained significant even after controlling for brain size, meaning, it wasn't just that larger dogs had larger brains.¹

For example, herding dogs showed increased neural development in brain regions related to movement planning and control. This makes sense, as they are bred to anticipate and control where livestock go, requiring skills that are deeply wired into their nervous systems. On the other hand, breeds such as Golden Retrievers and Labradors had more developed areas in the brain related to social bonding and reward processing. These dogs are more currently bred for their strong human attachment, which may make them easier to train for service roles. And this is in contrast with guarding and working breeds, which showed different patterns yet again, suggesting that their brains are adapted to vigilance and protective behavior, traits selected for in their original working roles.

But doesn't this fly in the face of "it's not the breed, it's the deed?" Other studies have shown that there are more differences between individuals within a breed compared to between-breed differences. However, how many of us say "and..." when an owner grumbles about their Border Collie that herds the family on hikes, or the terrier that is overly focused on rodents? What Dr. Hecht's research adds is evidence that these behavioral tendencies aren't just learned

but actually built into the brain. None of this negates the fact that we need to approach each dog as an individual.

Some new and exciting information that Dr. Hecht shared was her current research on the effects of “Early Life Adversity” on dogs, yet to be published. Currently owners of more than 4,500 dogs of more than 200 breeds filled out an internet survey on the behavior of their dog, along with histories of any known adversities, such as abuse, neglect, starvation, being tethered outside, and being attacked by another animal. There seems to be a correlation between adversities and increased fear and aggression toward people and non-household dogs, and it was more impactful if the adversity occurred before six months of age. This correlation was stronger in certain breeds and weaker in others, notably the Golden Retriever and Labrador Retriever.

By combining what we know from behavior with what neuroscience tells us about brain structure, we can become better, more empathetic, and more effective animal care professionals. Whether you’re working with a hound, a retriever, or a terrier, understanding what’s happening in the brain can make all the difference.

If you are interested in attending next year’s symposium, in person and virtually, the preliminary plan is that it will take place June 9-10, 2026, in Seattle, Washington...hope to see you there! Keep an eye on www.dacvb.org for updates.

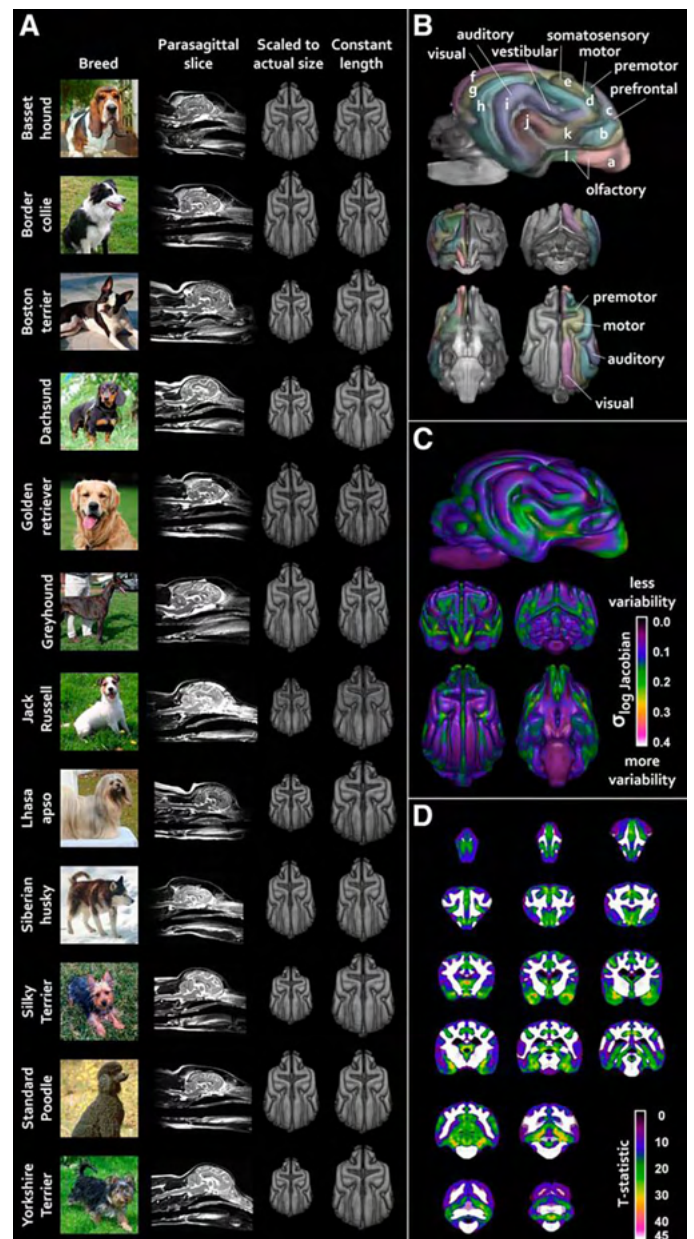


Dr. Melissa Bain is a veterinarian and Professor of Clinical Animal Behavior, and is board-certified by both the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists and the American College of Animal Welfare. She received a Master’s degree in Advanced Clinical Research from the UC Davis School of Medicine in 2007. She is a past president of both the American College of

Veterinary Behaviorists and the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior, and is currently on the board of the American College of Animal Welfare. In 2016 she was selected as the Bustad Companion Animal Veterinarian of the Year, awarded by the American Veterinary Medical Association, and in 2019 she received the Companion Animal Welfare Award from the World Small Animal Veterinary Association.

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Neuroanatomical variation in domestic dogs. **A**, MRI images and 3D reconstructions of warped template from 10 selected dogs of different breeds. Images are public-domain photos from Wikimedia Commons. **B**, Unbiased group-average template for this dataset. See Figure 1-1, and Figure 1-2 for processing schematics. Neuroanatomical labels (based on Palazzi, 2011; Datta et al., 2012; Evans and de Lahunta, 2013) are as follows: (a) olfactory peduncle; (b) orbital (presylvian) gyrus; (c) proreal gyrus; (d) pre cruciate gyrus; (e) postcruciate gyrus; (f) marginal (lateral) gyrus; (g) ectomarginal gyrus; (h) suprasylvian gyrus; (i) ectosylvian gyrus; (j) sylvian gyrus; (k) insular cortex; and (l) piriform lobe. **C**, Brain-wide morphological variation, regardless of breed, as indexed by the SD of all dogs' Jacobian determinant images. **D**, A Monte Carlo permutation test on demeaned gray matter Jacobian determinant images revealed that much of gray matter shows significant deviation from group-mean morphology. Colored regions are all $p < 0.05$ after multiple-comparisons correction; t-statistic values are illustrated.

Insurance rates/premiums, exposure, and risk:

What goes up must go up, up and up?

By David Pearsall



Have you ever been playing fetch with your dog, and their ball or disc gets stuck in a tree, or flies over the backyard fence? If so, and your dog(s) are anything like mine, they will immediately see where their ball or disc ended up, and look back at you with that face that says “you did see where that landed, right?” or “how long is it going to take for you to get it this time...?” while presumptively thinking “if he’d just keep the gate open or take us to the park, we wouldn’t have this problem...”

For most trainers (and adult humans across our country), the above scenario is quite similar to our reaction when it comes to our annual insurance renewal(s) bill. Whether it’s auto, homeowners or renters, health, or business insurance, it seems like every year the bill we receive just flew over the fence or is stuck way up in a tree, while we look at our insurance agent or company representative to take us to the park (so this won’t keep happening). And so, for this briefing, let’s go to the park together about the many reasons for these never-ending renewal increases. Some make complete sense and are easy to understand and explain, some of them we might all understand, but not like very much, and a couple more that even a seasoned insurance professional cannot explain.

Let’s start with the easy-to-understand or easier-to-explain reasons, beginning with the definition of insurance, which is a contractual relationship between a company or government and an individual or business (aka the client/aka the insured) for a promise or guarantee of reimbursement for a specified risk of loss, in return for a payment or premium. Obviously the higher or greater degree of risk, the higher the cost or premium one can expect to pay to insure it. To measure a specific risk or risks and assign a dollar amount, insurance companies must first identify and define the risk exposures involved, determine the likelihood of them happening, and determine what it will cost them if the actual loss occurs.

For example, in a general liability insurance contract for a dog trainer, the risk being contemplated by an insurance company is the potential for bodily injury or property damage to a third party due to the trainer’s negligence and/or alleged negligence. Insurance companies determine what each individual trainer or training business annual premium will be by the amount of training or volume they perform annually and typically measure that volume via the business’s annual

gross sales. And, if a training business also offers and/or provides other related pet services such as grooming or pet sitting, or sells pet supplies, the insurer may break each of these services/categories out separately if they believe there is an higher or lower potential for a potential loss from another service, or if they feel the potential for loss from all services and products offered by the business is roughly the same, they may opt to combine, and base off the total annual gross sales for all of the services and product sales combined.

In other words, if you’re a part time trainer, and training dogs is more of a hobby or a side gig, as opposed to your full time job or career, and you train one or two dogs a year, your risk exposure is minimal compared to that of a training business that has a physical training facility with 10 full-time employees providing training, dog boarding and daycare, and grooming services seven days a week. Most will agree that this makes sense, and that the larger business should pay more, but this article is not about the obvious size differences, it’s about renewal increases, right? So why is both the part-time trainer, and the seven days a week training facility business receiving a renewal increase? Great question! And the answer is one that many trainers/business owners fail to consider when they are first starting out, and receive their first or second premium renewal invoice, which is the growth of their business. You see, as your gross sales and your business grow, so does your risk exposure, and unfortunately, your annual premium. While you may think it is still just you and that your business is exactly the same size because it is just you, be sure to consider whether your volume/gross sales are growing, and if so, be aware that it may be your business, not the insurance company, that was responsible for your renewal increase.

Now let’s look at those renewal increases that also make sense when explained, but none of us are happy about it, especially when we see our hard-earned money going over the fence every year, and no one ever brings our ball (money) back. The truth is that many of us will pay our insurance renewal each year and may never actually incur a claim. So when you receive a renewal increase, and you know for a fact your business has not grown or added exposures, and has never incurred a claim or cost your insurance company a dime, well, you’re left once again looking back like our dogs do to us when the ball goes over the fence,

only this time there's another dog on the other side who scoops it up, and runs away with it. And there is nothing you or anyone can do about it. Unfortunately, while your business may not have ever incurred an incident, several fellow trainers you collaborate with across the country may have suffered multiple claims, some of which were significant. And now your insurance company, and all insurance companies covering dog training and pet related services determine that based on the amounts paid out on claims, versus the amount of premium paid over a certain period, they must increase their rates across the board on all similar businesses going forward, or stop insuring trainers all together, similar to the many property insurers leaving Florida due hurricanes or California due to wildfires. While those states will provide relief in terms of property insurance, you won't find them doing so when it comes to liability coverage risk exposures.

The last reason or type of renewal increases are those that resemble when the ball or disc we threw for our dog(s) just simply disappeared, and neither you, nor your dog(s) have a clue as to where they ended up. And if you/your dog(s) are anything like me/mine, these scenarios leave us walking/running around the backyard searching for answers. These are the ones where the insurance industry opts to increase rates across the board, due to their belief that higher rates will be needed going forward, due to activity that has recently transpired, but the statistical data doesn't necessarily back it up.

I recently met with insurance representatives from two large national companies our agency works with, which specialize in the pet services industry, and posed the question...why their companies were continuing to increase rates on our clients in excess of 10-20% in 2025. As both of these reps are based in North Carolina, it wasn't surprising to hear their response was the same: Hurricane Helene, which last August devastated Asheville, North Carolina and surrounding areas with flooding and mudslides, in some cases wiping out entire families in some of the poorest parts of our great state. While that answer might be sufficient for some, it didn't sit well with me then, nor does it sit with me now, after watching both of their companies take home record profits in 2024. I let each of them know what I am fairly certain they were already aware of, which is that flood and mudslides are excluded under their business owner and commercial property policies. Additionally, very few claims from Helene have been paid by either of their companies, and this trend will continue in the future when hurricanes produce more flooding as opposed to wind or hail damage.



David Pearsall is a licensed insurance agent and co-owner of Business Insurers of the Carolinas, an insurance agency specializing in business insurance for pet related services since 1992. David and his team have managed insurance programs for many national pet services associations, including the APDT Insurance Program since 2001. A licensed agent in all 50 states, he holds both the Certified

Insurance Counselor (CIC) and the Certified Workers' compensation Advisor (CWCA) designations. Contact David at DP@Business-Insurers.com or visit Business Insurers on the web at www.DogTrainerInsurance.com

RECENT GENERAL LIABILITY CLAIMS:

- Two dogs were playing during a group training class. The playing escalated into a scuffle, and one of the dogs bit the other on the neck and torso. Total paid: \$3,151.
- A client came to pick up his dog after a 6-week board and train course. While waiting for his dog to be brought to the front of the facility, another client entered the building with their dog to inquire about the various courses being offered. The waiting client attempted to pet/play with the other owner's dog and suffered a severe bite to his hand. As a result of the bite, the dog owner lost significant function of his hand. Total paid: \$65,000.
- During a training class, a client's dog ran into a tree and suffered a cut on its right flank. The dog required emergency vet care as a result. Total paid: \$4,405.
- A client's dog was being boarded at the trainer's home. During the night the dog began vomiting and was taken to the vet. Total paid: \$1,460.
- During an agility class, a client's dog attempted a jump, but landed awkwardly, causing a fracture to its leg. Total paid: \$5,400.
- Dog trainer was working with a new client's dog and took the dog on a hike. While on the hike, the dog was bitten by a rattlesnake and required emergency vet care. Total paid: \$2,179.
- A client's dog was being boarded at trainer's home and was to receive training lessons for a few weeks. The dog ingested something in the home, which caused a blockage between its stomach and intestines. The blockage was so severe it caused aspirated pneumonia, which had to be treated before the dog could undergo surgery to remove the object. Total paid: \$5,840.
- While the trainer was teaching a group class, one of the client's dogs bit another on its hip, which required stitches. Total paid: \$702.
- A client's dog tore its ACL while running during a training session. Three weeks later, the dog owner went back to the vet for a check-up as it did not appear the surgery was improving. Unfortunately, the dog had suffered a second torn ACL on its opposite hind leg which also required surgery. Total paid: \$7,985.

RECENT WORKER'S COMPENSATION CLAIMS:

- Trainer's employee ran/fell into another employee and incidentally hit the other employee in the face, which required stitches on their forehead. Total paid: \$2,365.
- During a grooming appointment, the client's dog bit the trainer's employee on the arm. Total paid: \$1,202.
- An employee was attempting to pick up a water bowl at a board and train facility. As she was doing so, a large dog jumped towards her, causing her to fall and injure her leg, which required medical treatment. Total paid: \$1,713.

Answers To Common Questions Asked By Parents

Use the 5 Types of Supervision Guide to avoid conflicts between dog and baby

By Jen Shryock, CDBC, and John Visconti, CPDT-KA

In our last column, we answered some often-asked questions and provided foundational information regarding preparation for the arrival of a newborn and the anticipated homecoming. Proactive preparation is an essential component in establishing a harmonious and safe home environment. Preparation can take many forms, such as acquiring knowledge to guide actions. It can also include more tangible actions such as setting up physical arrangements in

advance of the arrival of the baby. The saying “dig your well before you’re thirsty” perfectly illustrates this concept.

A noteworthy illustration of integrating both theoretical knowledge and practical implementation is demonstrated through the concept of supervision, which Family Paws LLC specifically categorizes into “Five Types of Supervision” — Absent, Passive, Reactive, Proactive, and Active. It is essential to comprehend the distinctions and



THE 5 TYPES OF SUPERVISION

1



ABSENT

Adult not in room with dog and baby/toddler



2



PASSIVE

Adult in same location but distracted and not watching



3



REACTIVE

Responding after dog or child is too close



4



PROACTIVE

Planning and preparing safe separation.



5



ACTIVE

Full awake adult supervision



interactions among these to achieve effective supervision and to avoid problems arising, sometimes with drastic consequences.

Absent Supervision: The term ‘Absent Supervision’ is somewhat contradictory, as one cannot be absent and supervising simultaneously. Often, incidents involving babies and dogs arise from parents or guardians being absent when the two are together. Commonly heard is, “we only left them alone for a few seconds.” Even brief moments can lead to issues, regardless of the dog’s friendliness, unintended consequences can occur. Example: an adult sleeping in the same room as the baby and the dog is engaged in Absent Supervision.

Passive Supervision occurs when an adult is physically present in the same room but is otherwise distracted. While many adults believe that their presence alone constitutes supervision, this is not accurate. It is important to note that situations can quickly become unsafe if the adult’s attention is not focused on both the dog and the baby. For example, passive supervision occurs when an adult is engaged in a phone conversation or preoccupied with another task while the baby and dog are in close proximity.

Reactive Supervision refers to instances where the parent is near both the baby and the dog but is unable to effectively manage their interactions due to not being properly positioned. Family Paws advocates a principle, “Dog and Baby on the Scene, parent in between,” which is essential for proper supervision. A significant risk with Reactive Supervision arises when the parent notices a potentially dangerous situation and hastily intervenes, which may inadvertently provoke the dog. Example: an adult is a step behind the dog as it approaches the baby and rushes up from behind the dog to intercede.

Proactive Supervision entails both planning and preparation to ensure safe separation. This method of supervision requires not only the presence of a guardian but one who is engaged and continually aware. A parent practicing Proactive Supervision might employ “Success Stations” (areas designed with physical barriers or management tools, which will be elaborated on in a subsequent column). Example: An adult is positioned between the baby and dog, or where the dog and baby are separated by a physical barrier such as a gate or play yard or preferably, both.

Active Supervision involves engaging with both the dog and the baby within the context of effective monitoring. In contrast to Proactive Supervision, where the guardian separates the dog from the baby, Active Supervision allows for closely supervised interaction with the dog while the baby is present. This form of supervision mirrors typical family dynamics as there are no physical barriers, but the guardian should always be between the baby and the dog. Effective active supervision is contingent on the dog having been gradually and incrementally acclimated to the presence of the baby, with no indications of stress. Example: a caregiver interacts with the dog while the baby is present without any barriers for separation.

Even gentle dogs may bite or unintentionally injure an infant. Playful interactions can sometimes lead to accidental bites, scratches,

or falls. Babies and toddlers often make unexpected movements and sounds that can startle dogs or trigger undesirable behaviors.

It is essential to effectively supervise interactions between dogs and babies. Simply being present isn’t adequate. Additionally, supervision is a dynamic process. Supervision must be consistently and proactively adapted in response to changing circumstances. At Family Paws, LLC, we emphasize that, “Babies grow and dogs age, adjust at every stage.”

Life offers limited opportunities for control. Overseeing the interactions between a baby and a dog is one such opportunity. It is essential to provide guidance to parents on how to proactively supervise interactions. The advantages are substantial, benefiting not only the parents, baby, and dog, but also the trainer — creating a safe and harmonious home environment for families is profoundly rewarding.



Jennifer Shryock is a Certified Dog Behavior Consultant (CDBC) and Licensed Family Dog Mediator as well as the owner of Family Paws® LLC in Cary, North Carolina. In 2000, her family adopted their first German Shepherd rescue dog. That inspired her work with the rescue organization as a counselor and

trainer. There, she discovered families with babies or young children who found their situation overwhelming and were often on the verge of surrendering their cherished dog. Once she recognized new and expecting parents’ needs for support and education, she began developing resources for families and dog professionals. These passions fueled her creation of Family Paws™ Parent Education, which now offers programs across the United States, Canada, and beyond. By combining her special education experience, passion for supporting new families with her skills as a Certified Dog Behavior Consultant, she was able to create programs that support parents looking to prepare for life with a dog and baby and dogs and toddlers.



John D. Visconti, CPDT-KA is the owner of Rising Star Dog Training Services, LLC and Rising Star Dog Training, LLC, based in Cary, North Carolina. His first book, “Fetch More Dollars for Your Dog Training Business” was the 2015 winner of the prestigious Dog Writers Association of America Maxwell Award reference book of

the year. His most recent book, “Pepper Becoming,” recounts his eventful and unlikely journey with an abandoned, unwanted shelter dog. John has written several columns for BARKS from the Guild and Association for Professional Dog Training International’s Chronicle of the Dog. He has also served as a chair for the APDT International’s business subcommittee and presented several coaching lectures and webinars to dog training schools and force-free organizations.



Solutions for Classroom Challenges: Voices from the Training Community

By Jamie McKay, CPDT-KSA

Ask 10 trainers a question and you'll get 10 different answers! If you would like to contribute a response or a suggestion for a topic to be covered in this series, please email jamiemckay@optonline.net.

This challenge was suggested by Jamie McKay CPDT KSA:

Our club offers group puppy classes and all age manners training. Additionally, offered are advanced manners classes, competition obedience, agility, scent work classes and titling classes including but not limited to canine good citizen and tricks. Classes were paused for months during the COVID pandemic. Once reopened, enrollment skyrocketed with many classes having wait lists. Recently, enrollment has dropped and it seems not just our club as a school in our area (not a direct competitor) just closed its doors. I think there are many factors involved but what ideas can other instructors share to attract students and boost enrollment.

PAT MILLER, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA

Director, Peaceable Paws Trainer Academies (Fairplay, Maryland)
www.peaceablepaws.com

We offer a variety of classes here at Peaceable Paws. Because we are not "obedience" competition oriented we have long looked for class options for "regular" dog caretakers. Some of ours include:

1. Clicks for Tricks: Obviously a tricks class, with some students capable of earning Tricks Certifications from Do More With Your Dog.
2. Household Paw Course: Using household objects to create a "Paw Course" for dogs — crawling under chairs, unrolling a rolled up rug, standing on a stool, jumping over broomsticks and more.

3. Fidos on the Farm: We're fortunate we are on 80 acres. This popular summertime class takes students on hikes around the farm where we practice good manners behaviors; attention in the presence of horses and wildlife, long-distance recalls (on long lines and off leash for those who are ready), and more.
4. Ice Cream Social: This class meets every week practicing good manners in a different dog-friendly location in Washington County. We used to call it "Downtown Hound" and then we started holding every class within walking distance of an ice cream shop — so now it's Ice Cream Social — and we end each class with ice cream all around.
5. Co-operative Care: Self-explanatory - a class that works on giving dogs agency in husbandry handling protocols.
6. Sports Sampler: Each week students are introduced to the basics of a different canine sport. This helps them decide if/which they and their dog would like to pursue.
7. Cognition - of course!

KRISTINA CARPENTER, CPDT-KA

Rock Hill | No Leash Needed (St. Louis, Missouri)

Here are ideas we have tried to attract clients:

- Demos at rescue and dog sporting events, festivals and farmers markets. A little marketing budget can go to reserving a booth spot, or stage time. For an agility demo our dogs run a course, then we assist spectators and their dogs to try low height jumps, place box and a frame. After a Rally - O demo, spectators get to try out a few signs in a numbered course. We've also done Scent work demos. Sponsor fun games (bubble catching, paw prints painting, recall races) at the event.
- Practice in a public space including parks, businesses where dogs are permitted might attract interest and questions. Carry business cards or if your dog wears a vest advertise on it.
- Offer to teach a class about dog safety at a local school. Leave a card for every kid who has a pet dog at home.
- Photo opportunities offering both digital and physical photos attract people especially with fun or seasonal backdrops.
- Bacon themed events are enjoyed by our clients. Training with bacon snacks, pictures with bacon snacks, special lunches/treats with bacon. You just have to watch your fingers sometimes!
- Offer a bring-a-friend night either just humans to audit class, or a friend with their dog and have them try a few things at the end or beginning of class.
- Add out-of-the-box new ideas to your programs, for example dinner with a trainer or movie night, puppy bowl at your facility or a local shelter.
- Host a public event where invited local first responders discuss dogs in rescue situations and home safety tips for dogs.

I'm excited to see what other people might suggest, I know our market has been down lately as well.

**ELIZABETH 'KIZZ' ROBINSON, CDBC, CPDT-KA,
FAMILY DOG MEDIATOR**

PumpkinPups Dog Training (Brooklyn, New York)

I'm a member of dogbiz Success's Thrive! membership and my answer to this question is coming from things they've taught me. It sounds like the query is coming from a place of doing marketing when times are tight and lightening up on marketing when classes are full. Most marketing projects yield clients 6-12 months later. Finding things that we can do consistently to put our information out into our community can be super helpful. Projects that bring back clients more quickly usually focus on retention. So, creating a "next level" class and sending a personal invitation to previous clients to come to this class that builds on what they learned with you before.

ABBY HARRISON, CPDT-KA

Sit Dog Stay (Houston, Texas)

It helps to remember that some things are not under our control, like the state of the economy. We don't have a lot of control over how soon we will be needed for training the new puppy when an older dog has passed on. Will they remember you and your name 10 years later? And, for many, training is not really necessary. They grew up with untrained dogs or they don't realize some of the fallout from not training. How many trainers are located in your zip code? I once talked to a trainer who mentioned that there were more than 100 CPDT KAs in their zip code. That's a lot competition for X number of dogs per year.

What can you do to stand out? Think of specific concerns/training needs and offer services you are experienced with, i.e. aggression, children and dogs, house training, resource guarding, service dog, separation anxiety, companion events to name some beyond basic good dog manners. Consider specializing in an area so you become a trainer others refer to.

What about pet sitting or dog walking? Many owners need help with leash reactive dogs and might want to work with someone who can help them or even walk their leash reactive dog.

How will you be remembered? Is there a mnemonic of your name, the business so you can be more easily found? I tell them: It's Abby. Like Dear Abby. I'm here to help you fix this problem. People might shove a paper business card in a pocket but the eyes tend to light up more with a business card on a magnet instead.

Make sure you thank people when they refer someone to you. I recently gave a Starbucks gift card to someone who sent me a new puppy client. This new puppy client is suddenly now also fostering a rescue dog and their son has a new dog.

I give hand outs (Dr. Sophia Yin's on arousal, how to be and not be around a dog, check list for socialization from Dogwise). I show and talk about books — as a resource for a student to know that this kind of thing is out there if needed later. They can think of it as a very specialized reference library a phone call away.

JAMIE MCKAY, CPDT-KSA

McKay9 Dog Training (Westchester, New York)

www.McKay9.com

Our facility closed for a time during COVID. Once reopened classes had wait lists and extra classes were added to the schedule. During the pandemic as people transitioned to remote work/school many also acquired pets. As things improved people looked for more activities they could do outside the home and classes enrollment increased as pet ownership increased. Recently, our "pet" class enrollments have been down. Enrollment usually drops off slightly in summer and around the Christmas holidays but that we expect. It's my impression that the numbers of dogs adopted from shelters or obtained from breeders may be less than during the pandemic, which can impact class enrollment.

We are a club but our group classes are open to the general public. To help get the word out I post classes and events on local area Facebook dog park and pet parent groups. Free advertising. We have a public club Facebook group. We are updating our website and revising our Instagram account. Volunteer club members bring flyers to area veterinarians, dog related businesses and shelter/rescue groups. We volunteer at a local shelter working with volunteers and dogs awaiting forever homes. We offer a \$50 discount for first class enrollment to those who adopted a dog from a shelter/rescue. Club members man booths and demos at local rescue events and at events sponsored by The American Kennel Club including Meet The Breeds.

In addition to full session classes, we offer some half session classes that address specific concerns such as jumping (Eager Greeters), coming when called (Ricochet Recalls) and counter surfing/eating things on walks (Drop It and Leave It). We have half session classes for people who miss the start of a full session but want to get started (Puppy PreK and Jump Start For Foundations) Having classes on the schedule that meet early evenings and weekends brings in those who can't attend day classes. We're adding a class to help owners with Leash Reactivity as that is something that many owners struggle with.

One advantage of being a club is that volunteer members receive a discounted class fee and the opportunity to enroll a day early than nonmembers. If people get the training bug and enjoy classes hopefully, they will want to become members and continue taking classes year-round. New students should feel supported and welcome. Often times their first introduction to our facility are puppy and/or general manners classes. Even if they don't continue taking classes after their initial class or two it's likely they'll recommend you to friends and family looking for training help.



Jamie McKay, CPDT-KSA, gained her early experience at the Humane Society of Westchester teaching safe handling skills to volunteers to enhance the adoptability of shelter dogs. Jamie teaches group classes at Port Chester Obedience Training Club in New York. She is a Canine Good Citizen evaluator and competes in agility and rally obedience. Jamie and her husband, Stephen, CPDT-KSA, own McKay9 Dog Training, LLC.

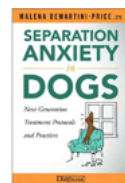
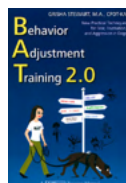
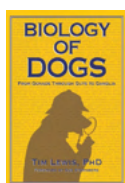
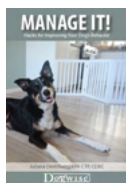
Thanks for joining us at the 2024 APDT Conference

APDT members get a 10% discount using promo code APDTPRO10



THANKS FOR JOINING US AT THE 2024 APDT CONFERENCE!

Thank you to everyone who stopped by our booth at APDT 2024 in Riverside, California this year. Our authors were delighted to sign your books and discuss dog behavior and training with you. We always love to talk with you to discuss books and help you grow your library! Check out the titles below to see which books were best-sellers at this year's conference! Remember that APDT members get a 10% discount using promo code **APDTPRO10** during checkout at www.Dogwise.com



Order online at dogwise.com or call 800-776-2665.

Editor's Review

Puppy Socialization 2.0

How to raise a socially healthy dog

By Sydney Bleicher, KPA CTP and Peggy van Dam

Self-published by Sydney Bleicher. Released Dec. 16, 2024; 80 pages; Where to purchase: Amazon US, \$19.95 paperback; Amazon CA, \$28.40 paperback.

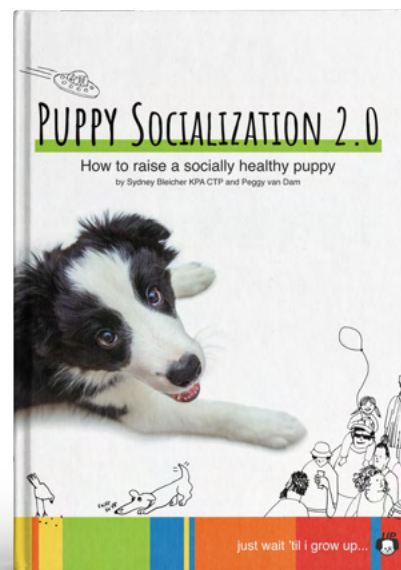
There cannot be enough books to stress the importance of puppy socialization. “Puppy Socialization 2.0: How To Raise a Socially Healthy Dog” is one of them. The authors are Sydney Bleicher and Peggy van Dam, the co-founders of the Ultimate Puppy, based in Toronto, Ontario. Sydney graduated with distinction from the Karen Pryor Academy, is a Certified Fear-Free Professional and TAG level 2.

It was Peggy’s experience with her adopted Labrador Retriever Yukon, however, that inspired the creation of Ultimate Puppy. Yukon developed aggression toward small children and other dogs, and after much research, Peggy concluded the root cause was likely Yukon’s poor socialization as a puppy. That experience led Sydney and Peggy to found Ultimate Puppy and collaborate in publishing guides, planners and books to help pet parents socialize their puppies. This latest book was dedicated to Yukon.

The 80-page guide offers 14 chapters:

- Puppy Socialization Foundations
- Canine Body Language
- Best Games to Use When Socializing Your Puppy.
- Guidelines for successful puppy socialization
- Puppies and Children
- How to get out of sticky situations
- An Illustrated Guide to socialization
- How to rock your routines
- Highrise living: Tips for Success
- Strategic socialization aimed at future goals
- Are group puppy classes for you?
- A deeper dive into socialization
- Lucky puppy: Next steps
- Resource Library

There is lots of valuable information, but for me, the Social Schedule checklist on how to socialize a puppy from birth of 16 weeks was tops. Getting your puppy used to its surroundings and environment is crucial in its development. Without this socialization, pet parents can end up with dogs fearful of new environments, even to the point of refusing walks or experiencing life outside of their domains. The



reason most often given for poor socialization? The fear of going out before the puppy vaccinations are completed.

The authors address this issue, saying “the risk of not socializing your puppy is potentially greater than the risk of disease. If you wait until your puppy has had their final round of vaccinations, you will miss out on this period of development.” That doesn’t mean you can haul your vulnerable puppy to the dog park. The authors explain puppies can be introduced to other dogs you know that are healthy and vaccinated. They can still be taken to pet-friendly businesses and go on walks.

The book is filled with easy-to-understand information on puppy growth, especially how a new pet parent can help their puppy through the fear stages. The illustrations and graphics also help in visualizing a dog’s body language. For those who live in a city with high-rise apartments, the book explains how to introduce a puppy to the elevator and proper evaluator etiquette. Live near the water? The book explains how to introduce your puppy to be comfortable around boats and paddleboards, walking on docks or wearing a life vest.

There is a chapter on games that provides step-by-step instructions on how to play with your puppy and what the real-life uses are, such as getting your puppy’s attention with the use of the word “Skedaddle” or “Ready!” Another is a sniffari treasure hunt, which is a great way to engage with the puppy when the weather doesn’t allow outside playtime or walks.

Particularly useful in this book is troubleshooting puppy behavior that needs to be corrected, such as pulling toward other dogs and people while on a leash, or the puppy is afraid to walk in the dark. Sydney recommends making the ordinary extraordinary, such as setting time aside each week to do grooming and nail trims. As all trainers know, starting early with basic grooming is crucial, especially for those who own doodles of any combination. Introducing grooming tools – the sounds and vibrations – will make life much easier in the long run.

From its easy-to-read, no-nonsense advice and tips, all beautifully illustrated, this guidebook would make a great gift any trainer could provide to new pet parents attending puppy classes. — The editor

Richmond conference will feature VIP evening event

For the first time in many years, there will be an evening social event at the 2025 APDT International Education Conference and Trade Show Nov. 5-7 in Richmond, Virginia. Networking at a dog training conference is more than just swapping business cards; it is a vital opportunity to build meaningful connections that can enhance your skills, expand your knowledge, and improve the quality of care you provide to your canine clients. Whether you are a seasoned trainer or just starting out, the relationships formed while networking at conferences can provide lasting value, helping you stay current with industry trends and refine your training techniques through shared knowledge and experience.

“Many have heard the great stories about social events connected to the APDT conferences of yesteryear. Of course, many things have evolved in conferences take place, but one thing remains true is, why attendees make the trip to APDT International conferences. That is connection with their peers and an opportunity to expand their network of trusted professionals,” APDT International Executive Director Matt Varney said. “We are so excited to keep expanding the opportunities at conference to connect and learn more about those you’re sitting next to in sessions including this year’s Thursday Night VIP event. Join us as we take over a local brewery in Richmond for a night of connection, learning, and fun!”

“We are so excited to keep expanding the opportunities at conference to connect and learn more about those you’re sitting next to in sessions including this year’s Thursday Night VIP event. Join us as we take over a local brewery in Richmond for a night of connection, learning, and fun!”

This special VIP event, called the Night on the Town, will be held from 6 to 10 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 6 at Strangeways Brewing, 22077A Dabney Road in Richmond. Pre-registration is required. The additional \$100 cost will include transportation from the hotel to Strangeways Brewing, a tap room and brewery open only to APDT International conference attendees. Once there, you will have a chance to sample branded brews and a variety of food options while connecting with those you have met – or want to meet – from the conference.

The second half of the evening will be an intimate session by special guest speaker, Jess Adam, a licensed psychotherapist who has used



Special guest speaker, Jess Adam.

animal-assisted therapy and equine therapy in her practice. It was her desire to have a therapy dog that led her to adopt a 6-month-old Labrador-Pitbull puppy named Dio. It was during his training for Canine Good Citizen and therapy dog evaluations that Dio’s anxiety and reactive behavior began to overwhelm Jess. Four years later, he did achieve those goals, only for Jess to determine being a therapy dog was too stressful for Dio.

“But what was interesting about this experience was just how immersed in dog training I became, and how much more I learned about dogs than I ever expected,” Jess explained in an interview with *Authority Magazine*. “It made me recognize how deeply my own emotions and mental health were impacted by my dog and his needs, and how I needed to care for myself in order to care for him in the ways he deserved. It led me to create Handlers and Humans, my little passion project that has grown to support the mental health of hundreds of dog owners and trainers who live with, work with, and love difficult dogs. This experience taught me that even when you don’t end up where you expected, you often end up exactly where you’re meant to be.”

Jess’ presentation will define what it means to be a “person-centered” dog trainer and why focusing on the human side of the leash is important. She will discuss the emotional and mental health impacts on clients living with and training a challenging dog. Attendees will also learn how to empower dog guardians to use their inherent and environmental strengths to create more success in training. The presentation will identify and address barriers in the training progress, look at strategies for recognizing strengths, and infuse them into the training process. This unique session will offer another CEU to your conference collection.

After food, brews and schooling, the event will close out with music and the opportunity to dance and mingle.

2025 APDT International Conference Tentative Schedule



The 2025 APDT International Educational Conference and Trade Show has something for every dog training background and interest. Gain an educational edge through three days of the best available CEU opportunities, learn about new trends through lectures, workshops and panel discussions taught by professional dog training experts. Network with your peers and discover products and services that will enhance your dog training business and career. Observe the demo area while experts exhibit dog training techniques and tricks! The annual APDT conference is the premier dog training conference for dog training professionals and behaviorists. It will be held Nov. 5-7 (pre-conference workshops on Nov. 4) at the Greater Richmond Convention Center, Richmond, Virginia. Below is a tentative conference schedule. **Sessions marked with an asterisk (*) are sessions for those viewing the conference through live-streaming.** For more information, check out the Conference tab on our apdt.com website or tap the 2025 Conference button on the APDT Member App available for both Android and Apple through their respective stores.

TUESDAY, NOV. 4 WORKSHOPS

Workshops will be held 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. prior to the start of the 2025 Conference on Tuesday, Nov. 4. A separate fee of \$125 is required and limited space is available for each workshop. Transportation and box lunch provided. **The 2025 pre-conference workshops are sponsored by Cloud Star.**



The Magical World of Tricks
with Instructors **Sarah Babcock, CTC, CPDT-KSA, CBCC-KA, CDBC, and Chrissy Joy**

The magic of tricks is that they can be used for virtually everything. They are wonderful enrichment for any dog, whether that dog is in a home or in a shelter. They are great for confidence building in shy dogs and adding structure for high energy "busy" dogs. They provide the perfect foundation for dog sports, including agility, flyball, obedience, rally obedience, parkour, and more. They are great for therapy dogs and service dogs, and if taught well, can allow your dogs to get commercial work including in television and on film. And, they will allow you, the human to practice and perfect your training skills, no matter where else you want to use them. Come join this fun-filled workshop at the Richmond SPCA to take your trick-training skills to the next level. If you are interested in bringing your own dog to participate in this workshop, please contact Sarah Babcock at sbabcock@richmondspca.org for approval.



Wagging Without Worry: Helping Dogs with Fear and Aggression with Instructor **Michael Shikashio, CDBC (SOLD OUT)**

Join world-renowned aggression expert Michael Shikashio for an informative one-day workshop at the Richmond SPCA designed to be an immersive experience into practical and efficient strategies for working with dogs with a history of fear or aggression.



Your PORTL to Improving Your Shaping Skills with Instructors **Jesús Rosales-Ruiz, Ph.D., and Mary Hunter, M.S.**

Join Dr. Rosales-Ruiz and Mary Hunter for a one-day workshop all about shaping behaviors. You'll learn about behavior principles and techniques that will help you create optimal learning situations when working with both animals and people. Throughout the workshop, held at the Richmond Convention Center, we'll talk about reinforcement systems, picking effective starting points, how to shape actions, raising criteria, errorless learning, and more. In addition to lectures and discussion, this workshop will allow you to practice your shaping skills with another human as the learner using the shaping game PORTL. The PORTL exercises will help you learn to problem solve and think more creatively when designing training solutions. You will also get to play the role of the learner, which will give you more insight into how people and animals learn.

5:00-7:00 PM

REGIception at the Greater Richmond Convention Center

As you pick up your conference badge, join us for fun and prizes during REGIception. Enjoy light appetizers and beverages as you meet and mingle with attendees.



WEDNESDAY, NOV. 5

8:30-9:00 AM

Opening Welcome

Welcome to APDT 2025! Kick-off the first day of the conference with APDT International Executive Director Matt Varney and learn more about what to expect with the APDT conference experience.

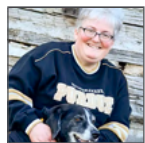
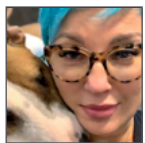
*9:00-10:30 AM



Opening Keynote — Behavior in Motion: Why movement cycles matter *by Jesús Rosales-Ruiz, Ph.D.* **Sponsored by Pets for Vets.**

A movement cycle is a repeatable unit of behavior. It specifies a starting position and a series of learner-environment interactions that continue until the individual is back at the starting point and can begin the movement cycle again. For example, most people think of the behavior of “sitting” in terms of the outcome, the dog’s bottom on the floor. However, one movement cycle of sitting starts with the dog in a standing position, goes through a series of muscle movements and weight shifts until the dog’s bottom is on the floor, and then goes through another series of actions to return to the standing position. In this talk, Dr. Rosales-Ruiz will explore why movement cycles are still relevant from a theoretical perspective and how they can help you better understand the nature of reinforcement. Thinking in terms of movement cycles will give you a new perspective when you are defining units of behavior for measurement, designing shaping plans, and setting your criteria for reinforcement.

10:45-11:45 AM

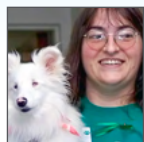


What is happening?! Understanding Canine Compulsive Disorders *by Fanna Easter, CDBC, CSAT, CPDT- KA, KPA CTP and Colleen Quinn, DVM, LFDM, KPA- CTP, Fear Free Elite, LSH-Silver*

Watching a dog spin, chase reflections, consume non-food items and paw at shadows in repetition is frustrating and scary! Canine Compulsive Disorders are not as common as most think, however they do pop up. In this session, Fanna and Dr. Quinn will explain compulsive disorders, discuss common causes and behavior protocols. If working with compulsive disorders is not your thing, learn how to identify the behavior and find a referral system quickly.



10:45-11:45 AM



The Missing Piece: Adding Tellington TTouch to Your Training Toolbox *by Deb Bauer, KPA CTP, HTAP, TT-CAP2, LFDM*

What if you had a tool at your disposal that your clients could learn easily and put into practice in between sessions, that would increase the relationship and connection with their dog while encouraging the relaxed behaviors they hope to achieve? What if that same tool could help you support leash pullers, fearful reactive behavior, and even cooperative care challenges, in a way that beautifully complements all the wonderful support you already offer? Join Tellington TTouch Practitioner and certified dog trainer Deb Bauer to discover this tool that may be the missing piece to your trainer toolbox. With years of experience blending science-based teaching methods with gentle yet powerful TTouch techniques, she will open the door to a world of possibility for trainers looking to elevate their results, enhance their services, and support both dogs and their humans in a whole new way.

*10:45-11:45 AM



Cocker-Doodle-doo: What is a dog breed anyway? *by Tim Lewis, Ph.D.*

Breeds and intentional crossbreeds are both distinct kinds of genetic lines selected for traits. We will distinguish species from breeds based on biological terms (think red wolf). We will look at the biological side of what makes up a dog breed and what we know about how the major breeds came into being based on DNA analysis rather than the written breed histories. We will look at some of the more popular breeds and crossbreeds as examples of artificial selection for specific activities. From this, we can use science to better establish our expectations about breed look and behavior, especially as it applies picking your next dog.

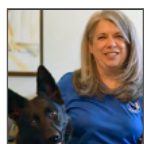
*1:30-3:00 PM



Canine Sense and Scent Ability *by Nathan Hall, Ph.D.*

Myths and legends abound about the canine sense of smell. In this talk Dr. Hall will provide the science of the canine sense of smell and describe how it is measured at the Canine Olfaction Lab. Dr. Hall will provide a tutorial on how to train dogs to detect odors and the research conducted to support the performance of detection dogs.

1:30-3:00 PM



Risk Management & Legal Issues Panel - Q&A *with Heidi Meinzer, JD, CPDT-KSA, CNW and David Pearsall*

Heidi Meinzer, an animal law attorney with the Law Office of Heidi Meinzer, PLLC, and David Pearsall, Certified Insurance Counselor, with Business Insurers of the Carolinas, will answer all your questions on how to best navigate all your legal issues and exposures to risk, and protect yourself (and your business) throughout your career.

1:30-3:00 PM



Rethinking Reactivity - Understanding and working with reactive behavior from the inside out *with Victoria Stilwell*

Living or working with a reactive dog is hard on everyone and it is understandable that people are often frustrated, embarrassed and exhausted with their dog's reactive behavior. Trainers are often brought in when the 'problem' has become too difficult for guardians to manage, and this makes it even more challenging for trainers to find effective, workable solutions that are easy for clients to understand and utilize. In this presentation we will look at what reactivity is and how trainers and guardians can use Positively's comprehensive and innovative approach to work successfully with reactive behavior.

1:30-3:00 PM



LEARNING LAB: The Wolf in Your Kitchen: How your dog is a wolf, and how it is so much better *by Tim Lewis, Ph.D.*

This hands-on Learning Lab will allow you to see what sets carnivores, including wolves, apart from other mammals like bears and weasels; how wolves are distinct from other wolf-like mammals such as coyotes and foxes; and how domestic dogs are wolves, and yet better than that. Ten thousand years of deliberate selection had to make some things better for us, right? In this lab, we will use real skulls and furs to better understand wolves and their kin, but note that all domestic skulls will be plastic reproductions.

*3:15-4:45 PM



Love Bites: Dog Aggression Directed at Family or Friends *with Michael Shikashio, CDBC*

Have you recently introduced a new dog to your family, only to witness unexpected aggression directed towards your partner or visitors? Or, has your long-time companion suddenly displayed hostility toward a family member you live with? Perhaps you've observed your dog reacting aggressively when you and your partner express affection or approach each other? Maybe your dog just doesn't want anyone in the home except for you?! Join Michael Shikashio CDBC as he dives into the underlying reasons behind this often puzzling and stressful type of aggression.

3:15-4:45 PM



Building Reinforcement Systems that Lead to Improved Communication and Accelerated Learning *by Mary Hunter, M.S.*

Why is it that some dogs learn slowly and seem so disengaged, even when the trainer has what should be an effective reinforcer? What is often missing is a reinforcement system.

This presentation will look at the elements of a reinforcement system and discuss step-by-step procedures that can be used to design and teach new reinforcement systems. Understanding the concept of a reinforcement system will help you maximize the effectiveness of your reinforcers and accelerate your training progress.

3:15-4:45 PM



Canine Colors: Personality Testing for Clients and Dogs *by Beth Bowers, CPDT-KA, CMPTI, CPPS, CTD*

CANINE COLORS® personality test will introduce you to yourself, your clients, and the dogs in a way you never imagined. Are there clients that you don't seem to connect with? Are there dogs that stress you in different ways? This workshop will open doors to how you work with clients and help them to understand what's working and not working with their dogs and how to appreciate the dog that's in front of them. CANINE COLORS® also gives a compelling view of how we can help our clients find their perfect canine companion.

5:00-7:00 PM

Welcome Reception and Exhibit Hall Grand Opening

End the first day of conference with hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar. Please join us for the grand opening of the exhibit hall and meet our many exhibitors. Come for treats and see some tricks in the Demo Area during the reception.

THURSDAY, NOV. 6

*8:00-9:00 AM



Skully and Mulder: Weird, wild, and wonderful cases with the Dr. Detectives *by Dr. Amy Pike, DVM, DACVB and Dr. Amy Learn VMD, DACVB, CABC, FFCP-elite*

In this talk, veterinarians Amy Learn and Amy Pike will discuss cases of theirs that have over the years either stumped their veterinary colleagues, or just plain fascinated them!

8:00-9:00 AM



The Sensory Savvy Trainer: Adapting Methods for Blind and Deaf Dogs *by Deb Bauer, KPA CTP, HTAP, TT-CAP2, LFDM*

Join internationally recognized expert Deb Bauer, celebrated for her groundbreaking work with blind and/or deaf dogs, as she takes you on a journey into the often-overlooked world of dogs living with sensory differences. This engaging presentation is designed specifically for dog trainers and professionals who are eager to expand their knowledge, grow their client base, and ensure that no dog or family feels left behind. This session is more than an educational opportunity; it's a chance to broaden your impact as a trainer and make a meaningful difference for dogs who need your skills the most.

8:00-9:00 AM



Dog Training For Good: How to Help More People (Without Losing Yourself!)

by Miranda Hitchcock, MS, CDBC, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, Fear Free

As a trainer, you love helping people and dogs. But you also know that you have to set boundaries when it comes to that help: you need to make enough money to support yourself, and you know you get frustrated when clients don't do what you're asking. You might have been hearing about diversity, equity, and inclusion, but have no idea it impacts you or what you can do about it. And you know that families are struggling financially right now, but feel like there's not much you can do to help. In this session we're going to talk about some real-world strategies you can use to become more inclusive in your training - without sacrificing your own quality of life.

*9:15-10:15 AM



How to Talk so People will Listen...

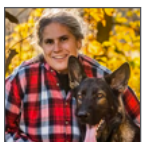
How to Listen so People will Talk

by Kenny Lamberti, B.S.

Regardless of what we are trying to accomplish, being able to effectively communicate is the key to success.

Whether working with an individual dog, managing a team, or giving a keynote address, our ability to deeply understand our audience and the message we hope to convey will make the difference in leaving a lasting meaningful impression. In this session we will explore how cultural nuance, surrendering our ego, and viewing our message with humility through the eyes and ears of the listener can elevate us as leaders, teachers, facilitators, and change makers.

9:15-10:15 AM



Fitting Equipment to Dogs

by Sue Alexander, CPDT-KSA, CBCC-KA, CDBC

Equipment is an important part of dog training today, and everyone has an opinion about what equipment you will or will not use. In order to have meaningful conversations with clients and colleagues, we have to have an understanding of how equipment works and what mode of action is in play when equipment is used. In this presentation you will learn how to evaluate equipment through the lens of mode of action, how to put that equipment onto the dog so that it works as intended, and how to choose equipment that will help you to achieve your training goals. In this talk, we will be looking at a wide variety of equipment, with the recognition that every trainer must choose equipment that suits their needs, and fits within their own ethical beliefs.

9:15-10:15 AM



Genetics of Your Dog, by Tim Lewis, Ph.D.

Session description coming soon!



*10:30-12:00 PM



LIVESTREAM EXCLUSIVE:

Conversations About Research Methods Utilized in the Study of Dog Behavior & Welfare
by Lisa Gunter, Ph.D., CAAB, MA, CBCC-KA and Erica Feuerbacher, Ph.D., CAAB, CPDT-KA, BCBA-D

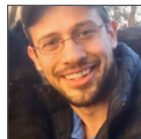
When designing research studies, scientists must have a clear understanding of the question being asked, appropriate dependent measures to answer that question, a design that is free from bias or are biased against their hypothesis, and experimental conditions that are equivalent in as many ways as possible except for the critical variable of interest. Moreover, their sample of participants should be representative of the population, and their methodology consistently applied. Once data collection is complete, scientists need to use statistical analyses that are appropriate for their data and research question, ensure interpretations are consistent with the analytical results, and be transparent in their reporting. In this session we will discuss the essential features of carrying out such a research study, and how a study investigating the question of training methods would need to be designed in order to fulfill these aims and obtain applicable results. Attendees will have a better understanding about the challenges of conducting applied research and be a more informed consumer of science, including being able to discuss the strengths and limitations of a given study more knowledgeably.

10:30-1:30 PM

Exhibit Hall Exclusive

Stay tuned to learn more about demos and exhibitors! Info coming soon!

*1:30-3:00 PM



How WE Learn: An Introduction to Behavior Analysis and Training *by Rick Hester*

This talk is an introduction to the principles, procedures, and philosophy of behavior analysis. We will review six fundamental topics to understanding and changing animal behavior. The topics include 1) an evolutionary view of learning and behavior; 2) a review of the science of behavior-change called behavior analysis; 3) common obstacles to the scientific analysis of learning and behavior; 4) ABC assessment to better understand, predict and change behavior; 5) the errorless learning philosophy and antecedent arrangement to make the right behavior more likely; 6) the relevance of the least intrusive procedure to ethical use of training procedures.

1:30-3:00 PM



LEARNING LAB: Shock and Awe: Designing Research Studies about Dog Training Methods by *Lisa Gunter, Ph.D., CAAB, MA, CBCC-KA* and *Erica Feuerbacher, Ph.D., CAAB, CPDT-KA, BCBA-D*

Conducting research is a challenging endeavor, and even more so when we ask applied questions. When we consider recent research attempting to investigate the relative impacts of shock collars and food-based training on dog behavior and welfare, being a well-informed consumer of science is critical in order to evaluate studies for their merits and limitations. In this learning lab, we will discuss these essential features in greater detail. We will then facilitate attendees working together in small groups as they design a study investigating their own question about training methods.

1:30-3:00 PM



Puppy Kindergarten: The new science of raising a great dog by *Vanessa Woods*

What does it take to raise a great dog? This was the question that we hoped to answer when we enrolled one hundred and one Canine Companion service dog puppies in a longitudinal study of cognition and temperament at the Duke Puppy Kindergarten between 2018-2024. With the help of a retired service dog named Congo and hundreds of undergraduate volunteers, we set out to understand the secrets of the puppy mind. Applying the same games that psychologists use when exploring the development of young children, we tested when cognition critical to a dog's training success first develops during a puppy's final stage of rapid brain development (from approximately 8-20 weeks of age). We also socialized our puppies in two different ways to test which positive early experiences might enhance their abilities and give them a cognitive head-start. The results were surprising - maturational patterns varied greatly between cognitive skills, with puppies showing adult-like performance on some tasks only weeks after a skill emerged, while never achieving adult performance in others. Differences in rearing strategy did not lead to differences in developmental patterns while, in some cases, repeated testing enhanced cognitive development. The results suggest ways to integrate this new developmental understanding into training approaches. Raising dozens of puppies on a college campus allowed us to rigorously ask a host of other questions including how stress physiology, sleep, coprophagy develops and what rearing strategies are most likely to lead to a positive outcome. We use all the discoveries to ultimately provide science-based recommendations on how to best help our puppies grow up to be the best dogs they can possibly be.

1:30-3:00 PM



From Joyful Play To Musical Freestyle: Enhancing Your Relationship Through Movement and Music by *Ruth Lewis, CCFT*

Studies show that dogs who listen to specific types of music experience a reduction in anxiety and stress. It has also been demonstrated that the use of music is effective in increasing levels of beneficial hormones like serotonin and dopamine in both dog and handler. These increased levels can help increase the relationship and bond. This session will explore methods and benefits of combining music and movement into a variety of dog activities such as training, classes, conditioning, and even canine musical freestyle.

*4:00-5:00 PM



Finding Furever Homes: Training shelter volunteers how to teach dogs behaviors that promote adoption by *Sean Will, Ph.D., and Maasa Nishimuta, M.S., BCBA*

Animal shelters across the United States are tasked with caring for and re-homing over three million dogs annually. Well-trained volunteers are required to help dogs get adopted from animal shelters. Inadequate training can lead to mismanagement of the volunteers and attrition of those volunteers who are critical to helping shelter dogs get adopted. However, animal shelters often lack access to the resources and funds required to provide adequate training. This study created and examined a cost-effective and effective method to train volunteers how to teach dogs behaviors that have been demonstrated through research to promote dog adoption. This presentation will explore the research behind dog adoption and the one behavior shown to have a statistically significant increase in being adopted, the training program used to teach volunteers how to teach this behavior to the dogs, and the results of the training for the humans and the outcomes it had for the dogs!

4:00-5:00 PM

Emergency and Disaster Preparedness by *Gretchen Powers, DVM, MS, CCRP, DACVPM*

This lecture will discuss the impact to pets and animals during times of crisis with an emphasis on preparedness strategies. Topics will include creating and practicing an emergency plan, items to include in a pet emergency kit, and considerations for sheltering during disasters.

4:00-5:00 PM



Redefining the Walk by *Laurie Williams, BA, CCUI, CTDI*

As most dog trainers will concur, the first thing people want to do when they add a new puppy or dog to the family is walk them. You get a dog, you're supposed to immediately walk that dog. Sadly, this often results in a frustrating experience for both dog and owner, and that's why it's no surprise that "leash walking" is arguably one of the most requested training assistance new puppy and dog owners ask for. In this session we will take a closer look at "the walk" and discuss the many things that impede progress, as well as identify and demonstrate the techniques that will lead to success.



6:00-10:00 PM



Night on the Town VIP Event: *Special Speaker, Jess Adam, MA, LPC, at Strangeways Brewing.*
Additional \$100 cost at registration.

APDT International is bringing the evening social back to conference in a big way. Attendees will board buses from their hotels which will whisk them away to an exclusive evening as conference attendees take over an entire tap room and brewery. You'll sample branded brews and a variety of food options as we spend the first part of the evening connecting with everyone you've met at the big event. Next, continue with an intimate session from one of our most engaging speakers, Jess Adam, who will be delivering unique content only available to Thursday night's event, adding another valuable CEU to your collection. As we wrap up the learning content, music will take over the speakers and you will have the opportunity to dance and mingle well into the night.

FRIDAY, NOV. 7

7:30-9:15 AM

Rise and Thrive Breakfast. Sponsored by Cloud Star.

Friday morning will include breakfast during an expanded exhibit hall opening time. This will present attendees with additional exposure to exhibits, connecting with resources to help them take their practice to the next level. Elevate your breakfast experience with giveaways, and special engagement opportunities.

*8:00-9:30 AM

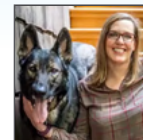


The "Good Life" of a Good Dog: A total welfare model for the future of the pet dog industry by *Kim Brophay, LFDM, CDBC, CPDT-KA*

How do you REALLY get a "Good Dog"? By giving them a "Good Life" - a term that has been defined by leading animal welfare scientists concerned with the characteristics of optimal welfare as the gold standard for any animal living under human control and captive conditions. Animals who have this "Good Life" standard of welfare do not have behavior problems. That's right - our dogs' behavior challenges are very often symptoms of their chronic confusion, frustration, and distress in their modern pet lives. The "easy" life of today's pet is not as easy as we think it is - and our dogs desperately need our help as their stewards and professionals. This talk will be a powerful, game-changing, conflict-mediating introduction to Kim Brophay's new Total Welfare Assessment Tool - the integration of the internationally celebrated L.E.G.S. Model of Canine Science with the updated framework of the Five Domains Model of Animal Welfare.



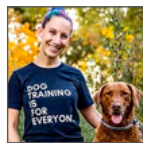
8:00-9:30 AM



LEARNING LAB: Shock & Awe: Designing Rigorous Research Studies about Dog Training Methods with *Lisa Gunter, Ph.D., CAAB, MA, CBCC-KA* and *Erica Feuerbacher, Ph.D., CAAB, CPDT-KA, BCBA-D*

Conducting research is a challenging endeavor. When carrying out research studies, scientists must have clear understanding of their research questions, appropriate dependent measures to answer that question, a design that is free from bias (or are biased against their hypothesis), and experimental conditions that are equivalent in as many ways as possible, expect for critical variable on interest. Samples should be representative of the population, and their methodology consistent with the analytical research. In this workshop, we will discuss these essential features in greater detail. We will then facilitate attendees working together in small groups as they design a study investigating their own question about training methods. Following this workshop, attendees will have a better understanding about the challenges of conducting applied research and the more informed consumers of science, including being able to discuss a given study strengths and limitations more knowledgeably.

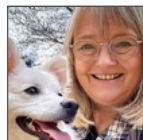
8:00-9:30 AM



Behavioral Euthanasia: Fact and Fiction by *Miranda Hitchcock, MS, CDBC, CBCC-KA, CPDT-KA, Fear Free*

Behavioral euthanasia is an important topic for behavior consultants, shelter workers, and the behavior community as a whole — but there's been very little research about it over the years. More practitioners are talking about behavioral euthanasia, despite the stigma that has prevented these discussions from becoming mainstream. This talk will cover the research on behavioral euthanasia, to provide behavior professionals with a better understanding of what we actually know about the topic. We'll specifically focus on separating fact from fiction: is behavioral euthanasia mostly for young dogs? Is it mostly about access to resources/funding? How often is it happening? Is it about convenience, or safety, or quality of life? Attendees will leave this presentation with a better understanding of what we know about behavioral euthanasia- and what we don't. They'll also leave with some tips and tricks for handling conversations around behavioral euthanasia, and how to help clients who are making these difficult decisions.

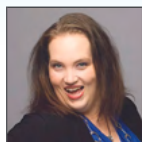
8:00-9:30 AM



Enrichment in Richmond: Keeping Shelter Dogs and Cats Safe, Sane, and Thriving by *Sarah Babcock, CTC, CPDT-KSA, CBCC-KA, CDBC*

Caring for an average of 100 dogs and 150 cats at the Richmond SPCA means ensuring not just their physical well-being but also their mental and emotional health. While medical care and behavior modification play key roles, daily enrichment is essential to reducing stress and setting animals up for success in the shelter and beyond. In this interactive session, we'll explore proven, practical enrichment strategies for both dogs and cats, including playgroups, scent work, quiet time, and volunteer-led efforts like the Richmond SPCA's Running Buddies, Green Team, and Blue Team programs. Attendees will leave with ready-to-use enrichment ideas, DIY craft projects, and actionable plans they can implement in shelters, rescues, and homes.

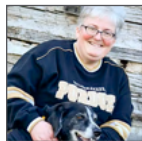
9:45-10:45 AM



Out and About Dangers by Beth Bowers, CPDT-KA, CMPTI, CPPS, CTDI

Have you considered the dangers that lurk while you are on location with your clients? If you are working on leash manners with your clients outside, this class is for you. We want to bring awareness to the top six emergencies when you are outdoors with dogs. This program will cover bites, stings, allergic reactions, snakebites, poisons/toxins/parasites, extreme temperatures, trauma injuries/fractures, bleeding wounds and trauma.

*9:45-10:45 AM



Embracing all 4 L.E.G.S. of Pets and People to Create a New Kind of Veterinary Experience by Colleen Quinn, DVM, LFDM, KPA-CTP, Fear Free Elite, LSH-Silver

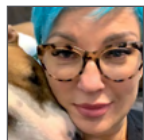
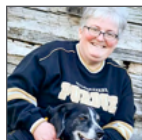
The science of ethology has reemerged as a critical aspect of behavior in the last few years and one of the models (developed by Kim Brophey CDBC, BA) is L.E.G.S., which stands for Learning, Environment, Genetics, and Self. It focuses on the "why" behind behaviors, more than the "how to's" of changing behaviors. If we understand more about why animals are showing the behaviors they are through analyzing their L.E.G.S., we can meet their needs better and improve their emotional, physical, and mental health and in turn, improve their welfare. This model can be incorporated into the veterinary setting, alongside Fear-Free and Low Stress Handling, to decrease anxiety for both the pets and their owners. Come hear about the L.E.G.S. model, how it works in a veterinary setting, and see how the speaker has used it to open an entirely new type of veterinary clinic designed specifically to help anxious, fearful and aggressive pets.

10:45-1:15 PM

Exhibit Hall Exclusive

More info coming soon!

*12:00-1:00 PM



**LIVESTREAM EXCLUSIVE:
Discussing Behavior Modifications with a Dog's DVM by Colleen Quinn, DVM, FDM, KPA-CTP, Fear Free Elite, LSH-Silver and Fanna Easter, CDBC, CSAT, CPDT-KA, KPA**

We are opening the door to discussing ways trainers can build relationships with veterinarians, what happens in a veterinary hospital that is helpful for trainers to know, and how these two things can make a big difference for our pets. Collaboration among trainers, veterinarians, and guardians can help improve the identification, diagnosis, management, treatment, and prognosis of behavioral issues. Navigating these connections and conversations can be daunting, and frustrating, as each party brings different knowledge, experience, and observations to the table. We will discuss how to approach each other, share information, understand, and respect all parties, and always keep the pet's welfare at the forefront.

*1:15-2:00 PM

Closing Speech by Matt Varney, APDT International executive director

Stay tuned for exciting announcements and recognitions.

*2:00-3:30 PM



CLOSING KEYNOTE: The Genius of Dogs by Brian Hare, Ph.D.

Dogs have more jobs than ever, but the demand for the best trained dogs far exceeds the supply. The challenge is identifying dogs that are most likely to succeed with working dog training. Dr. Hare will present data on individual differences in dog psychology that demonstrate that dogs have different types of cognition, and these abilities vary independently. He will then explain how the existence of cognitive profiles in dogs has the potential to enhance the selection, breeding and rearing of working dogs. He will also share what he has learned so far about puppies, service dogs, bomb detection, genes and even some wolves. The goal is to 1) train dogs for jobs they are most likely to succeed in and 2) help more people in need who can benefit from the assistance a dog can provide.

SAVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!

Registration is open on our website at APDT.com and through the APDT app. Conference recordings can be added for \$99. Pre-Conference Workshops on Nov. 4 are an additional fee of \$125. The payment plan deadline is July 15.

In-Person Conference

Members & Partners

Early Rate April 26 - July 15, \$550
Standard Rate July 16 - Sept. 30, \$650
LAST CALL Oct. 1 - Live Event, \$725

Non-Members

Early Rate April 26 - July 15, \$650
Standard Rate July 16 - Sept. 30, \$750
LAST CALL Oct. 1 - Live Event \$850

Livestream Attendance

(Livestream registration is non-refundable).

Members & Partners

Early Rate through July 15, \$175
Standard Rate July 16 - Oct. 31, \$225

Non-Members

Early Rate through July 15, \$275
Standard Rate July 16 - Oct. 31, \$325

Teaching Puppy to Poop on Cue

By Dr. Ian Dunbar PhD, BVetMed, MRCVS
Courtesy of DunbarAcademy.com

After your puppy has dutifully peed on cue:

1. Remain still, say "Go Poop" (your choice of words) and let them circle around you on leash to have the chance 'to go' if necessary. (Lunge-pooing).
2. Gently praise when your puppy sniffs the ground and especially, when they short-couple (hind legs catch up to the front legs), prepare to address the spot (like a golfer), and especially while they meditate throughout the production.
3. After your puppy poops, praise and offer half a dozen treats in succession.

TIP: Some dogs are 'double-poopers'. If so, praise after the first poop, and handsomely reward after the second poop. Play Fetch, Tug, or Tag to prompt some peristalsis and then, give your puppy another opportunity in the poop spot. Should your pup prematurely consider a second poop while playing, immediately instruct, "Toilet! Toilet! Toilet!" in a calm yet insistent voice.

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(Pat Miller Certified Trainers) for their accomplishments and
dedication to ongoing learning and professionalism!*

You can find all of our Academies and Workshops
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LIVE WEBINAR

Dread to Discovery: Transform Adolescent Challenges into Lasting Success



AUG 18 at 1:00 PM EST

Bobbie Bhambree & Dr. Kathy Murphy

Adolescence is one of the most misunderstood — and crucial—stages in a dog's life. But what if you could stop dreading it and start seeing the huge window of opportunity it presents?

Can't make it live? Recording included!

pathlms.com/apdt/webinars/83534



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✓ MADE IN THE USA!

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