



Dog Meadow – December 2021

Welcome to our December newsletter. This month I would like to quote Pat Craig, Executive Director of Wild Animal Sanctuary (wildanimalsanctuary.org).

The bottom line is we have gotten completely off track in a very short amount of time, so we need to find a way to get back to a better place. Too many people spend an inordinate amount of time worrying about what other people are doing and not what they could be doing to better themselves.

Going back to a place where people invested more of their time toward providing for their family and taking care of those they love would actually be a great start. Many cultures still do this, and having that strong family bond helps bring a balance to their lives.

Looking toward our relationship with animals will also help, as I believe that is why people love their pets much more as they get older. As the years pile on, we tend to gravitate more toward our animal friends because, in truth, they are so much better than people.

They don't lie and they don't cheat, and they always give their love unconditionally. You can tell them your innermost secrets, and they will never judge you for it. To them, life is simple. They are ready to give and receive love equally and believe everything else will fall into place.

We all need to stop festering on the negative and quit worrying about those we have no business trying to change. Be kind to others, and trust they will do the same.

Thank you for being with us and supporting us and wish you all a great holiday season. Join us for a summary of some of the goings-on at Dog Meadow.



KINDNESS!

"Be kind to others, and trust they will do the same." is what Pat Craig says in our introduction statement.

It feels great to be needed and to help others. When we got a call early on a Sunday morning, we were only half awake, and I almost didn't pick up the phone because we get a lot of calls at all hours inquiring about boarding. I'm glad I saw the name of one of our regular clients and picked up the call. He sounded distressed and said that he was in the emergency room suffering from a possible heart attack. He was worried about his dog whom he had left in the car in the parking lot, and he wanted us to get

him. We rushed over to Poughkeepsie, checked in on our client to see that he was in good hands, and picked up his dog and his car. There have been times in our lives where others have been there for us, and we were happy to be there on that day for our client who ended up needing surgery and was happy to have the peace of mind that his dog would be getting an impromptu vacation with us for a few days.

We enjoy the feeling of being connected when we go above and beyond in helping our clients and community.

The photo above shows our client and his dog. These two are inseparable. The photo is part of a larger project that I am working on to show the connection between a dog and its owner. The plan is to one day exhibit the growing collection in a gallery.



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TOTAL RECALL!

In an ideal world, when the dog hears, “Bobbie, come!” he should drop what he is doing and fly toward his caretaker, being careful to rein in his speed just enough to execute the perfect toe-to-toe sit with his commander in chief. Sadly, many dogs think the command to come is an invitation for a game of canine keep-away. How did your dog’s skills go from perfect-puppy “recall”—the standard dog-training term for coming when called—at three months of age to this frustrating and dangerous behavior as an adult? In order to figure out the answer to this question, consider what “come” now means to your dog. Then commit to fixing it.

Are you asking him to come to trim his nails, give him a bath? If you're calling him to end his "good time" or restrict his freedom so you can go to work, he will not want to comply. He will just learn to associate "come" with negative connotations. When

teaching the command, what follows should be rewarding.

The command must be consistent and be specific to the event that results in complying. Until the dog proves reliable under many different circumstances, regardless of environment, level of distraction, and distance from the handler, he should not be off-leash and expected to come when called. If the dog is not on a leash or long line and cannot be reeled in (made to comply), the recall command "come" should not be used. Why let the dog think that "come" is a multiple-choice request?

TEACHING THE COMMAND: Begin with the dog on a standard six-foot lead. Let him get interested in something and then call, "Bobbie, come," in an upbeat voice. He should come forward and be given a treat. When he masters this, say "come" while running backward, away from the dog. As you are running, hold a treat at the dog's nose level to serve as a lure. When the dog is a few steps away, raise the treat up a bit while telling the dog to sit. After the dog sits, reach out, grab his collar, and reward him with the treat. You should do this for a few minutes. and repeat later. When the dog has achieved perfection at this level in a variety of environments, graduate to using a 15-to-30-foot line. (I personally do not recommend retractable leads. Especially on crowded sidewalks or busy streets.) Increase the difficulty by presenting with distractions such as a friend, toys, food, and graduate to using another dog as the main distraction. As the recall improves, you will not need to run backward or give a treat every time, but the command itself always should sound upbeat and welcoming to the dog. When you get unhesitating compliance 100 percent of the time when using a long line, begin off-leash training in confined areas. If the dog begins to tune you out, take a step backward and begin using light lines like a light nylon cord until you get compliance. One of the crucial components to a great recall is a strong bond with your dog. Encourage your dog to frequently check in with you whether he's on-leash or off. Reward eye contact—even if it's with a quick smile or gesture. Up the ante by hiding from your dog behind the garage or a tree and making him seek you out. Insist he requests permission before he is allowed to bound off-leash, and end the fun if he chooses to forget you're there. Be persistent when teaching this command. The perfect recall will not only get you to work on time, but it may also one day save your dog's life.

Laura and I practice the recall skill often in our back pasture with our dogs simply to keep them in tune. With almost 400 yards between us it doesn't take long for our dogs to come to each of us. Especially when Jack realizes there might be a treat involved.

The word "come" can be substituted with other words such as "touch" or "front." Some use a foreign word. Whatever you use, it should be used only for this purpose so that it retains all its magical power.



When meeting with a dog, a person may exhibit anxiety which the dog might sense, but it is important that you remain calm.

SAY HELLO TO A FRIEND

Recently, I was approached by one of our dog parents about his dog barking and lunging at a stranger in public. The stranger happened to be tall and had his arms up while carrying an object. To the dog, it might have made him appear to be menacing. It might have been a natural reaction for the dog, however, a dog can be taught to say hello to a "friend" to avoid situations like this.

TEACHING THE COMMAND: Teach the dog at home on a regular basis before trying it with strangers. Assuming you have people in your household, associate the word "friend" with everyone that the dog likes and gets along with. Invite friends or people that he knows to your home and again, repeat the word to the dog with every person that he likes. If you frequent a dog park or a playgroup, you can do this there as well. You can reward these encounters with a treat if you wish. At this point, the dog should be associating the word with a feeling of trust and assurance that his person is safe and not a threat. Once the word is ingrained successfully with the action, he will be ready to receive the command with strangers while on a leash.

When meeting with a dog, a person may exhibit anxiety which the dog might sense, but it is important that you remain calm as the dog will further sense apprehension on your part. Without pulling on the leash, it is at this point that you will use the word "friend" and the dog will get that safe feeling from you and understand that this person should be treated as safe.

A lot of a dog's training is about distraction. So, when in a situation where you may not want the dog to have any engagement at all with someone, a good way to casually avoid it is by simply distracting the dog with something else such as a toy or a treat or a simple eye check with you. Once he is distracted, move on and try again.

The above method is one way to tackle this issue. There are always different ways that you can use to accomplish tasks such as these. For us, we had to teach this to Ashley and continue to work with her. With Ashley we use the words "be nice" and she recognizes that as a cue to behaving properly. Especially when meeting a new dog. She is praised when she is nice and looks to us when a new dog comes by. Her eye contact with us tells us that she is aware that she has to in some way act a certain way. Lately, we have noticed that she will deliberately act playful to "show off" to us that she is behaving nicely.

DOG MEADOW BEFORE & AFTER





Dog Meadow opened its doors to the public in July of 2019. Legally, we had to go through the town board and present them with our plans and were given the official thumbs up to operate as Dog Meadow at Millbrook in November 2019.

Meanwhile, we were slowly booking clients and managed to fill a calendar through August of 2020. March came around and the Covid-19 Pandemic hits us hard. Dog owners canceled their travel plans and since their dogs were now going to stay home, the calendar went from being booked for months to no business for months. Sure we had a few daycare clients, but it was a struggle. I knew I had to keep positive and continue to build a place that I knew people would eventually appreciate. Our setup was simple at the time. I used pallets and spare wood to create walls and structures to house the dogs in a safe environment while they were inside. The heat that was provided by a mini electric fireplace was sufficient to keep us all warm but had to run continuously. It wasn't an issue during the summer as it was actually cool and the dogs loved it. It was overall comfortable, but to me, it was not acceptable. How can we say we provide a luxury environment when it wasn't.

Fast forward to April 2021. I decided to close for a couple of days so we could at least put up the TV wall and the divider wall that was to separate the living room and the feeding area. Materials weren't always available and prices of lumber and other supplies had gone up due to the pandemic. This was a bit of a blessing, I suppose,

as we had to continue to work around the dogs that stayed with us while doing the construction. We had to be smart about timing while using makeshift temporary gated areas to protect the dogs. It was helpful that the renovation was being done during the spring and summer months. Even during the fall, the unseasonable warm weather helped as they spent a lot of the daytime hours outside.

The photos below show the living room that was recently completed. The living room has plenty of space for us and the dogs and it is cozy at all times. Keeping it clean is easy and feeding them is a breeze with the new feeding station. My work area allows me to be there during their naps and indoor time during inclement weather. Music is played 24/7 and we can sit and watch TV comfortably with the dogs which is a luxury in itself since we don't often have a chance to do that. My next decision is how far to take it with Christmas decorations.



The living room has bright overhead lights. Pictured here is the alternate warm-lamp lighting which is more soothing.



Laura, at the Emmerich Tree Farm in Warwick, NY, stands by the Christmas tree that will adorn our living room this year.

Dog Meadow Blog

Laura Evans, Lady of Dog Meadow, writes a Dog Meadow blog entry on a weekly basis (more or less). She shares life at Dog Meadow as well as trials and tribulations in life as a whole. Every entry includes an easy-to-follow recipe at the end. We encourage you to read it **here** and please subscribe.

Did you know...

you can do something to help Dog Meadow? Yes, you can! And it takes less than a minute. If you follow us on Instagram or Facebook, "liking" and/or sharing our posts greatly increases our exposure and ensures that your dog will always have doggy friends to play with here at Dog Meadow.

Bookings

Thank you for your patronage. Thanksgiving was a hit this year with dogs being booked since July. We are booked solid for the Christmas holiday and through the New Year. Please remember to book your dog's stay early at Dog Meadow. Booking requests must be made and confirmed via email. If you are receiving this newsletter, you have filled out a form that is used to gather information on your dog. It does not mean you are reserving a date. We will not reach out to you. It is up to you to reach out to us if and when you are ready to book your dog's stay. If you do not have an email confirming a reservation for specific dates, you do not have a reservation.

With that said, we remind you to make sure that your dog's vaccinations are up-to-date. We encourage you to check your records and make appointments with your dog's vet if needed to ensure that he is in good health. You can find our **requirements** on our website.

Thank you again for your patronage and wish you all a great holiday season.

Finally, let's all be safe and kind to one another.



Dog Meadow asks that if you have not been vaccinated that masks be worn as recommended by the CDC when dropping off and/or picking up your dog.



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