



# THE HAPPY HEELER

JANUARY 2021



**DEADLINE FOR FEBRUARY 2021 NEWSLETTER IS JANUARY 28, 2021**

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From John Schwartz

Basset Hound, “Vinnie,” “GCH CH Legend’s Blazing Saddles of Wild West, BN, RM, RAE, TD, CGCA, CGCU, TKA, ATT”, got an early start to his 2021 awards plaque by passing the Tracking Dog Test (TD) at the Agility Club of San Diego’s test on December 16, 2020. Upon achieving his new title, Vinnie also met the eligibility requirements for a Versatility Certificate (VC) from the Basset Hound Club of America! Thank you Kay Hawthorne for taking your time and sharing your tracking expertise! A couple of years ago you said that you were going help us achieve this title and here it is — tracking has been one of the most fun and rewarding experiences with Vinnie!

Thank you!  
John

Obedience Club of San Diego County class update:

We hope you had a wonderful, safe holiday. Our class schedule for 2021 needs to be flexible to start due to the current COVID situation. Hopefully things will settle down soon so we can resume a more regular schedule. This is the **tentative** schedule for now due to Covid. We will confirm the January 21st start date as that date nears.

Beginning & Intermediate Obedience classes-tentatively start Thursday, January 21st.

Rally classes inquiry-we will start several rally classes (tentatively January 21st or January 28th). Rally offerings depend on class interest. If you are interested in rally, please email Nancy Asbury at [nasbury@cox.net](mailto:nasbury@cox.net) and state the class level you are interested in as that will determine which rally classes we offer in January:

Novice rally (beginning)

Intermediate/advanced

Excellent

Masters

Scent Work classes will start in March.

Beginning scent work to start mid-March.

Continuing scent work - hope to start something in March as well

Stay tuned- more specific information to follow as we get closer to March.

Drop-in classes:

Conformation drop-in: Starts January 21st, 7-8:00 pm, when all classes start

Obedience drop-in: Starts February 4th & Feb 18th (only offered on the 1st & 3rd Thursdays, 7-8:00 pm until further notice)

Rally drop-in: Starts January 21st, 7-8:00 pm when all classes start

Scent Work drop-in: Starts in March (only offered on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays, \*new time (6:30-7:30 pm))

Nancy Asbury  
Training Director

# THE SUBTLETIES AND SERIOUSNESS OF CHRONIC PAIN IN DOGS

By Gemma Johnstone

Dogs are known for their stoicism, and even the most loving owner might miss signs that their pet is suffering.

Progressive, persistent pain that creeps up on a dog is often tricky to spot. Referred to as chronic, it can dramatically impact their quality of life.

## **Understanding the Differences Between Acute and Chronic Pain**

Dr. Lindsey Fry is a Veterinarian and Co-owner of Red Sage Vets in Colorado. The practice specializes in pain management and rehabilitation.

She explains that acute pain is usually pretty obvious. There might be crying and other types of vocalization, a pronounced limp, a change in mobility, or a known event, like surgery or an accident. Seen as having a protective purpose, it's often accompanied by redness, swelling, or heat.

Dr. Fry describes how, "sometimes the pain is no longer protective. It has become the disease itself, and the symptoms look very different." Chronic pain is often insidious, and a dog may have to tolerate it long term if the owner doesn't recognize the early signs.

## **How Can You Tell a Dog is Suffering From Chronic Pain?**

Diagnosing chronic pain is tricky as dogs don't usually present the obvious indicators associated with acute pain. Dr. Fry recognizes that "it's very individual, so we try to peel back the layers that have developed and find the primary sources. It's rarely the same between two patients."

Often changes in behavior are the most significant indicator of a problem. Sometimes, these changes are noticeable and a big red flag. Perhaps your typically greedy dog has gone off their food. Or, it could be that an ordinarily affectionate dog might growl, flinch or hide when you try to touch them.

Severe chronic pain can induce depression and anxiety in dogs, just like it can with humans. Your dog could become noticeably more withdrawn and less likely to seek out interaction or contact.

Older dogs are more likely to suffer from chronic pain. Many times, however, owners attribute certain subtle changes in behaviors to natural age-related slowing down. As Dr. Fry points out, "often there's a chronic pain component that's pushing them into slowing down more abruptly."

Maybe they won't want to walk as far on their walk, or they might struggle to jump into the car or climb the stairs. Dogs that used to love toys may no longer play with them, and they could become more sleepy or struggle to get comfortable. Even things like excessive licking and small postural changes are sometimes indicative of pain.

Dr. Fry observes that sometimes "the brightness and strong engagement owners recognize in their dog's face starts to disappear. There's more of a disconnected, glazed over blank stare."

## **Diagnosing Chronic Pain**

Chronic pain is typically complex and multifaceted. Experienced vets like Dr Fry, however, are “comfortable picking up specific compensatory patterns related to certain types of pain. Whether it’s an old ACL tear, hip arthritis or neck pain, there are some classic signs we see. So, we try to classify their pain into a few categories, and that helps us start to design a treatment plan.” They’ll primarily be looking at neurological, inflammatory (like arthritis), and myofascial causes.

## **Treating Chronic Pain**

Arthritis is one of the leading sources of chronic pain, particularly in senior dogs. Dr. Hannah Capon set up Canine Arthritis Management to better educate owners and fellow veterinary professionals on the condition and its treatment options.

Dr. Capon explains, “I had been working as a vet for around 12 years when I became very conscious of how many dogs are euthanized for “going off their legs”. I was also aware that, as a vet, I actually knew very little about soft tissue ailments and felt I needed to offer my clients more than just anti-inflammatory medication and leash rest”.

Adopting a multimodal treatment plan for chronic pain can, in many cases, greatly improve a dogs quality of life and long-term prognosis.

There are many “game-changers for owners that cost no money and have huge benefits”, Dr. Capon points out. It’s not just about what drugs and canine rehabilitation therapies, such as acupuncture and hydrotherapy, your vet can offer.

While these are key elements, owners need to proactively consider their dog’s lifestyle and home environment too.

Dr. Capon is keen to highlight that “ball throwing and high impact activities will have long term effects. Owners should be mindful and get their dogs physically checked over by a physiotherapist at least annually.”

She also recommends making simple adjustments at home, like “ensuring your dog isn’t injuring themselves further on slippery floors, blind steps, steep staircases, or elevated sofas.”

Introducing additions such as ramps, orthopedic beds, and rugs around the home are all small changes that can make a big difference.

## **Why Ensuring Your Dog is a Healthy Weight is so Important**

Following a comprehensive 2018 survey, The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention estimated that over 56% of dogs in the United States were overweight or obese.

Dr. Fry describes how “being overweight isn’t just a physical burden on the joints, but fat tissue itself is also inflammatory. Having a lot more inflammatory tissue is going to make something like arthritis, that’s inflammatory in origin, much harder to control. This means that weight loss is a critical part of the conversation.”

She also recognizes it can be challenging “because when your dog doesn’t want to be active, what brings them joy in life can be eating.”

It's all about finding the most appropriate, portion-controlled diet and treats, alongside the right type of physical and mental enrichment.

### **Is it Worth Consulting with a Specialist?**

For dogs with ongoing chronic pain issues, it can be advantageous to seek the support of a pain management or rehabilitation specialist.

“General Practitioners are wonderful and essential, but they often have very limited time”, says Dr. Fry. “Managing something like chronic pain is challenging and time-intensive. Having access to so many pain management options really lets us fine-tune the treatment for the dog.”

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## **DO DOGS DREAM?**

If your dog had a dream journal, what do you think it would say? Although we can't speak to our dogs to know for sure, scientists studying this fascinating question have deduced some interesting facts about our dog's dreams.

During sleep, dogs have the same two stages of brain wave patterns as people: a slow, steady wave pattern of quiet, still sleep and a fast, irregular wave pattern of REM (rapid eye movement) sleep, when the mind is more active and the eyes dart rapidly beneath the eyelids. Your dog may whine, breath rapidly and move their legs during REM sleep.

We dream, and since dogs have the same sleeping brain wave patterns as people, scientists have concluded that it is safe to assume that our furry companions do indeed dream, too!

### **What do we know about dog dreams?**

During REM sleep, the brain functions much like it does when awake, so people—and it is believed dogs as well—dream about the events of their day. It is a chance for the brain to process all that happened while awake and sometimes even relive it through the dream. So your dog may “sleep run” as they chase a squirrel or fetch the ball in their dreams.

Puppies, who have a lot of new information to process as they explore their new world every day, tend to dream more often than adult dogs.

Interestingly, a dog's size also affects the number and length of dreams they have. Smaller dogs have more dreams than their bigger friends. A toy poodle may dream every 10 minutes, while a Labrador retriever may only dream once every 60-90 minutes. However, the poodle's dream may last only a minute while the Labrador's dreams may be 5-10 minutes long.

Additionally, dogs who are tuckered out from staying active may sleep more soundly and experience longer phases of REM sleep, giving them more time to dream.

Lastly, just like ourselves, dogs who are startled out of a dream may wake feeling defensive or alarmed. In fact, many of the dog bites that occur in children happen because the child wakes a sleeping dog.

**So always remember to let sleeping dogs lie . . . and dream.**

## UNUSUAL PET SLEEP BEHAVIORS TO WATCH OUT FOR

Many pets have cute and quirky bedtime habits, like circling their bed before lying down or yipping in their sleep, but some nocturnal behaviors are not as innocent as they seem. Check our list of unusual sleep behaviors to make sure your pet's nighttime antics aren't more than they seem:

- **Night pacing:** Are you kept up at night by the continuous clicking of your pet aimlessly pacing the house? In senior pets, this nightly restlessness may be caused by cognitive dysfunction, also known as dementia. The confusion it causes can disrupt a pet's sleep-wake cycles and lead to night pacing. Other possible causes of pet insomnia also include hyperthyroidism in cats and anxiety.
- **Can't get comfortable:** Some pets are prissy about their beds, fussily fluffing it into the perfect shape before lying down, but if your pet seems to be spending excessive time circling and pawing, repeatedly getting up to try again, something might be amiss. Painful conditions such as arthritis may be preventing your pet from finding a restful position.
- **Sleep coughing:** A cough that happens only at nighttime is just as concerning as a round-the-clock cough. Coughing caused by certain diseases, like heart disease, are exacerbated by lying down and are more easily noticed at bedtime.
- **Violent sleep movements:** Forget gentle twitching and yipping during sleep—the dreaming motions of pets with REM sleep behavior disorder are forceful enough to propel them across the floor and run them into walls! This disorder can closely resemble a seizure (and vice versa).
- **Falling asleep suddenly:** Narcolepsy is a genetic condition that causes pets to fall over asleep throughout the day, especially when they are excited. The pet may be eagerly running up for a treat in one moment and fully asleep on the floor the next. Other diseases that cause sudden collapse, like seizures or heart disease, look very similar and should always be checked for as well.

If you notice any of these signs in your pet, make an appointment to discuss them with your veterinarian. Capturing a video of your pet's behavior will help your veterinarian reach a diagnosis.

**Check the website and watch for email announcements  
in January for 2021 classes.**

**The premium list for our Rally Trial on Saturday, February 27, 2021 will be available on the website soon and will be e-mailed shortly after the 1<sup>st</sup> of the new year.**