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# The Whole



# Dog Journal™

A monthly guide to natural dog care and training

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## FEATURES

### 2 Gratitude

*Perspective from a late night walk with the dog.*

### 3 Choices, Choices

*On what criteria do you base your dog's food selection? We list some of your options, and offer our suggestions.*

### 6 Seriously Good Food

*WDJ's list of approved dry dog foods for 2011.*

### 13 Missing the Mark

*Dog foods that aimed at the "holistic" market – and missed.*

### 15 Stay in Touch

*Ensure that your dog feels good about physical contact with you..*

### 18 Positive Protection

*These police officers are proof that reward-based training is good for more than just basic obedience and fun tricks.*

### 24 Resources

*Information for reaching holistic veterinarians and positive trainers.*



**How to pick  
a winner  
... page 3**



**Teach your dog  
to enjoy (not just  
tolerate) touch. . .  
page 15**

# Gratitude

*My perspective from walking the dog.*

BY NANCY KERNS

Often, writing something to appear on this page is the last thing I do before shipping the issue to the printer. That's true tonight, too. Exhausted from making the calls and compiling the information that goes into our annual dry dog food review, I was drawing a blank on an idea for the editorial. So I did what I often do when I'm all wrung out; I took my dog Otto out for a walk.

It's crystal clear and freezing tonight, and the stars were shining brightly. Otto trotted ahead of me off-leash, stopping to smell bushes and waiting at the street corners for me to catch up, look both ways, and give him permission to race across the deserted streets. There is a park near our house with a low concrete wall around it, and as he often does, Otto jumped up onto the wall, pranced along it for a ways, and then stopped and looked back at me, a free dog, eyes alight with interest and affection and health. And it struck me how far I have come as a dog owner, thanks to WDJ.

Fifteen years ago, I thought that I was an above-average owner because I fed my dog Purina Dog Chow, rather than one of the lower-cost, generic dog foods in the grocery store. I failed to consider that there might be a connection between that diet and my dog's propensity for breaking out in hot spots and frequent ear infections. I didn't know *anything* back then!

Then I was hired to edit this magazine. Previously, I had edited horse magazines, and my most immediate prior experience was editing a holistic horse magazine. I figured that while I had a lot to learn about dogs, I knew a fair amount about holistic healthcare for horses, and how different could it be? I threw myself into the job, buying every book on the subject of holistic canine healthcare (there weren't many yet) and positive dog training, and signing up for lectures and conferences such as the annual meeting of the American Holistic

Veterinary Medical Association and the Association of Pet Dog Trainers.

I was horrified to learn, pretty much immediately, that all the dog training I had ever done was outdated and nonsensical – and the dog food that I was so proud of buying was far better suited to feeding a chicken or a pig.

This is one of the reasons that I am patient with friends or acquaintances who still use choke chains or feed grocery store foods; I was in their shoes not that long ago. I've learned that there are healthier alternatives to both of those things, and moving away from them has led me on a journey that has influenced how I feed myself and my family (including the dog, of course) and even how I raised my son. (It's a family joke, although one that sometimes startles people who don't know us well, that I regularly praise my son by saying, "Oh good dog, Eli!")

When you've been immersed in a subject for a long time, it's easy to forget the period of ignorance that came before. It's also easy to forget how ashamed you may have felt the first time you realized that some of the training techniques you used on a beloved canine partner in your past bordered on abuse. Or that all those annual vaccinations and poor-quality food may have helped to shorten that dog's life.

Seeing Otto's eyes twinkling at me in the starlight as he proudly balanced on the park wall, it just hit me: I deeply love and enjoy the company of my vibrantly healthy and well-behaved dog. I'm grateful that I've had an opportunity to spend my professional life learning about something that is fascinating

to me personally. I'm also appreciative of the opportunity to promote the power of positive training and holistic healthcare for dogs to other owners. Thanks so much for your support of WDJ.

NK



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# Choices, Choices

*On what criteria do you base your dog's food selection?*

BY NANCY KERNS

**H**ow should you select a food for your dog? Over the years, we've spoken to literally thousands of owners and industry experts – and they have at least a few hundred different approaches to the task. We'll briefly discuss some of the most prevalent factors used by owners to support their dog food buying decisions – and then we'll tell you how *we* recommend choosing your dogs' food.

■ **Price** – There is a correlation between the price of a dog food and its quality, but it's most accurate at the low end, and less certain when you get to the upper price points.

What *is* certain is that inexpensive food is not what's healthiest for your dog. Think about it: Cheap food is made with cheaper ingredients. We shudder to think of what sort of ingredients go into a product that sells for 25 cents a pound. Think about what is commonly called "4-D" meat: animals that are dead, dying, diseased, or disabled. Think about grain by-products

of unknown provenance being shipped all over the planet – rejected for use in human food and languishing in warehouses while ingredient brokers try to find a buyer.

Good- and top-quality ingredients cost more, and the companies that use them *have* to charge more, so a high price can be an indication of quality. But higher prices can also be indicative of a company's advertising budget, or the higher costs associated with running an independent pet supply store in a remote area.

At the top of the price range, there's a bit of wiggle room. We've seen hamburger-quality foods that are sold for filet mignon prices. The market tends to correct matters if a company leans out too far, seriously overrepresenting its quality and overpricing its mediocre foods. Such a product can't perform as well as one that's *really* that good. Even just a few dozen owners whose dogs have persistent diarrhea after eating a really expensive food can stir up quite a storm on the Internet.

## What you can do . . .

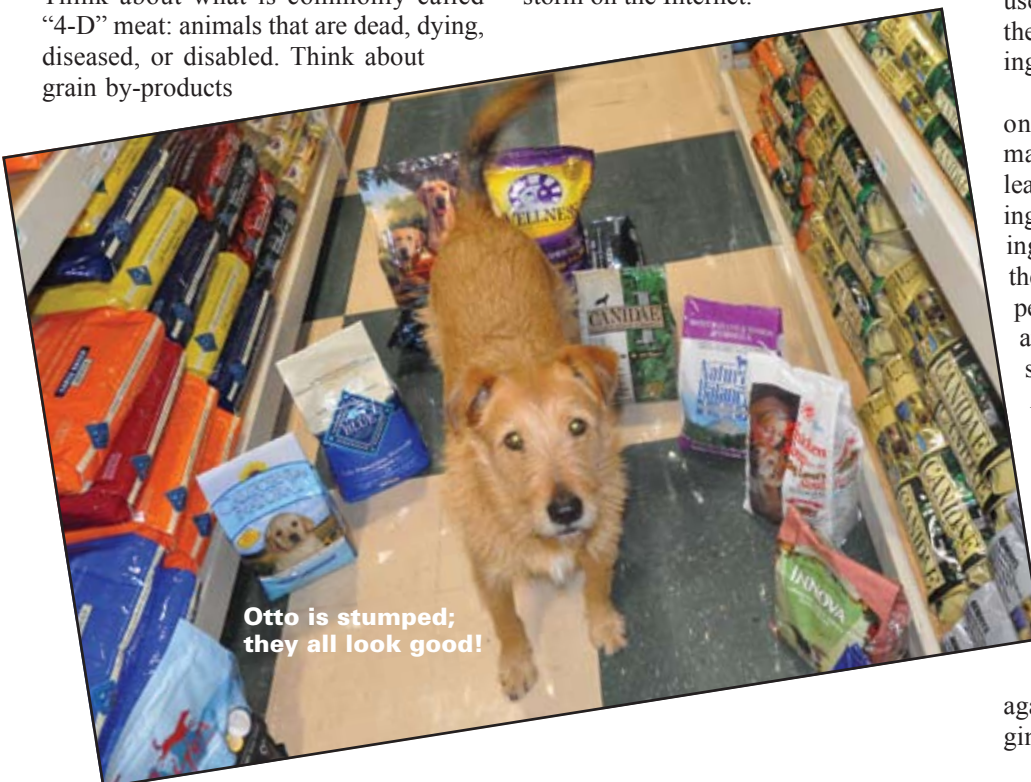
- Always first: Look at the ingredients panel of any food you consider for your dog. Look for foods with high-quality animal protein sources at the top of the list.
- Use any other selection criteria that is important to you, but . . .
- Allow your dog to be the judge. He should like it, but he should also thrive on it, without developing skin or digestive problems.



■ **Ingredients** – We hope that you *do* use the ingredients list to help you choose the food. But there are people who look at ingredients differently than we do.

For example, some owners insist on buying only those products whose manufacturers can provide proof (or at least, allege credibly) that all the food's ingredients are **domestically sourced** – no ingredients from China. In the wake of the melamine recalls, I don't blame those people one bit. There is no doubt that there are some really crummy food ingredients steaming across the oceans heading for American pet food plants.

On the other hand, we've also had pet food companies exhaustively describe the quality controls they employ to ensure that their Chinese-grown chicken (as one example) is as safe, wholesome, and less expensive than any fowl grown in North America. As a result, we can't justify making a blanket recommendation for or against food based on the country of origin of their ingredients alone. In our view,



this is a matter that has to be considered case by case. If a company won't either confirm the origin of its major proteins and grains or explain the quality control processes it employs to guarantee the purity and wholesomeness of its foreign-sourced ingredients, we'd take a pass on its products.



Then there is **the concept of “no”** – as in “no corn, wheat, or soy...” “No fillers.” Or our personal favorite: “No allergens” (that’s impossible, folks).

There are a few ingredients that are commonly identified as undesirable in dog food: corn, wheat, and soy, most frequently. Some authors (or competing pet food companies) go so far as to allege that dogs can't digest these ingredients, which is just plain silly; dogs digest these ingredients every day. None of these ingredients is inherently unhealthy for all dogs. Each has some benefit – for *some* dogs, in *moderate* amounts, and in the least-processed form possible. A certain percentage of dogs – a minority, for sure – may be allergic to (or more likely, intolerant of) one of the those ingredients. This doesn't mean the ingredients don't offer *some* value for most dogs. That said, we like to see them serve in a supporting, not a leading role. The protein and fat they offer have more nutritionally valuable (and of course, more expensive) counterparts in other ingredients. Their appearance in any of the top few places on an ingredients list signals a less-expensive, poorer-quality food. But their presence in a food lower down on the list doesn't “kill” that food for us – unless we are feeding a specific dog who doesn't tolerate one of those ingredients.

We've also seen screeds against beet pulp, tomato pomace, alfalfa meal, and other ingredients. Each of these ingredients offers some nutritional or functional benefits, such as helping to regulate the dog's stool quality. Again, we don't mind seeing them serve a supportive role in an otherwise healthy food.

Finally, there are a number of other factors having to do with ingredients that some people use to make the buying decision for their dog's food. Some owners look for food with ingredients that are **organic, local, non-GMO, or humanely raised and killed**. Each of these can be found in some products; each raises the price of the finished food exponentially.

Our view is that if ingredients of this quality are important to you, you should forget about kibble; you could certainly prepare a more

healthful diet for your dog using fresh ingredients. (Installments of Mary Straus' series of reviews on the best books about various types of home-prepared diets were published in the December 2010 and January 2011 issues of WDJ; the next article will appear in the March issue.)

■ **Past history** – This is another place where we may differ with some of our readers. Some people won't buy any product that has ever been recalled, for any reason. Other people won't buy foods that are manufactured at a plant that made another food that was once recalled. After all, accidents can be an indication that the company's quality controls are lax.

We certainly understand the fear that drives the consumers who make buying decisions based on a company's recall history. And yet, we're aware that sometimes, it's the folks who have made a costly mistake who do the best job of ensuring that they won't ever make another one. Companies tend to make huge investments in training and safety protocols after a recall.

Any company can suffer one manufacturing accident. That said, if accidents or recalls happen more than once . . . well, where there's smoke, there is often fire.

■ **Size of the company** – Some people don't trust corporate giants like Procter & Gamble (owner of Iams, Eukanuba, and more recently, all of the Natura Pet Products foods) or Colgate-Palmolive (owner of Hill's Science Diet).

It's the nature of manufacturing that always seems to pit quality against production efficiencies. We *love* the care and attention that small pet food companies can put into procuring top-quality, local, organic (or at least sustainably grown) ingredients. We appreciate their relentless drive to innovate healthier foods for dogs. But we worry about the manufacturing irregularities that can result in small plants (which are often running outdated equipment and inadequate quality control tests). We're also concerned about products that are formulated by amateurs in animal nutrition and marketed without enough feeding trials to determine that the foods

will perform as well in the dog as they did in the nutrition software.

In contrast, the giant food companies can put some of the most educated veterinary nutritionists to work in their research and development departments, furthering the industry's knowledge of animal nutrition. They have the resources to build and maintain glistening state-of-the-art food manufacturing facilities, and hire, train, and retain armies of food production workers that produce consistent, safe products. But they *don't* usually develop and support top quality products.

Either way, we consider the size of the company that's behind each product we buy for our dog and retain the information as background when considering its potential merits or faults. But the company size doesn't make the buying decision for us.

■ **Company-owned manufacturing plant vs. “contract manufacturer”** – As

recently as a few years ago, pet food companies who used contract manufacturers (also known as “co-packers”) were often reluctant to admit they didn't make their own products. But there are some real merits to *not* owning the plant, especially for small companies – precisely the ones who often bring something new to the industry or who have formulated unique and/or atypically high-quality foods. The costs associated with buying, equipping, and maintaining pet food manufacturing plants are enormous, but paying a co-packer for a bit of time on their machines can benefit both parties.

The challenge, though, is keeping a close enough eye on the co-packer, to make certain it uses your specified ingredients in the specified amounts, keeping accurate batch records, keeping your product separate from the other products in the plant, etc., etc. A pet food company's reputation is incredibly vulnerable if it fails to monitor and audit its co-packer (though the co-packer will surely be blamed for anything that goes wrong with the food, even if it followed its client's instructions to the letter).

Is it better, then, if the company owns its plant? In some cases, yes. But only if the company is big enough to maintain the plant well (we've seen some incredibly scruffy little manufacturing plants). And as we previously discussed, sometimes the biggest, cleanest plants produce some of the lowest-quality foods around. They do it well, though.

For these reasons, the actual ownership of a pet food's manufacturing plant isn't a selection criterion for us, though it is something we want to be aware of.

■ **Method of confirmation of nutritional adequacy** – Most veterinarians come out of school promoting the superiority of foods that have undergone Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO)-compliant feeding trials (versus those that have been “formulated to meet the nutrient levels” recommended by AAFCO). It's no wonder; veterinary nutrition textbooks have been written and/or published by the company whose products are all tested in these very expensive trials.

But the fact is, foods *should* be tested on dogs before they go to market; some products that seem brilliant in theory just don't perform well in actual dogs.

All foods that purport to be “complete and balanced” (as opposed to “for supplemental or intermittent feeding only”) must bear a statement on the label that indicates

which method of confirmation was used to support the claim. (The type might be really small; look carefully!)

When buying a food confirmed as “complete and balanced” by the AAFCO “nutrient levels” method, ask the maker of your dog's food whether and how the product was tested on dogs – for how long, and on how many dogs. Some companies conduct their own (non-AAFCO-compliant) feeding trials on dogs that they maintain in private kennels; others use a network of breeders or shelters who volunteer for these tests (free food!). (For a more complete discussion of the relative merits and faults with the various methods for proving nutritional adequacy, see “Take It With a Block of Salt,” WDJ February 2007.)

### Picking a food for your dog

We've discussed a lot of factors we don't necessarily use to choose our dog's food. So how do we make our selection?

First, we try to shop locally. (This may not be possible for people who live

in remote areas, but there is always online shopping and mail order, and fortunately, there are numerous companies with good products that available via direct shipping.) We try to scout out every location that sells pet food in our area, to get a sense of which ones carry which foods. We also talk to the shop owners or staff, in order to get a sense of which stores seem interested in serving our type of dog owner: motivated, educated, and willing to spend more than the average customer for really good food.

Then we look at the product labels, examining the ingredients lists. We use the criteria outlined below (“Hallmarks of Quality” and “Signs of Corners Cut”) to determine which (if any) of the foods carried by the store are in the range of quality we're willing to pay for.

We note the products that meet our selection criteria, and write down the names of any companies we're not familiar with, so we can do a little more research on them once we're back home.

If there are still several products in the

### Hallmarks of quality (what to look for):

■ **Lots of animal protein at the top of the ingredients list.**

Ingredients are listed by weight, so you want to see a lot of top quality animal protein at the top of the list; the first ingredient should be a “named” animal protein source (see next bullet).

■ **Named animal protein source** – chicken, beef, lamb, and so on. “Meat” is an example of a low-quality protein source of dubious origin. Animal protein “meals” should also be from named species (look for “beef meal” but avoid “meat meal”).

■ When a fresh meat appears high on the ingredients list, look for **an animal protein meal in a supporting role**, to augment the total animal protein in the diet. Fresh (or frozen) meat contains a lot of water, and water is heavy, so if a fresh meat is first on the list, another source of animal protein should be listed in the top three or so ingredients. Fresh or frozen meats do not contain enough protein to be used as the sole animal protein source in a dry food; they contain as much as 65 to 75 percent water and only 15 to 25 percent protein. In contrast, animal protein “meals” – meat, bone, skin, and connective tissue that's been rendered and dried – contain only about 10 percent moisture, and as much as 65 percent protein.

■ **Whole vegetables, fruits, and grains.** Fresh, unprocessed food ingredients contain wholesome nutrients in all their naturally complex glory, with their fragile vitamins, enzymes, and antioxidants intact. Don't be alarmed by one or two food fragments, especially if they are low on the ingredients list. But if there are several present in the food, and/or they appear high on the ingredients list, the lower-quality the food.

■ **A “best by” date that's at least six months away.** A best by date that's 10 or 11 months away is ideal; it means the food was made very recently. Note: Foods made with synthetic preservatives (BHA, BHT, ethoxyquin) may have a “best by” date that is as much as two years past the date of manufacture.

### Signs of corners cut (what to look out for)

■ **Meat by-products or poultry by-products.** Higher-value ingredients are processed and stored more carefully (kept clean and cold) than lower-cost ingredients (such as by-products) by the processors. The expense of whole meats and meat meals doesn't *rule out* poor handling and resultant oxidation (rancidity), but it makes it less likely. For these reasons, we suggest avoiding foods that contain by-products or by-product meal.

■ **Added sweeteners.** Dogs, like humans, enjoy the taste of sweet foods. Sweeteners effectively persuade many dogs to eat foods comprised mainly of grain fragments (and containing little healthy animal protein).

■ **Artificial preservatives, such as BHA, BHT, and ethoxyquin.** Natural preservatives, such as tocopherols (forms of vitamin E), vitamin C, and rosemary extract, can be used instead. Note that natural preservatives do not preserve the food as long as artificial preservatives, so owners should always check the “best by” date on the label and look for relatively fresh products.

■ **Artificial colors.** The color of the food makes no difference to the dog; these nutritionally useless chemicals are used in foods to make them look appealing to *you!*

running, we then look for the one that best matches our dog's needs for protein, fat, and calories, using his body condition (fat, thin, or just right?) and activity level (highly active or couch potato?) to choose a product in the appropriate range. Unless he's emaciated or obese (and in need of a high-calorie or "light" food, respectively), we look for a product whose calories, fat, and protein levels are in the middle range of the products that are still in the running.

At this point, we've decided which brand and variety to buy, but before we grab the bag from the top of the pile, we look for the "best by" date on the bag. Most naturally preserved dry foods are given a "best by" date that is 12 months from the date of manufacture. Try to find a bag that is as fresh as possible, rather than one that is near, at, or past its "best by" date. If every bag of food of the variety you selected is nearing its expiration, we'd recommend choosing another variety, or asking a sales

associate when she expects a new shipment to arrive. This stuff is too expensive, and your dog's health too important, to buy potentially rancid food.

Make a note on your calendar when you start feeding a new product to your dog, and note any changes in his health. Adjust accordingly.

### "Approved foods"

The following is our "approved dry foods" list for 2011. All these products meet our selection criteria – including our newest criterion, that the company discloses the name and location of its manufacturers.

**Note that we've listed the foods alphabetically by company; they are not rank-ordered.**

For comparison's sake, on page 13, we've listed some foods that don't meet our selection criteria.

Some companies make several product lines. We've listed each product line that meets our selection criteria from each

manufacturer. We've also highlighted *one* product from each company as a representative, to show what sort of ingredients and macro-nutrient levels (minimum amounts of protein and fat, and maximum amounts of fiber and moisture) are typically found in that maker's foods. Be aware that some companies offer dozens of different products with varying nutrient levels and ingredients. Check the company's website or call its toll-free phone number to get information about its other varieties.

We say this every year, but it bears repeating: What if your favorite dog foods don't meet our selection criteria? It's up to you. If you have been feeding what we would consider to be low-quality foods to your dog, and she looks and appears to feel great, good for you! She's one of those genetically lucky animals who can spin straw into gold, digestively speaking. But if she has allergies, chronic diarrhea, recurrent ear infections, or a poor coat, we'd recommend that you upgrade. 🐾

## WDJ'S APPROVED DRY FOODS OF 2011

Products highlighted in yellow are new to our list.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>ADDICTION FOODS</b> — Te Puke, New Zealand; (206) 618-9309; addictionfoods.com  |   |
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – 8 varieties, including 4 grain-free.  | <b>MADE BY</b> Taplow Ventures, Vancouver, British Columbia; Pied Piper Pet & Wildlife, Inc., Hamlin, TX; and Texas Farm Products, Nacogdoches, TX. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – La Lamb contains: Lamb meal, brown rice, oats, rice bran, chicken fat, Menhaden fish meal, flaxseed, lecithin, Menhaden fish oil, natural flavors . . . 22% protein; 12% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture.                                    |   |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Salmon and venison (puppy and adult) varieties are grain-free. A kangaroo (with oats and rice) variety is also offered, for dogs who would benefit from a food with a novel protein. Products sold in independent pet supply stores and direct-shipped. |   |

|   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <b>ANNAMAET PETFOODS</b> — Sellersville, PA; (215) 453-0381; annamaet.com   |                                      |
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – 8 varieties, including 3 grain-free.   | <b>MADE BY</b> Ohio Pet, Lisbon, OH. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – Annamaet Extra contains: Chicken meal, corn, brown rice, chicken fat, rolled oats, pearled barley, dried beet pulp, brewers dried yeast, flaxseed meal, wheat germ meal . . . 26% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. |                                      |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Available in a handful of independent pet supply stores and from a few online retailers, including petfooddirect.com.  |                                      |



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>ARTEMIS PET FOODS</b> — North Hollywood, CA; (800) 282-5876; artemiscompany.com   |   |
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – <b>Agarx</b> Immune Support (1 variety); <b>Fresh Mix</b> (8 varieties); Osopure (4 varieties, for small breeds).   | <b>MADE BY</b> Diamond Pet Products, Lathrop, CA. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – Agarx Immune Support contains: Chicken, chicken meal, turkey, turkey meal, brown rice, pearled barley, oatmeal, chicken fat, dried eggs, fish meal . . . 23% protein; 14% fat; 2.9% fiber; 10% moisture. |   |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Much of the food is exported, but is available in independent pet supply stores.  |   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>BACK TO BASICS</b> — Meadville, PA; (800) 219-2558; backtobasicspetfood.com  |   |
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – 2 varieties.   | <b>MADE BY</b> Dad's Pet Care, Meadville, PA. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – Chicken formula contains: Chicken meal, brown rice, pearled barley, oatmeal, chicken fat, salmon meal, oat fiber, alfalfa, dried eggs, tomato pomace . . . 23% protein; 17% fat; 4% fiber; 12% moisture.  |   |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Now owned by Dad's Pet Care (a division of Ainsworth Pet Nutrition). Available in independent pet supply stores. Dad's indicates that an extensive overhaul and reintroduction of this food is in the works, and assures us that the new product will meet WDJ's selection criteria. |   |

**BENCH & FIELD PET FOODS** — Grand Rapids, MI; (800) 525-4802; benchandfield.com**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – Holistic Natural Canine.**MADE BY** WellPet in Mishawaka, IN.**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Holistic Natural Canine contains: Chicken meal, brown rice, white rice, oatmeal, chicken fat, pork meal, dried beet pulp, fish meal, flaxseed, dried egg product . . . 24% protein; 15% fat; 4.9% fiber; 10% moisture.**MISC INFO** – Product is available in natural food and fine grocery stores (we originally found this food in Trader Joe’s), independent pet supply stores, and by direct shipping to your home.**BLUE BUFFALO COMPANY** — Wilton, CT; (800) 919-2833; bluebuff.com**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – **Blue Life Protection** (16 varieties, including 4 puppy varieties, 7 adult, 2 weight control, 3 senior); **Blue Longevity** (3 “life stages” varieties); **Blue Wilderness** (3 grain-free varieties); **Blue Basics** (2 varieties with “limited ingredients”).**MADE BY** Chenango Valley Pet Foods, Sherburne, NY; CJ Foods, Bern, KS; Dad’s Pet Care, Meadville, PA; Triple T Foods, Frontenac, KS; Tuffy’s Pet Foods, Perham, MN.**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Blue Life Protection Formula, Chicken & Brown Rice contains: Deboned chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, barley, oatmeal, chicken fat, rye, tomato pomace, natural chicken flavor, whole potatoes . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.**MISC INFO** – Company launched a “limited ingredient” line (Blue Basics) and discontinued production of its organic food.**BLUE SEAL FEEDS** — Londonderry, NH; (800) 367-2730; bynaturepetfoods.com**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – **By Nature** (7 varieties) and **By Nature Organic** (1 variety).**MADE BY** Blue Seal’s own plant in Arcade, NY; and Chenango Valley Pet Foods, Sherburne, NY.**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – By Nature Duck & Sweet Peas contains: Duck meal, turkey meal, ground barley, ground oats, ground brown rice, chicken fat, sweet peas, flaxseed meal, tomato pomace, natural flavors . . . 27% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.**MISC INFO** – By Nature products are available in independent pet specialty stores and chains (Petco and Petsmart).**BREEDER’S CHOICE PET FOODS** — Irwindale, CA; (800) 255-4286; apdselectchoice.com, avodermnatural.com, goactivedog.com, pinnaclepet.com**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – **Active Care** (2 varieties); **Advanced Pet Diets Select Choice** (6 varieties); **AvoDerm Natural** (7 varieties, including 1 vegetarian); **AvoDerm Natural Oven-Baked** (3 varieties); **Pinnacle Holistic** (6 varieties, 3 grain-free).**MADE BY** Breeder’s Choice’s own plant in Irwindale, CA.**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Advanced Pet Diets Chicken Meal & Rice, Skin & Coat contains: Chicken meal, brown rice, rice, chicken fat, pearled barley, natural flavor, salmon meal, canola oil, flaxseed, potassium chloride . . . 25% protein; 15% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture.**MISC INFO** – ActiveCare line contains “natural chicken cartilage with the highest levels of unprocessed chondroitin and glucosamine.” Advanced Pet Diets line offers “life stage” diets. AvoDerm line developed for dogs with skin and coat issues; AvoDerm Baked meant for dogs with “sensitive stomachs.” Pinnacle is meant to be Breeder’s Choice “holistic, premium” line, but these are all good foods. Products found in independent pet supply stores and national pet specialty stores (such as Petco, Petsmart).**BURNS PET HEALTH** — Valparaiso, IN; (877) 983-9651; burnspethealth.com**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – Burns offers 2 simple, elegant varieties: brown rice & chicken (comes in two “bite” sizes, regular and small); and brown rice & ocean fish.**MADE BY** By CJ Foods in Bern, KS.**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Brown Rice & Chicken contains: Whole brown rice, chicken meal, peas, oats, chicken fat, sunflower oil, seaweed, (the rest of the ingredients are vitamins and minerals) . . . 18.5% protein; 7.5% fat; 2.2% fiber; 9% moisture.**MISC INFO** – Company offers direct sales and shipping of fresh product to your home. Products also sold in independent pet supply stores in a dozen or so states.**CANIDAE CORP.** — San Luis Obispo, CA; (800) 398-1600; canidae.com**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – 8 varieties, including 3 grain-free varieties and 1 “single grain” (multiple protein sources) variety.**MADE BY** Diamond Pet Foods in Lathrop, CA; Meta, MO; and Gaston, SC.**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Canidae All Life Stages Chicken, Turkey, Lamb, & Fish Meal contains: Chicken meal, turkey meal, lamb meal, brown rice, white rice, rice bran, peas, potatoes, oatmeal, cracked pearled barley . . . 24% protein; 14.5% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.**MISC INFO** – Available in independent pet supply stores.

**CANINE CAVIAR PET FOODS** — Costa Mesa, CA; (800) 392-7898; caninecaviar.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – Canine Caviar Holistic Beneficial (4 varieties, including 1 puppy, 2 “all life stages,” and 1 lower protein, lower fat “special needs” variety); Holistic Grain Free (1 variety, venison & split pea). **MADE BY** Ohio Pet Foods, Lisbon, OH.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Chicken & Pearl Millet Adult contains: Dehydrated chicken, pearl millet, brown rice, chicken fat, chicken, whitefish, alfalfa, flaxseed, dried beet pulp, canola oil . . . 26% protein; 16% fat; 4% fiber; 8% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Company says it uses only dehydrated meats – not rendered meat meals – in its Holistic Beneficial varieties. Grain-free variety *does* use venison meal, said to be from free-range venison. Available in independent pet supply stores and from a variety of online retailers.



**CASTOR & POLLUX PET WORKS** — Clackamas, OR; (800) 875-7518; castorpolluxpet.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – **Organix** (3 varieties); **Ultramix** (5 varieties). **MADE BY** CJ Foods in Bern, KS; and Crosswinds Petfoods, Inc., Sabetha, KS.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Organix Adult contains: Organic chicken, chicken meal, organic brown rice, organic peas, organic millet, organic oats, salmon meal, chicken fat, natural chicken flavor, organic quinoa . . . 26% protein; 14% fat; 4.5% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Organix’s organic certification is now conducted by Oregon Tilth. Products sold in independent pet supply stores as well as national pet specialty stores (Petco, Petsmart); direct shipping to your home is also available.

**CHAMPION PETFOODS** — Morinville, Alberta, Canada; (877) 939-0006; championpetfoods.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – **Acana** (10 varieties); **Acana Grain-Free** (4 varieties); **Orijen** (6 varieties, all grain-free). **MADE BY** Champion’s own plant in Alberta, Canada.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Orijen Regional Red formula contains: Deboned wild boar, deboned lamb, beef liver, deboned pork, lamb meal, peas, salmon meal, russet potato, herring meal, whole eggs . . . 38% protein; 18% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Company says all ingredients are fresh (never frozen) and locally sourced. All foods are formulated with higher-protein, lower-carb content than most companies’ offerings.

**DELLA NATURA COMMODITIES** — Bayside, NY; (866) 936-2393; dellanaturapet.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – Wenaewe (4 varieties). **MADE BY** Erro S.A. in Dolores, Uruguay.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Wenaewe Adult contains: Organic beef, organic brown rice, organic canola seed, organic flaxseed meal, organic sunflower seed, organic buckwheat, organic barley, organic millet, organic carrots, organic red beets . . . 20% protein; 12% fat; 5% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Imported from Uruguay. Each contains 98 percent organic ingredients. Company says beef is “beyond organic,” free-range. Not found in many stores; available from k9cuisine.com.

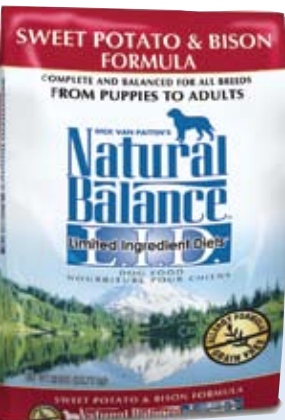


**DIAMOND PET PRODUCTS** — Meta, MO; (800) 658-0624; chickensoupforthepetloverssoul.com; premiumedgepetfood.com; professionalpetfood.com; tasteofthewildpetfood.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – **Chicken Soup for the Pet Lover’s Soul** (7 varieties); **Premium Edge** (8 varieties); **Professional Pet Food** (7 varieties); **Taste of the Wild** (4 varieties, all grain-free). **MADE BY** Diamond’s own manufacturing facilities in Lathrop, CA; Meta, MO; and Gaston, SC.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Taste of the Wild Wetlands contains: Duck, duck meal, chicken meal, egg product, sweet potatoes, peas, chicken fat, potatoes, quail, roasted duck . . . 32% protein; 18% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Products are sold in independent pet supply stores and some online retailers, including petfooddirect.com.



**DICK VAN PATTEN’S NATURAL BALANCE** — Pacoima, CA; (800) 829-4493; naturalbalance.net

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – 12 varieties, including 5 grain-free, 6 “limited ingredient,” 1 vegetarian, 1 organic. (Some of the limited ingredient varieties are grain-free). **MADE BY** CJ Foods, Bern, KS; and Diamond Pet Foods in Lathrop, CA; Meta, MO; and Gaston, SC.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Natural Balance Ultra Premium contains: Chicken, brown rice, lamb meal, oatmeal, barley, salmon meal, potatoes, carrots, chicken fat, tomato pomace . . . 23% protein; 13% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Company tests each batch for contaminants and makes the test results available on its website. Products available in independent pet supply stores and Petco.



**DOGSWELL, LLC** — Los Angeles, CA; (888) 559-8833; dogswell.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – Dogswell (3 varieties) and Nutrisca (2 grain-free, potato-free varieties).

**MADE BY** Tuffy’s Pet Foods in Perham, MN.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Vitality contains: Chicken, chicken meal, oats, barley, brown rice, natural flavors, chicken fat, flaxseed, tomato pomace, sweet potatoes . . . 24% protein; 12% fat; 6% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Available in independent pet supply stores and Petco.



**DR. G'S PET FOOD COMPANY** — Sedona, AZ; (866) 284-5939; drgsfreshpetfood.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – 1 variety.

**MADE BY** Chenango Valley Pet Foods in Sherburne, NY.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Dr. G’s contains: Chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, barley, rye, oats, chicken fat, natural chicken flavor, alfalfa meal, beet pulp . . . 25% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Company concept is simple: Fresh is better. Food orders will be made fresh weekly and direct-shipped to your home from the manufacturing plant on the following day; product is available only from the maker. *This doctor/founder, Martin Glinsky, PhD, specializes in animal nutrition and has formulated many pet foods in his career.*

**DR. TIM'S PET FOOD COMPANY** — Marquette, MI; (906) 249-8486; drtims.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – 3 varieties.

**MADE BY** Ohio Pet Foods, Lisbon, OH.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Dr. Tim’s Pursuit contains: Chicken meal, rice flour, chicken fat, oat flour, barley, beet pulp, herring meal, dried egg product, flaxseed meal, chicory root . . . 30% protein; 20% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – *This company doctor/founder is a veterinarian who specializes in athletic and competitive canine athletes and competes in sled dog racing. Momentum variety is for high-performance athletes; Pursuit for dogs with moderate activity; and Kinesis for couch potatoes! Available in independent pet supply stores, expanding from the Midwest outward. Also available by direct shipping.*



**DRS. FOSTER & SMITH** — Rhinelander, WI; (800) 826-7206; drsfostersmith.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – Drs. Foster & Smith Dog Food (5 varieties).

**MADE BY** CJ Foods in Bern, KS and Pawnee City, NE.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Chicken & Brown Rice Adult variety contains: Chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, barley, brewer’s rice, oat groats, chicken fat, beet pulp, natural flavor, dried egg product . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Company is a retail catalog company, so it will direct-ship to your home.

**EARTHBORN HOLISTIC** — Evansville, IN; (812) 867-7466; earthbornholisticpetfood.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – 5 “life stage” varieties, including 1 grain-free.

**MADE BY** Earthborn’s own plant, Midwestern Pet Foods, Monmouth, IL.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Earthborn Holistic Adult Vantage contains: Chicken meal, oatmeal, barley, brown rice, rye flour, potatoes, sweet potatoes, chicken fat, canola oil, tomato pomace . . . 22% protein; 12% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Available in independent pet supply stores and from online retailers, including petfooddirect.com, doggiefood.com.

**EVANGER'S DOG & CAT FOOD COMPANY** — Wheeling, IL; (800) 288-6796; evangersdogfood.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – 3 varieties.

**MADE BY** Hi Tek Rations, Dublin, GA, and Mid America, Mt. Pleasant, TX.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Chicken & Brown Rice variety contains: Chicken, brown rice, chicken meal, potato product, pearled barley, chicken fat, carrots, celery, beets, parsley . . . 26% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Products are available in independent pet supply stores and via direct shipping.



**FIRSTMATE PET FOODS** — North Vancouver, BC, Canada; (800) 658-1166; firstmate.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – **FirstMate** Grain-Free (6 varieties); **FirstMate Classic** (4 varieties); **Skoki Classic** (4 varieties); **Skoki Grain-Free** (6 varieties).

**MADE BY** FirstMate’s own plant in Chilliwack, BC, Canada.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – FirstMate’s Classic Maintenance contains: Chicken meal, pearled barley, oatmeal, brown rice, chicken fat, herring meal, fish meal, potato flour, tomato pomace, dicalcium phosphate . . . 26% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Skoki formulas cost less than FirstMate, which is the company’s “premium” line. Products available in Canada and the western U.S. in independent pet supply stores and specialty chains.



**FROMM FAMILY FOODS** — Mequon, WI; (800) 325-6331; frommfamily.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – **Fromm Four-Star Canine Entrees** (7 “all life stage” varieties, including 2 grain-free); **Gold Nutritionals** (5 “life stage” varieties); **Fromm Classics** (2 varieties).

**MADE BY** Fromm’s own plant in Mequon, WI.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Four Star Pork & Applesauce contains: Pork, pork meal, oatmeal, pearl barley, pea protein, brown rice, white rice, dried tomato pomace, whole dried egg, pork fat . . . 24% protein; 13% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Sold in independent pet supply stores and via online retailers; direct shipping also available.

**HORIZON PET NUTRITION** — Rosthern, Saskatchewan, Canada; (403) 279-5874; horizonpetnutrition.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – **Amicus** (3 grain-free varieties); **Horizon Complete** (5 “life stages” varieties); **Horizon Legacy** (2 varieties).

**MADE BY** Horizon’s own plant in Rosthern, Saskatchewan, Canada.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Horizon Complete Adult contains: Chicken meal, barley, rye, chicken, oats, chicken fat, pea fiber, flaxseed, egg product, salmon oil . . . 26% protein; 14% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Products available in independent pet supply stores. Amicus uses red lentils as the carb source.

**LAUGHING DOG, INC.** — Lodi, CA; (805) 653-7813; laughingdoginc.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – 3 “life stages” varieties.

**MADE BY** Taplow Feeds, Chilliwack, BC, Canada.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Brave Dog (adult) variety contains: Chicken meal, pearled barley, oatmeal, brown rice, chicken fat, herring meal, fish oil, potato flour, tomato pomace, dicalcium phosphate . . . 26% protein; 15% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Products available in independent pet supply stores and direct shipped to consumers.

**LINCOLN BIOTECH** — East Bend, NC; (800) 253-8128; lincolnbitech.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – 1 variety: Zinpro.

**MADE BY** Chenango Valley Pet Foods, Sherburne, NY.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Zinpro contains: Menhaden fish meal, brown rice, oatmeal, potato meal, barley, herring meal, oat flour, rice flour, canola oil, evening primrose meal . . . 22% protein; 12% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Company feels that dogs don’t get enough zinc, causing skin and coat problems, so Zinpro is formulated with a bioavailable zinc. Product is available at only a handful of independent pet supply stores but a number of online retailers, including k9cuisine.com and petfooddirect.com.

**LOTUS NATURAL FOOD** — Torrance, CA; (888) 995-6887; lotuspetfoods.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – 5 varieties, including 1 grain-free.

**MADE BY** Bio Biscuit, Montreal, Canada.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Chicken contains: Chicken, chicken meal, rye, brown rice, pollock, barley, oatmeal, pea fiber, oil blend (soybean, olive, salmon oils), dried egg product . . . 24% protein; 12% fat; 4.5% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – These foods are baked, not extruded. Company says all ingredients are sourced in North America (with three exceptions: lamb, lamb meal, and green mussels from New Zealand). Products are available in independent pet supply stores and online from doggiefood.com.



**MERRICK PET CARE** — Amarillo, TX; (800) 664-7387; merrickpetcare.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – **Before Grain** (3 varieties, all grain-free); **Merrick** (7 varieties); **Whole Earth Farms** (3 varieties).

**MADE BY** Merrick Pet Care, Hereford, TX.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Merrick’s Wilderness Blend contains: Buffalo, salmon meal, lamb meal, rice, oatmeal, pearled barley, beef fat, barley, venison, natural flavor . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – Products are sold in Petco and in independent pet supply stores; also available via direct shipping with no shipping charges in the U.S.

**MULLIGAN STEW PET FOOD** — Jackson, WY; (888) 364-7839; mulliganstewpetfood.com

**LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE** – 1 variety: Mulligan Stew.

**MADE BY** Mountain Country Foods, Okeene, OK.

**REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY** – Mulligan Stew Chicken variety contains: Chicken, brown rice, oats, chicken meal, chicken liver, alfalfa meal, flaxseed meal, eggs, herring oil, dried cane molasses . . . 26% protein; 10% fat; 8% fiber; 10% moisture.

**MISC INFO** – All dry foods are baked, not extruded. Company says all ingredients are sourced in from U.S. farms and ranches.

| <b>NATURA PET PRODUCTS</b> — Davis, CA; (800) 532-7261; naturapet.com  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – <b>California Natural</b> (12 varieties, 3 of which are grain-free); <b>Evo</b> (7 grain-free varieties); <b>HealthWise</b> (6 varieties); <b>Innova</b> (11 “life stage” varieties); <b>Karma</b> (1 variety, an organic food).  | <b>MADE BY</b> Natura’s own plants in Fremont, NE, and San Leandro, CA. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – California Natural Herring and Sweet Potato contains: Herring, barley, oatmeal, herring meal, herring oil, sunflower oil, sweet potatoes, natural flavors, (vitamins and minerals) . . . 21% protein; 11% fat; 3.7% fiber; 10% moisture.   |   |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Natura Pet Products is now owned by Procter & Gamble. California Natural foods contain a single animal protein source; Evo foods are grain-free, high in protein and fat; Innova foods contain several sources of animal protein; Karma is Natura’s only baked food and its only organic food. Products sold in independent pet supply stores and through various online retailers. |   |

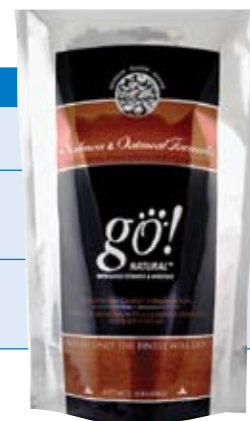
| <b>NATURE’S VARIETY</b> — Lincoln, NE; (888) 519-7387; naturesvariety.com   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – <b>Instinct</b> (5 grain-free varieties); <b>Prairie</b> (5 varieties).  | <b>MADE BY</b> Pied Piper Mills in Hamlin, TX. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – Instinct Chicken Meal contains: Chicken meal, tapioca, chicken fat, pumpkin seeds, Menhaden fish meal, alfalfa meal, Montmorillonite clay, natural chicken flavor, vitamin/mineral supplement . . . 42% protein; 22% fat; 3.2% fiber; 10% moisture. |  |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Company strongly promotes diet rotation among varieties and types, offering complementary frozen raw and canned foods. Products sold in independent pet supply stores and through various online retailers.  |  |

| <b>OMNIPRO PET FOODS</b> — Madison, MS; (601) 898-7773; omnipro.net   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – 1 variety: OmniPro.  | <b>MADE BY</b> Ohio Pet Foods, Lisbon, OH. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – OmniPro Holistic Salmon & Potato contains: Salmon, fish meal, potatoes, peas, ground barley, millet, egg product, oatmeal, canola oil, tomato pomace. . . 25% protein; 14% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. |  |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Food is mainly exported; currently available in the U.S. only through Amazon.com.  |  |

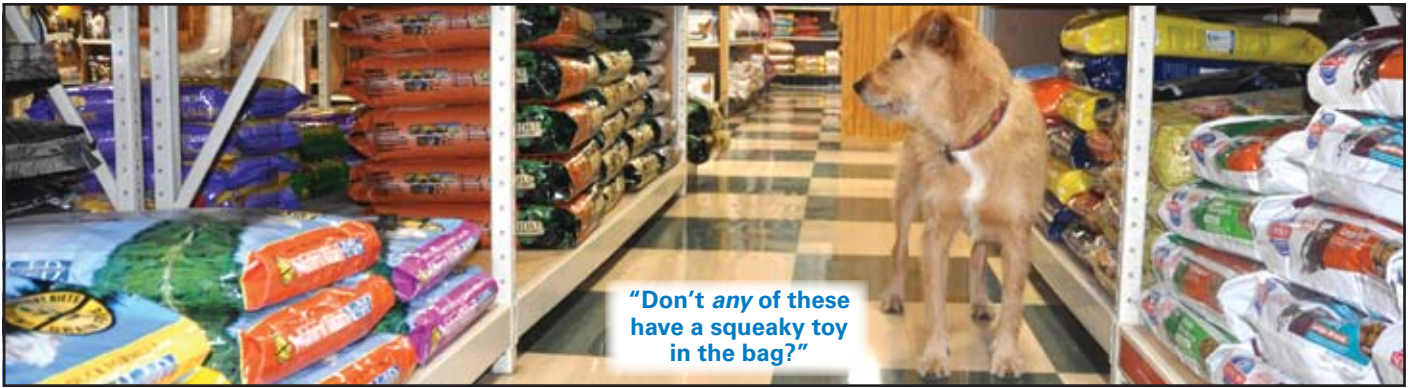
| <b>PERFECT HEALTH DIET PRODUCTS</b> — Elmsford, NY; (800) 743-1502; phdproducts.com  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – PHD Viand (2 varieties).  | <b>MADE BY</b> Chenango Valley Pet Foods, Sherburne, NY. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – PHD Viand Canine Growth & Maintenance contains: Lamb meal, chicken meal, brown rice, corn, Naturox (natural antioxidant mix), barley, oats, chicken liver digest, kelp, dried Lactobacillus Acidophilus. . . 26% protein; 16% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. |  |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Company suggests using its products to supplement a fresh food diet. Available in a handful of independent pet supply stores, veterinary clinics, and by direct shipping.   |  |

| <b>PET CHEF EXPRESS</b> — New Westminster, BC, Canada; (604) 916-2433; petchefexpress.ca  |   |
|---|---|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – 1 variety: Pet Chef Express.   | <b>MADE BY</b> Nutreco Canada, Inc., Guelph, Ontario, Canada. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – Pet Chef Express contains: Salmon meal, oats, millet, hullless barley, canola oil, salmon oil, carrot, potato, potassium chloride, garlic . . . 25% protein; 10% fat; 3% fiber; 10% moisture. |   |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Company provides home delivery in parts of Canada. Also sold in independent pet supply stores.   |   |

| <b>PETCUREAN PET NUTRITION</b> — Chilliwack, BC, Canada; (866) 864-6112; petcurean.com  |  |
|---|--|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – <b>Go! Natural</b> (6 varieties, including 3 grain-free); <b>Now!</b> (6 formulas, all grain-free); <b>Summit Holistics</b> (3 varieties).   | <b>MADE BY</b> Elmira Pet Products, Elmira, Ontario, Canada. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – Summit Australian Lamb variety contains: Australian lamb meal, brown rice, oatmeal, barley, canola oil, natural flavors, dried alfalfa, potassium chloride, salmon meal, flaxseed . . . 21% protein; 10% fat; 2% fiber; 10% moisture. |  |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Go! Natural grain-free variety was recently reformulated with lower protein and fat; Now! varieties contain no rendered meats (meat meals). Products available in independent pet supply stores and a variety of online retailers.                 |  |



| <b>PET VALU</b> — Markham, Ontario, Canada; (800) 738-8258; performatrinultra.com   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – <b>Permatrin Ultra</b> (3 varieties).  | <b>MADE BY</b> Elmira Pet Products, Elmira, Ontario, Canada. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – Permatrin Ultra Lamb & Brown Rice formula contains: Deboned lamb, lamb meal, brown rice, oatmeal, rice, pearled barley, dried egg product, millet, tomato pomace, vegetable oil . . . 22% protein; 12% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. |  |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Permatrin Ultra is sold in PetValu stores in Canada and the northeastern U.S. and via the online retailer petfooddirect.com.   |  |



**PRECISE PET PRODUCTS** — Nacogdoches, TX; (888) 477-3247; [precisepet.com](http://precisepet.com)

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – <b>Precise</b> (9 varieties); <b>Precise Holistic Complete</b> (5 varieties); <b>Precise Plus</b> (3 varieties).  | <b>MADE BY</b> Texas Farm Products' own plant in Nacogdoches, TX. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – Precise Holistic Complete Wild At Heart Flight Line contains: Duck meal, turkey meal, brown rice, potato, oatmeal, chicken fat, rice bran, citrus fiber, flaxseed, dried egg product . . . 24% protein; 15% fat; 3.5% fiber; 10% moisture. |   |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Precise varieties have been vastly improved; a nice new line of products (Precise Holistic Complete) has been launched.   |   |

**SMARTPAK CANINE** — Plymouth, MA; (800) 326-0282; [smartpakcanine.com](http://smartpakcanine.com)

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – <b>LiveSmart</b> (5 varieties).   | <b>MADE BY</b> Chenango Valley Pet Foods, Sherburne, NY. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – LiveSmart Chicken & Brown Rice Adult variety contains: Deboned chicken, chicken meal, brown rice, barley, oats, beet pulp, chicken fat, dried eggs, natural flavor, flaxseed . . . 24% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. |  |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Products are available by direct shipping only. Food is available sealed in single-serving packages with the food measured to your dog's specifications – creates extra packaging (not very "green") but keeps food incredibly fresh.         |  |

**SOLID GOLD HEALTH PRODUCTS FOR PETS, INC.** — El Cajon, CA; (800) 364-4863; [solidgoldhealth.com](http://solidgoldhealth.com)

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – 8 varieties (1 grain-free).   | <b>MADE BY</b> Diamond Pet Products in Lathrop, CA and Meta, MO. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – WolfKing Adult Variety contains: Bison, ocean fish meal, brown rice, potatoes, sweet potato, millet, rice bran, canola oil, tomato pomace, salmon oil . . . 22% protein; 9% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. |  |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Products available in independent pet supply stores and Petco.  |  |

**TUFFY'S PET FOODS, INC.** — Perham, MN; (800) 525-9155; [nutrisourcedogfood.com](http://nutrisourcedogfood.com)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – <b>Natural Planet Organics</b> (1 variety); <b>NutriSource</b> (11 varieties, including one grain-free); <b>PureVita</b> (3 varieties).  | <b>MADE BY</b> Tuffy's own plant in Perham, MN. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – Natural Planet Organics formula contains: Organic chicken, chicken meal, organic brown rice, organic oats, organic barley, natural flavors, organic flaxseed, chicken fat, calcium carbonate, organic sunflower oil . . . 23% protein; 14% fat; 4% fiber; 10% moisture. |   |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Natural Plant Organics certified by Oregon Tilth. PureVita varieties each contain a single source of animal protein.   |   |

**VERUS PET FOODS** — Abingdon, MD; (888) 828-3787; [veruspetfoods.com](http://veruspetfoods.com)

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – 5 varieties.   | <b>MADE BY</b> Ohio Pet Foods, Lisbon, OH. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – VerUS Adult Maintenance variety contains: Lamb meal, oats, brown rice, rice bran, flaxseed meal, sorghum, chicken fat, chicory pulp, alfalfa meal, kelp . . . 22% protein; 10% fat; 5% fiber; 12% moisture. |  |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – Company says all lamb used in foods is free-range, grass-fed, New Zealand lamb. Available in independent pet supply stores and through a few online retailers.   |  |

**WELLPET** — Tewksbury, MA; (800) 225-0904; [wellpet.com](http://wellpet.com)

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>LINES/TYPES AVAILABLE</b> – <b>Holistic Select</b> (10 varieties); <b>Wellness Core</b> (3 grain-free varieties); <b>Wellness Simple Solutions</b> (3 varieties, each with a single source of animal protein and rice); <b>Wellness Super5Mix</b> (9 varieties). | <b>MADE BY</b> WellPet's plant in Mishawaka, IN; Hagen Pet Foods in Waverly, NY; CJ Foods in Bern, KS; American Nutrition, Inc., in Ogden, UT; and Diamond Pet Foods in Gaston, SC. |
| <b>REPRESENTATIVE VARIETY</b> – Wellness Super5Mix Chicken contains: Deboned chicken, chicken meal, oatmeal, barley, brown rice, tomato pomace, rye flour, canola oil, tomatoes, rice bran . . . 22% protein; 12% fat; 3% fiber; 11% moisture.                      |   |
| <b>MISC INFO</b> – WellPet's products can be found in national pet specialty stores (such as Petco and Petsmart) and independent pet supply stores.   |   |

# Aiming for the “Holistic” Market, But Missing the Mark

The eight products below are intended to appeal to dog owners who are interested in a “holistic” and/or “healthy” food for their dogs. None contains artificial colors or artificial preservatives. But none can hold a candle to the products on our “approved” foods list. Each misses that mark – some miss by just a bit, and some miss by a country mile.

Procter & Gamble Pet Care, owner of Eukanuba and Iams, seems to be making a genuine effort to formulate decent products as their entries in the “natural” or “holistic” category. Their products, the first two products in the chart below, come the closest to meeting WDJ’s selection criteria. If either one had a quality animal protein as the second (or even third) item on the ingredients list – boom, they’d be on our “approved foods” list. They wouldn’t be the *best* products on our list, but they’d be on the list.

Each of the next two products on the chart has something going for it but not quite enough for us to be enthused about. The Rachel Ray product starts out nicely: a fresh, named animal protein at the top of the list, and a nice, named animal protein meal to bolster the total amount of animal protein in the food. Why, oh why, then did the company dump a really crummy fat (“animal fat”) into the food? “Animal fat” could be anything (and everything), from used fat collected from fast-food restaurants to road kill. The Nature’s Best product also bolsters its fresh animal protein (chicken) with a nice animal protein meal (chicken meal) – but why is that ingredient so far down the ingredients list (sixth)?

That product clearly contains a lot more grain than the Rachel Ray food. At least it has a nice (named) fat source.

The next pair of foods, both made by Purina, are more than just one step below the previous products in terms of quality. We suspect that each has a different target buyer; the Chef Michaels packages make the products resemble home-cooked meals; the ONE packages and marketing have a more professional look, as if only experienced dog owners should purchase them. But neither offers anything of value past the good first ingredient.

The Whole Foods store brand (365) dog food surprised us. People who are accustomed to buying healthy (and expensive) foods there might take it for granted that the Whole Foods 365 dog food is also high-quality, and fail to look at the ingredients list. *Never fail to look at the ingredients list!* Because there is almost nothing good in this food. (And the “lean” formula is even worse; “powdered cellulose” is sixth on its ingredients list!)

What’s the worst food we know that might be mistaken for something healthful? Ah, but that honor always seems to fall to a Beneful product, with its beautiful bags adorned with photos of fresh whole vegetables and glistening chunks of marbled meats. The Healthy Harvest variety is missing the meat, however; its protein comes from corn, corn gluten meal, and soy protein. There is so little fresh food in the product that *water* is added to the dry food (7th ingredient!). And how about the appearance of *sugar* in the 10th spot? Wow! Nothing healthy in that harvest.

green text = indicates a top quality protein or fat source

blue text = indicates a good quality, whole grain or carbohydrate source

black text = indicates an acceptable ingredient, neither great nor awful, or a processed ingredient by-product (in lieu of a whole ingredient)

red text = indicates a poor quality or unhealthy ingredient,

OR an acceptable ingredient in an inappropriate position on the ingredients list (i.e., corn listed as the first ingredient)

|             | BEST  | 2ND                           | TIED / 3RD  | TIED / 3RD                           | TIED / 5TH                     | TIED / 5TH                           | BAD                         | WORST                            |
|-------------|---|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| FOOD        | Eukanuba Naturally Wild Turkey & Multigrain | Iams Healthy Naturals Chicken | Nature’s Best (Science Diet) Chicken & Brown Rice | Rachel Ray Nutrish Beef & Brown Rice | Chef Michaels (Purina) Chicken | Purina ONE SmartBlend Chicken & Rice | Whole Foods 365 Performance | Beneful (Purina) Healthy Harvest |
| 1st ingred  | turkey                                      | chicken                       | chicken   | beef                                 | chicken                        | chicken                              | chicken by-product meal     | corn                             |
| 2nd ingred  | brewers rice                                | chicken by-product meal       | brown rice  | chicken meal                         | soybean meal                   | brewers rice                         | rice                        | corn gluten meal                 |
| 3rd ingred  | sorghum                                     | brewers rice                  | wheat   | brewer’s rice                        | soy flour                      | corn gluten meal                     | corn meal                   | whole wheat flour                |
| 4th ingred  | potato                                      | corn meal                     | cracked pearl barley                              | corn meal                            | animal fat                     | corn                                 | chicken fat                 | animal fat                       |
| 5th ingred  | barley                                      | sorghum                       | soybean meal                                      | soybean meal                         | brewers rice                   | poultry by-product meal              | corn gluten meal            | soy protein concentrate          |
| 6th ingred  | chicken meal                                | barley                        | chicken meal                                      | animal fat                           | soy protein concentrate        | wheat                                | wheat                       | soy flour                        |
| 7th ingred  | fish meal                                   | chicken fat                   | pork fat  | corn gluten meal                     | corn gluten meal               | animal fat                           | dried beet pulp             | water                            |
| 8th ingred  | chicken fat                                 | dried beet pulp               | dried egg product                                 | brown rice                           | corn                           | soy flakes                           | natural flavors             | rice flour                       |
| 9th ingred  | dried egg product                           | natural flavor                | natural flavor                                    | oatmeal                              | glycerin                       | soybean meal                         | flaxseed                    | pearled barley                   |
| 10th ingred | dried beet pulp                             | dried egg product             | oats  | dried beet pulp                      | wheat                          | animal digest                        | dried egg product           | sugar                            |

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# Stay in Touch

*Ensure that your dog feels good about physical contact with you.*

BY PAT MILLER, CPDT-KA, CDBC

**H**ave you ever stopped to think about how many times a day you *do* something to your dog that involves physical contact? I'm not talking about petting him when he nudges up against your leg; I'm talking about grasping his collar, putting his leash on, picking him up, wiping debris from the corners of his eyes, wiping the mud off his paws, trimming fur somewhere on his body, and many more "husbandry" procedures that require various degrees of restraint and touch. Chances are you really only think about it when your dog protests, but chances are *he* thinks about it every time you reach for him.

If you're lucky, he's thinking good thoughts. This happens when he has a generally positive association with the outcome of your touch. These are the procedures he loves. Good associations can happen incidentally (Leash = going for a walk – Yay!) and you can create them deliberately (Touch collar, feed a treat; collar = treats – Yay!). If you're not so fortunate or proactive, your dog may have

negative associations with some of your procedures. These are the ones he avoids or actively resists.

## Your dog will tell you

An owner who is skilled at observing and reading her dog's body language is usually well aware when a canine pal is even slightly uncomfortable. (See "Say What?" WDJ November 2005). That's "note to self" time; an opportunity to help change a mildly unhappy association to a very happy one, to avoid trouble down the road. Many owners, however, don't notice until the dog is putting up major resistance. At that point it's a much larger project to change the now well-established negative association. Once again, prevention is better than cure.

If you're working with a pup or a young dog who doesn't have many associations yet, don't let him become even *slightly* uncomfortable. Treat every new procedure as an opportunity to make wonderful associations with all the handling procedures you may perform with him over the years.

## What you can do . . .

- Learn more about dog body language so you can identify the procedures that are making your dog slightly uneasy.
- Make a list of procedures your dog isn't happy about – the "slightly uneasy ones" as well as the obvious ones.
- Select three to start with, perhaps two that your dog is slightly irritated with and one that causes him obvious annoyance, and start working on changing his association with them, or teaching him new operant behaviors.

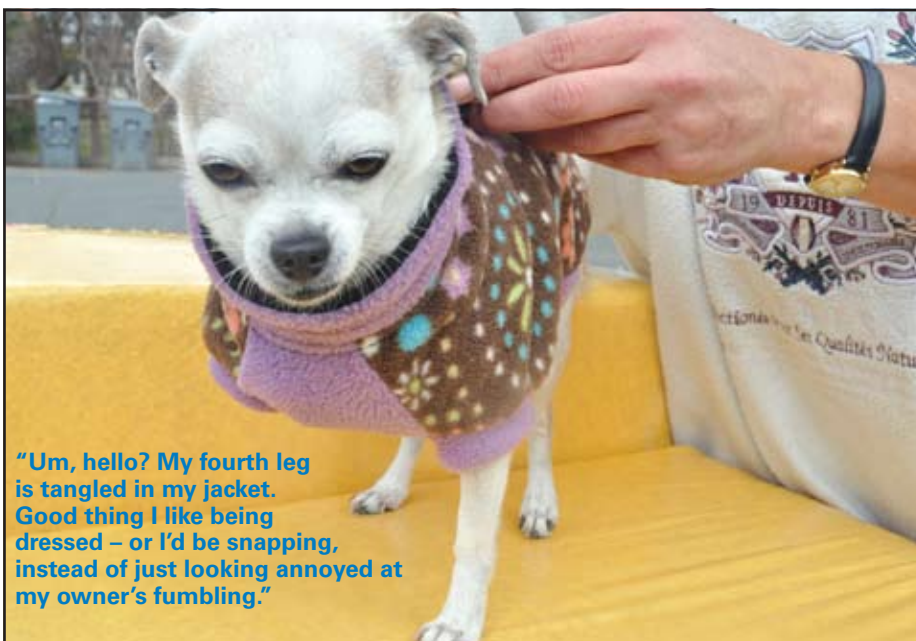


## Procedures

Here are examples of some of the procedures you can help your dog learn to love:

■ **Reaching for the collar:** Bet you can't even count how many times this has happened to your dog, whether it's reaching to put on a leash, to restrain him as a jogger goes by, to put him in his crate, or to hold him while you do *something else* to him. Most of the time grabbing for his collar is more reinforcing for you than for your dog, and he learns to shy away when you reach. This can be a serious safety concern, especially for those times when you *have* to grab him to protect him or prevent him from doing something inappropriate that could get him injured.

We do an exercise in our basic "good manners" classes called "Gotcha!" in which we teach the dogs that someone



**"Um, hello? My fourth leg is tangled in my jacket. Good thing I like being dressed – or I'd be snapping, instead of just looking annoyed at my owner's fumbling."**



To put some medication in her senior Greyhound's eyes, trainer Sarah Richardson, of The Canine Connection in Chico, California, positions him on a non-slip mat.

reaching for the collar consistently means something wonderful is coming. “Wonderful” is most often a tasty treat, but can also be a toy, a ball . . . or a leash and a walk.

The “Gotcha!” exercise is intended to desensitize your dog to having his collar grabbed, and to teach you the correct way to grasp a dog’s collar. This will help him enjoy having you reach for him, and greatly reduce the risk of a bite when you must take hold of your dog in a tense situation, since he will have learned to associate a collar grab with a reward.

Begin with your dog sitting in front of you. Say “Gotcha!” and feed him a treat. Repeat this until he brightens up when he hears the word. Then circle your hand over his head, say “Gotcha!” and feed him a treat. Repeat until he is calm when you do this, and happily anticipating a treat. Then touch his collar under his chin with the “Gotcha!” and treat.

Over several training sessions, gradually increase the intensity of your touches until you are grabbing the collar with the “Gotcha.” If at any time your dog flinches or tries to pull away you have moved forward too quickly. Back up a few steps in the process and start again.

■ **Apply medication:** When we found Dubhy, our Scottie, as a stray (some 10-plus years ago), he had badly infected ears and wanted no part of treatment. The dilemma when the ears are already infected is that no matter how much you add treats

to the program, there’s still a negative association with the pain the treatment inevitably causes. Fortunately Dubhy is a forgiving soul, and in just two days the treat-association far outweighed the pain for him; the sight of his medication bottle would send him running to his mat in the kitchen to await treats – and treatment.

Most owners wait until ear cleaning or infection time to worry about how the dog will handle it. Wise owners spend a moment or two each day initially touching ears, then feeding a treat. Over time they increase the stimulus to rubbing the inside of the ears, feeding a treat; pressing a finger into the ear canal, feeding a treat; touching the inside of the ear with a moist cloth, feeding a treat; and even doing the same with a medication bottle and some benign liquid or gel, until the dog thinks nothing of having his ears invaded.

The same holds true for similar procedures: administering eye drops, brushing teeth, removing debris from the corners of your dog’s eyes, applying topical flea and tick preventatives . . . Start small, well before the procedure is actually critically important. Associate your movements and the various tools and accessories with really good treats, and when the day comes that you really *do* need to treat or clean your dog’s ears, he’ll be happily waiting on his mat for treatment, just like Dubhy.

■ **Lifting:** Lots of small dogs get picked up – a lot. Many of them don’t much like

it, but are pretty helpless to prevent it, unless they snap and snarl. Just imagine how off-putting it would be to have a creature as much as 10 to 20 times your size (or more) swoop down and snatch you off the ground without warning, whenever it pleased.

When Scooter, our 10-pound Pomeranian, first joined our family two years ago, he was very resistant to being lifted. Even approaching him with lift-intention body language was enough to elicit a snarl. With a gradual association between good stuff and touch, then pressure, then lifting, he began to relax about being picked up. At that point we introduced a “Ready?” cue – in essence giving him notice of the pending lift, and the choice to be picked up.

Now, when I say “Ready?” I can feel him gather himself to be lifted, and when I say “Okay!” and pick him up he gives himself a small boost off the ground, as if to help. If I don’t feel him gather himself but I lift anyway, he will snarl. He still doesn’t appreciate being lifted if he is lying down, and I respect that. If he’s lying down and I need to pick him up I’ll invite him to stand, and if he declines I toss a treat to get him up. Treat consumed, he’s usually more than happy to play the “Ready?” game.

■ **Wiping paws:** Many dogs have negative associations with paw handling, in part because paws are most commonly touched and held for nail trimming – a procedure that creates a very negative association for *lots* of dogs. (See “Do My Nails, Please!” March 2009).

As with the “Gotcha” procedure, begin by just moving your hand *near* your dog’s paw and feeding a treat. When his eyes brighten and he looks for a treat as your hand moves toward him, add a brief, gentle touch before you treat. Gradually increase the length of time you touch, and then the amount of pressure. As things proceed well, eventually add small movements, working up to vigorous ones that approximate the movements you would use when toweling off his paws.

Over the same time period but in different sessions, introduce him to the towel. Show him the towel, feed him a treat. Repeat until you can tell by his response that he’s convinced towels make treats happen. Let him sniff the towel, and feed him a treat. Touch him with the towel on other parts of this body (assuming he’s comfortable with that) and feed him treats.

When he’s happy with both parts – the paw touching *and* the presence of the



towel, you can put them together. Start with a brief gentle touch of the towel to his paws, and feed a treat. Gradually work up to a full, vigorous paw-towel, making sure to keep the positive association as you progress.

■ **Putting on a jacket:** This is a complex procedure that may necessitate a considerable amount of canine cooperation. As with “wiping paws,” this one has two parts: the part where you create a positive association with touching the dog’s body parts, and the part where you create a pleasant association with the jacket (or Thundershirt, Anxiety Wrap, or other garment).

Visualize the process of putting on the jacket or other apparel. What parts of your dog must be touched, lifted, or moved in order to get the jacket on? Some have straps, buckles, buttons, zippers, or Velcro that reduce the amount of actual manipulation needed; others require that you pull paws through sleeves and the dog’s head through an opening. Make sure your dog is happy to have you touch, push, and pull on those various parts. Touch, push, and pull = treats!

Then look at the article of apparel itself. Velcro makes a potentially scary ripping noise; be sure your dog thinks Velcro-at-a-distance makes tasty treats happen before you even *think* of ripping open the straps right next to him. Button fumbling, zippers zipping, snaps snapping, raincoat rustling . . . all need their share of positive association-time to ensure a happy fashion ensemble for your canine pal.

Kind of in this same category is the dreaded Elizabethan collar or “cone.” I had neglected to anticipate the need, and failed to give our Corgi, Lucy, a positive association to one of these before she injured herself. When she had to wear one after her ACL surgery, she hated it. In fact she offered to bite me when I tried to put it on her the first time. We called a truce. In a workable compromise she grudgingly accepted a soft collar instead of the cone.

■ **Grooming:** A myriad of procedures fall under the heading of “grooming.” For each one, identify the tools used, and the body parts that need to be touched or held, and give your dog positive associations with all of them. For example, to scissor the long hair over your dog’s eyes, you may need to grasp his muzzle with one hand while you manipulate the scissors with the other. If he’s learned to accept the muzzle grasp (makes treats happen!) and with noise of the scissors, you’ll get a much straighter cut than if he’s flailing around while you try to trim. And you’re much less likely to poke an eye out!

### Try an operant approach

All of the above procedures rely on *classical conditioning* – giving your dog a positive association with the pieces of the procedures so that he loves them rather than just tolerating, or even hating them. You can also incorporate “operant conditioning” with your positive associations, where your dog makes deliberate behavior choices in order to get good stuff, thereby reducing

the need, in some cases, for annoying procedures.

Take wiping paws, for example. Another way to clean your dog’s muddy paws when he comes in the house could be to teach him to walk through a foot bath of clean water, and wipe *his own* paws on a mat that you provide for that purpose.

Lifting is another procedure that often suggests an operant solution. Your little dog hates to be lifted, but has to be carried upstairs every night to go to bed? Teach him to hop into his crate on cue, and then carry his crate up the stairs. Mission accomplished!

You can even trim your dog’s nails without ever touching a paw. Trainer Shirley Chong of Grinnell, Iowa, originally came up with the idea of creating a giant nail file for dogs, and the concept has spread like wildfire.

Take a board, 8 to 12 inches wide and 24 to 36 inches long, and cover it securely with coarse sandpaper, or with the slip-proof tape used to provide traction on wooden stairs. Place it flat on the ground or at an angle, depending on your dog’s preference. Then simply teach him to paw at the board with his front paws (easiest with clicker and shaping), kick at it with his hind paws (as if after defecating), and he’ll file his own nails!

According to Chong, dogs tend to get so happy about doing it that you have to put the board away or they’ll file them down to bloody stumps. Apparently dogs don’t mind quicking themselves! (See Chong’s website at ShirleyChong.com for more information about this solution.)

Another way to do a restraint-free nail trim is to teach your dog to stand on a board with his nails extended over the edge. If the board is on a slight incline forward, it works even better. You can clip off the exposed ends of the nails in mid-air, without ever touching the paw. Of course, you still need to give your dog positive associations with standing on the board, the pressure of the clipper on the nail, and the sensation of clipping, so don’t put those treats away yet! 🐾

*Pat Miller, CPDT-KA, CDBC, is WDJ’s Training Editor. Miller lives in Fairplay, Maryland, site of her Peaceable Paws training center. Pat is also author of several books on positive training, including her latest: Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance for a First Class Life. See page 24 for more information.*



**Sarah follows up the treatment with a generous handful of special treats – not something he ordinarily eats. This keeps the dog coming back, instead of hiding, at medication time.**

# Positive Protection

*These police officers are proof that reward-based training is good for more than just basic obedience and fun tricks.*

BY STEPHANIE COLMAN

In some training circles, it's still a sacred cow: the idea that the only way to get a dog trained to near perfection and utter reliability is to teach him that he "has to" comply; it doesn't matter if he "wants to." Adherents of this school of training believe that in order to create a dog who responds reliably when first "commanded," force-based training techniques must be used.

Fortunately, more and more trainers are realizing this sacred cow is a bunch of bull.

Positive reinforcement training has made significant inroads among much of the dog-owning population. However, many handlers involved in precision-based sports such as field work, obedience, and Schutzhund, along with many pet owners of "strong" breeds such as Rottweilers, Dobermans, and so-called "bully" breeds, still believe a healthy dose of compulsion is necessary to convince the dog he must perform as "commanded" (as opposed to "cued" or "requested").

The trainers of working police dogs generally feel that their dogs – and their jobs – also require the use of force-based techniques; a majority of law enforcement



**Steve White has worked extensively with military and police dogs, as well as "pet dogs" of every stripe. He's a leading proponent of positive reinforcement training, both for law enforcement and civilian trainers.**

dog handlers still rely on compulsion. Fortunately, a growing number are beginning to realize that positive reinforcement not only produces reliable dogs, it also decreases dog-handler conflict and creates stronger working relationships.

Among the "serve and protect" leaders of the movement toward positive training is Seattle-based trainer Steve White. A sergeant with the Seattle Police Department, White has more than 35 years of experience as a canine handler.

White's early dog training experiences were spent in the U.S. Army as a patrol dog handler at Lackland Air Force Base, a joint forces military installation in San Antonio, Texas. At the time, military dog training methods were based largely on the early work of Col. Konrad Most and William Koehler, and can best be described as a "carrots and sticks" approach.

"They taught us to praise our dogs by

making us face and praise a rock," White says. "They made you stand at your rock, get goofy and excited . . . 'That's a good boy, that's a good dog, that's a good baby!' At the same time you were practicing praising your rock, you were practicing leash corrections on a chain link fence. You got both sides of it."

Most behaviors were taught using negative reinforcement, a technique where the handler applies physical or social pressure in an effort to coerce or force the dog to alter his behavior – for example, pushing on a dog's backside to elicit a "sit" or using a collar and leash to drag a dog into a "down." In both cases the dog learns that compliance relieves the pressure; he works to avoid the uncomfortable situation.

## Creating conflict

For many dogs, especially those who are deliberately selected for their high-drive

### What you can do . . .

- Do your best to eliminate compulsion from your training. Look for every opportunity to reinforce your dog for increasingly better efforts.
- Support your local police canine foundation; they're often a source of funding for police K9 units (and funding = more training).



personalities and strong physical and emotional make-up, these techniques routinely create a conflict between dog and handler that results in a bite.

For White, the bite came after working with “Astro,” his first canine partner. The dog was willing to acquiesce to sit and perform heelwork, but was all too ready to fight back when White attempted to force him into a “down.” In an intense battle of wills, White sustained a bite that sidelined his training for two weeks. He returned to work a different dog and went on to finish the program as a Distinguished Honor Graduate.

“(Getting bitten) was common enough that they taught you how to deal with it,” says White. “They taught you how to protect yourself . . . to string up a dog. If the dog came at you, you lifted up on the leash and kept the pointy end away from you until the dog stopped fighting. It wasn’t an act of training; it was an act of self-defense until the dog could no longer offer an offense.”

One of the dangers of punishment, aside from the potential for physical harm and its ability to erode the dog-handler relationship, is the tendency for the handler to escalate out of frustration or a misguided desire for revenge.

“They taught us how to “airplane” (the dogs) so that you picked them up and started to spin around so they’d be off balance and couldn’t come after you,” White explained. “Some dogs could withstand being suspended by their neck longer than your arms could stand keeping them up there and then what do you do? Some people would walk over to the nearest fence and suspend the leash from that and hold the dog up. That would get carried away because now that you aren’t getting tired, and you’re a little ticked off, some people would succumb to the temptation to keep the dog up there longer.”

Thankfully, according to White, this didn’t happen often at Lackland, but sadly, it does sometimes happen in the name of police canine “training.” In August 2007, then Trooper Sgt. Charles Jones of the North Carolina Highway Patrol was unknowingly videotaped by a fellow trooper as he hung his Belgian Malinois “Ricoh” from a railing and kicked him repeatedly for failure to release a training toy.

The video ended up on YouTube, sparking a public outcry that resulted in Jones losing his job. However, in November 2010, North Carolina Superior Court Judge



**Photo by Senior Airman Christopher Griffin.**  
**Staff Sgt. William Riney uses a toy and a game of tug to reward his military dog for detecting narcotics around vehicles on the grounds of Lackland Air Force Base, Texas.**

James Hardin Jr. ruled that Jones was improperly fired and should be returned to his position as a canine officer, along with receiving back wages and attorney’s fees. The judge ruled that although Jones’ actions were not specifically part of the agency’s standard techniques, they were no worse than its accepted methods.

A similar video shows a Baltimore Police Department officer repeatedly lifting and throwing his canine partner to the ground in the name of training. For nearly three minutes, the officer battles with his dog while at least one bystander (assumed to be a supervisor or trainer) offers encouragement and instruction on how to show the dog “who’s boss.”

Another media report recounted how, in June 2006, a frustrated Miami-Dade Police Sergeant, Allen Cockfield, delivered a lethal kick to his canine partner, “Duke,” in an ill-fated training session.

### **A better way**

Fortunately, early in his career, White realized there were better ways beyond the force- and fear-based methods of his first experience. In the mid 1970s he began exploring the works of Leon Whitney (author of *Natural Method of*

*Dog Training*), Ray Berwick (*How to Train Your Pet Like a Television Star*) and Patricia Gail Burnham (*Playtraining Your Dog*). These three books served as a trilogy of concepts that was later supported by Karen Pryor’s *Don’t Shoot the Dog*, and set a path toward a training future based on positive reinforcement.

White’s first post-military canine assignment came with the Kitsap County Sheriff’s Office in Washington State, and he later joined the Seattle Police Department. He now also runs i2i K9 Professional Training Services, a consulting and training business operating out of Rivendale Learning Center, a “No Force - No Fear”® training company owned and operated by Steve and his wife, Jennifer.

White learned that one of the problems with negative reinforcement and punishment is the ability to create conflict, as his Army dog, Astro, so aptly demonstrated. He also learned that, conversely, positive reinforcement and negative punishment (removing access to what the dog wants following an incorrect response) are more likely to foster increased cooperation as the dog learns to trust the handler, and the team develops a stronger working relationship.

“With positive reinforcement training, you front load the effort,” White says. “There’s a lot of stuff to get the wheels turning. The curve is really steep in the beginning, but after a while it levels out and the workload is not as high. With negative reinforcement, you get full, finished behaviors quickly, but maintenance work afterward is high because the dog figures out the name of the game is ‘only work as hard as it takes to get this guy to leave me alone.’ With positive reinforcement, especially with substantial amounts of free-shaping, the dog figures the name of the game is ‘work as hard as I can to get this guy to pay off.’ The fundamental paradigm changes in the dog’s mind.”

Bob Eden shares White’s desire to transform police canine training. In 1991 Eden, a retired Delta Police Department (British Columbia, Canada) canine handler, founded the K9 Academy for Law Enforcement and the International Police K9 Conference, dedicated to positive reinforcement education for canine handlers around the world. With a team of 20 positive reinforcement-based instructors (including White), Eden’s organization demonstrates the effectiveness of positive reinforcement training to about 150 police agencies each year. Eden’s



**Retired Canadian police canine officer Bob Eden says that punishment-based training relies heavily on the incorrect notion that dogs have the logical capability to know right from wrong.**

mission is inspired by the little-known fact that statistically, canine handlers are involved in more gunfights than any other members of their department as a result of the suspect-oriented work they do.

“My goal as a retired police officer is to make sure that police officers who work with dogs go home to their families at the end of their shifts,” Eden says. “I want to make sure your dog is a precision animal that you, as an officer, don’t have to worry about on the street. If I’ve got my dog in the car and I end up in a confrontation with a suspect, I don’t have to worry about what my dog is doing. My attention is not divided between my dog and the person I’m dealing with. When I’m telling my dog what I need to have done, I know it will happen because my foundation work has been good. A policeman cannot afford to be a dog trainer on the street.”

### Shaping for success

Eden and White utilize the training principle of shaping, an operant conditioning technique where the dog is encouraged to discover (and then be rewarded for) the correct behavior on his own rather than physically manipulated or lured into the desired behavior. In the early stages, the handler’s job is simply to manage the training environment in a way that prevents the dog from self-rewarding undesired behavior. Eden calls this letting the dog teach himself.

“If we get a dog into training that

we allow to teach himself, the benefits are exponentially greater than what we had under the old system of negative reinforcers and compulsive training,” he says. “We found that it was so much better and the results were at the point where we had very little recidivism.”

Many trainers (both in law enforcement and the civilian world) maintain a strong belief that incorrect responses must quickly be corrected. Through shaping,

Eden and White turn this concept on its head, setting up training scenarios so that the dog, who initially does not know what the correct response is, experiments with different behaviors in an attempt to earn his desired reward; for most police dogs, it’s the chance to bite and tug the sleeve. The trainer must construct the exercise so that the dog is unable to perform undesired behaviors that are self-rewarding. For example, in the early stages of training, the handler might keep his dog leashed to prevent him from prematurely launching himself at the training decoy’s sleeve. The excited dog might bark, whine, and lunge in an attempt to get what he wants, but the handler allows the dog to bite the decoy only after the dog lies down.

“When he does what you want and is rewarded, it modifies the behavior so that he continues to achieve his reward by consistently doing the same right thing over and over again,” Eden explains.

For canine officers, one of the most difficult behaviors to train is the “out” or bite release, especially from a training sleeve. Handlers are required to maintain clean bite release work in training and on the street with suspects. If the team is ever involved in litigation, they must prove the dog is responsive to cues in all settings. Most police dogs are high-drive and equipment-oriented; they live for the chance to fight a decoy’s protective sleeve. Convincing them to let go is a challenge.

### “Emergency Brakes”

While White no longer uses punishment as a standard training technique, he offers an honest assessment of its use:

“Through the years, the more positive reinforcement I use, the fewer aversives I use,” he explains. “I’m not 100 percent pure positive; I sometimes need to use an emergency brake (such as a verbal reprimand or leash correction) – but I no longer use aversives as a teaching tool.”

No form of training will produce perfect dogs 100 percent of the time. In law enforcement, if a police dog makes a mistake, people (or the dog) can get hurt.

“Police dogs do something other dogs don’t,” White says. “They consummate the urge to bite, and then are asked to voluntarily stop something that is either highly reinforcing in a positive way by being fun, or negatively reinforcing by vanquishing a life-threatening adversary. It’s a demand that is unique to law enforcement and military dogs.”

When lives are on the line, if the dog fails to respond appropriately to a cue, handlers must have a way to stop the dog.

“Emergency brakes are just what the name implies – for emergencies only. They are not a training tool, but an emergency management tool,” says White.

Note: In pet dog training, whether it’s your walk-in-the-wood companion or your competition obedience star, if you find yourself frequently using aversives, it’s a strong indication that your reinforcement history is weak.

Traditionally handlers deal with non-compliant “outs” by issuing a strong correction on a choke chain, pinch, or shock collar. While this often offers results in the short-term, the added conflict eventually sends most dogs into a state of avoidance where, as they see the handler approaching, they begin to rotate away from the handler, positioning themselves on the far side of the decoy in an attempt to prolong the bite and delay the correction.

In contrast, White and Eden teach the dog that releasing the sleeve results in more fun and another opportunity to engage in a bite. An important characteristic of the training is that the difficulty level starts low and is gradually increased as the dog’s behavior improves. For example, in the early stages, the decoy remains calm and the only fight comes from the dog rather than a fighting decoy that further arouses the dog. When the dog engages the sleeve, the static decoy and the handler wait; they know the dog can’t maintain the bite forever (although White tells the story of once waiting 18 minutes before seeing his dog-in-training begin to waver). When the dog begins to fatigue, the handler might cue an extremely reliable behavior (such as “down”), and upon getting compliance, rewards the dog with an enthusiastic game of tug. Or the decoy might slip out of the sleeve, leaving the dog with a fight-less piece of equipment, only to don a second sleeve and fire up when the dog releases the lifeless sleeve on request. In both examples, the lack of punishment results in a calmer, more clear-headed animal.

Compulsion creates stress and often, as Eden explains, the stress level becomes so high that the dog literally cannot achieve the mental process necessary to open his mouth and release the sleeve. This lack of compliance causes the handler to escalate the force, which adds more stress and creates a vicious cycle that can, as one officer described it, result in “one dumb animal beating another.”

## A case for change

When Phoenix police officer Vince Bingaman joined the department 10 years ago, compulsion was the name of the game.

“With the types of strong dogs we deal with, that’s how you got an animal to do something,” he says. “He was forced to do it and there was a negative repercussion if he didn’t. When the dogs did well we praised them, but we were really into compulsion to force strong-willed dogs to

## Shaping vs. Luring

When it comes to positive reinforcement training in law enforcement, White and his colleagues rely on shaping, a training technique that involves initially rewarding an approximation of the desired behavior, and gradually rewarding better and better approximations en route to the finished behavior.

Another popular method of positive reinforcement training is luring. In lure-reward training the dog follows a desired item (food treat or toy) into position to earn the reward. White says both methods have a place in the well-rounded trainer’s toolkit, but both require skill and judicious application. He offers the following overview:

| METHOD       | PRO  | CON  |
|--------------|--|--|
| Lure-reward  | <p>Can quickly achieve the topography (physical shape/action) of a behavior.</p> <p>Easy for handlers of all skill-levels.</p>   | <p>If lures are used too long they can interfere with the dog’s understanding of the behavioral concept (what it’s for).</p> <p>Extended use of lures can create a lure-dependent dog who focuses more on the lure than the desired connection with the handler. This often results in handlers using the reward as a bribe rather than a teaching tool. To use effectively, the lure must be eliminated as quickly as possible.</p> |
| Free-shaping | <p>Promotes desired problem-solving as the dog must initially experiment with different behaviors to determine what “pays off.”</p> <p>Puts greater emphasis on the behavior than the reward. The dog still works for the reward, but without the salience of having it directly in front of him. As such, many report that shaped behaviors seem to “stick” better.</p> | <p>Requires more effort at the front end to get the wheels turning. Can take longer to achieve finished behaviors.</p> <p>Requires a keen eye for observation and an astute sense of when to raise criteria to the next level. Often challenging for beginning trainers.</p>   |

do what we wanted them to do – and it led to a lot of conflict.”

The conflict between dog and handler led to many handlers sustaining serious bites. The idea of compulsion and punishment leading to increased bites is not limited to working police canines. Many pet dogs react the same way, especially when punishment techniques are employed in an attempt to modify aggressive behavior. The agency eventually turned to Bob Eden, who, over three months, helped transform the canine department with amazing success.

“Compulsion adds a lot of stress to a dog and we had difficulty getting ideas across to the animal,” says Bingaman. “With compulsion, because the dogs were forced to do what we asked them to do, the results were quicker, but they weren’t long-standing. It was a cycle. The dog would work for us for a while and then there would be some negative side effects of

the dog falling back into his old ways and then the compulsion would have to come back in and the dog would comply and the cycle would continue. When we trained the dogs in a more positive environment, the training stuck.”

Like White, for Bingaman, a major advantage of positive reinforcement training is the ability to achieve reliable behavior that, at its core, allows the dog to not only comply with the handler, but to feed his own satisfactions and desires.

“That’s the beauty about operant training,” Bingaman says. “The dogs do what we want them to do, but actually they do it because they think it’s their decision.”

Change isn’t easy, especially for police officers who, by way of the job description, are fault-finders. (When’s the last time an officer pulled you over to reward you for *not* speeding?) Initial concerns within the department centered on the fear that a positively trained dog would lack respect

for the handler. Police agencies specifically select strong-willed dogs who love the fight and have been trained to bite from early puppyhood. This sometimes results in a dog challenging the proverbial pecking order.

“When a dog says, ‘Hey, I don’t want to do that,’ and he tries to eat you, there’s some compulsion in that, but it’s remedied quickly,” Bingaman says. “Like any training, there has to be a balance and once

we got the balance right, we all realized it’s quite a pleasure working a dog with operant conditioning and the conflict was eroded.” He estimates that training is now approximately 80 percent reinforcement and 20 percent punishment whereas historically, those numbers would be reversed. Further, because of all the operant groundwork, when punishment is deemed necessary, it’s dispensed at far lower levels. Once he switched to positive reinforcement

training, Bingaman was able to work his last dog in the field without needing a single correction for the remainder of the dog’s career. “This new dog, I can go out and run his control work and his obedience and everything without any collar on,” he says.

He often marvels at the pet owners he encounters who claim that negative reinforcement or punishment is necessary to handle their own dogs. “If I can run a hard dog using (positive reinforcement-based) training methods 80 percent of the time, I don’t know why people couldn’t train their pet dogs with at least 99 percent (positive reinforcement) training.”

## Train the Positive Police K9 Way

Whether training a strong-willed Shepherd or a creampuff Cavalier, the art and science of learning theory and behavior modification remains the same. White offers the following five tips designed to improve training results:

### 1. “For big results, you’ve got to think small. Always look for, and reinforce, the littlest increments on your way to the end behavior.”

A finished behavior is the sum of its parts. For example, when training acceptance of nail trimming, remember to start with basic foot handling – without clippers, and at a level your dog can tolerate. That might mean touching one toe, with one finger, for one second. Work up from there.

### 2. “Street-reliable skill sets are narrow and deep. Concentrate on fluency and generalization of the few behaviors you’ll need on the street.”

Watch out for the “jack of all trades, master of none” phenomenon where your dog can *sort of* do a lot of things, but lacks a solid performance in any of them.

### 3. “Over-train wisely. Build levels of fluency, generalization, and resistance to distraction beyond what you’ll need on the street.”

In training classes, we practice stays while remote-controlled cars pulling miniature wagons filled with treats zoom past. If your dog can do that, he’s more likely to successfully handle sitting patiently as you prepare his dinner. Be creative in your training, but always work at a level that is fair to your dog.

### 4. “Failure is information. If the dog does not perform as expected, it’s just because you asked for something you have not yet fully trained.”

Remember that behavior change doesn’t happen overnight. Persistence, patience, and practice are key.

### 5. “If it ain’t fun, it ain’t done. As soon as training becomes a drudge for either end of the leash, stop, rest, and find ways to bring the joy back into it.”

Smart trainers know that dog training can – and should – be fun. Many pet training classes now use fun games like Hide & Seek and Red Light, Green Light to encourage a joyful, playful attitude while training. Good training should leave you and your dog wanting more; not feeling like it’s a bore and a chore!

## Time well spent

Smart dog training is simple, but that doesn’t make it easy. One of the biggest mistakes pet owners make is thinking their dog “knows” something long before he really does. When the dog’s behavior falters, some owners choose to punish the dog (which often results in a desired behavior change, but usually only temporarily) while others blame the technique, declaring it ineffective. In today’s instant gratification society, it’s hard not to demand desired results right away, but as the Phoenix Police Department found, diligence and patience are valuable virtues.

“It’s a very time-consuming process for us,” admits Bingaman. “At the compulsion end we could have dogs up and running in a couple months or less, but the long-term effects were shorter and we continually had to put in more training. With the operant training, our (maintenance) training hours can be reduced and we have dogs who, if we didn’t do any training for weeks, can still come out and work because they’ve learned (the tasks) for the right reason.”

One of the biggest advantages of the agency’s switch to positive reinforcement training has been removing conflict from the dog-handler relationship.

“Nobody wants to fight with their dog. Most of us have been at this job long enough to have been on the receiving end of the bites while in training – it’s part of the job,” Bingaman says. “Nobody wants to be in conflict with their partner. As soon as it was realized that we could train with minimal amounts of compulsion, everybody bought into it. These dogs are an investment for us, not only monetarily for the city, but for us emotionally – we become attached to the dogs.”

PHOTO BY JEANETTE OLIVER



Officer Vince Allegra, a canine handler with the Simi Valley (California) Police Department, works a no-force “out” exercise with his dog.

The dramatic reduction in compulsion also helps protect their investment by lengthening the dogs' careers. In compulsion training, all the corrections on a pinch or choke collar come from the neck, which can breakdown vertebrae and eventually shorten or end a dog's career.

### Check your ego at the door

Ego often interferes with good dog training. Much of the often inhumane actions inflicted on dogs are based on the handler's need to feel dominant over the animal.

"You can shoot yourself in the foot if you take it personally when the dog doesn't listen to you," says Bingaman. "If a dog's not listening, I need to step back and look at how I need to adjust my training – it's the human end of it that's missing something. The dog is a simple-minded animal. There's no conspiracy going on in the dog's head, no matter what people think."

The problem with ego is compounded by the general human misunderstanding that dogs have the logical capability to know right from wrong to a degree that they can make a logical decision. Dogs make behavioral decisions, not logical ones. The dog will only do what the dog wants to do. As White often explains it, whenever you ask a dog to do something, the first thought that goes through his mind is, "What's in it for me *right now*?"

"The dog has to have the desire to do it," reiterates Eden. "If he doesn't get a reward for what he's doing, he'll only do it to avoid punishment. When you have a dog who's constantly under stress and doing things to avoid punishment, he won't work as intensely, as efficiently, or as stress-free as one who does it because he understands and knows what he needs to do to get the desired result.

"A dog who loves to go out and work is closely bonded to his handler because they mesh together as a team. If it looks like they understand each other – it's because they do. The handler has figured out how to work the dog at the dog's level. Many people don't think at the dog's level; they expect the dog to think at their level."

### The road forward

Dog trainers have a saying: "The only thing two dog trainers can agree on is what the third dog trainer is doing wrong." In attempting to transform the world of police canine training, this trio of dedicated trainers and their colleagues are careful not to be too heavy-handed in their efforts

to convert others. The success of agencies like the Phoenix Police Department, combined with the public scrutiny made possible by the proliferation of phone-based video cameras and YouTube, have helped White become even more hopeful that more agencies will begin to explore positive reinforcement training.

"The word is getting out there," says Bingaman, who, thanks to a supportive management team at Phoenix Police Department, routinely travels to demonstrate positive methods to others, including several other agencies throughout Arizona. "It comes down to them (the law enforcement dog handlers). We can show them what it takes to get the dog off compulsion, but it comes down to the work they want to put into it. People see our dogs and know the success we have in our profiles, but ultimately it boils down to the individual – they have to want to do it."

Both White and Eden caution against the tendency of some positive reinforcement trainers (professional or pet owners) to openly bad-mouth the use of other methods, recommending instead that they focus that energy into training their dogs and the dogs of clients to show – not tell – how their method is better.

"The positive reinforcement community has been talking about this now for a long time," White says. "The time has come for us to put up or shut up – to produce a result that other people want so badly, they beg us to show them how we got it."

It's what Seattle, Phoenix, and a handful of other police officers and agencies have done. "My successors are doing it. I feel really proud that the guy who's in charge of the unit I was part of for so long is moving in the right direction," says White. "The tipping point will come if we continue to pursue it."

Like any good shaping plan, success doesn't come overnight. It's all about learning to recognize small successes en route to the end result. Baby steps in a positive direction. 🐾

*For more information about the trainers mentioned in this article, see "Resources," page 24.*

*Stephanie Colman is a writer and dog trainer in Los Angeles. She shares her life with two dogs and actively competes in obedience and agility. See page 24 for contact information.*

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**Stephanie Colman**, Caninestein Dog Training, Los Angeles, CA. Caninestein Dog Training offers training for basic-advanced obedience, competition dog sports, problem-solving and much more! Private lessons and group classes. (818) 989-7996; caninesteintraining.com

**Pat Miller**, CPDT-KA, CDBC, Peaceable Paws Dog and Puppy Training, Fairplay, MD. Train with modern, dog-friendly positive methods. Group and private training, rally, behavior modification, workshops, intern and apprentice programs. Trainers can become “Pat Miller Certified Trainers” (PMCT) by successfully completing Pat’s Level 1 (Basic Dog Training and Behavior) and both Level 2 Academies (Behavior Modification and Instructors Course). (301) 582-9420; peaceablepaws.com

**Sarah Richardson**, CPDT-KA, CDBC, The Canine Connection, Chico, CA. Training, puppy classes, social sessions, daycare. Force-free, fun, positive training. (530) 345-1912; thecanineconnection.com

### POSITIVE POLICE DOG TRAINERS

**Steve White**, i2i K9, Woodinville, WA. (206) 718-4504; i2iK9.com

**Bob Eden, Eden & Ney Associates, Inc, K9 Academy For Law Enforcement.** Send email to rseden@policek9.com; more information on Bob’s website at policek9.com

### HOLISTIC VETERINARIANS

**American Holistic Veterinary Medical Association (AHVMA)**, PO Box 630, Abingdon, MD 21009. (410) 569-0795. Send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a list of holistic veterinarians in your area, or search ahvma.org

### BOOKS

WDJ Training Editor Pat Miller is author of many books on positive training. All available from Dogwise, (800) 776-2665 or dogwise.com



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