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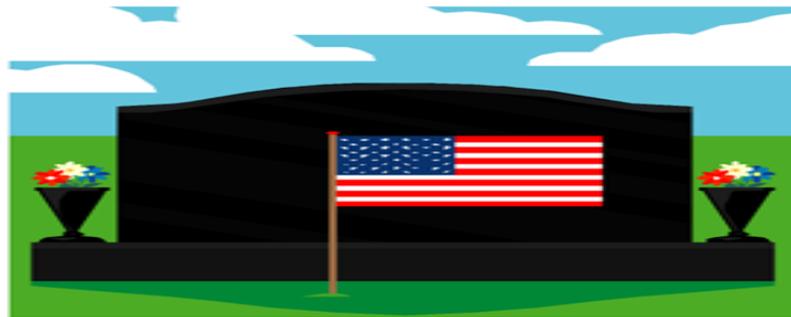
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In This Issue

Impulse Control - teaching structure
dogs calm and polite behavior pg. 2
New Dog Formula pg. 4
Quote of the Day pg. 5
Joke of the Day pg. 5
Sexual Maturity in dogs pg. 5
This & That pg. 9

FREEDOM IS NEVER FREE



Impulse control – Teaching- Structure dogs calm and polite behavior

We all know dogs that jump on people, push them out of their way to get through doors, rush their way in and out of the car or the crate and up and down the stairs. Dogs can be impatient and pushy. The smaller they are, the easier it is for owners to accept such energetic outbursts. A 5 lb. Chihuahua jumping on us as we walk through the door certainly doesn't present the same challenges as a 150 lb Great Dane or even a 70 lb. Labrador. But regardless of weight, size and strength, there are situations where pushy pooches can put themselves in harm's way. Rushing through an open door can lead to disastrous consequences if there's a busy road nearby. Is this just a temperament trait that we have to put up with? Do dogs eventually calm down and grow out of it or can we effectively teach them alternative behaviors? Controlling our dog's impulses is in fact quick and easy once we understand how.

In humans, impulsive refers to the urge to act on a whim, with only immediate gratification in mind and little consideration for potential consequences. Impulsivity plays a key role in various disorders, such as ADHD, bipolar disorder or substance abuse disorders, but is also very common in children and adults of all walks of life. We sometimes buy things we don't need just because we saw them in the store. We indulge in desserts even though we know how unhealthy they are. Research on the subject defines impulsive actions as 'poorly conceived, prematurely expressed, unduly risky or inappropriate to the situation' ([Evenden, 1999](#))

Dogs are no different. Their urges to go outside, get out of the crate or get a ball, often override any sense of safety or comfort for both themselves and the humans nearby. Impulsivity can be the result of a reduction of serotonin in the brain ([O'Hare 2007](#), [Panksepp, 2012](#)) so when dealing with impulsivity, it's always a good idea to take measures to increase the levels of serotonin.

Food changes are recommended as well as an increase in activity (like walks and playtime). In many cases however, the dogs have simply never been taught polite and appropriate behavior.

Owners find themselves routinely jumped on, shoved to the side and stepped on with little consideration. When a dog wants something, she wants it NOW! But just like we teach our toddlers, who share a similar weakness for giving in to temptations, we can also teach Rex and Sadie that patience, calm and polite

behaviors are more effective in getting what they want than jumping, pushing, pawing or barking.

For their sake as well as those around them, teaching dogs the art of self-control needs to be, just like it is for children, at the top of our priority list.

Impulse control, or self-control is useful in almost every situation, from calmly waiting to be hooked on the leash before going out for a walk (*instead of jumping around*) to patiently sitting for the food bowl, for the ball to be thrown or for the owner's attention. When applying the following principles in specific situations, the dogs learn **patterns and habits** that can generalize and help them stay calm and manageable in all situations:

Identify what it is that the dog wants: that's the reward. Depending on the situation, the dog may want to go out, your attention, food, a toy or playtime with another dog. Whatever the dog does immediately before getting what he/she wants will be rewarded and therefore repeated. If the dog pushes her way out of the door and manages to get out, she'll learn that pushing her way out gets her what she wants.

If jumping up to greet us gets your dog's attention (even when we're yelling or pushing him off), he'll do it again next time. The key here is to patiently wait for an alternative behavior, one that we want the dog to repeat.

A typical example is hooking the leash to the dog's collar before going out for a walk. Most dogs get very excited and start jumping up as soon as we grab the leash. Dogs can't jump forever and if we just stand there and wait, they will calm down. We can also **ask the dog to sit and only approach him with the leash when he's sitting down**. If he gets up (which he will at first), we simply take the leash away and wait for him to sit again. It doesn't take much for the dog to learn that only sitting calmly will get the leash on!

Practice patience! Staying calm and composed is critical. Frustration and irritation will only contribute to the dog's excitability and make it harder for him to calm down. We can't ask the dog to slow down if we're in a rush for results. Be prepared to spend the time that it takes for the dog to calm down. Pick the behavior that you want to reward and wait for it.

There is no behavior that the dog will sustain for long periods of time. He can't jump, bark or paw forever. As soon as the dog performs that behavior, like keeping all four paws on the ground, staying quiet for a few seconds or sitting, **reward that**

behavior by giving the dog what he wants. It will only take a few repetitions for the dog to start offering the alternative behavior instead of the one you're trying to stop. **Be consistent!**

Teaching is effective when we're consistent. If one day we allow jumping and the next day, because we're in our work clothes we no longer tolerate it, it's confusing to the dog and a source of stress. Once we chose to work on a specific behavior, no matter how tired or ready, we need to follow through with the training protocol with the confidence that our efforts will pay off. Look for opportunities to teach the dog calm and controlled behavior, such as:

Asking the dog to sit and wait for your cue before eating his meal; Waiting for the dog to sit and wait for your cue before jumping in and out of the car; Waiting for the dog to sit and wait for a cue before getting out of the crate; When coming home from work, waiting for the dog to have all four paws on the ground before giving her attention; Teaching the dog to 'settle' on cue.

Impulse control (or self-control), may be one of the most important concepts to teach any dog. Unfortunately, our natural tendencies to deal with impulsiveness often get in the way of effective teaching. When we try to punish the behavior, we often introduce confusion and chaos in the situation, making it harder for the dog to settle down. Instead, simply preventing the dog from getting what he/she wants while out of control and waiting for calm and polite behaviors, will make a world of difference. Dogs become calmer, more focused and easier to control in general. **Clarity, patience and persistence** are the key elements for success.

(Jennifer Cattet, Ph.D.)

***New Dog Age Formula**

It's not a simple calculation

We've always known we need a new formula for converting dog ages to human years. Most of us multiply the dog's age by 7, however, veterinarians have long objected to that simple formula, citing sexual maturity and the size of the dog as two reasons a "one size fits all" calculation won't work. Plus, smaller breeds usually have a long-life expectancy than large breeds.

Now, researchers at the University of California, San Diego, who scanned DNA patterns on 104 Labrador Retrievers for comparison and used the rate of the methylation changes in dogs to match it to human epigenetic clock (biological aging), propose a new formula for dogs over the age of 1:

$$16 \ln(\text{dog age}) + 31 = \text{human age}$$

That is the dog's age in natural logarithm (not how many years he's been alive), multiplied by 16, plus 31.

So, a 6-year-old dog would be equivalent to a human who is 59.7 years old, instead of the old method that would compare the dog to a 42-year-old human.

Natural logarithms are used to find "half-life, decay constant or unknown time in exponential decay problems," according to many sources. For most of us, it is not easy to calculate a natural logarithm, although some calculators have a button for it.

*Dog Watch: Cornell University

Quote of the Day:

"The more I learn about people, the more I like my dog" Mark Twain

Twain had three dogs which he named "I Know," "You Know," and "Don't Know."

*"Worrying does not take away tomorrow's troubles but it does take away today's peace"

*"Snowboarding is an activity for people who feel that regular skiing is not lethal enough." Dave Barry

*coffee news

Joke of the Day:

Q: What did the drummer call his twin daughters?

A: Anna One, Anna Two!



" I can't go to lunch today; I'm taking Fido to the V-E-T"



"Siri, what does V-E-T mean?"

***Sexually Maturity in Dogs**

Key points:

- Timing of sexual maturity varies depending on the breed and size of your dog.
- Puppies may be fertile before you realize it, so take steps to prevent unwanted breeding.
- Research shows that too early spay/neuter procedures may affect long-term health.

Humans take years to develop. Dogs though, in our eyes, mature almost overnight. One morning you have an adorable little puppy on your hands, and the next your puppy is starting to act like a teenager, complete with mood swings and behavioral changes. Sexual maturity is an important part of this process, and it is something that we need to understand if we want to be responsible dog owners. Here is what you need to know about sexual maturity to keep your puppy healthy and prevent unwanted breeding's.

When Do Puppies Reach Sexual Maturity?

The timing of sexual maturity is largely size-and breed-dependent. So, talk to your vet and breeder about your puppy. Sexual maturity in puppies typically begins to occur between 6-to-9 months of age, although certain giant breeds may not reach sexual maturity until they are older.

However, most are at least 9-to-11 months old before their growth plates close. This also varies based on size and breed. Many veterinarians believe it can be harmful to spay or neuter your dog before the growth plates close. The reason is that such procedures can alter hormones, which are critical to proper bone growth.

What To Expect As Your Puppy Sexually Matures

We all know what happens to humans when we hit puberty. Dogs get to skip the acne and facial hair, but they do experience significant hormonal changes that can alter behavior. The changes are different for male and female puppies.

Sexually mature female dogs typically go into heat twice a year. The most noticeable change during this time occurs at the start of their heat, called proestrus. The bitch's vulva will swell, and she will lick the area and urinate more frequently. She will also develop a red vaginal discharge for a period of 7-to-10 days, a bit like a human period. The female dog can be fertile for as long as 2-3 weeks.

The first heat usually takes place when the pup is between 6 and 15 months, depending on the breed and size of the dog. It's important to understand a puppy can become pregnant during her first heat, so be sure to keep a close on her if you decide not to spay yet and keep her on a leash when you take her out.

Male dogs are sexually active year-round and can be capable of siring puppies when they're as young as 5 months, but they are most fertile after 12-to-15 months of age, once they are fully physically mature. At this stage, they have higher testosterone levels than even adult male dogs have, which may cause other male dogs to be aggressive toward them.

Males can start to mark their territory as they become sexually mature, which is why many owners consider an undesirable trait. Roaming is another behavior that is sometimes characteristic of sexually mature male and female dogs.

Providing your adolescent dog with physical and mental exercise and continuing your puppy training will help you to prevent or mitigate behaviors that develop at that age. Try to be patient. Remember that this is just a phase that will come to an end as your dog grows. It helps to reinforce the behaviors you want and discourage the ones you don't want.

Spaying & Neutering

The most important decision you need to make as your puppy reaches sexual maturity involves spaying and neutering. Unless you plan on breeding or showing your dog, many veterinarians recommend spaying and neutering.

Timing is an important consideration, in addition to whether or not to spay or neuter at all. Allowing a female pup to have one heat cycle helps to be sure she is mature and finished growing. When a puppy is spayed or neutered before reaching full maturity, there may be a risk of future orthopedic problems. Hormones instruct the growth plates when to close. Spaying before puberty causes the growth plates, which are still open, to remain open longer. This can make a dog or bitch orthopedically out of balance.

AKC Canine Health Foundation-funded research has led to the following conclusion: "Most dogs in the United States are spayed or neutered, and for years the procedures have been completed prior to maturity. The research suggests that veterinarians should be more cautious about the age at which they spay and neuter in order to protect the overall health of dogs."

Research results have shown that early spay of neuter (before the age of 12 months) can impact the incidence of different types of cancer, hip dysplasia, and development of canine cruciate ligament ruptures.

In an article entitled “Long-Term Health Risks and Benefits Associated with Spay/Neuter in Dogs,” author Laura J. Sanborn, M.S. says: “An objective reading of the veterinary medical literature reveals a complex situation with respect to the long-term health risks and benefits associated with spay/neuter in dogs. The evidence shows that spay/neuter correlates with both positive and adverse health effects in dogs. It also suggests how much we really do not yet understand about this subject.”*Akc

*Coronavirus and Dogs



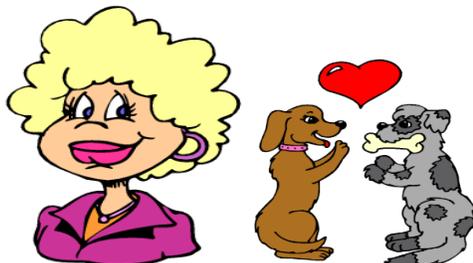
CDC says spread unlikely

Despite the photos you may have seen with Chinese dog owners buying face masks for their dogs, it appears that while dogs can be infected by coronaviruses, so far they are resistant to this new version making its way around the world.

“Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people.” Reports the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

In dogs, coronavirus infections tend to appear as short-lived but highly infectious intestinal infections. While many adult dogs show no clinical signs, puppies and young dogs may have acute onset diarrhea. The diarrhea may be orange in color, contain blood, and have a very bad odor. Symptomatic care generally resolves this infection, but it’s wise to consult with your veterinarian to rule out any other problems. * Cornell University

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY



***This and That**

A stray dog in Ontario, Canada, was found on a road sheltering five kittens from the cold, according to CTV News. The Pet and Wildlife Rescue (P.A.W.) took them in and said it was unlikely the five-week-old kittens would have survived otherwise. Offers to adopt the dog, named Serenity, are pouring in.

The remains of a “remarkably intact” puppy were found in Russia last year, but information about the find is just surfacing. Named Dogor, the male two-month-old puppy’s remains are estimated to be 18,000 years old. Researchers are unable to determine if the puppy is wolf or dog or a mix.

In Oregon, a jury awarded two dog breeders \$400,000 because a semen bank for dogs mistakenly destroyed frozen specimens from highly-esteemed Labrador Retrievers, according to The Register-Guard.* (Cornell University-Dog Watch)