



THE HAPPY HEELER

JULY 2020



DEADLINE FOR AUGUST 2020 NEWSLETTER IS JULY 30, 2020

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Membership:
Nancy Asbury
6826 Century St
La Mesa, CA. 91942
619 890-6826

Newsletter Editor:
Barbara Scott
441 Las Flores Terrace
San Diego, CA. 92114
E-mail: BarbaraScottOCSDC@aol.com

TRAINING DIRECTOR

Nancy Asbury - nasbury@cox.net

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**LIMITED CLASSES WILL START UP AGAIN SOON,
PLEASE CONTACT YOUR TRAINER AND STAY
TUNED!**

A message from the President and the Training Director:

Limited classes starting soon! More information to come soon. Please watch for an e-mail.

ALL Associate Memberships will be extended four months AFTER we can start classes again.

IS COOKOUT FOOD HAZARDOUS TO DOGS? By Harriet Meyers

Grilled steak bones, ribs, and chicken bones cause choking and throat damage to dogs.

Garlic and onions in any form are toxic for canine consumption.

Licking the fatty leftovers around the grill can result in pancreatitis.

With warmer weather comes the chance to fire up the grill and enjoy a cookout. Dog owners may be tempted to let their dog have a taste of the delicious grilled foods. However, many cookout foods are not safe for dogs to eat. Here are a few tips on foods to watch out for:

Bones

What's better than a nice juicy grilled steak or barbecued ribs or chicken wings? But sharing these with your dog is a dangerous idea. Dr. Jerry Klein, AKC chief veterinary officer, warns that you should never give your dog cooked bones of any kind. They splinter into shards that can cause choking and serious damage to the dog's mouth, throat, or intestines.

Raw Meat

Raw steak or hamburger patties can contain bacteria, such as salmonella and E. coli that can be harmful to dogs, as well as people. Keep a careful eye on the meat as you prepare the grill because the aroma will definitely get your dog's attention, and he may try to sneak a tasty morsel.

Hot Dogs

Hot dogs often contain ingredients that are not good for dogs, such as sodium nitrate, which has been linked to cancer; monosodium glutamate (MSG); and sugars or artificial sweeteners. Hot dogs also contain seasonings, such as garlic and onion powder, that are toxic to dogs. The biggest problem with hot dogs is salt.

Feeding your dog even one-half of a hot dog would probably put him way over his daily sodium limit, and too much sodium can lead to dehydration and high blood pressure. Another issue with hot dogs is that they are a choking hazard.

Toppings

Garlic and onions can cause stomach upset in dogs, and sometimes have even more serious side effects. Raw or cooked, fried or powdered, onions, and the rest of the allium family (garlic, shallots, leeks, and chives) are all harmful to dogs. Onions contain a toxic compound that causes a breakdown of red blood cells, leading to anemia in dogs.

Ketchup, while not toxic for dogs, is best left off of the foods you share with your canine pal. In addition to tomatoes, commercial ketchup typically contains garlic and onions, cinnamon, sugar and salt, preservatives and chemicals – and many of these ingredients can have detrimental effects on dogs. Mustard can upset a dog's stomach and cause vomiting.

Corn on the Cob

Corn on the cob is a summertime staple, and although a small amount of corn won't hurt, you should not share your corn on the cob with your dog. There is a risk that he will choke on it, and if he ingests the cob, it can cause a serious intestinal blockage. So, unfortunately, it's not a food you should allow your dog to gnaw on.

Salty Snacks

Potato chips, pretzels, peanuts, and popcorn – all make nice portable snacks when you eat outside. But too much salt can lead to sodium ion poisoning in dogs, causing vomiting, diarrhea, tremors, fever, and seizures – and can even be fatal.

Watermelon

Watermelon is safe for dogs in moderation with these precautions: Seeds could cause an intestinal blockage, so make sure you remove them. It's also not a good idea to allow a dog to chew on the rind, because it can cause gastrointestinal upset.

Chocolate

Whether it's eaten in ice cream, cake, or straight on, chocolate is dangerous for dogs, and depending on the type and amount of chocolate consumed and the weight of your dog, it could cause a serious medical emergency. So the safest path is to avoid giving your dog chocolate at all times in any form.

Ice Cream

Although it's refreshing, ice cream is a milk-based product, and dogs' bodies are not designed to digest milk after they are weaned as puppies. Since ice cream is made with milk, feeding your dog ice cream could lead to gas, bloating, constipation, diarrhea, or vomiting.

Alcohol

An ice-cold beer, a mojito, or margarita may sound refreshing, but don't let your pup dip into any alcoholic beverages. Alcohol toxicity is not very common, because dogs are not innately drawn to alcoholic beverages. However, they may be attracted to fruit-based drinks, cocktails, punches, ciders, seltzers, and foods with alcohol as a key ingredient. Another serious consideration is diet alcoholic beverages or other mixers that may contain Xylitol, an artificial sweetener, which is highly dangerous, and even fatal, if consumed by a dog.

Caffeine

Caffeine can be fatal for dogs. This includes the beans and grounds for coffee, hot tea and iced tea, sodas with cola, energy drinks, and chocolate drinks. Their high sensitivity to caffeine can cause dogs to experience hyperactivity, increased heart rate, and cardiac arrhythmias, high blood pressure, tremors, seizures, vomiting and diarrhea, a high fever, and coma.

Leftovers

Most dogs will be attracted to the grill, especially when you cook meat. Don't let them lick up the fat that drips from the meat because it is rich in oils that can cause pancreatitis. Symptoms include: vomiting, diarrhea, intense abdominal pain, hunched back, weakness, and fever, and pancreatitis is life-threatening if untreated.

If you have a charcoal grill, be aware that although charcoal isn't poisonous, it may upset your dog's stomach if he eats it. It commonly causes vomiting, diarrhea, and loss of appetite. Large pieces could also lead to obstruction and choking.

What Should I Do If My Dog Eats Something Toxic?

If you think your pet has gotten into something potentially toxic, call your veterinarian right away. When it happens outside of office hours or any time, day or night, weekends, and holidays, you can call AKC Reunite's Pet Poison Helpline at 800-252-7894 for help.

As experts on the potential danger of the substances dogs eat, the Pet Poison Helpline is the go-to resource to assist if your pet accidentally gets into something. They will recommend the necessary steps to help treat your pet. This may sometimes include getting the dog to an emergency vet as soon as possible. (AKC Reunite subscribers have lifetime access to the poison helpline for a single additional \$15 fee.)

What Human Foods Can My Dog Safely Eat?

Although dog foods might not be appealing to us, most contain all of the nutrients dogs need to stay healthy. However, there are many fresh summer fruits and vegetables that are safe for you to share with your dog, such as blueberries, cantaloupe, cucumbers, and peas.

COULD DOGS HELP DETECT COVID-19?

By Miranda Carney

As states begin to open and the demand to test and screen for COVID-19 grows, researchers are enlisting all the help they can get — including dogs.

Led by Cynthia M. Otto, director of the Working Dog Center at UPenn's School of Veterinary Medicine, eight Labrador Retrievers are being trained to sniff out the coronavirus.

Training dogs to sniff out disease is far from new. In fact, Otto says this new project builds off of programs UPENN already has. "We've been working with medical detection dogs since 2013. We have a program where we're evaluating whether dogs can help us in the early detection of ovarian cancer, we've looked at diabetes alert, and we also have a project looking at bacterial infections and the ability for dogs to help us to make those diagnoses. We feel that we're really well-positioned to take this and apply it to the next new and important disease, and that's certainly COVID-19."

Such a big undertaking can't be done alone. Otto and the University of Pennsylvania Working Dog Center have partnered with other organizations to bring in the best scientists both from the university and other programs, including Auburn University and Medical Detection Dogs UK.

How Long Does Detection Training Take?

So how do you train a dog to detect COVID-19? It's not easy. "There are many, many steps," Otto says. "Our first step is to ask the question: Is there a unique odor associated with COVID-19 infection?"

That first step is critical. If there is no odor associated with the virus, there would be no point in going any further with training the dogs. So Otto and her team are beginning by working with physicians to collect samples from patients who have been tested for COVID-19 — both positive and negative.

"We're taking the samples from positive patients, showing them to the dog, letting them sniff them, and then reward them for sniffing those samples," Otto says. "So we let them know there's something in there that is a good thing."

The dogs then sniff the negative samples, but don't get a reward. "They learn to discriminate that there's something unique about the samples from the COVID-19 patients," Otto says.

Sound familiar? This sort of training is similar to that done in Scent Work, Otto says. It's also the same process used to teach dogs the odors of explosives or narcotics. But there's an added challenge in medical detection. Dogs must be able to not just find the odor, but to discriminate between whether the odor is in the sample or not in the sample.

Dogs can learn an odor fairly quickly, but it gets harder — the dogs must be able to understand the odor can occur in the background of a person's odor. "If they can identify that, we want to look at: Can they identify that when we're moving? Can they identify that when there are many people around?" Otto says.

Taking it to the Real World

If that all works, Otto says they can start thinking about taking this into operational usage. Otto and her team have to determine how best to take these dogs into the community and places such as the airport to evaluate how they could help detect individuals who might be positive in a real-world scenario. "Especially those who aren't showing symptoms because those are the ones we really need to identify," Otto says.

Right now, the dogs are being trained with practice scents, until the physicians that Otto is working with are able to send over COVID-19 samples. Otto estimates this will be within the next week or two. After three to four weeks of exposing the dogs to those samples, the researchers should be able to determine whether or not there is a scent associated with the virus.

Training in the lab includes teaching dogs the process. Otto's lab uses a scent wheel isolated from other stimuli or odors. The dogs learn to go into the room by themselves, sniff each container, then either stop and indicate the scent is present or not present.

And what breeds are best suited to sniff out COVID-19? Labrador Retrievers were chosen for a reason. "First, we know these Labradors have been selected for generations for their olfactory performance and hunting," Otto says. "We know they have the genetic potential and we are selecting them based on their behavioral aspects that we think will be successful."

There's a second reason this breed was selected. Taking these dogs out into the operational setting means choosing a dog that the majority of possible users would be most comfortable with. "When we talked to people that might be potential end-users, they felt more comfortable bringing Labradors into a big public setting rather than German Shepherd Dogs or Belgian Malinois, which many people might be afraid of," Otto says. "So it's that calming effect that a Labrador brings as well as the effectiveness." Many breeds, however, are equipped.

Is This Safe?

When it comes to safety, Otto and her team have already thought ahead. Even though the risk to dogs is very small, they are still training the dogs to detect odors at a distance, which protects both the person being screened and the handler as well. The dogs will also be monitored and tested for antibodies throughout. Some of the center's partners include the Army Chem Bio-Center and other agencies who are looking at the best decontamination procedures.

"I think the other piece that's really interesting is that if we're using the dogs to screen rather than taking a swab of a person, no one has to take their mask off," Otto says. If a healthcare worker sticks a swab up someone's nose, they may end up coughing or sneezing with their mask pulled down. With a dog, everyone keeps their mask on and there is nothing to stimulate a person to sneeze or cough. The handlers of the dogs will be even further away from those being tested, at the end of a six-foot leash in full protective equipment.

The Nose Knows

If all training goes successfully, the biggest issue becomes demand. There is already a huge shortage of detection dogs in the United States for explosives work. There's also a shortage of testing and screening. Pair those together, and almost everyone will want a COVID-19 detection dog. Whether it's to screen at a company or screen before entering a restaurant, Otto anticipates there won't be enough trained dogs to keep up with the demand.

The question becomes: are there enough dogs to do this? And if there are, are the dogs performing both accurately and safely?

"I think people are very excited and I think a lot of individuals would love to train their dogs to help in this mission, but we have to make sure it's safe for the people, it's safe for the dog, and that they're performing in a way that we can rely on the information they're giving us," Otto says. If a dog is inaccurate and dismisses someone as not infected when they really are infected, it becomes worse than not knowing in the first place. If a dog indicates someone is fine, that person may act with fewer precautions.

The goal is for these dogs to streamline regular testing. So these dogs can help identify the people who should be prioritized for testing. “We know the dogs are very sensitive and very accurate but we want to make sure we’re confirming that and that we have the most information possible.”

While there is still a long journey ahead for Otto and the eight Labrador Retrievers being trained to sniff out COVID-19, Otto is optimistic about the potential of her research. A dog’s nose is a powerful tool, Otto says. There have been many attempts to create electric noses, but nothing comes close to the ability of dogs.

The AKC is here to help dog owners adapt to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Find answers to all your coronavirus concerns, plus at-home activity ideas, training tips, educational resources, and more at our ‘Coping With Coronavirus COVID-19 hub.

IS YOUR DOG ACTUALLY HAVING FUN?

Now that the weather is warming up and more parks are open...

It’s time for doggie playdates!

After all, spending time with friends is just as important for your dog as it is for you.

But how can you KNOW if your dog is actually having fun? Simply read their body language.

You see, your dog has an instinctual “canine language.” And if you know what to look for...

You can make sure their time with other dogs is always a positive experience.

So, to make sure your pup’s playdates are a huge hit this summer...

I’m going to share 4 simple types of your dog’s “canine body language” (and what they all mean.)

1. The Play Bow

When your pup wants to play, they’ll “ask” by dipping into a play bow. Here’s what it looks like:

Their front legs stretch out in front of them, their back curves with their butt in the air, and their tail wags.

This is your pup’s special way of saying: “Do you wanna play with me?”

2. The Loosey-goosey

If your dog is feeling relaxed and playful...

Their body will be “loosey-goosey” with their tail wagging all over the place.

In loosey-goosey mode, your dog’s tail wags in broad strokes, their back wiggles, and their mouth hangs open in a doggie smile.

When you see this, you know your pup is ready to party.

3. The Wound-up Pup

Sometimes during a playdate, your dog can get a little too “wound-up.” Meaning, they can get overexcited, frustrated, or even angry. A “wound-up pup” will be very tense. You’ll notice their legs, back, and tail are stiff and straight. Their mouth closes tight and their ears lay flat against their head. This body language can be a sign that your dog is feeling defensive and maybe even aggressive. So if you see your pup getting “wound-up” tight —Simply lead them away from the other dogs and give them some scratches and cuddles.

When they calm down, you can let them try playing again.

4. The Doggie Apology

We all make mistakes sometimes, and dogs are no exception.

Let's say your pup wrestles too hard and the other dog gives a yelp...

Well, don't be surprised if your dog "apologizes." It usually looks like this:

They'll drop back into a bow or lay down on their side and show their belly to the other pup.

This is a good thing! It shows that your dog is learning how to be a better canine friend.

And there you have it.

Learning to "speak dog" is pretty simple, right? And it's a fantastic way to make sure everyone is having a good time. However, if you give the "playdate" thing a try...And it turns out your pup really prefers your company, well, that's okay too.

Because at the end of the day, your furry pal already has their best friend in the whole world: you!

Lucky dog :)

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS (Tentative)

August 29 & 30 - German Shepherd Dog & Basset Hound Obedience & Rally

October 17 & 18 - Hidden Valley Obedience & Rally.

KEEP SAFE AND KEEP TRAINING.