

Arizona Dog Sports

TRAINING NEWS



★ Highlights ★

continued on page 2

"No one appreciates the very special genius of your conversation as the dog does."
- Christopher Morley



LIVING WITH DOGS

Beyond Fetch: Games To Play With Your Dog

A game is a great way to exercise your dog's body and mind, and spend a little quality time together. What's in your repertoire? Here's a selection of games you can play indoors or outside:

Homegrown agility. If your house is big enough, create a makeshift obstacle course for your dog from rolled-up towels, cardboard boxes, blankets hung between chairs, etc. Or, if the weather is good and you have a yard, build your course outside.

Hide-and-seek. Grab a handful of yummy treats or your dog's favorite toy. Ask your dog to sit and stay, then you go hide in another room. Call your dog and when he finds you, reward him with a treat or a play session with his toy. Repeat until you have had enough—your dog likely won't get bored anytime soon.

The name game. Get two of your dog's favorite toys and remove all other toys and possible distractions. Say the name of one of the toys (keep names simple, like "moose" or "bird") and throw it for your dog to fetch. Repeat a few times, then do the same with the second toy. After a while, test to see if your dog has made the name connection. Put the two toys down and ask him to fetch one of them. If he gets it right, praise and treat him. If not, go back to the name-the-toy-and-fetch-it game a bit longer.



Round Robin. Have the whole family (or a group of friends) grab treats and sit in a circle around 10 feet from each other. Each person then calls your dog, one after the other, and rewards him when he comes. If he catches on fast, try speeding up the game, having people call his name the moment the previous person has delivered a treat. When he has mastered this level, try spreading out further or taking the game outdoors.

DID YOU KNOW?

These Canine Superheroes?

Ace the Bathound. If you caught the movies but never read the comic books, you might have missed Batman's dog, Ace, a clever canine investigator and sidekick of the Caped Crusader.

Krypto. Superman also had a furry best friend, a nondescript, white dog from the planet Krypton. Like Superman, Krypto had supernormal abilities and senses. His alter ego was the Kent family dog, Skip.

K-9. Fans of UK sci-fi series *Dr Who* will be familiar with K-9, his robot dog companion. He packed a laser-gun nose, serious computing power, and encyclopaedic knowledge.

Dynomutt. Another robot sidekick, this one of Blue Falcon. The plot of the show centered on Blue Falcon's crime-fighting efforts, but the show itself was named for its canine hero: Dynomutt, Dog Wonder.



A WORLD OF DOGS

Understanding Fear In Dogs

When we think of a scared dog, what usually comes to mind is a trembling animal hiding in a dark corner or under the bed, whining, his tail tucked. Nonstop barking doesn't often make the list. Nor do shredding of clothes, gnawing through window frames, or growling and lunging at visitors. But these can all be symptoms of fear in dogs. Fear-based behaviors vary so widely that we frequently don't recognize them as fear-based. Instead we think the dog is being stubborn or naughty or is trying to run the household (the long-discredited dominance theory), which means we end up trying to solve the wrong problem. Clues in canine body language can help us identify fear and anxiety—fear-based behaviors always come with some physical, postural giveaways. It might be muscle tension, a tightly closed mouth or one wide open showing all the teeth, crouching, dilated pupils, yawning, ears held back, etc.



Why dogs develop fear-related conditions in the first place is a complex question without an easy answer. Genetics play a role (experiments have shown you can breed for fear of people, for example), and so does proper socialization, the all-important early exposure to new people, places, animals, sounds, and objects. Puppies who have positive experiences with all-things-new are much less likely to develop fear later in life. But that isn't the whole picture, because some well-socialized dogs do develop fear disorders. And again, bad experiences (abuse, accidents) can explain some of those cases, but not all.

Helping a fearful dog takes patience and effort on the part of human companions. Once a visit to a veterinarian has excluded pain or illness as the source of a problematic behavior, a qualified trainer or behaviorist can assess the situation and design a behavior modification plan. Treatment might include desensitization (exposing the dog to something he fears at such a low level it doesn't trigger his anxiety) and classical counterconditioning (pairing something the dog fears with something he loves). The less-than-good news is the amount of time it can take to see improvement. But the good news is that dogs can and do overcome fear. Not all dogs, but most.

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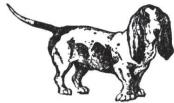


DOGS IN ACTION

The Many Benefits of Agility

Think agility is only for serious dog sports enthusiasts willing to spend every weekend on the obstacle course? Think again. Agility can be enjoyed at any level—all the way from the World Championships to low-key backyard training—and you and your dog still reap the many benefits of this fun, bond-building dog sport. For example:

- Dogs of all sizes and breeds can participate in and enjoy agility. Yes, Border Collies and Australian Shepherds excel at it, but titleholders also include Yorkies, Papillons, Spaniels, and Boxers.
- You can work the obstacle course at the pace that's right for you, meaning agility can provide gentle, moderate, or strenuous exercise.
- Training your dog to navigate agility obstacles using only hand signals and voice cues is a terrific way to improve communication—and further strengthen the bond—between you.
- Best of all? The fun you'll have together and the confidence boost you'll likely see in your dog. Mastering those tricky jumps, forging through a tunnel for the first time, figuring out what you're asking of her—these are all thrilling experiences to a dog.



HEALTHY DOG

Dementia In Dogs

Dementia in dogs—also known as “canine cognitive dysfunction”—is similar to Alzheimer’s in people and is caused by changes in the brain’s chemical balance. The condition often gets off to a slow start with mild, almost imperceptible changes but can speed up quickly. If your dog is getting on in years, be on the lookout for symptoms like disorientation/confusion, anxiety, restlessness, irritability, apathy, lack of self-grooming, loss of appetite, and changes in sleep cycles.

We don't yet have a way to cure dementia in dogs any more than we do in humans. But you can make a great deal of difference to your dog's condition by keeping up a stimulating daily routine of exercise, play, and training. Your veterinarian may also recommend adjustments to your dog's diet as well as nutritional supplements like Omega-3, vitamin E and C, selenium, beta carotene, and L-carnitine, all known to have a positive effect on cognitive function in dogs.

DOG IN THE SPOTLIGHT

The Cairn Terrier

This confident, active, tenacious little ragamuffin is the smallest of the Scottish terriers, and was originally bred for hunting rodents and small game like otters, foxes, and badgers. A Cairn's paws are made to dig—literally. The front paws are bigger and flatter than the hind paws, making it easier for the dog to get into “cairns,” the rock dens where his quarry lived. Cairns also sport a weather-resistant outer coat, highly expressive ears, and enough personality to steal any picture. Case in point: the unforgettable Toto in *The Wizard of Oz* was a Cairn (“he” was a she called Terry). Quick to learn and always up for a game, Cairns are happiest when they get plenty of exercise and stimulation. Despite their modest size, they are terrific little athletes that, with patient training, can excel at agility, tracking trials, K9 Nose Work, and Rally obedience.

To give a Cairn Terrier a home, search online for a rescue organization near you.



OUR SERVICES

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TIPS & TOOLS

4 Tips For Keeping Your Dog Healthy

As the Agnes Sligh Turnbull quote reminds us, dogs' only fault is that their lives are too short. Here are four tips for increasing your dog's odds at longevity:

Feed him well. Nothing beats premium fuel in the engine for supporting strong health; feed your dog the best quality food you can afford.

Keep him slim. Overweight increases your dog's risk of developing a myriad of health issues from diabetes to heart disease.

See the doctor. Even when your dog is healthy, schedule regular checkups with your vet for disease prevention and early detection.

Mind his dental hygiene. Don't neglect teeth brushing and dental checkups. In addition to causing pain and discomfort, oral health issues can lead to heart and kidney disease.

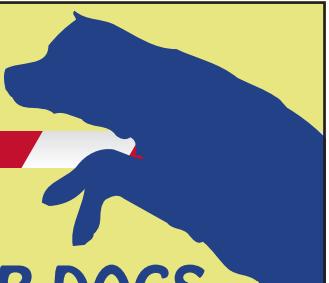
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A GYM FOR DOGS

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