



***NADOI NOTES:
An Anthology***

***VOLUME 2
1981-1997***

***Edited
by:
Anita Crafton***

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“NADOI Notes”, written by members of the National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors (NADOI), has appeared in several general and specialized dog publications since 1971. This second volume of the NADOI Anthology brings together 57 articles spanning the years 1981 through 1997.

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BEHAVIOR

How Your Dog Trains You

by Joann M. Locher, M.S. - 1992

Every dog has certain needs, drives and desires. When one first acquires a dog, the animal exhibits a great deal of trial and error behavior to determine what will “work” to get fulfillment. Therefore, any touch, spoken word, food, toys, letting the dog out/in, etc. can serve as “Positive Reinforcement” because it reinforces (or strengthens) what the dog was doing at the time. In other words, whatever behavior is occurring the moment the dog receives something it likes, is the behavior which is more likely to occur again.

Many pet owners avoid training because they think it is an unpleasant process in which they will be forced to jerk and yell at their dog in order to control him. However, controlling your dog’s behavior can be as simple as just using better timing for the same things you are doing now with your pet.

For example, if your dog nudges you and you pet him, you are rewarding nudging. However, if you ignored him until he sat and then petted him, you would be teaching your dog that sitting “pays”. With impeccable, consistent timing, your dog would, in a surprisingly short time, begin to think that sitting is his command for you to pet him (he was commanding you with the nudging).

This approach would: 1) be very simple to do; 2) Take no extra time; 3) Be a very pleasant way to modify the dog’s behavior; 4) Work quicker than you think.

If you could “interview” a dog in an obedience class and ask “What are you doing here?”, the dog would probably say, “I’m training my owner to give me treats! I just have to figure out the commands which will work. Currently, quietly laying down seems to be my best bet.”

If you give your dog a cookie when he whines, I’ll bet that he whines quite a bit. Suppose you decide that you are only going to give him a cookie when he lays down. Carry cookies in your pocket and point to the floor. If he doesn’t lay down, ignore him. If he does, as soon as his elbows hit the deck, slip a cookie in his mouth and pleasantly say “Down! Good!” If you are consistent, your dog will be terrific at lying down in no time!

To “shape” more complex behaviors, you would at first reward a very rough approximation of the desired behavior and, as the dog gets better, slowly raise your standards. For example, if you want to teach “High Five” (a very high paw raise), you would kneel by your sitting dog with a treat hidden in your hand, held still in front of his nose. Watch carefully as he tries to figure out what command he must give you to make you give the treat. The second he lifts one paw (even a little) slip the treat in his mouth, while saying “High Five!” Remember: you have to be quick! As he gets the idea that a paw raise works”, you can selectively reward higher and higher attempts.

If you pay closer attention to timing and give the dog what he wants only when he does what you want, you will have a nicer dog. Whether you realize it or not, you have already been “shaping” the dog’s behavior, only you may have been inadvertently rewarding the wrong things.

Remember: WHAT YOU WILL REWARD YOU WILL GET!

HANDLERS WITH DISABILITIES

Physically Disabled Children As Dog Trainers

Author Unknown

Dog obedience training for physically disabled children blends physical therapy activities with social and psychological concerns. Unlike other modes of therapy this activity takes place in the child's familiar environment along with other children, dogs, and adults, emphasizing the normality of the disabled child rather than the differences. Too often the disabled child is treated in a distorted manner, as though the disability were the child rather than only one aspect of the child. Participation in the common activity of dog training helps the child perceive him/herself in an integrated fashion.

Disabled children can become the perpetual recipient of others decisions and continue this pattern into adulthood. While this passive attitude may be comfortable for the parent, this non-assertive posture will hinder economic and mental independence. In dog training the child moves into a position of leadership and control. The child makes decisions that affect not only him/herself but the dog as well. By becoming an active participant rather than a passive observer, the child develops decision making skills and experiences the consequences of those decisions.

Children execute physical therapy techniques during actual training. Body postures and exercises to physically aid the child are incorporated into dog training's multi-faceted approach.

Dog training is intrinsically filled with mishaps and mistakes. As the child learns the new role of teacher the dog is learning a new role as pupil! Their frequent errors are an unavoidable and natural part of training, and are treated with humor, patience, persistence, and a hug. Through observation and example, the child learns that when mistakes are made love is not lessened or approval withdrawn.

Group participation and social skills are learned in dog training class. In addition to encouraging individual accomplishments, class activities are created to stimulate cooperative attitudes.

Children have the opportunity to compete in dog shows with their trained pet. Competition in these areas place the child on equal terms with non-disabled peers, as the emphasis is placed on the dog's performance rather than the limitations of the child.

Dog obedience training offers a rich sampling of life skills and experiences for the disabled child. Building a relationship with an animal based on mutual activity that brings tangible results increases the child's self-esteem and confidence as it opens and extends personal horizons.

Training Aid For A Handicapped Handler

by Terry Ryan - 1985

Every so often there comes along an idea that is so simple in concept, yet so effective, one is forced to say, "Why didn't I think of that?" Such is the case with the solid leash. At every dog obedience training clinic I have attended, there are usually one or two ideas that stand out head and shoulders above the others. Thank you, Bob Self, for introducing me to the solid leash.

The solid leash is a conventional snap attached to the end of a dowel. Let ingenuity be your guide to construction. In Bob Self's training manual, *DOGS SELF TRAINED*, he shows the construction by drilling a hole through the end of a ½ inch by 30 inch dowel rod. The snap is fastened to the dowel by passing a piece of wire through the hole and the eye of the snap and then twisting the wire. Tape covers the sharp ends of the wire. Another method is by stapling a cotton web leash to a ¾ inch x 3-inch dowel. Both methods of construction prevent the snap from being rapidly attached to the rod.

A good instructor knows when to modify his usual approach to teaching an exercise to suit the temperament and capabilities of the individual dogs and handlers. This becomes more of a challenge when instructing a handicapped handler. The solid leash is an invaluable training device for handlers with a limited range of motion or limited dexterity. It allows the handler to give a verbal command while physically prompting the dog into position with little or no assistance from another handler. This does much for the morale of the handler as well as helping the dog regard his owner as leader.

When a student brings his dog to class, the main reason is to be able to control his dog and have him "mind." More specifically, to be able to have his dog do what he asks him to do. This simply means having voice control. All of our exercises are taught with this goal in mind. We stress that students should not rely on the lead or physical manipulation to control the dog. In order to do this the sequence of name, command, movement, praise or correction must be properly carried out. If not the dog becomes dependent on everything but voice.

The foundation for this is found in the basic principals of classical conditioning. A dog can be taught (conditioned) to salivate by associating a light or buzzer with the presentation of meat powder. The sequence is light (buzzer), food powder, salivation and reward. Since the food powder is always presented following the stimulus, the dog learns to salivate at the sight of the light or sound of the buzzer.

With heeling, what we want is the dog's attention on us when he is in a certain position at our left side. Should the dog begin to leave that position, his name is called followed by the command to "heel." If the dog does not respond by looking at us or stopping his movement away from heel position, he is given a lead correction or as we prefer, a reminder, to once again get his attention. The reminder is not such that the dog physically pulled into position since, if timed properly, the dog is never really out of position. It should be quick enough to startle the dog and divert his attention to the owner. Once his attention has been regained, the dog is praised. It is stressed that the lead never be used unless the dog's name has first been called and he has failed to respond. Through the constant association between the name, his attention should be on the

owner. To point out the need for voice control, we stress that if the dog cannot be controlled with the lead on with the voice alone, never having to use the lead, it is not reasonable to expect to be able to control the dog when he is off-lead.

We also suggest that the dog's name never be used unless we are going to have the dog do something. For this reason the name should not be used with stays. The practical application in every day life is simply that the dog becomes more responsive to his name and controllable off lead. If the name is used constantly when the dog is around, never expecting him to respond to it, the name becomes a part of the background noise of everyday life. For those competing in trials, it teaches the dog that when he hears his name, he is going to be asked to do something and his attention should be on the owner.

Problems arise when the lead is over used or corrections have been more forceful than needed to get the job done. This usually occurs when students and/or instructors fail to understand why the lead is used and the corrections are given regardless of how the dog is responding to the command or his name. What most often happens is that command and lead correction are given simultaneously. The dog learns that both must occur and both are needed for him to respond. Since in heeling there is movement, the dog is given a chance to respond to this movement before a reminder is given. We find that stressing the proper sequence of name, command and reminders helps eliminate many of the problems associated with basic training.

GENERAL INTEREST

Continuing Education

by Carol Cronan - 1996

As I have mentioned previously, I live on Whidbey Island in Washington state. Whidbey Island is divided into three sections: the southend, where I live; central Whidbey; and the northend, where there is a Naval Air Station. It takes about an hour to drive from one end of the island to the other. I get 95% of my business from the residents of the southend.

Where am I heading with this geography lesson of my little corner of the Pacific Northwest? Well, I had an opportunity to teach a continuing education class at the high school located in central Whidbey. The topic was, Understanding Your Canine Companion, and the class was to last for two hours. I was honored to be asked and it was a good opportunity to reach an untapped market for my dog training business.

Now I had to prepare my presentation. First I went to the library and checked out the book, "Speaking with Confidence, A Guide For Public Speakers" by Wanda Vassallo. After reading it for a couple of times I had my game plan and an "I'm sure I can talk about dogs for two hours" attitude.

The second step was to get out all my dog books and organize an outline:

- Introduction of myself
- Dogs in the 90's
- Domestication of dogs
- Canine series
- Canine communication
- Living with dogs

The next step was to look through my canine library and find all the facts I could that would be pertinent to my presentation. I enjoyed revisiting some of my older books that I hadn't looked at for a while. It was difficult to find enough information to get my point across, but at the same time I didn't want to provide too much information as some of the areas in the outline had entire books on the subject.

After looking at the books I had to start putting something down on paper so I got out a notebook and began jotting down ideas that I thought would fit in with Understanding Your Canine Companion. Then I numbered each entry in my notebook, keeping in mind my outline, and began entering it all into my computer. Once I had everything from my notebook in my computer I was able to fill-in with more information. Things were starting to fit together pretty well and the class was three weeks away.

In “Speaking With Confidence” it suggests that you go over your presentation a few times in front of a video camera before you do it for real. This is what I did, and the first time I ran through my presentation the talk took almost an hour; okay back to the computer. The book also suggests that you involve your audience and what better way than with a few trivia questions. Audio-visual is also an important part of a public talk so I took a few tapes we had made of dogs at our behavior clinic and spliced together a tape so the students could use some of the things we were going to cover in class to evaluate the dogs in the tape.

With one week left until class time most of my props were ready and the talking part was very close to being finished. My confidence, however, was wavering. Could I really talk about dogs for two hours? What if everyone in the audience knows more about dogs than me...? It just so happened that that evening I picked up the book “Simple Abundance” by Sarah Ban Breathnach to read before bed and I looked at the message for September 20th and read, “One significant quality found in women we admire is that they have identified their personal patterns of self-sabotage and learned to be their own best friend – their authentic self – outsmart the enemy within.” So with a boost of ego and some final preparations I was ready, the presentation was ready, and I was determined to have fun while I shared the information I felt John Q. Public would need to understand their dog.

It was fun! Seventeen people signed up for the class and I can’t wait to give the presentation again, maybe next time here on the southend. This is a great way to reach your community. Most high schools offer community or continuing education classes in the evening. I got paid for doing the talk and I met more potential students for my classes. Good luck and have fun!

Copyright Your Writing

by Carol Cronan - 1996

An important part of being a dog obedience instructor is our written word. An effective class must include informational and lesson handouts. Part of our NADOI code of ethics states that: “I will work to train persons as competent instructors for dog obedience training classes, and towards that end will always freely exchange ideas, methods, and techniques in connection with dog obedience instruction.” Is there a fine line between sharing and the unethical use of someone else’s ideas? Read on and I will describe copyright laws, then explain how copyright laws protect us, and where you can get more information.

“Original works of authorship” are protected by copyright. This includes literary, dramatic, musical, artistic, and certain other intellectual works. Copyright is provided by the United States Copyright Act. From the time you create one of the works listed above your work has copyright protection, regardless of whether it was ever published or whether it contains notice of copyright. This right is protected for as long as the writer lives, plus 50 years.

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Here are two examples:

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Brusaw, Alred, and Oliu. Handbook of Technical Writing, Third Edition. New York. T. Martin's Press, 1987.

Rosenbaum, David G. Patents, Trademarks, and Copyrights: Practical Strategies for Protecting Your Ideas, Second Edition. Hawthorne, NJ Career Press, 1994.

First Aid

by Carol Cronan - 1996

Every place where people and dogs gather to train should be equipped with a well-stocked first aid kit and manual. Instructors and assistants should be prepared to assist with injuries ranging from skinned knees to heart attacks. Of course, I can't cover all that information in this column but I will review what should be in your kit, some suggestions for the person in charge, and food for thought about your emergency plan.

Mark your first aid kit as such and keep it in an easily accessible location. You can purchase a kit already put together or you can do it yourself. Remember, you could possibly be treating a dog or a person or both. The kit should contain the following:

- Cotton – roll and balls
- Band aids – several sizes
- Tweezers
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Instant ice compress
- Muzzles – several sizes
- Gauze – rolls and pads
- Adhesive tape
- Scissors
- Antiseptic towelettes
- Ammonia inhalant
- Clean blanket

The definition of first aid is: First aid is the temporary and immediate care of a person or animal that is injured, prevention of further injury or death, pain relief, and shock counter action until medical aid can be obtained.

One person should be in charge of the emergency situation. The responsibilities of that person are:

- Be calm, take command, and enlist help from others as needed.
- Keep injured person or dog lying down and quiet – be reassuring.
- Look for life-endangering conditions – take care of the most serious injury first.
- Send for medical aid immediately in all serious injuries – be specific in your request.
- Keep onlookers away from victims.

The situations that require first aid should be considered **PRIOR** to the emergency. The Red Cross can provide you with the training you need to be effective in an emergency, so put contacting the Red Cross at the top of your things-to-do list. Some possible first aid scenarios are: dog bite (a human or a dog could get bitten), bug bite, or bee sting (again human or dog); scraped knee; hurt pad; and heart attack. You may need to perform artificial resuscitation (human or dog), wrap a wound, or move the wounded.

Do you know the answers to these questions?

- Where is the nearest telephone?
- If the injured is a dog do you know how to explain to a driver how to get to the nearest emergency veterinary clinic?

- How can you use a blanket for moving an injured dog?
- Are you able to identify a victim in shock?
- Do you know where to find the pulse of a dog?

The result of writing this column for me has been to replenish my first aid kit and brush up on my first aid procedures. I hope it does the same for you and that we never have to use any of it!

Vacationing

by Carol Cronan - 1996

Taking a vacation can be more than just getting away from home. It is a chance to get caught up on some reading and if you get far enough away from home, you can also meet other NADOI members. I had a chance to do both on a recent trip to Maui.

One of the books I read was *The Dog Who Loved Too Much* by Dr. Nicholas Dodman, published by Bantam Books. This book is a must read for anyone who deals with people and their dogs. The stories are about owners and their dogs that Dr. Dodman has worked with in his veterinary behavior clinic, which is a part of the Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine. The stories are entertaining and informative, and Dr. Dodman's style of writing makes this book a "quick read." After each chapter there is a brief synopsis of the problem and the treatment that was covered in that chapter. Make this one of your reference books for dealing with some of the questions about behavior problems that you will surely encounter as a dog obedience instructor.

The next book I had a chance to look at was *Jumping from A to Z, Teach Your Dog to Soar*, by M. Christine Zink, DVM, Ph.D. and Julie Daniels, published by Canine Sports Production. This book has it all as far as how dogs jump, how to teach dogs to jump, and how to put those jumping skills to work. The first two chapters explain the mechanics of jumping and is done clearly, with excellent drawings and photographs. I hadn't realized that there was that much to it and now I enjoy watching dogs jump more than ever. The training program that is outlined is very thorough with a checklist at the end of each chapter to make sure you have accomplished the steps necessary to continue. There are chapters that explain jumping for obedience competition, agility, and Flyball. After reading these chapters you will have the knowledge needed to decide if you want your canine athlete to participate in any or all of these sports. If your dog is already jumping or you are looking for another activity to do with your dog, this book has it all.

Before I take a trip I check in my NADOI roster and look up any fellow members who are in the vicinity that I am visiting. On the island of Maui, it is Karla Kimmey, so I gave her a call and went to visit her. (The NADOI annual meeting in February 1998 is going to be on Maui; Karla will be the host.) This gives an excellent opportunity to exchange ideas and get to know one another a little better. Being a part of a national organization can be challenging because it is hard to get to know people and you rarely get to talk face-to-face. I found out about how and what Karla teaches in her classes and some of the new things she is trying. It turns out we use the same method when trying out new ideas – gather a few friends and their dogs and give that new

idea a go. I knew that Karla and Terry Ryan (another NADOI member) were doing a mail order business together, Legacy by Mail. This gave me a chance to buy a Buster Cube as a Maui souvenir for my dogs at home. A Buster Cube is an educational activity toy for dogs that involves filling the center with dry dog food and then having the dog roll the cube to get the food out, burning off excess energy and scenting in the process. Lots of fun for dogs!

If you ever get a chance to get away, I hope you read a few books, make some new friends, and relax. The Buster Cube mentioned in this article is available from Legacy by Mail (808) 871-0623; call for prices. The books can be purchased from Direct Book Services, 1-800-776-265: *The Dog Who Loved Too Much*, DTB 447, \$22.95 (also available in audiocassette; DTB 456, \$17.95). *Jumping from A to Z*, *Teaching Your Dog To Soar*, DTA 125, \$19.95.

Who Am I?

by Carol Cronan - 1996

I am a dog obedience instructor and live on an island north of Seattle in a rural community. We live on five acres and that is where I teach my classes, here at home. That brings me back to the first sentence; I am a dog obedience instructor. However, there is so much more to being a dog obedience instructor than just teaching the classes.

Last year we had a 30' x 36' indoor training facility built on our property. That involved being an architect and a contractor (my husband did most of that but I offered my support). Having the building has been great but we also had to paint the outside, insulate the inside, and we are still working on the drywall. Once the drywall is complete we will put our painting clothes on again and paint the inside.

Speaking of building, having an indoor facility has meant adding some agility equipment to enhance the games that I have been incorporating into classes. This involved the use of PVC piping and wood, which of course lead to the use of power tools. Now I must admit there is a feeling of getting the job done when you put on the tool belt, eye protection, and grab the power saw. (It is usually at this point that my husband comes out to check on what I'm doing.) Of course, that last step of any building project seems to be getting out that paint brush again.

Before clients walk inside of your building their first impression is of the grounds. This is true no matter where you teach your classes: your own property, training club, or public park. The grass should be kept cut, and to keep your students from getting covered with the grass clippings it works best if you bag the clippings as you cut. There should be no telltale signs of dogs in the area so have a scoop in plain view and check the area yourself regularly. If you train in a public area, pick-up any litter that is laying around. To enhance the appearance of your training area a well-kept flower bed is appealing. Since time is always a factor you don't want to spend too much energy with weeding so make sure the beds have a nice covering of mulch to keep weeds to a minimum. My main flower bed is a perennial bed (the flowers come up every year) and consists of plants that grow well naturally in our northwest climate.

But before I head out to the training area I need to make sure I have an attractive business card placed at all the local groomers, veterinarians, and pet stores. I also need to place ads in the local newspaper, which has involved trying some different advertising techniques and seeing which is the most cost effective, eye catching, and brings in the most customers.

If I've done a good job with the above I'll have to spend time at my desk answering the phone and scheduling classes. This is only one aspect of the office work involved. In order to keep track of students, lesson plans, and handouts I will need to do some filing. I've discovered over the years that it is best to file the student's paper work under the dog's name, since I seldom remember the people's last name but I always remember the dog's name.

A huge part of my office work involves my computer and a recent addition: the scanner/copier. I use the scanner from time to time but the copier feature of that piece of equipment has been invaluable. (I'm lucky because my husband works at home, too, as a technical writer for computer books so he is always handy to help me with the computer issues.) I use the computer to keep my lesson plans up-to-date and in order to create brochures and auxiliary handouts. Since it has taken years of work to create all of these documents I better make sure it is all backed up regularly.

After the classes have been taught I need to do something with the money I have collected. So while I am in my office I do the bookkeeping involved with running a business. I also need to keep track of the inventory I carry and place orders when needed. Once the order is delivered I price the products and restock the shelves.

Another after class activity is sweeping and sanitizing the training facility. I also sprinkle the building with borax as a flea control method from time to time. In the outdoor areas where dogs gather I use diatomaceous earth as a natural flea control product. Then I put away all the equipment we used for the games at the end of the class in preparation for the next classes.

So next time someone asks me what I do, to answer honestly, I might say, "I'm an instructional designer, writer, receptionist, bookkeeper, file clerk, graphic designer, custodian, groundskeeper, gardener, exterminator, architect, contractor, painter, salesperson, computer technician, and when I have time, a dog obedience instructor."

One Collar, Over Easy To Go

by Marty Martin - 1990

In spite of the abundance of “new wave” training collars, the choke chain, for the most part, remains the collar of choice for instructors of beginner obedience classes. But “old faithful,” despite its continued popularity, still has a way of becoming an instructor’s nemesis.

It’s not terribly unusual for a class of very green novice handlers to have a few who, though well intentioned, manage to transform the choke chain into an abusive, dangerous or lethal instrument at whose mercy sits the innocent four-legged critter. The subtle way in which this happens can be startling or even frightening to an unsuspecting or unconsciously careless instructor!

It all begins the moment this training tool is fitted on the dog. At this point the instructor’s interest is centered on selecting the appropriate size, not on educating the new handler on how, when and why to use it. Time will be set aside during the class to discuss proper usage of this shiny new piece of hardware. Right? Not to worry. Wrong!

In addition to learning when and when not to have the choke on the dog, initiate handlers must also concentrate on learning what seems to them a thousand new obedience exercises the very first night. It’s very risky to ASSUME all handlers will remember ALL that was said, particularly when it comes to the training collar (choke chain.) One safe guard is to REPEAT the do’s and don’t for its use at the end of the class. Another is to stress that the choke chain DOES NOT REPLACE the buckle collar.

At ensuing classes, spot check with the handlers to find out how they are using or abusing the collar. If a majority are keeping it on all the time, have attached dog tags to it and/or claim they simply can’t get the collar off, another class discussion on proper usage is definitely in order! This time, REALLY EMPHASIZE the right and wrong practices. And, make sure you have everyone’s undivided attention!

This brings us to the handlers who, practically at the onset of a class, need a larger collar. Watch out! Don’t assume they’re right! Check for yourself. Remember it’s hard to slip a collar on or off when a dog is standing on his head, rolled over on his back, or in some cases has his mouth wide open. For the new trainer, it’s a whole lot easier to slip one collar, over easy and go than to try to get his untrained companion to sit and stay while putting the choke chain on or taking it off.

Finally, for the really obstinate handlers, don’t be hesitant to tell them horror stories about dogs being injured or killed because they were wearing a choke chain. Make it clear that it could happen to this trainer’s dog too. Don’t mince words! You sure don’t want to have guilt feelings, later, if the dog is hurt or dies because you introduced the owner to the choke chain and didn’t do your cautious best to educate him on its safe use.

Speak Softly

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1987

One goal in our classes is to have a dog that will respond to the first command given in a normal tone of voice, a goal that may not be so easy to accomplish without some effort. I had not really given this much thought until the other night when one of my students said how impressed he was that my dog was responding to such a quiet tone of voice. I was surprised that the reason for this was not obvious. We tell students what we want them to do and wonder why it may not be working. Students do not know deep down inside that their dog will learn what we set out to teach them. The student may not have the confidence that his dog will learn to respond to his commands.

We stress that for a dog to respond, as we want, the first command given in a normal tone of voice must be enforced. Initially the student follows through but at some point he may feel that the dog should be responding on his own. The command is given followed by a pause to see if the dog will respond. When he doesn't, the command is given again thinking the dog didn't hear it the first time. The dog does not respond a second time. Now the volume increases along with a more demanding tone followed by enforcement of the command. The dog learns quickly when the command will be enforced and responds accordingly. We have made the decision as to when the dog should start responding instead of letting the dog, through his actions, tell us. There is no need to yell at a dog. His hearing is quite good. Think of these situations in everyday life where our dog responds to sounds we don't hear. (The sound of paper rattling in the kitchen).

The attitude of the owner towards his dog also influences the way a command is given. If the attitude is that training is a battle of wills, and that the dog is to be dominated, the commands will reflect it. Some how we feel that a dog can understand that a demanding tone means that the dog understands the consequence which is implied in our tone of voice if he refuses a command.

Teaching a dog to respond to a soft voice giving commands pleasantly requires a great deal of self-control. This comes from having the confidence in knowing that the dog will learn the task. It comes from not trying to set some arbitrary deadline to accomplish it. It comes from respecting the dog. The attitude towards your dog should be one of understanding and trying to make the task as easy as possible for the dog to learn. If the method is sound, the dog will learn.

Tools Of The Trade

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1987

It is always interesting to listen in on or become involved in a discussion on training equipment. Be it chain, nylon, leather, pronged or pinch, everyone has a preference as to collars. The same is true for leads, dumbbells, articles, etc. These are tools of the trade much as saws, rackets, bats, gloves and clubs represent tools of other trades. The trick is in knowing how to get the most out of these tools.

A friend told me a story about a gentleman who plays golf. He has just purchased a new driver and was trying it out at the driving range. Each swing of the club sent the ball hooking into the woods. As the somewhat disgruntled golfer complained about his new club, his friend took the club and drove several balls straight down the fairway. He looked at the club, handed it back to its owner saying, "It's not the club".

This simple moral can be applied to dog training. Regardless of how good or poor the equipment, without the knowledge of how to use it correctly, the results of the use of that equipment will be somewhat less than expected. To some extent, this is true of the dog. In the wrong hands, a well-trained dog will not work well. Some of the tools used these days, in particular food, have come under criticism. A rationale for not using them is that they cannot be used in the ring. What a lame excuse. The lead is used in only one exercise of the three obedience classes and accounts of only 20% of the points in the novice class, yet we still train with it. Chutes, extended leads, tie down boards, and throw chains are not allowed in the ring but we have learned how to use them so that the dog (handler?) doesn't rely on them. If food or any other training tool is a problem for a handler, it just may be he does not know how to use it properly.

Teaching an animal (including man) to respond to a stimulus is based on very well defined rules of conditioning (or whatever name you want to put on it). An understanding of these rules and how to use them properly will result in a training approach which will be successful. Problems arise when the rules are not well understood or are used in inappropriate situations. It is imperative that the instructor understands these rules and their application when teaching training classes. Many people want an A-B-C approach to training, which does not require them to think. Many could care less how the training steps are arrived at. That's fine and it can reduce the amount of explanation needed in teaching class. If, however, the explanation can be incorporated in an informative, palatable manner, the handler is well on his way to understanding the principles of conditioning (training) and solving training problems on his own thus making the best use of the training tools at his disposal.

Want A Dog? Earn Your RPO!

by Peggy Prudden - 1990

Almost every parent has been nagged by a kid about having a dog. Tom Dawson, a volunteer, who writes publicity for the Somerset County (NJ) Humane Society, has come up with some ideas that deserve to be passed on to the training community.

First, he acknowledges that most parents know that they are the ones who may end up taking care of the dog no matter how many pledges the wantful children make. Either that or they say “Okay” to having a dog without thinking it through.

How should a family lay the groundwork for having a dog? Above all Mr. Dawson advises, “Don’t decide immediately!” Next he says parents should hang tough and explain to the children that “a dog is a living creature subject to hunger, thirst, heat, cold, disease and emotional as well as physical pain, and it will be the child’s responsibility to see to its welfare.” (Yes, yes, we’ve heard all that before!)

Mr. Dawson says it is imperative that the child understands that you are making a very, very important decision, one of life or death for an innocent puppy. This dog will outlive your automobile and we all know how much we look into the buying of a new car. The parent should adopt a “show me” attitude and their child earn the title of Responsible Pet Owner before any decisions are made. After all mom and dad had to take driver’s tests, didn’t they?

- A. Have the child study at least one book or pamphlet on the subject of training and caring for a dog, and give oral reports on its contents, explaining why each item is important. Books, pamphlets and other written information can come from your vet, local dog club or school and dog food manufacturers.
- B. Have the child talk to a vet, dog owner and/or breeder about personality traits and temperaments. Perhaps, go to a dog show and view these breeds. This helps the whole family make a more intelligent decision as to what type of dog would be most suitable.
- C. Buy a pooper scooper (or some sealable plastic bags) and, after showing the child how to use it properly and where to dispose of it, have him or her clean up the neighborhood after irresponsible pet owners. Says Mr. Dawson, “Any kid who gets squeamish at this stage can not be an RPO yet, and should consider a goldfish.” Kids (and parents) who can handle poop pickup without flinching gain a degree of respect from the neighbors and also learn to hold irresponsible dog owners in contempt as such owners give all owners, even RPOs, a bad name.
- D. Arrange for the child to walk, brush, feed and otherwise care for a friend or neighbor’s dog on a strict schedule for a month. (Oh, I love this man!) If the child forgets to walk the dog, the child must mop the floor whether the dog had an accident or not. If the child forgets to feed the dog, the child misses dinner also. Valuable lesson - responsibility and punctuality. Mr. Dawson warns, however, parents should be careful lest the child begins to resent the dog. He suggests the child be reminded how the dog has suffered as a result

of the negligence and make it clear that the dog will forgive him instantly, but YOU won't.

When the child has successfully met these RPO requirements and any others you'd like to add, to the parents satisfaction - praise, congratulations and a dog of their own is well deserved.

Tom suggests that parents choose a period of time for Rover's arrival (two weeks minimum) when the entire family is free of major commitments, as any dog, especially a puppy will need a good deal of attention at first.

He also strongly recommends that if the children are under six years of age that an adult dog be adopted. Puppyhood passes incredibly quickly and a young adult dog from a reputable shelter - perhaps already housetrained can be a Godsend. Housetraining requires "alert" time. It can take weeks. Then teething begins... Besides, shelter dogs desperately need RPOs!

Voice And Commands

by Bonnie Thiel - 1990

The most important tool in training a dog is the voice. As an instructor, it is up to you to convey this knowledge to the beginner student and make sure he is effectively using it. The collar, the lead and the hand are all physical tools we use in training. While we rely on them greatly (a snap on the collar, a jerk on the lead, a tap with the hand,) they all require that we be in very close proximity to the dog. The voice, however, can emit response without ever having to physically touch the dog, or even be near him.

Voice tone is the first thing a beginner trainer must learn. Dogs do not understand the English language as we do. Through training, we condition - not teach - our dogs to certain words. For example, we say the word, "Sit;" physically sit the dog and praise him. The dog is conditioned to sit on the command, but he does not understand the actual word "Sit." To prove this theory, take the phrase, "good boy." Said in a happy, pleasant tone, the dog will wag his tail and exhibit pleasure. But say the same phrase "good boy" in a harsh tone (as if saying "bad boy") and the dog will hang his head as if ashamed. The word "good" itself means nothing to the dog unless coupled with a pleasant tone. The dog has been conditioned that the words "good boy" PLUS a pleasant tone emits a pleasant response from the trainer.

Try leaving the dog and calling, "Fido, Sit!" in the same tone you would use for "Fido, Come!" Chances are the dog will get up and come to you - or at least make a move and stop. Or say, "Fido, Sit!" and use a hand signal to "down." In most cases, the conditioning of the hand signal will override the word "sit," and the dog will go down.

The beginner must then realize that saying "No!" in a monotone (or even a nice tone) will not effectively correct the dog. The dog does not understand that a pleasant "No, Fido" means that he has done something wrong. A command to "Sit" or "Stay" used with an uplifting tone (as used with "come") will not establish a no-nonsense approach to making the dog obey the command.

The dog senses that the owner “does not mean business” - simply by his tone of voice. By the same token, calling the dog in a harsh tone will not emit a fast and happy recall. A word that is not used with the proper corresponding tone confuses the dog.

On the other hand, improper use of commands by the trainer can also confuse the dog. This is a very common problem with the beginner. For example, telling a dog that has been trained to sit and to lay down to “sit down” is confusing to the dog. An even more common mistake is that when the dog jumps on the bed and is told to “get down.” I always tell my students that if the dog lays down, they can sleep on the couch that night, because the dog has obeyed the command (down) and must be praised. An effective alternative is to tell the dog to “get off.”

Even though these theories seem quite simple to the experienced trainer, they are all common mistakes made by the beginner. They merely utilize common sense (point that out to your students) and after all, common sense is an important building block of all learning. . .for humans and dogs.

THE INSTRUCTOR

NADOI Notes - 1982

At a recent seminar, a well-known clinician advised his audience that if their present dog is incapable of producing top scores or an OTCH, they should discard this dog and search for another. It is crucial that the class instructor become aware of this increasingly evident sentiment and strive to foster a more compassionate attitude in his/her classes.

The notion that only a potentially top scoring dog is worthy of time and energy is an anathema to the sport. Obedience was created to encourage socially acceptable behavior in our dogs, not to gather trophy after trophy. Trials were established to promote interest in training a companion animal, not to compile HIT upon HIT. Exercises were designed to enhance the enjoyment of the dog, not to amass high scores. Created to deepen and broaden the owner/dog relationship. The clinician's narrow view drastically veers from the original goals of obedience.

Top scoring dogs are in part the product of superior handlers. Children, seniors, the physically challenged, and other individuals discouraged from participating in conformation are welcomed in obedience rings. Taking advantage of the "everyone can win" system, they compete against themselves and their unique abilities, earning titles at their own pace and skill level. Should we also discourage people not blessed with superior native talent and outstanding expertise from training and showing their dogs? To callously discard dogs that do not meet an arbitrary standard of perfection is a close step toward discarding people who fall short.

Instead of discouraging owners of problem or average dogs, the instructor must recognize his/her obligation to encourage these owners. Average dogs might become above average with creative training methods and persistence. In addition to the dog benefiting from thorough training, the handler may discover areas of personal development and awareness through increased effort. Unless aided with training, problem dogs rarely lead even an adequate life. To discard a problem dog because of its lack of high scoring potential is to seal its fate as a neglected, abused, or euthanized dog.

The bulk of exhibitors are not gifted handlers working with specially selected dogs. Most are simply competing with their companion animals, enjoying the social and recreational aspects of the sport as they strive for legs and titles. To discourage this majority is a disservice to all connected with the sport. These owners are the framework upon which obedience is built, and if these participants are discouraged, the sport will die.

Class instructors, with their contact with beginning and experienced handlers, are an influence upon the prevailing attitudes in obedience. Through word and example, the instructor must keep a sharply focused picture of the true value of obedience competition, and instill in his/her students an admiration and respect for all canine and human participants.

High-Tech Handouts

by Carol Cronan - 1997

If you read this column regularly, you know that I am a believer in lesson and auxiliary handouts. I have found over the years that during the first few lessons an owner with an untrained dog may be so concerned about their dog's behavior during class they miss about half of the instruction. The handouts can be very helpful to the owner once they are back home and on their own.

For years I have given the initial handouts at the first class in a manila envelope and then after each subsequent class I would give out the lesson and handouts for that week for the student to put in the envelope once at home. This worked pretty well but had some drawbacks; the biggest were:

The handouts could get destroyed or lost and then be of no help at all.

Another instructor started teaching classes at my facility and it was a hassle to always make sure she had the correct handouts.

As I was talking to my high-tech husband, John, about the situation he suggested I create a booklet with all the lessons and handouts in it to give out the first night and be done with it. At first I was concerned about giving out all the lessons at once, but concluded that if the student misses a class or drops out they will at least have the lessons they need. I already have collected the class fee so it really doesn't change that aspect for me.

There are three options to talk about when creating a booklet: temporary, such as a three ring binder; semi-permanent, such as a 19-hole comb bound booklet; or permanent, which would mean going to a print shop. John convinced me that I could make an attractive booklet with minimum cost by purchasing a comb-binding machine. It would mean the booklet would be easy to use, portable, and the pages would not fall out very easily.

You can purchase a binding machine at most office supply stores. There will be a few different models to choose from, with each having a different capacity, and of course, different prices. We found the prices to range from \$100.00 to \$300.00. The larger model could punch up to 20 pages at a time, handle a variety of different print media such as computer printouts or magazines, and bind up to 2 inches of documents. The next model down was the same as the higher priced one except it could not support the variety. The less expensive binding machine can punch 12 pages at a time and bind a document up to 5/8 inches.

Once you have purchased the machine you must also purchase the combs that hold the document together. The combs come in a variety of colors and sizes, ranging from ¼ inch, 20-page capacity to 1 inch, 200-page capacity, and the prices ranging from \$6.00 to \$20.00 for 100. You will also need cover sets; these come in different textures and colors and cost about \$8.00 for 25 sets.

I spend about 8 hours at my computer putting all my lessons and handouts into a booklet format. I needed to make sure the look was uniform and to break up the text I added some clip art. I arranged the booklet so that the appropriate auxiliary handouts followed the lesson they related to. I also added a blank piece of colored paper in between the lessons to make the booklet user friendly. Once that was all done, I made the table of contents and was ready to start binding.

I purchased the binding machine that can punch up to 12 pages at a time. My booklet would use the 3/8 inch 55-page capacity comb. The first few documents I did took awhile as I experimented with the machine doing things like punching the wrong end of the pages, not getting the pages in the puncher straight, or not noticing that I had bound two back covers instead of one. With all that behind me I can now watch TV, have a glass of wine, and bind booklets without too many mistakes (with the wine I don't care as much). The comb-bound booklet looks very professional and if you were to personalize the cover it would be a good advertisement for your business as it sits on your client's coffee table. This was a good idea of my husband's (don't you just hate it when that happens!).

You Never Stop Learning

by Carol Cronan - 1996

Nine years ago a well-known dog obedience instructor came to the animal shelter where I volunteered. We were hammering out a euthanasia policy and she was the guest speaker. As I sat in the audience I couldn't help notice she came to speak to us in dirty clothes and no shoes. Her attitude about shelter dogs seemed cold and she talked to us like we were a bunch of "kooks." I had just turned thirty and was looking into making some important changes in my life. As the evening wore on I said to myself, "I can do that, and I think I can do it better than that." That one evening started me on a journey that I'm still enjoying to this day.

At that time my dog was an eight-year old terrier mix that was not interested in training, but was the perfect dog for me when I was busy raising my kids. She lived to be 17 years old. The dogs I used for training and practicing were shelter dogs. The goal was to help the dogs become more adoptable during their stay at the shelter. When I started teaching dog obedience classes most clients were interested in basic obedience and not really competing with their dogs. To this day it is that group of people that make up most of my classes.

One year ago my husband John and I decided to specialize in Newfoundlands. So we added Louise and Hawkeye to our family. Louise is now 16 months and Hawkeye is 8 months. We enjoy the work they do such as draft work and water rescue. Our goal is to put a Versatile Newfoundland (VN) title on each dog. To earn that title your dog must be a Champion Dog (Ch.), a Water Rescue Dog (WRD), a Draft Dog (DD) and earn a Companion Dog (CD) title. We are having fun and learning a lot about training a dog for a title.

I had always gone to dog shows as a spectator and to say the least they can be very confusing. Especially in the breed ring. How do you earn points? How many do you need? Could you explain that again? When is it my turn? The obedience ring seems too strict; no looking at your

dog during heeling, watch those double commands, that sit was crooked. (In the classes I teach most folks are just happy to have their unruly dog sit at all.)

What I really need to do is go to some classes myself. One of the disadvantages of living on an island is that it is not always easy to take the time to get off it. The ferry ride is 20 minutes each way, not to mention the wait in line to get on the boat. A trip off the island isn't complete unless you run at least three other errands to make it worthwhile. So I keep thinking I'll take classes but there just doesn't seem to be the time. With teaching 12 classes a week: Level I, Level II and a carting class (more on that next month) time just slips away.

To help me continue to grow and learn about all the different facets of the dog fancy I attend seminars regularly. They give me great ideas, for my classes and personal use. The seminars work out well for me because they are generally held on weekends and are two or three days in a row. Seminars also give me a chance to get to know some of my peers. I read monthly periodicals to keep up to date on all that is going on in the fancy from training to health issues. I volunteer my time as a member of NADOI and communicate with dog obedience instructors throughout the country via e-mail, regular mail, and the telephone. When I go to dog shows I'm always open to suggestions and help, I sometimes even run into fellow NADOI members. I also find help in some of the great dog training books that are available like: *The Pearsall Guide to Successful Dog Training* by Margaret Pearsall or "*Fido, Come!*" by Liz Palika.

So, if you are considering becoming a dog obedience instructor or have been involved in training dogs for many years there is an endless supply of information available to help you learn, grow, and reach your goals.

How To Motivate Your Students

by Lonnie Morgan - 1988

The first question instructors should ask themselves when they ponder the question of how to motivate students is, "Why does the student come to class in the first place?" Most students register in dog obedience classes because they want a well-mannered pet. Many of the dogs are going through their "terrible teens" (puberty) and developing obnoxious little habits which were easier to overlook when the dog was younger and smaller. The students want a "cure" for their problems, and they want it NOW! Other people come to obedience class to have an evening out with their dog, or to get away from the kids or the husband, or just to get out, period. What instructors should understand is that not many students are prepared for the enormous amount of dedication and work required to make that dog the well-behaved pet which the students envision when they hand over their money. Students will become bored, lazy, frustrated or preoccupied with something else, and often drop out of training all together. This usually makes the instructor wonder if he or she is doing something terribly wrong to lose so many students. Hopefully, this is not the case. However, there are several things an instructor can do to help increase the motivation factor for the students and make them care enough to be dedicated, do their homework, and produce a well-trained pet.

The first thing an instructor can do is take an interest in the students. Take the time to learn their names and greet them with a smile and a “Hi, Jerry!” each week. Nametags can be worn like armbands with dog and handler’s names written in large block letters for high visibility. Taking roll each week will help the instructor place names with faces, also. Nothing is worse than seeing a “hopeless” student suddenly getting it together and doing the exercise perfectly, then not being able to remember the student’s name to call out to them with some positive reinforcement. Hollering, “Hey, you!” somehow just does not have the warmth you want to convey in giving positive reinforcements.

The positive reinforcement is a necessary ingredient to turn out motivated students. Praise is something people just never get enough of, and it should be given out at every opportunity. Even students with dogs who just don’t seem to get anything right need praise. If nothing else, praise their good attendance or the fact that they are always early for class or the fact that they are doing better than they were last week, even if that is still pretty poor. Everyone delights in attention and praise, so look for and find something to say about each student. Another way to reinforce achievement is to give out little “awards” for extra good behavior. Staging sit contests each week is a good way to reward the students for their performance. These can begin the first week after they learn sits at the halt, because you are testing the student on how well he makes the dog sit and not on whether or not the dog will sit on his own. The “prize” could be anything from a dog bone to a dog pamphlet or dog magazine (pre-read, or course). You can offer a tidbit for the person who trained their dog all seven days of the previous week. This is based totally on the honor system, but will hopefully encourage the daily homework practice which is needed to succeed.

Another big help with novice students is to put everything into small “bites,” so that the students can comprehend and master the maneuver a little at a time. For the beginning dog trainer, some exercises can be just plain overwhelming. Not everyone has an aptitude for dog training, and something that a skilled instructor would think so simple a child could do might very well be beyond the comprehension of the average neophyte pet dog owner. By breaking each exercise into small steps, or sequences, the task is much more easily mastered by the novice student.

Along the same vein, I have found that weekly tests have been very helpful and motivational for the students. As each “small bite” is learned, and each new level or sequence of training added, the students are tested on this material before moving on. Just a few moments before class each week is all that is needed to spot weak areas before they become problems. If the student is doing all the exercises as instructed, giving proper commands, correct technique in modeling or reinforcement and well-timed praise, they receive a little gold star for their dog’s forehead. It might seem silly to you, but the students are VERY proud of those stars they earn. The testing also prepared the student for what lies ahead – graduation. Some students haven’t got a clue as to what they will be required to do at graduation. The weekly “quizzes” sort of break it to them gently.

Lastly, the instructor should try to keep the students interested in coming back a week at a time. Don’t worry about the supreme goal of no dropouts for the entire eight weeks. Just keep them interested enough to keep coming back for one more class. Each week at the end of class, the instructor should give a little 30 second commercial for next week’s lesson. Make it sound like something they just can’t miss. You might say, “Okay, folks, next week we will be teaching our

dogs the all important ‘come when called’ command. This is the one you’ve all been waiting for, so be sure to come and bring lots of enthusiasm for this exercise! See you next week.” This kind of “advertisement” will keep them excited about the weeks to come – one at a time. If you run out of exciting obedience exercises, promise the students that in the weeks to come they will get to see a grooming demonstration and a flyball demonstration. They surely won’t want to miss that!

Using these motivational techniques should produce students who come to class prepared every week and achieve their goals of having well trained pets. If they still drop out of class, it is probably due to very good reason that does not involve the instructor or the method of instruction (One way to find out and set your mind at ease is to give the student a phone call and tell them they were missed at class).

Red Flags

by Helen Cariotis - 1990

Pre-registration, or advance registration of the beginner class, seems to be more and more popular with instructors. Aside from the obvious advantages of controlling class size and reducing paperwork on the always busy first night of class, pre-registration allows the instructor to screen out dogs or handlers who should not be in a group situation, and obtain valuable advance information on those who do come into class.

When prospective handlers return their registration forms to our office prior to class, they have provided us with facts which reveal much more than name, dog name and breed, etc. The answers to some questions asked on the form are automatic “red flags.”

Although an obedience school in the middle of Manhattan may not find it necessary to screen out dogs or handlers ahead of time, in our area of the country (Texas) we are glad that we are able to see some dogs prior to class. For example, some breeds and mixes of certain breeds cue us that more interview time with the handler may be warranted. Sometimes it is the owner who gets “screened out,” not the dog! Attack trained dogs, dogs from poorly run schutzhund classes, extreme sharp-shy dogs are best worked with individually. We simply explain that not all dogs or handlers are suited to a group situation, for the safety and pleasure of all.

In addition to asking the breed of dog, we also ask the handler to give his age, if a minor. We don’t automatically ban kids from classes, but we would want to meet, ahead of time, a twelve year old youngster with a young, intact male of a large breed. The same child with a small breed would cause no such concern. We don’t usually red flag senior citizens unless they indicate some disability - in fact, more of them do exceedingly well.

Another of our questions asks if the dog has ever been on a collar and leash. If not, they can be provided with our leash training hand-out and instructed on how to practice at home.

Other red flag questions include, “How does your dog get along with other dogs?” “How does he get along with other people?” “Is he very shy?” “Is he unpredictable?” “Has he ever bitten you or anyone else?”

Our initial phone contact with the prospective handler combined with the questions on the registration form, and if necessary, a personal meeting, will almost always enable us to not only screen out those handlers who don't belong in a group class, but also enable us to prepare better for what may await us on the first night of class. I don't intend to be “nailed” by a sharp-shy dog while fitting a collar if I can possibly help it! And I'm always glad to have brought the “weenies” when I have to go out to someone's pick-up truck because “Cujo” doesn't want to come in!

Red flags are just that - attention getters which alert the instructor to stop until more information is gathered. They may be the obvious answers to key questions on your class registration form, or they may be as subtle as the things left unsaid in your phone conversation with the prospective student. The wise instructor will learn to “read between the lines” in both instances and spot problems before they can become unpleasant surprises.

I Want A Guard Dog

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1985

How many times have you answered the phone only to find as you get further into the conversation that this fellow not only wants his dog to “mind” but also wants him to be a guard dog? Here are a few reasons people have given for needing a guard dog.

“I have to be away from home for 4 to 5 hours a day for a part time job and I need a guard dog to be in the house and protect my 3 year old child.”

“I have had some funny situations happen lately and because of where I live I need more protection. I have 4 mixed breeds from the pound and want one of them trained to protect me.”

“Our house has been robbed 3 times in the past four years. We live in a sub-division with 4-5 acre lots and after we have our dog protection trained, we'll let him run free when we are at home and put him in his pen when we have to go off.”

“I want a dog so mean, you can't even throw him a biscuit.” (This fellow had a St. Bernard and lived in a sub-division with small lots).

“I want this dog to be protection trained because his daddy was an Army dog (which they still had) and he ought to be a good one.” (This dog had never been off their property until he was brought to class at 9 months of age. He was fearful of both dogs and people).

Few people who want this type of training need it and even fewer understand the training needed and the liability laws governing dogs which have been trained to bite. I handle these situations by first assessing the need. In 99% of the cases there is no real need. Now comes the tough part,

convincing them they don't really need this training or the liability associated with a dog trained to bite. I explain the length of time needed to train the dog and probable expense, the need to maintain the training and the fact that they can't treat the dog like any other dog and let him run free. Most people expect to pick up their dog fully trained and never do anything else with him until he is needed.

Liability laws differ from state to state. In our state a dog is considered a vicious dog if he has shown a propensity to bite or has been trained to bite. If neither has occurred and the dog does bite an adult, you might be able to prove the dog was provoked.

We suggest instead that the dog be made as much a part of the family as possible and enjoy being around people. It's surprising how many don't want too many people around their dog for fear he will be too friendly and will not protect. We explain that unless the dog likes people and is not fearful of them, the only time the dog is likely to bite is to protect himself. We encourage teaching the dog to alert and bark at strange noises around the house and then seek out the owner and stay with them.

For those who plan to keep their "guard dog" in his pen or fenced back yard so as to prevent break ins, I have a simple question "What good is it to have the dog in the back yard if someone is breaking into your house unless you keep your TV set, money and valuables in the yard with the dog?"

If my efforts are in vain or they really need a dog, I explain that I don't do that type of training and am not setup for it anyway. I refer them to a friend who does do protection training and he tells them the same thing.

The Instructor And The Vicious Dog

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1987

Over the past year the general public has seen the damage a dog can inflict on humans. The result has been state and local legislation directed towards the "pit bull" dog in particular and vicious dogs in general. While most governmental bodies realize that it is the owner rather than the dog that should ultimately be responsible, the effect on dogs and their training (to include show, obedience, schutzhund, etc.) could be seriously affected.

Some laws have required not only exorbitantly high liability insurance on anyone owning certain breeds which have been deemed as being vicious, but a dog which has been trained to bite people or is considered vicious must be kept behind doubly fenced enclosure and when out of the enclosure, must be leashed and muzzled. This would obviously eliminate schutzhund training and trials. While supporters of the sport insist that a well trained dog is actually more reliable, it would be hard to convince a layman that the courage test is anything less than an attack on a fleeing person. This same situation is seen where a child is trying to flee from an attack by a dog.

In some areas it has been suggested that a requirement for owning a vicious dog or in some case any dog be a certificate of successful completion of an obedience class. All instructors are aware that once an owner leaves class, it is up to that owner to use what he has learned. The instructor can no longer control the situation.

While this requirement might improve enrollment, the demand could well exceed class availability. The result could be unqualified individuals starting classes to meet the demand. Also what would be considered “successful completion” and what about the owner who needs a certificate to keep his dog and has not done well enough in class to earn a certificate? Local officials should be made aware of these problems when considering legislation and the pressures, which might be brought to bear on instructors.

From other areas has come the suggestion that if there is any question of whether or not a dog is vicious, a “professional” dog trainer evaluates the dog. What would be the definition of a vicious dog, the qualifications of the trainer and how would the dog be evaluated? Across the country, how uniform would this evaluation be?

Organizations and individuals that offer classes are in an interesting position. We should begin educating local officials and the general public about responsible dog ownership, proper ways of training and how to treat dogs in general to prevent the problems. People should be made aware that regardless of how hard we try to prevent the problem, dogs are going to be made aggressive of children teasing through fences, other dogs teasing a dog on a chain, etc. This is not purposeful but still training and training which can be prevented by education.

Vicious dog legislation is needed and is likely to put added responsibilities on instructors and training programs. In areas where there are a number of programs, it would be advantageous to cooperate in developing a uniform approach to the problems that are likely to develop.

Reflections

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1984

While mulling over a “problem dog” the other day, it was interesting and amusing to reflect on my changes in perspective towards dogs and people over the 13 years I have been in the sport. I put the words problem dog in quotation marks because this is the way I first viewed these situations; but, as we know, it is much more than the dog. In fact, the dog is what the owner has made him.

When I first got in the dog game and began teaching classes, this was an area where I really felt inadequate. The solutions to these various “problems” such as digging, chewing, biting, etc., left me a little flat and without much enthusiasm in my answers. Those presenting clinics provided little guidance with answers such as, “I would handle it the same way you would” or “I would have to see the dog first.” Not having any good approaches with which I could feel confident, I continued to be optimistic with people yet taking it personally when things didn’t improve. I continued to read, listen, and look for solutions to these problems.

Gradually it became clear the problem was not the dog but his environment. I felt this inside but was not really confident about this until I started studying dog behavior more carefully and reading Bill Campbell's first articles in Modern Veterinary Practice. The solution to the problem dog was really the problem owner. They must first be educated as to how his treatment of the dog and the dog's genetic potential together have created these problems.

Generally speaking, most of the problems with which people want help are related to role reversal. That is, the dog has assumed the leadership role or is not sure of his position in the "pack". Problems such as aggression, chewing, and household micturition can be related to the dominance hierarchy.

The question we are faced with is how to teach the owner. Initially, I presented solutions that were very much mechanical and in some cases worked. Yet the owners never really understood why and could not cope with relapses. In addition, being a little soft hearted, I would put little of the blame on the owner. Things have changed.

As with at home treatment of a sick dog, the success of any corrective procedure for problem behavior depends on the dedication of the owner to follow the prescribed treatment.

In dealing with aggressive dogs, I have found that if the owner is afraid of the dog to the point where he is unwilling to work with the dog to establish leadership, the battle is lost. All too often an overnight solution is sought and the owner is not willing to work with the problem for a number of weeks needed. I now lay the responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the owner. It is made very clear that if he does not change his ways of interacting with his dog, the dog will not change.

Several owners have chosen an alternative solution. A professional trainer has taken the dog for several weeks at a substantial fee. The dog is then returned to the expectant owner who now has his problem solved – so he thinks. Even though pains are taken to educate the owner as to what the dog has been taught and what the owner needs to do, few seem to follow through. As a result the problem reoccurs.

Some owners take the approach of getting rid of the problem dog and starting over with a puppy. Unfortunately, if this dog is raised as the first dog was, the same problems are likely to develop.

Through the years, I have emphasized in my classes that I am teaching the owner how to train his dog and tried to develop approaches which are both effective and easy for the owners. Yet it all boils down to working with people. I now find the most helpful and educational programs that help me develop as a teacher are those I get in my job that teach leadership skills and motivation. Only a few students are self motivated with the majority needing additional motivation which I need to provide. As a trainer my job is to learn how to condition and motivate my dog. As an instructor, my job is to effectively communicate with and motivate people. It all seemed a lot easier when I first got in this sport.

What Kids Can Tell You

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1987

Over the years I have had a number of students say that they wish they had taken a dog training class before they had children. After working with them and their dog, I understand why they made that comment. While there are exceptions, you can get a good idea of how that person is going to do with their dog by observing their children. As we all know the training principles for kids and dogs are much the same.

Two extreme examples come to mind. The first involved a lady who brought two pre-schoolers to class with her. Before class she would sit them on a stack of tumbling mats at one end of the room. If at any time during the one-hour class they would get restless, she would snap her fingers as she pointed at them. They immediately settled down. As you might expect, she did an excellent job with her dog.

The second example again involves pre-schoolers. A couple brought the kids and a large German Shepherd Dog to class. The building had a balcony over looking three sides of the training floor. The kids were all over the balcony, throwing things down onto the floor, climbing ropes and being generally disruptive. The parents were totally unaffected by this behavior as was their dog by their training. Fortunately, the dog was good-natured. The children had to have someone come to the house during the day since their behavior has resulted in their being kicked out of nearly every day care facility in the area.

In some cases, similar behavior patterns in both the dog and the child can be seen in other areas such as aggression, destructive behavior and responsiveness towards adults. If the dog is not responding, take a look at the kids.

Instructors would be wise to observe the children of students particularly those of students having difficulties. It may well be that you are working against the basic nature of the person. In this case, extra effort should be made to emphasize the principles of good training practices so they can gain control of their dog and, hopefully, the child as well.

What Makes a Good Teacher?

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1984

The ability to communicate and motivate are two of the most important skills one must have in order to be an effective teacher. All the knowledge on technique is worthless to an instructor if he cannot communicate with his students. We develop language which is well understood in the dog circle but is foreign to the novice dog owner. If this language is used without clarification, the student is lost. To dazzle students with fancy footwork and fast talk might momentarily impress but does little to get points across. An effective teacher should seldom have to handle a student's dog or demonstrate with his own in order to make his points. A handler having a problem teaching his dog an exercise does not need the instructor to train his dog or demonstrate

with his own. He needs to be told how to do it himself. An instructor's job is to verbally show the student what to do or not to do. This is not easy. It takes a thorough knowledge of the techniques and the ability to clearly explain them. One must be able to quickly analyze what's going wrong and adjust instructions accordingly.

When presenting papers at professional meetings, those speakers who are outstanding 1) assume no prior knowledge of the subject by the audience, 2) are knowledgeable enough about their subject that foundations leading to significant points are built such that the audience is lead quickly, clearly, and logically to those points, 3) each idea is presented as a single unit or thought, 4) terms are used that are understood by the audience and new terms are clearly defined.

While we might be very knowledgeable, we must communicate on the level of the students using words and analogies they understand. As terms are introduced, they are defined and clearly explained. Exercises should be broken down to simple, easy to explain and understand steps.

Many students are motivated to come to class because they want their dog to be a little more manageable. However, after finding that it is not as easy as they thought, this form of motivation may not be enough. Some instructors use money to motivate feeling that if a student pays say \$100.00 for a set of classes, he will work hard so that his money does not go to waste. By the same token, you had better give him his money's worth of knowledge and instruction.

If time is taken to talk to a student paying attention to what they have to say, you can learn a lot about that person and what motivates him. This can be used to remotivate that student when he gets down. By knowing your students, they can be motivated as individuals. Students, like their dogs, are individuals and need to be handled as such.

Nothing detracts more from a class and cuts motivation than does boredom. For this reason, an instructor is also an entertainer. If you can keep the student's attention, you are well on your way to getting points across. Keep class interesting and entertaining through stories, different exercises which also encompass points to be covered, and humor. Finally, a good teacher cares about his students and their dog. If the student gets the impression you don't care, you have lost that road to communication.

All too often, we get into dog training because we like dogs, and rightfully so; but when you get right down to it, when teaching, we are dealing with people and somehow the dog seems to come out okay in spite of the people.

What Value Experience?

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1985

Many clubs and training organizations have established requirements for becoming an instructor. Many require having taught with an instructor for a period of time prior to teaching a class alone. Others require a UD title (not degree) on a dog before teaching even a basic class. Most require having taken a dog through a basic or novice class along with having earned a CD title. Some people are better trainers than others, while others are better teachers. Which is most important? The best is the person who excels at both. Unfortunately that leaves the majority of us out in the cold. Here are some considerations.

A person who has trained one or more of his own dogs to a UD title is hopefully aware of the problems that can pop up in advanced training and what can be done in early training to avoid them. In addition, he can see how certain training approaches in early training can create problems later. In most cases students don't get bitten by the bug until after they have been through a class or two. It is wise not to let something slide that might cause problems later and the experienced instructor can spot them.

Regardless of how good a trainer you are, if you can't effectively communicate with people, that experience remains untapped. Teachers who can explain so that all can understand are the most effective. Consider how you felt as a student and try to anticipate questions and develop clear explanations so as to supply them in your initial presentation.

Learn to explain how to teach an exercise so that the student can do it as well as you. All too often an instructor can take a dog and get the desired response. Yet the student has difficulty. Instructors rely on years of experience and gut feelings when working with a strange dog. Learn how to put those feelings into words so that others can benefit from that experience.

Trial preparation and most advanced classes should be left to those who have been there. This is one place where there is little substitute for experience. It is difficult to explain the ins and outs of competition unless you have been there and while many instructors who have not competed have had students to earn titles with high scores, their knowledge would be that much greater having had the experience themselves.

A good and effective instructor is a student himself. Without some outside input we can become very stale in our teaching. Exposure to the ideas of others always helps develop greater diversity in approach. Educational experiences are plentiful with all the clinics and seminars available. Books on training and behavior provide good background information. Check with local veterinary associations to see if you can attend continuing education programs which are available.

We spend so much time learning about dogs that we sometimes lose sight of the fact that we deal primarily with people. Many companies and community colleges offer classes in people motivation and management. These can provide invaluable insight on dealing with people and being a more effective motivator and communicator. Learning what motivates people can lead to a more productive class.

Experience, good communication skills, to say which is most important to being a good instructor is difficult. The best have both.

Are You A Dog Obedience “Pro?”

by Missy Parker, RVT - 1992

No, I'm not talking about how many OTCH's you have personally trained. I'm talking about how you present yourself and your business to the public. Although as youngsters we're taught not to "judge a book by its cover," the facts are most people do. First impressions are often the ONLY chance you get to impress a potential client. Dog trainers/obedience instructors historically have not had the best reputations for professional appearance.

APPEARANCE:

Is your personal hygiene up to par or does your hair look like it needed a trim a couple of weeks ago or a wash a couple of days ago? A missing or damaged tooth not only looks bad, but can create halitosis which no client will appreciate. Are your clothes clean, neat, pressed and of a conservative style from THIS century? Even though we work with animals, ragged blue jeans, stained t-shirts and scuffed sneakers shouldn't be our "uniform" unless it's only to clean the kennels. Think about providing yourself and your staff with good quality polo shirts, custom embroidered with your company logo. Or instead of custom embroidery, engraved plastic name tags can be an acceptable low-cost alternative. Not only will this enhance your professional image, but it also serves as (1) advertising for your business, and (2) makes your staff easily identifiable to new students.

DEMEANOR:

Your demeanor also figures in this respectability and credibility issue. Do you arrive late at your client's home in a dirty vehicle, your "tools of the trade" in an old canvas bag with one strap missing and a broken zipper, or do you show up promptly, briefcase in hand? If you want your client to respect you and your advice, you must look and act respectable and professional!

How do you answer your business's telephone? Do you articulate clearly and politely? If you must put a client "on hold," don't leave them waiting too long. Remember, their business or potential business pays the rent! If the interruption will take longer than one minute to deal with, ask your caller if you may call them back shortly, then by all means follow through. Is the tape on your answering machine worn out, or is the machine itself ready for electronic heaven? Don't use overly long or "cutesy" messages either - people these days don't have time- to waste listening to litanies of "doggie" anecdotes. Never use profanity, "off-color" words, or slang terms in your discussions with clients. Don't get too familiar or informal with your clients - keep this a business relationship, at least initially, if you smoke, never practice your habit in a client's home, during a consultation, or while instructing group classes. If you imbibe alcohol, NEVER do so before or during instruction or any appearance in public in which you are representing your business or profession. Don't fool yourself into thinking a swish of mouth wash or breath mint

will coverup the smell of alcohol on your breath - IT WON'T and you will have lost any hope of making a favorable impression on your students.

FACILITIES/EQUIPMENT/PRINTED MATERIALS:

Facilities where animals are trained are subjected to a lot of hard use/abuse. Is it past time for yours to have a new coat of paint or even just a real good, deep-down cleaning? Fecal material and the odor of urine definitely detract from one's professional image. Are the grounds neat and well-manicured or do they look weedy and like they've seen better days? Is your equipment held together with tape and bubble-gum -obviously sorely in need of repair, replacement or cleaning? What about your printed materials? Are you handing out copies of copies of copies of old typewritten materials? If so, invest a modest amount in computer desktop publishing and redo your materials - it will work wonders for the image of your business.

Most of these suggestions don't require a lot of money to implement. but they do take effort. Just as we should all see our doctors and dentists at least once a year for a checkup, give yourself, your staff, and all aspects of your business a checkup. It will do you good!

Human-Animal Bond

by Terry Ryan - 1984

Why should we, as dog obedience instructors, take a special interest in the human-animal bond? Because we are already involved, and always have been, whether we have realized it or not.

Helping people to train their dogs is helping them to develop communications channels with their pets – to better understand each other, to establish mutual respect. The end product is a dog that is more acceptable, more apt to be “taken along”, a dog that will fit better into the new environment people have created for themselves and their animals. Beyond that, class instructors are often consulted by clients on “special” issues – a handler who is not physically or mentally adept at dog training yet must train his dog anyway, questions about behavior problems, a client who must deal with pet loss, and a multitude of other situations that can influence a people/pet relationship. Although these topics are not a part of the usual dog obedience class curriculum, they are an important part of pet ownership and the knowledgeable instructor must know how to deal with them.

Throughout history, animals have been used to improve the well-being of people by protection, work, sport, and companionship. Dog guides aid the blind, hearing dogs help the deaf, and more recently dogs are assisting the physically handicapped.

There is current interest in the ways animals can be used therapeutically to improve the physical and emotional health of people. Research by individuals pioneering in the field have found that more heart attack victims survive if they are pet owners. It has been determined that the death rate of isolated people is between two and ten percent higher than those with companions. Others have found that stroking a pet or just having a pet in close proximity will lower human blood

pressure. Recently there has been found a measurable reduction of stress in dental surgery when the patients can view an aquarium instead of a blank wall. There has been reduced drug dependence in psychiatric wards where pets were allowed as residents.

The media feature stories of pets visiting hospitals, animals residing in nursing homes, prison inmates training dogs for the disabled and handicapped individuals benefiting from therapy on horseback.

Veterinarians are taking a greater interest in the roles pets play in their owner's lives and are becoming more active in counseling clients experiencing behavior problems with their pets or in helping owners deal with the loss of a pet. They often arrange for low or no-cost care for pets of low-income elderly or animals in institutions.

In recent years numerous community-oriented volunteer programs have been established with varied goals. Some visit pediatric wards, convalescent centers and shut-ins with a variety of animals. Food banks have been created to aid pets of the elderly. Grade school children are taught respect and responsibility for pets. Older youngsters are taught about the human aging process as well as the care and training of their own pet and then link the two by regular visits to nursing homes with their animals. One group of volunteers offers a 24-hour telephone service which answers over 600 calls a month about a variety of pet related questions.

Some of these successful organizations have written information to help others who wish to get started in these endeavors. Guidelines are available for the optimal placement of animals in nursing homes or with the noninstitutionalized elderly. Numerous books have been published on a wide variety of subjects from technical papers on pet-facilitated psychotherapy to anecdotal case histories of instances where pets have made a significant difference in the lives of individuals. Centers to study the human-animal bond have been established throughout the country and abroad. Interdisciplinary research projects have been completed and more are underway by psychiatrists, psychologists, sociologists, medical doctors, veterinarians and experts on animal training and behavior to measure and evaluate animal companionship and therapy programs and how to identify persons who can benefit from such programs.

There have been national and international conferences on human-animal relationships. Some states have adopted legislation allowing pets in nursing homes and/or in housing for the low-income elderly or the handicapped.

Interest in the role of animals in aiding human health and well being has resulted in many questions. The use of animals is not a panacea. Advocates must know when and how to implement such programs. The Delta Society is a professional organization comprised of most of the scientists actively engaged in research on pets and their role in society, as well as individuals operating programs all over the world. Delta serves as an international resource in distributing material and information on guidelines, research, recent books and programs. Dog obedience instructors and the general public can get such information by contacting: The Delta Society, 212 Wells Avenue S., Suite C, Renton, WA 98055.

NADOI members, knowing that they are very much a part of the interaction of people and their pets, are seeking to learn more about research and activities in this field. At our annual meeting

in March in Atlanta, Georgia, a workshop was conducted by Robert K. Anderson, DVM, of the University of Minnesota on human-animal bonding. Dr. Anderson is a Delta Society consultant and is the Director of the Center of Study Human-Animal Relationships and Environment (CENSHARE) in Minnesota.

Beginner's Class: The Value of a Strong Orientation

by Terry Ryan - 1984

The first meeting of a beginner's obedience class can set the overall mood for the entire course. An orientation session provides an excellent opportunity to motivate and inspire the class as well as to demonstrate training techniques and gain your client's confidence.

Since some dogs can be noisy and out of control during their first experience in a class situation, dogs should not be invited to orientation. This will allow handlers and instructors alike the freedom to concentrate on the presentation. The handlers can gain much knowledge in a quiet, relaxed atmosphere, then return home to apply a few newly learned principles in the dog's accustomed environment.

After greeting your clients as they arrive, direct them toward the registration desk. Pre-registration or plenty of manpower at the registration desk helps make orientation go smoothly. A display of complimentary literature on a variety of canine subject areas can be made available to your clients on orientation night. Dog food companies are a good source of free pamphlets. Be sure to review all literature. To help your clients become aware of dog-related activities in their communities, try to include local information such as copies of your area's animal ordinance, fliers for upcoming fun matches, shows, seminars, or perhaps copies of kennel club newsletters or humane society bulletins. You should explain that this literature is not required reading, but encourage them to pick up anything that is of interest to them.

Much material can be covered on orientation night. It is up to the individual instructor to decide what is important, and what might better be introduced during an actual class session. A lot will depend on the availability and completeness of a student handbook; however, a handbook can never take the place of a live orientation session. Some instructors prefer to distribute handbooks after orientation, to be read as part of that week's homework assignment and to be used as a reference throughout the course.

Begin your orientation with an introduction of yourself and your background with dogs in general, dog obedience and class instruction in particular. Assistants should also be introduced at this time. Introduce your demo dogs, explaining a little about obedience degrees as you do so. To break the ice, you might then call roll, asking each student to tell a little about himself as he responds. This can start a camaraderie among the students which always makes obedience class more fun. Try to have plenty of live demos, videotapes, slides, charts, etc. Intersperse these aids with the less graphic material to help keep your lecture from becoming dull.

A very important element of an orientation is a discussion on equipment. Stress that the job will be easier if they use the proper tools. Let your clients know your preference in equipment, and how much latitude they have in selection, while still meeting your class requirements. Some instructors carry a line of equipment and, as part of the registration fee, provide a properly fitting collar and leash to each student. Others will have equipment on sale at class for an additional fee. Another option is to have a list of area shops which carry the proper equipment, or you might locate a pet store proprietor who will agree to bring his merchandise to class and make it available for purchase at the training site.

In explaining the use of the equipment, make no assumptions about your students' knowledge in this area. Not all people walk into class knowing how to form a slip collar, much less the proper way to put it on a dog. Even though a slip collar might not be used with all students, let the entire class know that a slip collar can be deadly and explain in great detail its use as well as giving examples of its misuse. This piece of equipment should not be referred to as a "choke collar", as it is not used to choke a dog. Refer to it as a slip collar or training collar. Analogizing the collar with the letter "P", show the class the right and wrong way to put it on a dog, what happens when you tighten the collar in each instance, and equally important, how to properly fit the dog with a collar of the right size. Go into detail on training leashes and how to select a good one: length, width, material, type and size of snap, proper hand positioning on the leash, examples of proper use and misuse. Again making no assumptions, ask if all dogs are "leash broken", being careful to explain what you mean.

Before demonstrating specific exercises, be sure to give the class your philosophy and approach to dog obedience training, why you do things the way you do. Explain that you are training people, not dogs, and that in most cases they will get out of the class what they put into it, touching on their homework commitment. At this point it might be well to outline the principles of canine behavior. Briefly explain the differences in temperament. Talk about the social hierarchy and how the handler can assume the leadership role. Open the door for communication here. Ask to be informed before the next session if a client feels his dog is overly shy, distrustful, or aggressive toward dogs or people. Has he ever been in a dog fight? Has he ever bitten anyone, this includes the owner. Discuss the learning principles and how they relate to dog obedience training. While it's probably inappropriate to get into the psychology of learning in great detail, you might at least want to paraphrase Thorndike's Law of Effect as a way to stress positive reinforcement: "When a response is followed by a pleasant state of affairs, that response increases in frequency."

Give the class clearly defined goals. Demonstrate, with a trained dog, the level of achievement you wish them to attain. Perhaps your assistant can perform the demonstration while you narrate or vice versa. While your class may judge your expertise on the performance of your demo dog, it is more important to use an animated, happy worker than to strive for precision in your demonstrations. If you are demonstrating AKC exercises, explain this to the class, indicating that these are also the very exercises needed for an enjoyable companion. Competition need not be stressed at this level. The majority of the typical beginners' class is not interested at this point and emphasis on competition may alienate some individuals, particularly those with mixed breed dogs.

Having seen your demo dog perform the exercise, your clients will next see the steps involved for them to attain the same results with their own dogs. Place your demo dog where all will have an unobstructed view. If there is more than one demo dog available, position each dog/handler team at a different angle to the audience and repeat the demonstration to give the class different views of the same exercise. Reassure your class that you will repeat the demonstrations next session when their dogs are present. Explain to the class that dogs and their handlers are both individuals and some teams will be more successful with a different approach to an exercise. Demonstrate alternative methods or assure them that you will be closely monitoring their progress and may suggest a different technique after evaluating their dog's temperament and the handler's capabilities over the next several sessions.

Ask to be informed by the next session if any of the handlers suffer from a physical handicap. A bad back or trick knee may simply require a different approach to some exercises, but a handler who is hearing impaired or in a wheel chair may require extra one-on-one assistance from a volunteer. Knowledge of this can allow you to make plans and arrangements before the next session. Also ask about the physical condition of the dogs. If there is a lameness or other known problem that might interfere with the training process, it helps to know this in advance.

This is a good point for a break. You can accomplish this and continue your instruction at the same time. Position your class around the training site as if it were the first night with dogs. Have the class imagine their dogs at their left sides, on leash. Go through the exercises in great detail, having them work with their imaginary dogs on tone of command, praise, leash handling, prompting the dogs into the proper positions, footwork and other details that the handlers may not be able to concentrate on while coping with their dogs on the first few nights of class. Keeping this very upbeat, you will not only give the class a break, but a few laughs and valuable "hands on" experience at the same time.

When the class is again seated, refreshed and ready to listen, you might explain some of your class policies: where to park, where to exercise the dogs, how to prevent as well as clean up "accidents", how to avoid conflicts between nervous dogs. Review your policy on family participation, spectators, smoking, food treats, bitches in heat. Remind them to wear non-slip shoes and comfortable clothes they are not afraid to get dirty. Your previous experience with questions most often asked by clients will help you prepare this section of the orientation.

You might also want to give your class a brief demonstration of a few of the advanced obedience exercises. To see a dog drop on recall, retrieve over the high jump, perform the signal or scent discrimination exercise can motivate as well as entertain your clients. Sit and Heel will seem like less of a task by comparison. If your demo dog can perform a few tricks, this can also be a crowd pleaser.

Conclude your orientation by giving a simple homework assignment, explain in detail what it will accomplish and demonstrate exactly how to do it. The remainder of the class can be a question and answer session.

A positive orientation can do much to carry your clients' interest through those often frustrating first sessions of working with their dogs in a class situation. An obedience class instructor is in a

position to influence a very important human/animal relationship – a responsibility not to be taken lightly.

Mid-Session Evaluations

by Margery West - 1997

The Internet is a wonderful thing. There is so much useful information on different dog training lists. In fact, I consider this one of the more productive means of continuing education.

There was a discussion on one such list about class evaluation forms. Many use these, usually at the end of class. The object is to get information about what your students think of your class so that you can make improvements. I had used these end-of-class evaluation forms before, and did not find them particularly helpful. Of course, the wording has to be right. The form I used was, in my opinion, too involved. Well, I read the discussions on these forms without too much interest until someone suggested having an evaluation form in the middle of class. The light bulb went on – great idea!

So, I made my own mid-term evaluation form. I've used it the last two classes, and Wow! Am I impressed! This little six-question form let me know what each student felt they had a problem with in time to help them before class ended. It is short enough that they don't have to spend much time answering the questions. The questions are:

1. What have you learned so far in class that has been the MOST beneficial?
2. What exercise is the hardest for you and your dog?
3. Which is the easiest?
4. Is there an exercise or command you would like more individual help with?
5. After reading and reviewing the written material given with the class, do you now have any behavior problems you don't know how to deal with?
6. Any comments on the class in general?

I was able to help people with things I had no idea they had a problem with. I put together articles and different sources of information on digging for one student. I put together a list of tips for handling hyperactive dogs for a student whose dog seemed normal in class, but who was hyper at home. I put together a plan of action for one student whose dog snaps at the kids when they try to get something from him. Several felt they needed some help with the exercises we were learning at the time.

This form gave me the information I needed to give my students more help. It didn't take much time. They filled out the form on Week 5 of an eight week class. I went over the forms during the week and thought about how to handle each problem. When they next came to class, I was ready with the help and information they wanted.

I have started using the mid-session evaluation and it sure lets you know what is working and what is not. Most importantly it gives you the time to fix any problems your students might be having.

NADOI – THE ORGANIZATION

1988 NADOI Annual Meeting

by Lonnie Morgan

The 1988 NADOI annual meeting and workshop was held in Salt lake City, Utah, on April 30-31. Members from all over the nation attended this meeting and workshop, which was the first to be held “out West”. The workshop speaker was Herb Morrison, of Athens, Georgia, who spoke on instructing and canine behavior. Herb handed us blindfolds and proceeded to give instructions to a novice student on how to put a training collar and lead o the dog. Whew! What a trial. Everyone had fun and learned lots of new ideas to take back home to their classes.

There was also a guest representative from an insurance company who spoke to the membership about some possible choices for liability coverage, which is a very real concern to all of us in the dog obedience instructing game. Many of us found that, although we think we may be covered, and indeed we may have been told by our parks departments, YMCA facilities or community centers that we were covered under their policies, we found out that the sad truth is those policies do not include “contracted” employees, like enrichment class instructors.

At the annual banquet, we had asked a trainer from Applewood’s Dog Center to speak to us about

the Service Dog program they have there in Maryland. Margot Woods brought her Service Dog, Charity, with her, which really turned some heads at the Little America Hotel. Charity is a large Doberman, who wears a service pack on her back with a nameplate on the side which has inscribed, “Please do not pet me – I am a service dog”. I overheard one man murmur, “Oh mercy, I wouldn’t DREAM of petting you, sweetheart”. Charity can’t help it if she looks like a dog with Schutzhund potential. She does everything she can to try to portray a friendly image. She even carries around a cute little stuffed pink bunny to make herself look more “innocent”.



The Board of Directors of the National Association of Dog obedience Instructors at the 1988 annual meeting. Left to right, standing: Jill Masemore, Terry Ryan, Herb Morrison, Margie English, Sue Cone, Peg Prudden – Seated: Lisa Sebastian, Lloyd Aguero, Renate Traylor.

On Sunday we took a tour up to the mountains. It was just beautiful with all of the new fallen snow. Of course the best part of the trip was sitting with other dog obedience trainers/instructors on the bus and sharing dog tales and training techniques while munching on fruit, cheese and wine served to us by our fantastic hostess, Judy Boles and her husband, John. Judy is the only N.A.D.O.I. member in Utah, and put on the entire workshop and annual meeting single-handedly! What a hard act that will be to follow!

As the sun sank slowly in the West, we all marked out calendars for the 1989 annual meeting and workshop, which will be in Flint, Michigan. We will be trying out first two-day workshop, featuring Margie English on Saturday and Karen Pryor on Sunday. Here's hoping it will be the biggest and best ever!

1989 NADOI Seminars a Big Success

by Lonnie Morgan

Well another year has come and gone and another annual meeting is out of the way. I say that with a note of relief, as I had the job of hosting the workshop here in Michigan. This year NADOI tried something new. We had two workshops over the weekend instead of just one, along with our annual meeting. We had two great speakers, Margie English and Karen Pryor, which helped make the annual event a huge success.

Margie had many wonderful ideas which everyone was anxious to take home and use in our obedience classes (I've used several of them already.) If anyone gets a chance to hear Margie speak, I would highly recommend going. She is very witty and talented. I wish we could have had a full day to hear her speak, as we all left wanting more. But there was the small detail of squeezing the annual meeting into the weekend someplace!

Karen Pryor was a big hit here with the local people (and people as far away as Texas, Louisiana, California, Oregon, Washington, Utah and Virginia.) We had a full house. We were delighted to get such a good turn out after just recently having Karen speak for us back in 1986 in New Jersey. This time, she had many new things to show us. She added a new twist to the "training game" by shaping six people's behavior simultaneously. She also did subliminal form of the training game, and we did not even realize we were all being shaped! She shared with us some of her slides of the dolphins helping the fishermen catch fish in South America. The workshop participants had a big treat in store for them when they found out that, due to popular demand, Karen had decided to have paperback copies published of her book, *Lads Before The Wind*. Those of us "Karen Pryor Groupies" who have been looking high and low trying to find copies of this out-of-print book about her experiences in dolphin training were very grateful.

Next year our annual meeting will be another good one. Liz Palika from California will be hosting the meeting and will again have two workshops instead of one. It looks like having two workshops will become an annual practice. You will probably hear more about the speakers and the particulars in this column.

National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors, Inc. Celebrates 25th Anniversary

by Lonnie Morgan - 1990

This summer the National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors is celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary. Yes, just 25 years ago, people like John and Katherine Saucier and Milo and Margaret Pearsall sat down in someone's living room and created NADOI. Since that time, the organization has spread from its nucleus in the southern states to gain membership all over the country, and from several other countries. The state with the most NADOI members is Pennsylvania, with 38. There are five states with no NADOI members at all: North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Louisiana and Rhode island (aren't there any obedience classes out that way?). But we do have members in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Canada, Australia, North Korea, South Africa, East Malaysia, and West Germany.

Yes, our organization has grown quite a bit in twenty-five years, but its objective has remained the same: to promote quality instruction of dog obedience classes. NADOI still has an annual workshop which is free for the benefit of its membership. NADOI still has a national publication NADOI News, which is also free to its members. And in that publication, the CODE OF ETHICS is still printed on the inside page of every issue, with the reminder to "read and sign it regularly – practice it always!" This is what it says:

As a member of the National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors, Inc...I shall remember that to my community and all with whom I come in contact in dog obedience work, I typify Dog Obedience. It is my duty to keep that ideal high.

I will always strive to better the understanding of dog obedience, proving it a work and profession worthy of respect and admiration. Always will I advocate training by such methods that will keep the best interest of the dog, the handler and the fancy in mind.

I will work towards uniform and improved methods of instruction for all breeds of dogs. At all times in my association with people and my work with dogs will I conduct myself in a sportsmanlike manner, neither boasting if I win in the show ring, nor showing rancor toward my dog or toward the judge, should I lose. At no time shall I display evil temper, either in the ring or while instructing.

When handling my own or another's dog, either in the show ring or when instructing, never will I conduct myself in such a manner that it will bring discredit to this Association or the fancy.

I will work to train others as competent instructors for dog obedience training classes, and toward this end will always freely exchange ideas, methods and techniques in connection with dog obedience instruction.

In this, our anniversary year, NADOI has decided to award a member with honorary "Life Membership." The member(s) chosen at our national meeting to receive this award are John Saucier (NADOI member #1) and Katherine Saucier (NADIO member #5), of Birmingham,

Alabama. NADOI would like to take this opportunity to thank the Sauciers for all the work they put into the Association, into instructing, and into the sport of dog obedience over the past twenty-five years. Without people like the Sauciers, we may never have had a National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors.

Happy 25th Anniversary, NADOI!

Gateway to the Best

by Carol Cronan - 1996

NADOI will host its 1996 annual meeting in St. Louis, Missouri, at the King Henry VIII Hotel, April 11th through the 14th. This four-day event is an excellent opportunity to network with professional dog obedience instructors. You won't want to miss it! Reservations can be made at the King Henry VIII Hotel by calling (800) 325-1588. There is a block of rooms being held for seminar attendees. To keep these rooms your reservation must be made by March 15th. Remember to mention that you are attending the NADOI annual meeting to get our special rate for the rooms. The hotel is centrally located in St. Louis and just off a major freeway. There is limo service available from the airport to the hotel. For more information about this educational event, please call the annual meeting chairperson Bill Burt at (314) 756-4051.

Thursday and Friday the Delta Society will be giving interested pet people the opportunity to become a Delta Society Animal Evaluator. You will be trained to recognize appropriate behavior of animals involved in animal-assisted therapy programs. Final certification is dependent on successful demonstration of the latter. In order for a pet to remain a Delta Society participant that pet must be recertified every three years by a Delta Society Evaluator. This is an excellent opportunity to become involved in the Delta Society.

Saturday morning's presenter will be Dani Weinberg. Dani's presentation will be about the people skills needed when teaching dog obedience classes. On Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning attendees will have the opportunity to choose four sessions from the list of mini-sessions. The choices are varied, here are just a few: problem solving/lateral thinking, the use of games in classes, setting up and creating class plans, teaching a CGC class, or working with young dog trainers. The presenters of these breakout sessions will be our peers Terry Ryan, Charlotte Schwartz, Linda Copti, and Marti Kincaid, just to name a few.

Social events include a Friday night hospitality room where NADOI members can visit and get caught up on all the news. Our annual banquet will be held on Saturday evening. Other social activities are still in the planning stages as I am writing this article, but you can be assured that whatever is planned it will be interesting and fun. When members of NADOI gather annually, a good time is always had by all!

NADOI Annual Gathering 1997

by Carol Cronan

The National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors will be hosting its annual meeting April 24th-27th in Fort Meyers, Florida. This four-day event is for members and non-members and is an excellent opportunity to network with professional dog obedience instructors from all over the world. (Florida in April is also a fantastic family vacation destination.)

One of the nicest things about a NADOI gathering is the chance to start or renew friendships. Participation in the pre-seminar activities combines fun and networking possibilities. I went to my first NADOI annual meeting in Tucson in 1993. I was so thrilled to meet all the people whose articles I had been reading and influenced me as a beginning instructor. I was also able to get away for the 1994 meeting in Denver (my sister also lived in the area). What fun! On the last night a group of us went out to dinner: John Rogerson, Terry Ryan, Joann Locher, Lonnie Olson, Charlotte Schwartz, Missie Parker, Joyce Bradley, Margie English, Joan Segler... now you don't have dinner with a crowd like that too often!

Read on for a brief description of what to expect in Florida in 1997. Thursday, April 24th is an all day trip which will include the Ding Darling National Wildlife Sanctuary, located on Sanibel Island in the Gulf of Mexico just outside of Fort Meyers. Our guided tour of the National Wildlife Sanctuary will concentrate on birds, native vegetation and the history of the Calusa Indians. Sanibel Island is referred to as the "Hawaii of the South" and is world renowned for its shelling and bird watching. This fun day will be followed by an evening at the Seminole Gaming Casino to test your luck or skill.

On Friday, April 25th we will spend the morning at the Babcock Wilderness Adventure, which is a part of a 90,000 acre working ranch, the Crescent B Ranch. You will tour this ranch in a swamp buggy, and explore unspoiled woodlands and swamps first hand by viewing alligators, wild boars, or buffalo. You are guaranteed to see birds galore, so bring your birding guidebook, binoculars, and camera along. The afternoon will be spent at The Factory Outlet Village where you will find more stores than you can imagine. It might be a good idea to bring along an extra carry-on bag so you will be able to bring home all your bargains. For more information about the Fort Meyers area try surfing the Internet. On Friday evening there will be a pool and pizza party followed by a video presentation by Naomi Sagara on dog training in Japan.

The presenter for Saturday, April 26th is William (Bill) Campbell. Bill Campbell has been consulting with owners, trainers and consultants about dog behavior problems since 1967. His book Behavior Problems in Dogs is a classic and a must read for any dog obedience instructor. This book is now out in its second edition with Bill currently working on the third edition. The topic for Bill's day-long presentation will be Obedience = Quality Owner/Dog Relationship. On Saturday evening there will be a gathering at the hotel for seminar attendees including a dinner party, dancing, live band, singing, and games.

Sunday, April 27th will have two presentations. The first will be Dr. David Nichols, DVM from the Coral Veterinary Clinic. His topic will be: Anomalies that Affect Dogs in Training. The

afternoon presentation will be dolphin trainers from Sea World. You can learn a lot about training when you meet the trainers of another species.

What is NADOI?

by Carol Cronan - 1997

What is the National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors (NADOI, pronounced “nay-doy”)? To the dog owning public it means that they can rely upon the NADOI membership procedure to evaluate an instructor’s abilities. To an instructor it means an opportunity to exchange ideas about class training programs, teaching techniques, and problem dogs, with other instructors across the country.

To become a member of NADOI an instructor must have at least five years’ experience in obedience training and must have taught at least 104 class hours (over a minimum of two years) as a full-charge instructor of basic obedience classes. Provisional membership is offered to instructors who lack the requisite hours of instructing experience but who prove themselves qualified in all other aspects. Advanced levels of endorsement may be obtained with an additional 52 class hours of instructing at each level and are dependent upon endorsement at the previous level.

The idea for NADOI came about in 1960 as the result of some brainstorming by Milo Pearsall and Earl Traxler. These two men thought that there was a gentler, kinder way to train dogs. Margaret Pearsall, Milo’s wife, wrote in the preface of her book, *The Pearsall Guide to Successful Dog Training*, “When, in 1944 we started our first dog in obedience training (a five-month-old Cocker Spaniel, Pearsall’s Black Charger, trained by Milo), there was only one way to train and nobody questioned it. The theory was “complete master dominance,” and the tools were a heavy chain collar, a heavy lead with a big bolt snap, and plenty of muscle and voice so you could yank the lead and yell at your dog to make him do what you wanted.” Milo and Earl also thought that there should be an organization to help the public make certain that the dog obedience instructor they choose is qualified to make that claim.

This idea didn’t become a reality until 1965 when a group of 13 students gathered at one of Milo Pearsall’s training camps. It was at this gathering that John Saucier took “the bull by the horns” and became the first president of NADOI and Mrs. Wright-Smith was the first treasurer. NADOI now had officers and needed a committee to work on the regulations that would guide the membership. The regulation that has been passed to the NADOI historian, Fran Tardif, is: Everyone, including charter members, had to take a test of their performance. This test would consist of a group of students that you would give instruction. The catch was the students were selected by the examiners and could be anyone! Potential members would also need to pass an oral test.

As NADOI grew, they experienced some growing pains and there was a need for a meeting to reorganize. The group went back to Pearsall’s training camp in approximately 1967. It was at this gathering that it was decided to put the idea of a gentler, kinder method to work. A white toy

poodle was used as the guinea pig; the dog would be trained during the entire two weeks with her leash hooked to the dead ring. The dog's point of view was considered as each new behavior was being taught and the gentler method was employed. After two weeks of camp that little white dog was able to perform well enough to get the job done in novice, open, utility and she also did some tracking. This experience helped to prove the theory that there must be another way to train dogs.

NADOI has grown over the years from 13 members in 1965 to over 400 today. NADOI still has the NADOI News publication which started in 1969 and the NADOI Notes column which I believe started in 1971. These two avenues of sharing information and ideas are as important today as they were 30 years ago. Some new avenues for sharing information have been developed: The NADOI Puppy Pamphlet, which helps the public get off to a good start with their new puppy, and the NADOI Veterinarian Pack which is a way to let the veterinarians in your area learn about NADOI.

We now have added the quarterly magazine Forward which is available by subscription to anyone who is interested in learning more about being a dog obedience instructor. NADOI has a web site, <http://www.kimberly.uidaho.edu/nadoi/> for those interested in learning more about NADOI and its members. If you are a computer user, have computer access, and a NADOI member, there is a discussion list to share ideas and encourage communication of issues important to us today.

NADOI is an organization that continues to grow and change as the years go by. Some of the events to look forward to are: the NADOI-sponsored regional educational seminars and, of course, the annual gathering of members, which is a great place for the members of this national club to get to know one another and learn together. Thank you Earl and Milo and all the students at the Pearsall's training camp, NADOI was a great idea!

THE TRAINING PROGRAM

Dog Training And The VCR

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1987

How many times have you seen something a student was doing wrong and wanted to somehow separate that student from himself so he could watch what was being done? With the popularity of the VCR we can now do this. We are all aware of how a VCR can help improve handling technique by video taping trial performances. There are many other ways video taping can help in class instructing.

For a correction to be effective, it must be given as the dog is thinking about doing something and before he commits to doing it. An experienced handler can read the subtleties in the dog's behavior that signal these actions, but the novice handler may not realize what is going on until after the dog has committed to his transgression. The VCR can be used too in a set-up situation so that the handler can see what we see. In doing so we can point out when to give the correction or simply get the dog's attention.

Another area is evaluating jumping and movement problems. When establishing a take off point, the dog should approach the jump in stride and not have to adjust his steps. Taping the dog can help establish a proper take off point. If a dog appears to have difficulty jumping, it may be that the rear or shoulders are weak. This will show up on tape and will help the student and instructor evaluate the problem.

One difficulty is that filming and evaluation takes time, more than what is available in a class session. An alternative is to take a Saturday afternoon and devote it to filming and evaluation. You are not under any time constraint and do not have to worry that you are taking time away from other students. In addition, if it is optional, the students who are not really interested do not have to attend. If there is a problem student, a private session can always be arranged.

Thus far we have looked at how the student can improve his training technique from video taping. The instructor can also improve his teaching using videotape. Try taping one of your classes concentrating on the instructor. How well does the instructor present his material? Can his appearance or delivery be improved? Are topics or important points overlooked?

Training groups might think about making tapes of how each instructor teaches a given exercise and creating a library, which would be available to new instructors and assistants to review, and study. Each instructor has his own way of teaching which can benefit the new instructor. One of the big things to overcome is being self-conscious about seeing oneself on the tube. We are probably more critical of ourselves than others would be. Consider it a learning experience and don't worry about it.

The VCR provides a variety of ways to improve training as well as instructing ability and is something that should be looked into if you don't mind being a TV star.

Putting The Dog Before The Cart

by Carol Cronan - 1996

For the last ten years I have been teaching basic obedience. In an effort to expand my repertoire I have added carting to my class schedule. I became acquainted with carting through the Newfoundland Club of Seattle and our ownership to two Newfoundlands. There are, however, a few steps between acquaintance and teaching a class. Here are the steps I took in creating a carting class.

First my husband, John, and I taught our two Newfoundland to pull carts. Cart pulling is also referred to as draft work. I read the book Newfoundland Draft Work, Second Edition by Consie Powell. I watched two different videos on draft work; An introduction to Canine Carting with Beth Ostrander and Carting with Cheryl Dondino. As I watched and read, I took notes on the flow and content of these instructional materials. With my notes in hand I started creating my lesson plan.

Some of the things I wondered about were: How long will the classes last; 4, 5, or 6 weeks? What equipment will I need to have on hand? Can small and large dogs alike enjoy carting? To answer these questions I asked a few of my friends to be my guinea pigs and participate in a run-through of my classes. I taught one of the classes in the morning and another that evening. Any changes that were needed in the lesson I made and then used in the evening class. (The morning dogs were a Newfoundland, Malamute, and Leonburger; and the evening dogs were a Newfoundland, Great Dane, and Malamute.)

We covered all the basics in four weeks of lessons. The owners would need to continue the draft work on their own at home. Briefly this is what was covered in each lesson.

In Lesson One, we went over the equipment needed for carting, such as the different types of harnesses and carts that are available. I explained the importance of conditioning for the dog who is now going to be doing physical labor and how to get started on an exercise program. Basic control was practiced and areas that needed work were discovered. Along with the Lesson One handout, each student was given a catalog from Dog Works, Inc. that carries a full line of harnesses and carts and anything else you might need to get started.

Lesson Two consisted of review of basic control, first without, and then with, the harness. The handlers and their dogs started learning the commands needed for draft work, such as backing up, close, whoa or stop, and right and left turn. By this time the dogs were comfortable in their harnesses so we first had them pull empty traces and then a lightweight drag. Some of the dogs started pulling with no problems and others needed more reassurance and practice in the privacy of their own homes.

Lesson Three consisted of reviewing the new carting commands and continuing work with the dogs pulling. This is where the dogs started progressing at different rates. Some of the dogs by the end of this lesson were happily pulling a cart, while others were still pulling a lightweight drag and getting used to an item following them everywhere they went.

Lesson Four was more practice of the carting commands (no carts) using an obstacle course. We finished off the lesson with the dogs being hooked to the carts and pulling the carts through my neighborhood. Of the six dogs that took the course, four were reliably and eagerly pulling a cart by the end of this lesson. The two dogs that were not pulling a cart by this time needed more time, although they enjoyed their harnesses and were doing very well with the carting commands.

I had three carts for us to use during the classes and three harnesses, that seemed like plenty of equipment for starters. Class size will be limited to four dogs and it was very helpful having John help. I think you would need an assistant especially once you started having the dog get into the carts.

A “real” class starts next week and the canine students are a : Miniature Schnauzer, Lhasa Apso mix, and a Miniature Dachshund. The harnesses and carts have been made and I can’t wait! We should all have fun and doesn’t that sound like a cute group to be seen cart pulling?

To order the items mentioned in this article contact:

Cheryl Dondino at Harmony Enterprises, 20600 SW Johnson, Aloha, OR 97006
(503) 591-9187 to order her carting video:

or

Dog Works, Inc., RR 3 317 Curvin Circle, Stewartstown, PA 17363
(800) 787-2788 for their catalog, the Consie Powell book or the Beth Ostrander carting video.

Evaluating Job Performance

by Carol Cronan - 1996

If you have an employer, your level of effectiveness on the job will be evaluated at least once a year. As a result of this evaluation you will receive praise, information on areas that need improving, and probably a pay raise. Since I am self-employed, I need to get my job evaluation from my customers, the people who come to my dog classes.

My first evaluation form was created after reading a NADOI Notes column in 1989 written by Lonnie Olson (author of Flyball: A Dog Sport For Everyone and past president of NADOI). Why reinvent the wheel; so here are some of the suggestions Lonnie made for creating an evaluation questionnaire.

First, find out how many classes the student attended and ask how many days the student did the homework. This will give you an idea as to what type of student this person really was. You

might be interested in knowing if the student will be taking more classes from your organization. You may want to send out class announcements to those who answer yes. Would the student recommend your training center to friends who are in need of a trainer? A “yes” answer to this question will let you know the student was satisfied and will also plant the seed of recommendation.

- The next questions should be about the class:
- What exercise did your dog find the most difficult?
- What exercise was the most interesting to learn?
- What aspect of the class did you like the least?
- What aspect did you like the most?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
- Did you receive enough personal attention during the classes?

The answers to these questions will help you keep your classes user friendly. After teaching dog classes for ten years, I really don't have a good perception of what would be the most difficult exercise for a first time dog owner. (According to the answers to my questionnaires, the most difficult part of the class is getting their dog to behave around other dogs.)

You may also want to add some questions about how the students felt about you and your assistants, if you have them. This would best be done by a numbered evaluation (such as 1, 2, 3, 4 with 1 being the best and 4 the worst.) Then have the students rate your attitude, preparation, class handouts, appearance, ability, and availability, to name a few.

When creating your evaluation form keep the questions as simple as possible. The easier it is for your students to understand the questions, the more truthful and useful the answers will be for you. Once you have the filled out questionnaires in hand, take a deep breath and sit down to discover what your students thought of your classes.

Here is a sampling of some of the responses I have gotten from my evaluations:

What is the greatest benefit you derived from class?

Dutch and I are much closer than we were at the beginning of class.

Interaction with other people and dogs.

Members of our family learned to be consistent with commands and expectations, comments, criticisms, and suggestions.

On the second night nobody helped me handle Mylo as he was biting my hand.

I liked the pace of the class, the variety was nice. Could you give advanced notice and let the class bring questions on certain nights regarding behavior problems (aggression, timidity, other?)

Please don't mix dogs from other classes on graduation night!

Have evening classes start a little later.

Have classes last eight weeks instead of six.

You get the idea. I take the information I get in the evaluation and use it to try and improve my classes. Every new or repeat customer (and each referral) is like a pay raise for me, so I keep trying to improve the service I have to offer.

Instructor and Educator

by Carol Cronan - 1996

As a dog instructor you may be the only professional person who has the time and opportunity to educate dog owners about the correct way to manage their dogs. Since all dogs enrolled in obedience classes need to have their vaccinations to participate, you know they have been to a veterinarian. But veterinarians rarely have the time to educate owners about the responsible treatment of dogs because they are busy tending to health issues. This is also true of groomers and pet store owners whose main focus is educating owners about their areas of expertise. Dog obedience instructors, however, have the dog owner in class one hour a week for several weeks. This makes the dog owners a captive audience and provides the ideal time to educate owners about dogs and to help the owners begin to view themselves as responsible guardians for their dogs.

When you greet your students and their dogs you will be showing the owners how you feel about dogs by the way you praise and affectionately pet their dogs. During the first few weeks of class, you will be helping the owners gain some control of their dogs, and as this begins to happen you will be building your credibility. The ground work has now been laid for your students to listen to your advice about the responsible way to treat dogs.

The methods used to train dogs these days focus on the dog learning new behaviors, such as: sit, down, come, or stay, and being rewarded for thinking through the process. I find it a challenge to break the habit of handlers who immediately jerk on their dog's collar even before it has a chance to respond to the command. This is the beginning of teaching the owners to avoid force as the foundation for training. An example of this is the learning of the Down command. In my classes I teach the Down using a treat as a lure starting at the dog's nose, moving the lure to the ground between the dog's paws, and then moving the lure away from the dog (in an "L" pattern). If a dog doesn't "down" during the initial practice in class, I send them home to practice in their quiet training area. Also given an alternate idea such as using the lure to coax the dog under a chair, for example, with the result being a dog that is in the "down" position. These methods all respect the dog as a thinking creature that deserves humane treatment.

Pet overpopulation is an issue that should be mentioned in all classes. I have a couple of handouts that I give out and even if the people in class have already had their dog spayed or neutered, I encourage the students to pass the information on to anyone they know who has yet to be enlightened about this issue. Since I have been involved with animal shelters for the last ten

years, I have stories to share about the problem of too many dogs and not enough homes. Most puppies are born to be dead before they are one year old; this message definitely falls into the category of responsible ownership.

Allowing dogs to run free is one of the biggest problem areas I run across in the area of educating dog owners. Since I live in a rural area, most people feel that if they own five or ten acres their dog should be able to run free and stay at home. The truth of the matter is that most dogs will not stay at home. Any bunny can lure a dog off his property, as can the goats or chickens that live next door. Maybe there are people who ride bikes or jog past the dog's property. This is setting up the dog for trouble which might include chasing or biting of the passers-by. Traffic is life threatening for dogs that are unconfined, because dogs do not understand that cars are killers. I also like to mention the potential for developing angry neighbors because dogs that are allowed to run free are getting into trouble somewhere. One of my solutions is to give out a handout on confinement providing some ideas about the different types of fencing available. This is a good time to remark about the fact that chaining your dog is not one of the solutions for the permanent confinement of dogs.

A dog cannot speak for itself so it is up to us as dog obedience instructors to educate the dog owner in all aspects of dog ownership. We must speak up for the humane and responsible treatment of dogs. To understand and enjoy your dog is a deeply satisfying experience; a dog obedience instructor has the opportunity to teach owners how.

Prevention Is Easier Than A Cure

by Carol Cronan - 1997

I got to thinking last week after a woman telephoned me about her dog. As our conversation developed, Mary told me about how Fido had been biting her unpredictably. Here are some of the answers that I received to my questions: no, Fido does not bring the stick back when playing fetch; yet the dog is allowed on the furniture; yes, Fido growls at her around the food dish. Mary and Fido came a few days later for a private behavior consultation that was conducted by myself and Patti Brown, who works with me at Canine Potentials.

Here is some of the information that was gathered during that session. Fido is 18 months old and has been growling at Mary since she brought him home at 8 weeks. Mary picked him from his litter because he was the friendliest. When Fido was 12 weeks old, he was chewing on a pig's ear in the hallway and as Mary tried to leave the bathroom, Fido would not let her walk past. Mary ended up climbing out of the bathroom window.

The first time Mary and Fido went to obedience classes was when Fido was 4 months old. The obedience training progressed and positive methods were used. According to Mary, this helped diminish some of the growling and bossy behavior around the house. Mary then moved across the country where the problems gradually escalated. Mary had Fido neutered and signed up for another obedience class; this time the instructor used compulsion as the means of training the

dog. Since Fido is a big healthy dog and Mary is an average-sized woman, it wasn't long before Mary and Fido were at odds with each other and the growling and biting continued.

I am the third obedience instructor that Mary has been to. From my point of view, Mary has a lot of work ahead of her to straighten out her relationship with Fido. Mary is a committed owner, and in some cases that is half the battle. Mary is gradually implementing the changes necessary and is determined to give it her best shot. This is not a success story (yet) but a thought-provoking tale. My thoughts have been leaning towards: how could this have been prevented in the first place, and what could the first instructor have done to have turned the tables for Mary and Fido before the problems kept building.

It should be part of our job description as dog obedience instructors to help dog owners understand their dogs. One of the sources of frustration for owners is a lack of knowledge as it relates to canine behavior. This knowledge can be obtained in a variety of ways which I will touch upon in this article.

The initial contact on the telephone is the beginning. On the phone you will be explaining your obedience program and the cost. You will most likely explain that it is the owner who will be teaching the dog and you will be teaching the owner. It is a good time to mention that it takes only about 15 minutes a day for the owner to see good results at the end of the session. Most owners are surprised it takes so little practice for them to see results.

Once class has started, you can educate owners on the subject of canine behavior through the use of auxiliary handouts. The handouts can include subjects like: what it means to a dog to be allowed to sleep on the owner's bed or to be on the furniture, why dogs jump on people, the importance of the people in the household being the "alpha," understanding canine body language, and how our body language speaks to your dog. If you don't already have handouts on these subjects, the information can be found in books about dog behavior or by attending seminars.

As the weeks roll by, it is up to you to observe what is going on during class time. If an owner is having a hard time getting her dog to down, if a dog is still barking at its owner during week three of class, or maybe the owner can not get their dog's attention, you may need to investigate to find out what else is going on in his/her relationship. Find the time after class to talk to the owner or give them a phone call in between classes to see how things are actually going around the house.

I wonder if Mary received handouts that first time around. If she had, were they given out in a neat package? Was she able to refer to them at a later date, when the problems recurred? I used to give a few auxiliary handouts for my classes each week, expecting the owner to put them in the manila envelope that I gave them the first week. I am currently switching so all the handouts are given out at once in one neat booklet. Next month I will share with you the creation of the Canine Potentials comb-bound booklet.

Communication: An Exercise For Instructors

by Marty Martin - 1990

Okay, you teach classes, but do you communicate with your trainers? Are some, or perhaps most, just faces in a crowd? How many of your students, if any, feel that you're interested in them? Do they ask questions or hang around after class to talk with you? Do you always seem to have quiet, subdued classes with little or no interaction with your trainers?

Before you take pen in hand to draft a heated response to my insinuations that perhaps your communication skills could use some "exercise," see how many of the following basic communication exercises you practice.

LITTLE THINGS MEAN A LOT

Return phone inquiries promptly! This is your first golden opportunity to set the stage for good communication. Your timely response suggests your ability to follow-up, and intimates you have an interest in the caller. Waiting two, three or even four days to return a call may (and often does) result in your losing a potential trainer. (Surely this is of concern to you!)

Make the most of your initial contact. Congeniality goes a long way (you know this.) And there's no substitute for interest, so ask questions. Encourage the dog owner to tell you about him/herself and his/her dog. Remember, the first impression you give on the initial contact is usually a lasting one. It's no time to have to mend fences because of a poor start!

Extend an invitation to visit one of your classes. "I look forward to meeting you and your dog. Bring your family, too." With these few little words, you've reinforced your interest in the caller, conveyed your confidence in what you're doing ("come see the dogs I am now training",) and opened the door for future communication.

Greet your class visitors. You've started the ball rolling, don't fumble it now. Even if you can only snatch a minute or two, grab em! Suggest further conversation during the break or after class. It's just possible your guest will have some questions to ask you after watching your class. And who knows, you might pick up some information that will be helpful when the person enrolls in one of your classes. (Profoundism: The value of good communication is a two way street!)

KNOCK, KNOCK - WHO'S THERE?

Make it a point to greet each trainer the first night of class. "It's nice to see you again." "I've been looking forward to meeting you." "So this is Archibald!" (You've got the idea.) It should be pretty obvious that the purpose of this exercise is to make your trainers feel welcome.

Also, say something positive about each dog. Sure, sometimes you may really have to dig deep to come up with something, but it'll mean an awfully lot to the handler. Comment on a dog's lovely coat, striking color or expressive eyes. Even an "Ugly McNasty" has at least one attribute... if you look hard enough. It could be a proud carriage or a healthy glow and how,

might you ask, does this improve communication? It helps make a trainer more receptive to you and what you have to say. You've communicated, once again, interest in this trainer and this dog.

Call your trainers by name. "Hey you with the purple shirt" doesn't exactly suggest familiarity. You use a dog's name to get its attention, don't you? By using a trainer's name, you not only get his attention, you've let him know that he's not just a "face in the crowd." If you can't totally rely on memory (like me,) make a cheat card and use it! Include as much information as you need in order to match a name to the right person. (By the way, how are you scoring so far?)

Next month: Part II. More exercises in communication.

Last month we covered a few basic communication skills for us to practice as instructors, Lets continue on. . . .

It's Not Easy Being Green

by Marty Martin - 1991

Give each trainer some personal attention throughout the course. Remember what it was like training your first dog? Do the words "worst," "impossible," "stubborn," or "dumb" kindle any memories? As an instructor you have tools of experience and knowledge to alleviate many doubts and frustrations felt by your trainers. An encouraging word from you can reduce "monumental obstacles" to temporary barriers requiring a little extra work. Your ability to motivate, instill confidence and, in some cases, make the difference between a trainer dropping out or graduating can depend, my friend, on the communicative rapport you have with your handlers.

Don't overlook your outstanding trainers. Maybe some trainers do well from the start. They still need you. Let them know that you noticed how well they've been doing. Success can be empty without recognition. (Need I say more?)

Be positive even when you have to criticize. The automatic sit of Timid Tony's dog is deplorable! First tell Tony how well, for example, his dog is heeling. Then recommend that more attention be given to practicing the auto sit. That's effective communication and constructive criticism, kiddo.

Bring common problems out into the open. How many times has a trainer pulled you aside to tell you that is/her dog does so well at home, but at class he's awful? (Go ahead, count the times.) This is your chance to talk with your class and let them know that some problems are shared by many or all of them. You've let them know that they have more in common than they possibly realize (which promotes comradery,) and that together you'll work out these problems. (Cuz you're sympathetic to their problems, right?)

Never embarrass a trainer in front of the class! This is a sure fire way of cutting off every communicative inroad you've achieved with that trainer! (I know, you probably already knew this, but it never hurts to refresh one's memory.)

Bring In The Clowns

A little humor goes a long way. It serves to lighten up and relax a class. A little humor now and then contributes to a trainer's enjoyment of training which, in turn, makes the experience more pleasant for the dog, too. Who can deny that a positive attitude facilitates the learning process? And even if a sense of humor isn't one of your strong points, you can elicit a chuckle or two by drawing on and exaggerating your own foibles (are you game or gasping?), and/or tossing in something ridiculous. Need a little help? You got it.

"I'm such a klutz that my first dog learned the exercises before I did." "At one point, I thought it would be a whole lot easier just to buy a windup dog." (No one said you had to be absolutely truthful!) "Tonight's review includes a stand for exam, down from heel, and three pirouettes." "Next week will be much easier. You only have 83 exercises to learn." Try a little humor. It's another way of saying that you enjoy what you're doing, and you want your students to enjoy training too.

Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice

Have your trainers introduce themselves and their dogs. This is a subtle way of helping you learn names, and one way for getting your trainers acquainted with one another. You can also ask them to identify their breeds (yes, Virginia, not everyone is familiar with all the breeds of dogs.) The idea, of course, is to encourage communication between the handlers. By taking the time for introductions, there's a very good chance you'll see your trainers motivating one another, and encouraging one another to continue. (Now aren't you the smart one!)

That's All Folks

There you have it. Hopefully I've effectively communicated the basic practices for helping you polish or improve your communicative skills. Perhaps we can get together again to share and explore other avenues of communication. If we do, we both stand to broaden our talents as instructors, right?

First Lessons Linger On

by Marty Martin - 1990

Every now and then I clearly recall the very first dog obedience class I taught. I think that's good for it serves to remind me that no matter how much I think I know, I still have a long way to go.

Two lessons from that first go around were indelibly imprinted on my lil' brain. I learned the importance of flexibility and the need to garner as much knowledge of human psychology as possible. Now to help you understand how these lessons were brought to the forefront. I have to go back about. . .well, let's say a lotta years.

Down deep I just knew I was a performer looking for a stage. Instructing a dog class was, in my mind, as good a stage to start on as any. I was confident, I knew the course material. I was "Miss Cool" no problem. Until, that is, I hit my fist tiny little obstacle. I could not remember the steps in instructing the first exercise, the sit! Before this aspiring "star" turned into a black hole, I recovered my brain and spewed out detailed instructions. Convinced I had recouped brilliantly, I asked the class to sit their dogs.

Patty Pettalot said her precious punkin' didn't want to sit. Malcolm Macho pounced on his unsuspecting critter like a runaway freight train. The others just stood there repeating the command to sit nine or twenty times. My perception of the obvious alerted me to the fact that something had gone amiss.

Sure I can chuckle, now, about that first class. No doubt you, too, can smile about yours. But do you ever think about the lesson or lessons you may have learned from it? I said I learned about flexibility and the need to have some understanding of human psychology. Let's go back again to my introductory class.

Look at Patty. She wasn't about to put any pressure on her dog's collar because she believed it would choke her dainty darlin'. The hand on the rump was okay, particularly since the lightness of Patty's touch wouldn't have disturbed a butterfly. I needed flexibility to employ a technique that was more in line with Patty's psyche. And what about Malcolm? He was physically big and strong enough to put an elephant in a sit. But he didn't own an elephant, he owned a sheltie. Retrieving the tad bit of knowledge I'd gleaned from college psychology courses, I managed to avoid bruising Malcolm's ego while I practiced training flexibility, again, by having him use a training approach more appropriate for his breed of dog. As for the rest of the class, I had many challenges! Some I successfully handled. Some I just wasn't prepared to deal with. Back then, however, my 'bag of tricks' wasn't as full as it is now, and I've learned a whole lot more about the creature we call human.

The performer part of me is still very much with me, and I'm happy with the stage I occupy. I strive to make each new class better than the last through on going education. One of the ways in which I continue to grow as an instructor is through the National Association of Dog Obedience Instructors (NADOI.) As a member of NADOI, I am able to share experiences and problems with instructors throughout the country. Together we are always working to improve dog obedience training and instructing.

Teaching Aids – The Evaluation Sheet

by Lonnie Morgan - 1989

Everyone likes to think they are doing a good job of teaching their classes. One good way to find out is to ask the students. If you offer the student an opportunity to give you feedback, comments, suggestions and criticisms, you may find out a great deal about the way you teach classes.

Keep in mind that most students are crazy about their “first” dog obedience instructor. If that’s you, you’ve got it made. If it was someone else, then hold on to your hat, because you will have to “prove” yourself to this student. Anything you do differently will not automatically be viewed as an improvement. This student will ask the most questions. Be patient. He may not be trying to make you look like a fool, after all. He may only be trying to refute every method you use and reason you give. If the student can’t refute it, then it must be a valid idea, and you are accepted - you win! Then again, there are some students with whom you can never win, and I just group them in my “sour grapes” bunch. They’re either convinced that another method is better and yours is not even worth trying to refute, or they “know it all” because they breed German Shepherds and they trained one of them for obedience once, back in 1953. What I am trying to say is that you must learn to interpret the information on the evaluations. Some praises weigh heavier than others and some criticisms weigh heavier than others. Nice people will say nice things about your class and nasty people will say nasty things. Don’t take it personally. It has to do with THEIR self-concept, and you can’t change that. What you have to do is look at the overall picture. For instance, if a basically attentive, cheerful student hands in an evaluation with almost all fours (excellent) on it, with a two (fair) sticking out like a sore thumb, you had better check to see what you got the two on. If more than just a few people give you low marks on that one area, you should give some consideration as to how you could improve. If a “know it all” or “grouch” gives you all twos, don’t get frantic. It equals the same as all fours from the good student.

What questions do you ask on the evaluation? First, find out how many classes were attended and how many days the person did their homework each week. This will give you a hint as to whether you are being evaluated by a model student or a “slacker.” Then ask if the student plans to continue his training with your organization. This will tell you if you have a motivated student. Asking if the student will recommend this class to a friend will plant the seed in his head to do so, and will also tell you if you have a satisfied customer. Next, ask the student to name the most difficult, most interesting and least interesting exercise or aspect of the class. Ask what specifically they liked most about the class, and then ask for suggestions for improvement. You can make a numbered section (+4321-) and code it any way you like: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree, or, Excellent to Poor. Have them rate your attitude, preparation, appearance, organization, presentation, ability and availability, as well as that of your assistants. Put it in the form of a statement or questions, such as, “Do you feel the class time was well spent?”

Keep the questions as basic and simple as possible. If there is one word in a sentence which people with a sixth grade reading level will not understand, they will automatically give that questions a “grey” answer, like a three (if you have one through five,) because they don’t know

what you mean and don't want to take the time to figure it out. It's just easier to check a "middle of the road" answer and be done with it. Don't take it personally.

At the bottom of the form, I have a place for the person to sign the evaluation if they want to, and put the date and class night on the form. This will help me in case I get the classes mixed up, and I'm trying to find out which assistant the student thought was so helpful.

Sometimes I get some really good ideas from the students. And, of course, I get my share of strokes, too. My favorite stroke is when I get a "second hand" student who writes, "Your method is soooo much gentler than the one at another obedience class I enrolled in and QUIT!" (Quoted from a student's evaluation form.) The students tell me when what I do is working, and when something can be thrown out. Having used the evaluation form over the years has helped shape my classes, has kept me open to the idea of change and helped keep me on my toes. If you're not using one now, I strongly recommend the implementation of a class evaluation sheet. After using one, see if the quality of your classes improves. It should.

Teaching Aids – Handouts

by Lonnie Morgan - 1990

There are a wide variety of topics related to living with dogs which can be handled through class handouts. Students don't just want to learn standard obedience exercises - they want to learn how to clip their dog's nails and keep "Peppy" off the furniture (or if they don't, they SHOULD!) For this purpose, I use something called the weekly lab assignment. If I were to call it a handout, it would become just that, and the students would probably not even bother to read it. By making it an assignment, which we will review and discuss together next week, the student has to become involved. The first week, for instance, is a lab on how to clip the dog's toenails. The assignment involves learning, clipping and bringing the dog to class next week with short nails (and thus less slipping and sliding on the gym floor.)

Labs can cover anything from house training to grooming. I find that this is a good time to get on my soap box and preach about the redeeming value of using dog crates, spaying and neutering your pet dogs and especially, not breeding your pet dogs just for the sake of having puppies. I include a lab on putting identification on your pet for protection (I advocate tattooing,) and also a lab on finding a fun sport in which to participate with your dog (I also advocate having FUN with your dog.) You can make up your own labs about anything. You could include such things as, "How to stop your dog from jumping up," or "How to teach your pet a trick." Labs are like a "catch-all" to cover all of the little topics which can eat away at class time when the questions which the labs answer come up. It's nice to be able to tell the student that their question is a concern to a great many other students, and that it is covered in detail on the week six lab assignment. Labs are also a nice diversion from the routine of weekly homework lessons. The owner of a chronic run-away dog once told me that the lab on whistle training alone was worth the entire price of the class, as now his dog returns immediately when he hears the whistle.

Student feedback tells me that the labs are well worth the effort. Many of the handlers write on their evaluation sheets that the labs are the most interesting part of the class. Next month, the topic of this column will be another valuable teaching aid: The Evaluation Sheet.

Teaching Aids – The Homework Sheet

by Lonnie Morgan - 1990

Most of us in obedience instruction got our start in dog training. With class instruction, our pupil is not the dog, but the handler. Handlers come with varying degrees of aptitude, dedication, intelligence and motivation. While an instructor speaks to his class, up to 80% of what he says will be forgotten by the student before he gets home. When the instructor demonstrates an exercise, the retention is slightly better - the student only forgets 65% of what he sees with his eyes and hears with his ears. If the student performs the exercise himself during class, his chances of remembering it the way it was taught increase even more - he loses only 50% and retains 50%. But, which 50% will he remember? By having a weekly homework sheet, either in the form of a hand-out or a booklet, the instructor will increase the chances of his students completing the lessons correctly.

Never underestimate the ability of your students to forget things! Novice obedience trainers have a lot to learn. Anything the instructor can do to increase learning and minimize confusion will be a great help. Some suggested material for homework sheets include the following.

Include a detailed written description of how to walk through the exercise at home. Print command words in capital letters with quotes, so that they will learn to use the proper commands consistently (“SPIKE, COME”). Give the student a goal to work toward with each homework exercise. Tell the student how many times he should do each exercise per training session. Some students would actually not have any idea of how to ration their training out over a week’s time to get the results they need. Include pictures or drawings where they would be helpful, like with “how to put on the training collar.” One picture could be worth a thousand words. Keep the language simple. Don’t try to impress your students with your vocabulary. Use common, everyday language what a third grader would understand (you might get a third grader in your class.) Include which exercises should be reviewed, and give a “sneak peek” preview of what will be learned next week in class (make them want to be there.) Also, make note of any reminders the student may need for next week’s class, like: “Be sure to bring your long lines next week.” Include the names of several good training books which would compliment your own methods. Leave room for the student to make some notes of his own, if necessary. And, of course, make sure the student has your phone number, in the event he must contact you regarding class.

In addition to the homework sheet itself, it is useful to include such information as building use rules, class cancellation policy, and general instructions. I also include sheets called, Commonly Asked Questions, The Ten Commandments of Dog Training, and Distractions. Along with the regular weekly homework sheet, I also have a weekly “lab assignment” sheet, which addresses some of the “extra curricular” activities. I will write about the lab sheet handouts next month.

Appearances Can Be Deceiving

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1985

Most involved in teaching dog obedience classes like to think of themselves as professionals. As professionals it is important that we conduct ourselves as such. This includes our dress, speech and the way we conduct class.

First impressions are very important and what students see first *is* what we look like. Let's face it, "dog people" are sometimes not the best dressed. Instructors should be neatly dressed and well groomed. Because we may handle dogs, have to get on the floor or just want to be comfortable is not an excuse to wear grubby clothes. Instructors should dress neatly yet appropriately Club shirts are an excellent idea and they also provide instant recognition of someone in authority.

The way we express ourselves says a great deal about us. Among dog people certain language is acceptable yet not appropriate for the general public. We should be conscious of this and avoid the use of expletives which are not needed to make points. If we have offended a student because of our *language* or appearance, he may be less likely to return to class and we have failed to be in a position to help that student.

Classes should be well organized with set goals for the week and total session. Instructors should be on time and prepared so as to set a good example for the students. If more than one person is helping with a class, each should clearly know his responsibility. All efforts should be made to remember the student's name and not just the dog's. After all, it is the student with whom we must communicate. Helpers should pay attention to what is going on in class and avoid congregating to carry on their own conversations. This is disruptive and disrespectful. Less than kind statements should never be made about a student or his dog in the presence of other students or instructors. Wait until the students are gone to discuss problems. The same holds true if you have a disagreement with another instructor. Wait until class is over. If there is a problem with a teaching method, call a break then discuss the problem.

Another aspect of professionalism is continuing education. We are all students with plenty to learn. We should take advantage of books, seminars and workshops to strengthen our knowledge. It's easy to get set in our ways and ignore something new that might be better than what we are currently using and comfortable with.

Sometimes we get a little lax in our dress, language, conduct and a desire to try something new. As a result we offer a less than sparkling example of what dogs and those interested in dogs are all about. If we think of ourselves as professionals, let's act that way.

Consider Developing A Working Relationship With Local Vets

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1987

Local veterinarians can be of great help to a dog obedience-training curriculum by providing information or guidance in establishing a dog health care program. The veterinarians benefit, too, by having some clients who can recognize early warning signals and provide essential information to aid in diagnosing. If there is an exchange of information in setting up such a program and who has confidence in the people instructing, there can be additional benefits to the training organization through referrals from a vet who understands the goals and methods of the training program and who has confidence in the people instructing. In addition, if the vet does not have the time and/or background to deal with canine behavior problems, he can advise the client to seek assistance from the training organization.

Incorporating discussions on health care into an obedience-training program is a logical step. Many of the people who own dogs have only vague concepts of the dog as a living organism, limited usually to knowing it needs shots and can have worms. No veterinarian and few breeders have the time to

Sit down with each new dog owner to impart this knowledge beyond simple nutritional requirements; the obedience instructor, however, can reach those owners already assembled for instruction. There are several ways to add the health care aspect to a session of training classes. One way is to reserve 15 minutes or so each week to cover a particular topic. Another way is to add an extra lesson that would be devoted to the general topic of the dog's health.

In our own classes we've found presenting a brief discussion on a different topic each week to work successfully. The lectures cover canine disease, external parasites, internal parasites, nutrition, reproduction, behavior, grooming, and the correct way to take the dog's temperature. The sole purpose is to have the owners become aware of various ailments affecting dogs and their early symptoms. No attempt is made to suggest that the owner undertakes treatment himself, rather the importance of veterinary attention is stressed. Preventative measures, particularly with regard to parasites, are outlined.

Initially a handout was drafted for each topic to be covered. These were compiled using several of the dog care books on the market. Each of the handouts was given to several veterinarians who checked them over for accuracy and saw to it that information on treatment and prevention conformed to local practices. At the present time, a slide presentation and many of the pamphlets now available from some of the veterinary pharmaceutical houses are supplementing these handouts.

For those not inclined to compose, having a veterinarian speak to the class might be the better approach. Another possibility is to ask a vet about educational materials advertised by the major manufacturers and contacting them about distributing the literature in the classes. Most of the pamphlets that we have seen are excellent, but it is still suggested that the local vets review the material that is used.

Since many, probably even most, veterinarians do not actively participate in the sport of training and exhibiting dogs, it is likely that they have as foggy a notion of what goes on in training classes as their clients have about canine medicine. While asking the vet for his help, take the time to explain the class set-up, training philosophy, and the ways the organization promotes responsible dog ownership. Groups that offer KPT classes should make the vets aware of the benefits of early training. Many vets may themselves not be familiar with the work of Scott and Fuller, Pfaffenberger, Fox and Campbell much less realize the influence they have on training concepts and approaches to problem behavior. It will probably be easiest to begin working with one's own veterinarian, but each vet in the community should eventually be contacted. If your area has an association of veterinarians, it might be easier to ask to be able to present a program at one of its meetings. Try to avoid playing favorites and give each vet the opportunity to cooperate with your group in establishing a well-rounded training program.

A sound mind in a sound body is applicable to our dogs, too. Developing a working relationship between the training instructor and the veterinarian is a step in the right direction toward reaching and maintaining this goal.

Teach Them Young

by Liz Palika - 1990

Children are wonderful mimics. Mom adjusts her shirt a particular way; she looks over to find little Susie doing the same thing. Mom scolds young Johnny and as soon as her back is turned, Susie mimics her - complete with expressions, words and tone of voice. Mom isn't the only one mimicked, either. Dad is out tinkering with the car and Johnny watches closely, then proceeds to "work" on the lawnmower. And if Dad says a dirty word when the wrench slips. . .well, children mimic only too well!

Unfortunately, children CAN mimic some of Mom and Dad's bad habits. If the parents mistreat or neglect the family dog or cat, then those children are going to grow up believing that their parents behaved properly and that's the way to treat animals.

As a professional trainer, I encourage the entire family to attend their dog's training class. While one family member trains the dog, the others can watch. Sometimes it can be a bit noisy, and sometimes there is quite a crowd, but to me, the benefits out-weigh the problems.

First of all, when the entire family attends, everyone can see exactly what is going on with the dog's training. . .what to do and what not to do. The whole family gets to be involved; it's not just Dad doing the training with his dog, but instead it's the family's dog.

But more importantly to me, the children reveal to me exactly how the dog is normally treated. If an adult hits a dog, even if it's done in anger, they may feel instinctively that it was not the proper way to train and will hide that in a class situation. I, as an instructor, may never see it. But the child that sees his parent treat the dog in such a manner will think that it is the proper way to

do it and if the dog misbehaves before class, the child will probably reveal to me the method that is used at home to correct the dog, whether it is by hitting or screaming or kicking.

When the entire family attends class, I can make sure that the kids are learning as well as Mom, Dad and the dog. The entire family can learn how to teach the dog and what is expected of the dog and of themselves. The kids also need to learn not to pull tails and poke eyes. They need to learn that it's cruel to tease a dog. They learn that the dog needs fresh water, good food, grooming, regular exercise and play time. Because this lesson on dog care is incorporated into normal lesson plans (and really doesn't take much time!), it doesn't take any time away from the so-called "regular" training.

I cope with the distractions from extra people attending class and have patience with them because our future rests with these kids. Some day these children are going to be grown up and raising their own families. If they have remembered anything that I have taught them, then they will be raising their children to care for their pets properly. Instead of being a vicious circle, it becomes a caring one.

Leader or Bully?

by George Phillip Quinlan - 1996

We all are aware that being top dog is a critical fact when living with and training a dog. What is the difference between dominance through leadership and dominance through force? There is a big difference between being a strong influence and being a bully!

I spent the breeding season of January and February '96 with the pack at Wolf Park in Battle Ground, Indiana, observing behavior and rank changes for five weeks. Chinook was the leader of his pack. He was alpha male and Altair the alpha female. During this period, when aggression is at its highest, I never observed Chinook grab another wolf by the scruff of the neck and pin it to the ground to maintain order. For that matter, I never observed him or any other wolves seriously reprimand either of the two male pups that were ten months old at that time. Mostly, he presented a ritualized attack (a general term for an attack with rules). If Altair started across the ice, the other males would start to follow. As Chinook started in her direction, all others would stop in their tracks until he passed. All it would take was a look or a step in their direction. That's real leadership!

It bothers me when I hear of instructors still teaching their students (who trust them) to grab a dog by the scruff of the neck, shake and pin them to the floor. They are not teaching their students to be leaders without being bullies. They are teaching people to behave aggressively to dogs.

We accept the fact that shaking a human baby is wrong and can cause severe and permanent damage. What kind of damage can you do to a puppy? What about the risk of the student being bitten by their pet? I don't care how big or little the dogs are, the student can still cause damage.

This is also putting the life of the dog at risk – if the average dog owner is bitten, it is the dog that will most likely “pay” by being destroyed.

For example, I had a young woman (and mother of two children) come to me for help with her new puppy. She had been taught at someone’s training classes that she must be dominant over her previous dog, a Malamute. She was instructed to correct him by grabbing and forcing him to the ground. Unfortunately, she corrected him in the manner she was taught and was bitten so badly that her husband immediately had the dog destroyed out of fear for the children. She didn’t want to have that happen to her new puppy!

Now, maybe the instructor told her to do it slightly differently, but sometimes people hear what they think they hear, or they misunderstand the instructions. It’s better to be safe than sorry. If there is a chance that the misunderstanding could be damaging, then we must be very careful what we teach.

I heard another sad story just before I left for my vacation in August. I received a call from a woman who said she was a NADOI instructor. One of her students had a dog that liked to chase his tail. One evening he started the tail chase during class. As the dog started to spin, the instructor reached over the dog and grabbed the check chain and the neck. The startled dog must have felt he had to defend himself, because he tried to bite her. I asked why she felt that was the way to correct the dog’s problem. She told me that another instructor in her area told her she should pin the dog every time he started to chase his tail. I wish someone would take the time to explain to me the benefits of this type of correction.

What do you (the instructor) gain? Better yet, what does the dog learn? Why would you put yourself, your student, or the dog at such a risk? I find it hard to understand why people feel they have to be so hard on dogs to train them!

Dogs were the first animal to be domesticated by humans 12,000 years ago. Over the centuries, breeds were developed to serve different needs. From hunting to being pampered, from the hills of Scotland to the laps of Parisians, dogs have served us well. Have we evolved so much that we have forgotten how to communicate with the other creatures of this earth? If we are going to train a dog by using dog language, then maybe we should take extra time to learn the language first!

Do You Teach Dog Obedience... Or More?

by Bonnie K. Thiel - 1990

Ask any person attending a dog obedience class on the first night and they will tell you that the reason they have enrolled is to have more control over the dog. They want the dog to walk with them (without dragging them down the street) and they want the dog to come when called. They want a better pet. Probe further, and you will find that most of these dogs enrolled also have behavior problems that their owners are hoping can be solved through obedience training, the most common being housebreaking and jumping on people.

While teaching the dog to heel, sit, down, stay and come is very important, it is not always enough. It should be the obedience instructor's goal to produce not only obedience trained dogs, but well behaved pets - and responsible pet owners.

Behavior related problems can easily be included weekly in the lesson plan. While some problems may require individual attention, most can be covered on a general basis. Each week, a general discussion about a behavior-related problem can help avoid future problems. For instance, a short explanation of housebreaking methods may be all an owner needs to set the dog on the right track. A discussion about aggression (biting, growling, etc.,) the causes and preventatives, might prevent a dog from becoming a biter. It only takes a few minutes to show the corrections for teaching the dog not to jump up on people. This is one of the most common complaints from pet owners, yet, few instructors ever address the problem. While every instructor has his/her own methods of correction, the important factor is that the problems are brought out in the open. The first step toward solving any problem is for the owner to recognize that a problem exists.

The obedience instructor is sometimes the public's sole source of dog ownership information. The responsibilities of pet ownership is another facet that the instructor should discuss with his/her students. Topics such as health care, simple grooming, dog laws and breeding can be covered under this subject. Some owners do not realize that their dog's DHLPP shots must be boosted yearly. Many know nothing about the more common worms and most have never even heard of "heartworm." Basic grooming tips (cleaning ears and teeth and trimming nails) are helpful, and everyone always wants to know about flea control. A discussion of laws and ordinances pertaining to pet owners can be written in conjunction with the local animal control officer. This makes the owner very aware of his responsibilities as a pet owner under state and local laws. Licensing can be discussed at this time, as well as cruelty, abandonment and dogs running at large. A discussion about breeding dogs should deal more with why NOT to breed dogs and why spaying and neutering are so beneficial.

Heeling, sit and down, stay and coming when called are all important aspects of the dog obedience class; but it just may be that the instructor's greatest contribution is providing the community not only with obedience trained dogs, but with well-behaved pets and educated, responsible pet owners.

PUPPY TRAINING

Puppy Training – You Can't Start Too Early

by Joann M. Locher, M.S. - 1992

A young puppy is like a little sponge...ready and willing to learn. People who train guide dogs know this and begin the learning program when pups are three weeks of age. Puppies learn something from every new experience.

The ideal time to bring a puppy home is at seven weeks of age, when they begin to bond best. The owner can immediately begin teaching the puppy desired behavior. If this is not done from the beginning, then these little sponges may do a great deal of negative learning.” As mistakes are made, the puppy is learning, “I can do this,” and many wrong behaviors are self-rewarding, and therefore, self-perpetuating.

The eighth to the tenth week is a stage of development called the “Fear Imprint Period.” The young pup is just learning to trust, and its fragile ego can be easily damaged. This is about the time when the new pet owner is trying to housebreak. If housebreaking is done in a negative manner, with ill-timed, physical corrections, it may have long-lasting, detrimental effects. The dog’s spirit may be broken or submissive urination may occur whenever the dog is approached.

Current research indicates that it is crucial for puppies to receive proper socialization and training during the third and fourth month of development if they are to mature into calm, confident, well-rounded adults. Behaviorists are now calling this critical period the “Socialization Period,” in which experiences are all new and exert a long-lasting effect on shaping the dog’s personality. The dog’s temperament is molded more by early training than most people realize. In order to be well “Socialized,” it is vitally important that the young dog have lots of positive exposure to a variety of strangers, numerous other dogs, and many different environments.

Dogs that have limited exposure during these early months quickly mature into aggressive, antisocial, fearful, nervous, or untrained adults. At the early age of five or six months, it is often difficult or impossible to do what could have been so easily accomplished had the training started earlier.

When I began training dogs twenty years ago, it was commonly believed that a dog should not begin a training program until he was at least six months old. Perhaps this was due to the fact that dog training at that time was a fairly negative, sometimes harsh process, not advised for the young, fragile, insecure puppy. By six months of age, the average dog has usually undergone plenty of negative learning. It ignores its owner, is totally confused, and has many bad habits.

Today the concept of “Puppy Kindergarten” is sweeping the country. This program of early training is a very gentle, positive approach to learning and problem prevention. Puppies not only

learn amazingly fast, but owners also learn how to handle those first crucial months of development and set the tone for success.

Speaking of success, the statistics for dogs are quite grim. Only one-third of all dogs succeed with their original owners. Most of the two-thirds which are given up are ultimately euthanized. This horrible truth is largely because people do not realize the importance of early training and socialization. Even if the person knows how to train the puppy him/herself, the puppy needs the types of experiences, socialization, and handling that are easy to obtain in a puppy kindergarten, but difficult to adequately provide otherwise.

TRAINING TECHNIQUES

Harsh Punishment

Author Unknown - 1981

An often heard and frequently read phrase in obedience training circles is, “It’s better to string the dog up (or hang the dog, administer severe beatings, electric shock, etc.) than to put the dog to sleep.” This assumes that in order to rescue the dog from the fate of euthanasia, any method of altering the dog’s behavior is justified. Although this concept of the ends justifying the means is a popular one, it deserves close scrutiny because it may not be as valid as we assume it to be.

However, it is important that the instructor attempt to overcome behavioral problems. Many students enroll in a class because of a behavioral problem with the animal, and they deserve the same consideration as a person wanting to complete a CD. To avoid these problems, or avoid using a method that may appear harsh to an inexperienced person is a disservice to the fancy, the student, and most importantly, the dog.

But many times, the attempts to solve behavioral problems are at too high a price. If we say we are trying to avoid euthanasia we may be avoiding the very thing that will be the most humane course of action. To repeatedly subject the animal to severe treatment, especially over a period of months or years because we want to “save” the dog may constitute far more cruelty than euthanasia.

And, harsh punishment may cause more behavioral side effects than it cures. By increasing painful punishment to counter aggressive actions toward other dogs, we may escalate rather than diminish the problem. Avoidance of the owner can also be conditioned with harsh punishments repeatedly administered after the original misbehavior.

Furthermore, if we are blinded by the “either or” thought, we cannot see other options. Every good instructor would like to produce well-adjusted, social dogs that can be well-mannered companions no matter where they are. Yet because of the wide diversity of skills, goals and values of the handlers, and backgrounds, genetic quirks and environmental influences on the dog, this is an unreachable goal. Perhaps the handler with a dog that aggresses toward other dogs could enjoy the animal in the home and backyard. While this may not be an ideal situation to the instructor, the handler may be willing to adjust to the dog. The handler may appreciate qualities in the dog that the instructor does not see. Options need to be offered so that the handler can make a choice, whether or not it coincides with the instructor’s choice.

To be sure, there are handlers that are not willing to compromise. A typical complaint is, “He’s digging in the yard and if he doesn’t stop, I’ll get rid of him.” Before rash action is taken with the idea of stopping the behavior at all costs, another side of this common coin needs examination.

This type of owner may be unwilling to live with any natural behaviors of the dog. If the digging were cured, this owner may then complain of barking, licking, chewing or scratching at fleas.

Some people who will not tolerate any “nuisance” from their dog are not responsible pet owners, no matter how well behaved the animal.

Instead of attempting to stop the problem at all costs and keep it in an environment that has little tolerance for normal behavior patterns, it may be in the dog’s best interest to place it in another home. By pointing out to this type of owner that it is normal for dogs to chew, bark, need feeding, exercise and veterinary care, the owner may realize that the dog is quite normal, but his/her tolerance for normal canine behavior is low.

Before action is taken by the instructor, alternatives to “the ends justify the means” must be explored. Is this a problem that can be overcome with imaginative alternatives? Is the owner complaining of a problem that she/he has consciously or unconsciously created? Would a different home solve the problem? And is euthanasia actually a more humane alternative to prolonged and severe punishment? There is never a blanket solution to behavioral problems, and each situation needs to be evaluated on an individual basis. Perhaps there will be times when the ends do indeed justify the means, but it is imperative that the instructor is aware of another way of seeing the problem and its possible solutions.

Out With The Old, In With The New

by Carol Cronan - 1996

It’s hard to change, but to keep current with all of the advances in dog obedience instructing these days you had better keep up with the changes or you will get lost in the shuffle. When I started teaching classes 9 years ago, the sessions lasted for 8 weeks and class size was 8 to 10 students. I spent a lot of energy in teaching people how to heel with their dogs, long steady sit/down stays and stand for exam. The graduation was similar to an obedience trial. Over the years I have discovered 8 weeks is too long of a time commitment for the busy families of the 90’s. Today my classes last 6 weeks, class size is 2 to 5 students, and graduation is an AKC Canine Good Citizen (CGC) test. For example, on Mondays I teach three Level I classes, with a total of 12 students. The graduation will be Monday evening with all 12 students coming to that one CGC graduation. I have guest evaluators come to the graduation test because by this time I am no longer a friendly stranger, but instead the favorite teacher!

I have eliminated heeling from my Level I classes, now we cover walking with the leash loose. Taking out the heeling work left a big void, but from observing and then realizing that it was during the heeling segments of my old lesson plan where most students, two and four legged, lost interest. If your dog learns to walk with the leash loose you will have no problem passing Tests 4, 5, and 9 of the CGC test. Most students are not interested in participating in obedience trials with their dog; they just want to enjoy walking their dog with no pulling.

Instead of concentrating on a three-minute sit-stay, the focus of the stay exercise in the updated classes is walking twenty feet away from your dog and then returning. This is taught using both the sit and down stay. Stay is a very important command and can literally save a dog’s life, but if the owner/dog team is having trouble finding success, they may give up on this command

entirely. To pass Test 6, all your dog needs to do is stay in the position, down or sit, you left him in while you walk to the end of a 20-foot line and back. This can be accomplished by most owner/dog teams after a couple of weeks of practice.

Although the dogs in Level I training learn to stand on command, our focus is sit for exam. This is accomplished by the students standing in a circle with their dogs sitting in the heel position, then myself or one of the folks observing the class walking around looking in the dogs' ears and touching their feet while the dogs stay in the sit position. If your dog can do this you will be able to pass Test 1, 2, and 3 of the CGC test.

I update my lesson plans regularly, but the switch from obedience trial base training to CGC training was a very big change. I had the other lessons timed so that I knew the lesson would last for one hour. With all the changes, I wasn't sure of the timing anymore. One thing I was sure of though was that the students and their dogs are finding more success in the new CGC based lessons. My drop out rate is near zero and as a result more students than ever are signing up for Level II, carting, or agility classes with their dogs.

If you are not familiar with the CGC program, call or write for a free information kit; The American Kennel Club, Attn: CGC, 5580 Centerview Drive, Suite 200, Raleigh, NC 27606 (919) 233-9780.

The About Turn

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1987

The about turn can be a difficult exercise to teach if the proper timing is not taught first. In out classes, we stress that the dog's name be called first before giving any moving command. In this way the dog learns that when he hears his name, he should look at his owner and he will then be asked to do something. This is also true when in the early stages of learning there is a change in direction while heeling.

When executing an about turn, the dog's name is called prior to actually turning. If the dog has been taught to pay attention to his handler when he hears his name, he should follow as the handler then turns. Teaching this timing can be difficult.

The first night of class owners are taught that when the dog hears his name he will be expected to do something if nothing more than look at his owner. Owners are encouraged to look closely at how often they use their dog's name in every day life when nothing is expected of the dog. We ask that the "call name" be used only when the dog is expected to respond. In other situations when referring to the dog, a "pet" name should be used. In this way the dog becomes much more attentive to his name.

To help develop proper timing for the about turn, handlers are first taught an about turn in place. With the dog sitting in heel position, the handler calls his dog's name followed by the command to heel. He then steps back on his right foot turning to his right as the left foot is brought around

to complete the 180 degree turn. A couple of additional steps are taken to give the dog time to catch up and find heel position.

The leash is used as only an attention getter and not something to haul the dog around with. If the dog does not immediately look at his handler when his name is called, the dog is given a quick jerk and released. This jerk and release is always given in the direction you want the dog to move. In this case 180 degrees from the direction the dog was originally facing. This is done as one continuous movement with no waiting to see what the dog is going to do. This is to be practiced for one week as a separate exercise.

Hopefully by the next class, the dog turns as the owner turns. At this time we introduce the complete exercise. When given the command “about turn” owners are expected to call the dog’s name before turning. By the time they get the command to heel out of their mouths, the dog should be looking at the owner as he turns. Again, if the dog should not turn his head as his name is called a jerk and release is given in the direction we want the dog to go.

Many of the exercises can be made much easier on owners if they are broken down into simple steps which can then be put together to give the finished product.

TRACKING

Setting Up A Tracking Class

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1985

With the introduction of the TDX title in 1980 there has been an increased interest in tracking. In many areas tracking is conducted by one or two individuals and not in a class situation. Tracking classes can provide knowledgeable instruction with set weekly goals which helps reduce the time needed to earn the TD and TDX titles. Weekly class sessions provide regular evaluation of the dog's progress and early detection and correction of problems. In addition, a close fellowship is built up among class members.

We have been conducting tracking classes off and on for the past ten years in our area with 42 TD titles having been earned. Approximately 85% of these students pass their first test. For those interested in setting up tracking classes, here are some points to consider.

We try to schedule classes so that we finish within a couple of tracking tests in the area. This provides the students with a goal for which they can shoot. Most of the students have their dogs certified by the sixth or seventh week of class giving them plenty of time to enter.

Because of the time devoted to each student during the actual class, class size is limited to six students. Generally I figure 2 to 4 hours for the class. Students are charged a fee for the class. This encourages class attendance and following through with the program. It also is an added incentive for the instructor to do his test.

Land can be a problem. We have about 50 acres of pasture available that we use for the first two to three weeks of class. For the remainder of the classes, we move to a 300 acre area where we hold our club tracking tests. It is best to have plenty of land available in one place to reduce the amount of moving from one area to another. It is important to be sure you have permission of the land owner and that he understands what is involved. Littering is forbidden and everyone is to be absolutely sure that gates are not left open. If crop land is used, be sure that if crops are changed, it is okay to continue to use that land. Certain crops can not take much pressure and should not be used. Finally it should be stressed that dogs will be on lead or under absolute control while in the fields. There is nothing worse than having a dog running cattle and causing injury to livestock.

When a prospective student calls about tracking classes, his name is placed on a list. When 6 to 10 names are on the list, each is sent a letter outlining the program and what will be expected of them during class and daily homework sessions. We paint a grim picture so that those who do not have the time or are not really motivated drop out before we get started. Classes are held regardless of weather. Those who are not willing to work under these conditions are also encouraged to think twice before starting. We begin with a two hour seminar covering the olfactory anatomy of the dog, scent theories and the training program. Movies and video tapes showing weekly progress of typical students are shown so that students see what can be

accomplished and what to expect from week to week. We stress learning how to lay tracks and remembering where they go. Handling is probably the most important area we teach. Good handling techniques make the whole process easier for the dog and handler as well as producing a more reliable dog. After completing the first assignments for a given 4 to 6 additional assignments to be completed by the next class. Most students lay their own tracks during the week and we do not find this to be a problem since in class other students are the track-layers.

The instructors responsibility is to establish a training program and encourage students to follow through. He should also be able to evaluate problems and suggest solutions. In many cases problems develop because students are not made aware of proper handling techniques. Pointing out what might happen if things are done incorrectly is just as important as seeing they are done correctly to begin with.

Tracking classes unlike obedience classes are much more time consuming and held in all kinds of weather. Consider carefully before setting them up but be prepared for a feeling of pride and accomplishment when your students earn their T's.

Maps And How To Find Them

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1987

In the latest copy of the "Guidelines for Obedience Judges" there is a statement that judges of TDX tests are to be sent detailed maps of the area to be used with obstacles, changes of cover, etc indicated. In addition, a copy of this map is to be forwarded to the AKC along with the paper work for the test. If you do not have an artist in the club with a good feel for the scale of the area, what do you do?

Having been faced with this very problem we looked for a solution. There are a variety of sources of good maps available. The soil Conservation Service (SCS) has aerial photos of every square inch of the United States. If you have a college near by, check to see if they have a map room. They may also have these same maps. They are available from SCS as Xerox copies of originals (at a charge). You first find the county of interest. You will be presented with a large mosaic of smaller photos, each of which has a number in one corner. Once you find the photo, which covers the area, in question, you will get an 8 x 10 copy, which you can then xerox. This copy will have a scale of 1:20,000 (1 inch = 225 yds). These can be enlarged by a copy machine to a scale of 1 inch = 225 yds. We then go to the fields and walk the area indicating on the copy fences, roads, heavy and light wooded areas, creeks, etc. The copy we send to the AKC has each track marked on it.

Another alternative approach is to check with realtors who deal with farmland or surveyors. In many cases they will have aerial photos with a scale of about 1:4800 (1 inch = 133 yds). The copy you get will be blue and will fade if not protected from bright light. The detail is much better and copies are of good quality. For some one who knows the areas well, tracks can be plotted on these before the test and much of the work the day of plotting is already done. In many

cases all that is needed is to walk the track to be sure there are no surprises and to check that you measured correctly on the photo.

A third alternative is with the county commissioners or county tax office. The maps in these offices are generally topographical which appear as a lot of curved lines and concentric circles. These are elevation lines. These are a bit harder to read since they do not indicate woods or pasture land, only the elevation of the land.

Regardless of which is used, the boundaries of the test area should be indicated along with the scale. These are not meant to take the place of having someone who has a good knowledge of the fields the day of plotting, nor are they meant to take the place of getting out in the field to plot the track. They are an aid to both judges and tracklayers. We have found these very useful in new fields for TD as well as TDX because they can give an excellent idea of the space available and if it is sufficient.

How Much Land Do You Need For A Track?

by W. Herbert Morrison, III - 1987

Recently I was talking with a friend who was in the process of organizing a tracking match for his club. The question came up as to how much land would be needed for the test. In the back of my mind the figure of 10 acres per track kept coming up. I thought the AKC had suggested this number but I could not seem to find it anywhere. So I plotted a few tracks to calculate the amount of land needed for the tracks.

An acre equals 4840 square yards. The track alone (150) yds x 100 yds) in figure 1 takes up only 3.1 acres. However, there are several regulations that must be kept in mind. A track cannot be within 75 yards of another track and a track should not be within 15 yards of a boundary. These two regulations really eat up land. Figure 1 is a very economical track as far as use of land. If we assume tracks to the left and above this track, it requires 30881.25 yds. or 6.85 acres. This would represent the least amount of land provided all other factors were ideal. As one can see, including boundaries and the distances between tracks nearly doubles the amount of land needed for just one track. Unfortunately, we often have fields of between 10 and 15 acres, which hold only one track because of the way the field is laid out.

Figure 1

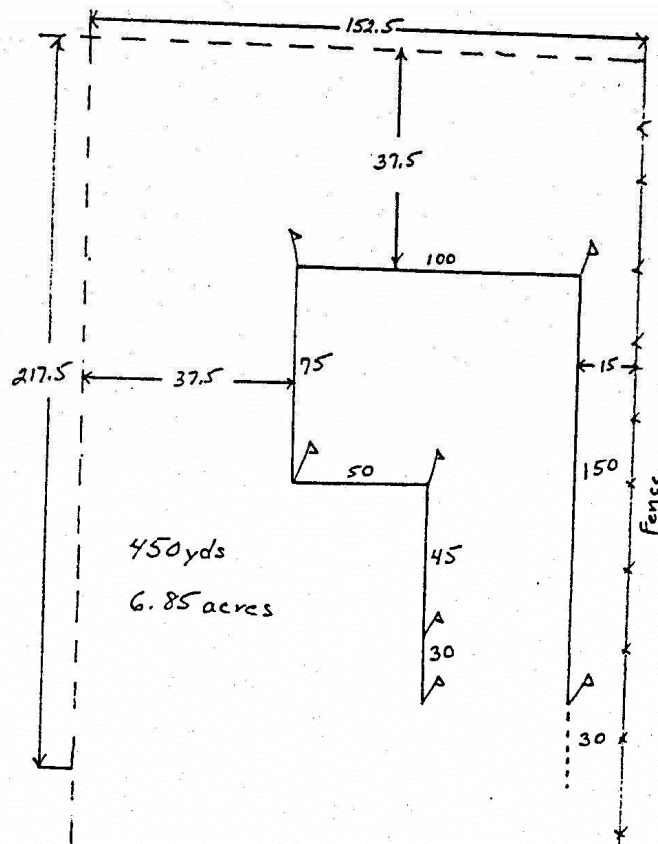


Figure I

Let's now consider the tracks in Figure 2. This field is not unlike many. It is bounded by roads at both end and the front and a fence at the rear of the field. The three tracks take up about 35 acres. The three tracks alone use 18.2 acres, again half that needed when boundaries are included. This field is limited in that the only way tracklayers can leave the field is to the main road or on the other side of the roads at either end.

Figures 2 & 3

useful for TD tests. They provide a good overview of the area. If the scale is known, tracks can be sketched in. If there is a problem with not having enough land or how tracklayers will exit the field, they can consider it before getting in the field. However, while helpful, aerial photos and maps are no substitute for walking the fields so you are not suddenly faced with a surprise the weekend of the test.

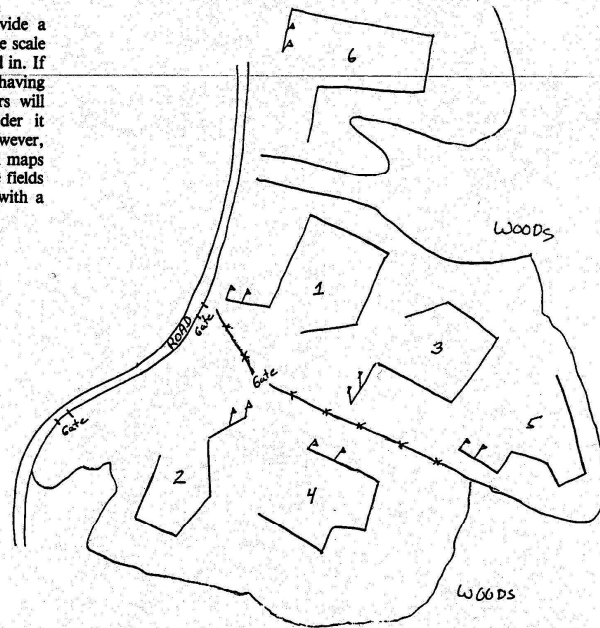


Figure 3

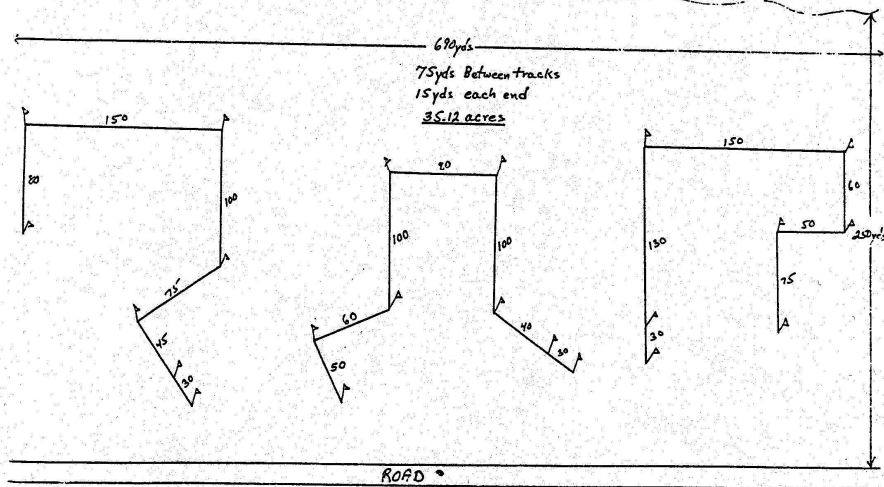


Figure 2

Getting the track layer off the field can limit the number of tracks a field can hold even if there is ample room. Consider the tracks in Figure 3. At a recent test we were faced with these fields. Tracks 1, 3 and 5 were all in the same field. To get the track layer out, track layer 3 had to leave the field through track 1; track layer 5 had to leave through track 3, and track layer 4 through track 2. To accomplish this, tracks 1 and 2 were walked. After dog 1 had run, track 3 was walked with the track layer leaving through track 1. After track 2 had been run, track 4 was walked. After track 3 was run, track 5 was walked. Had track 6 not finished where it had, tracklayers 3 and 5 could have reached the road by walking through the woods and the tracks could have been run in a different order? Had track 3 been designed differently, possibly only one track would have been in the same field with track 1 because of how the track layer would have had to leave the field.

The total area available for this test is about 300 acres. However, because of the boundaries and the location of wooded areas, we are limited to eleven TD tracks (10 tracks plus an alternate). We also use this area for our TDX. It will hold the six tracks needed for a five-dog entry. In a TDX test the crosstrackers as well as tracklayers must avoid the original as well as other tracks by 75 yards. The three TDX tracks on the last three pages of “guidelines for obedience Judges” require between 35 and 45 acres each.

In most cases, there are club members who have had plenty of experience tracking and are aware of the amount of land needed for a test. We are sometimes deceived as to the number of tracks we can get in a field. Often in training we do not observe the regulations, particularly the distance between tracks, if we have a large group with which to work. If there is any doubt, the best thing to do is get out there and walk the fields keeping in mind all the regulations before setting the limit for a test. Even then, have some extra fields available in case there are problems.

The AKC requires that maps of the area used for a TDX test be forwarded to them along with the test paper work. Aerial photos or detailed maps are also useful for TD tests. They provide a good overview of the area. If the scale is known, tracks can be sketched in. If there is a problem with not having enough land or how tracklayers will exit the field, they can consider it before getting in the field. However, while helpful, aerial photos and maps are no substitute for walking the fields so you are not suddenly faced with a surprise the weekend of the test.