

Special Issue Volume One

F RUM

National newsletter of the Canadian Association of Professional Dog Trainers

The CAPDT Turns 30

How Safe are
Dog Parks?

Certifications
are Important

Improving Dog Training Through Education

Membership has Benefits



image credit: Sylvia Koczerzuk, Walkabout Canine Consulting; photographer: Meg Gray Photography



Certification Council for
Professional Dog Trainers



AggressiveDog.com

The CAPDT Forum is a quarterly educational publication for CAPDT members.

Articles are welcomed which respect our Code of Ethics and support our goals to give professional dog trainers the opportunity to belong to a cohesive group of like-minded people; to provide a forum for education, exchange and generation of ideas and networking with other professionals.

We welcome volunteer writers and remind our CCPDT certified members that writing an article for the newsletter counts as one CEU towards recertification.

Please email the editor with your 750 (or so) word article or ideas for one.

Submission Deadlines:

Winter Issue (January 15)

Spring Issue (March 15)

Summer Issue (June 15)

Fall Issue (October 15)

Editor:

Jennifer Berg
forumeditor@capdt.ca

Contributors:

Kristi Benson
Rose Browne
Kyla Denault
Shelley Doan
Scarlett MacKenzie
Andrew Perkins
Helen Prinold
Carla Simon
Megan Stanley
Zazie Todd
Michelle Wieser
Andre Yeu

CAPDT is a member-driven organization that relies on volunteers to help it achieve success and meet the goals necessary to serve the dog training profession. Any CAPDT member can volunteer, and we have many opportunities for involvement. As a volunteer, you can help shape the direction of the association and your profession, meet new colleagues and forge valuable and lasting relationships. You also have a chance to give back to your profession and influence the key issues affecting dog training today.

Disclaimer: Forum is a publication of the Canadian Association of Professional Dog Trainers (CAPDT). As such, the Board and the Editor reserve the right to refuse advertising or submissions which are not in the best interest of the Association or its Members, or to cancel any advertising upon refund of payments made for unpublished material.

Items included in the CAPDT Forum are the responsibility of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the Association, the Board, or the Editor. Publication of advertisements should not in any way be considered an endorsement.

Articles or letters for submission must be signed and presented in a manner which is not libellous or slanderous to an individual or the CAPDT. The Editor reserves the right to edit and/or verify all copy. All submissions become the property of the CAPDT, unless otherwise noted.

Membership has Benefits



Photo crédit: Christina Sobol

DogwiseTM
www.dogwise.com

PROLINK

Canada's Insurance Connection

CONTENTS

08

Looking Back On Our Last 30 Years

The beginning of the CAPDT and how it has grown.

14

A Conversation with Sue Ailsby

Sue Ailsby's journey from compulsion-based training to positive reinforcement

22

Riding the Lines

Engaging with the public about shock collars

26

The Path to Success for Professional Dog Trainers

The importance of continued education

28

Fear Free Frontier

31

Becoming a CDBC with the IAABC

33

A Review of the KPA Professional Dog Trainer Program

36

A Community of Learners: The Academy for Dog Trainers

38

Why Did I Become a CPDT-KA?

40

The Power of a Big Introduction

The benefit of a big introduction and the science of good leadership.

44

Happy Walks for Happy Dogs

Excerpt from *Wag: the Science of Making Dogs Happy*

46

Canine Enrichment: Everyone Wins!

Tips and activities for your dog, including activities children can be involved in.

48

Scent Detection Training Tips

3 Tips to Reinvigorate Your Scent Detection Training

52

Simple Ways to Reduce Dangers Around Your Home

Simple ways to prevent accidents and injuries-at home.

56

A Safer Visit to the Dog Park

How to reduce the risk of dog fights.

Membership has Benefits



Photo credit: Jessical Eden O'Neill



PROfur®

Insurance for Pet Care Professionals

VETVINE

The logo for VetVine features the word "VETVINE" in a sans-serif font, with "VET" in grey and "VINE" in grey. Below the word is a stylized orange smiley face graphic consisting of two curved lines.

LOOKING BACK, MOVING FORWARD

Over the past decades there has been a significant shift in how people perceive dogs and the roles they play in our lives; the CAPDT has adapted to this shift and strives to lead the way to further positive changes in the industry.

- The core value of the CAPDT has always been “making dog training better” as founding member, Andrew Perkins states in his opening essay; and by leading and supporting industry professionals, the CAPDT plans to continue to move our industry forward.
- Progress can be difficult and slow, and it takes a lot of courage and determination to push against social pressure and deep-seated beliefs about dog behaviour, something that clicker training pioneer, Sue Ailsby, shares in her interview about her journey as a crossover trainer.
- Today, the internet allows people to more easily find information, community, and support, but the internet also comes with trolls and the amplification of outdated training methodologies as Kristi Benson alludes to in her piece about answering questions about shock collars.

Looking Back on Our First 30 Years

By Andrew Perkins

BestFriendsTraining.ca

Andrew is a founding member of CAPDT and was named its fourth Life Member in 2023. This article was previously published in the Fall 2023 issue of FORUM.

A cure for the feeling of youth, the feeling of being at the beginning, is to acknowledge the passing of 30 years since you did something as an adult. For many, it's the recognition of the adulthood of their children. And in a way, though my children are not quite that old, it's a birth of sorts 30 years back that is making me feel like an old dad.

When you, as a parent, look at your 30-year-old son or daughter, you see someone who has become independent, who has accomplished things you had no hand in, made choices that made you proud, made some you hope they'll learn from. You still picture them in their childhood, and you still feel like it's your job to steer them, protect them and nourish them.

“

[Dunbar] proposed the idea that pet dog trainers should band together to share ideas and expertise, and could by doing so ensure that the best information would rise to the top and come to guide us all towards better quality and more humane service to our clients and their dogs.



The first interim board: (from left) Ann Colacci, Andrew Perkins, Debbie Amar, Donna Davidson, Jan Greey (Photo credit unknown)

When I started training in 1991, it was the dawn of lure-reward, positive reinforcement training catching on as a consumer concept. The beginner class I took at Dealing With Dogs as a new dog owner was based on the Volhard approach, which was, as you know, full of reinforcement and positivity, and also very hand-on, with guiding, or “modelling.” But by the intermediate class I took that same year at the same school (where I continued to work as an apprentice, assistant and instructor ever since), we had adopted Dr. Ian Dunbar’s lure-reward philosophy.

Those methods, at least where I lived, spread like wildfire, so in just a couple of years, a majority of trainers and schools had shifted.

Dunbar held a seminar for dog trainers just outside Toronto in the spring of 1993. At the time he was doing that fairly regularly, touring North America and speaking to trainers and veterinarians. On this one visit, though, he proposed the idea that pet dog trainers should band together to share ideas and expertise, and could by doing so ensure that the best information would rise to the top and come to

guide us all towards better quality and more humane service to our clients and their dogs. While he specifically said we shouldn't be a policing body, he did propose that having such an association would show an ability to be self-governing, and he raised the spectre of government stepping in to legislate and control us as the alternative against which we would be defending.

Ninety-nine attendees gave their names and contact details on a pad of graph paper that was passed around to affirm they wanted to be part of such an organization. Of those, 16 were Americans who had travelled to Toronto to hear Dunbar, expressing interest in founding an American version.

Dunbar repeated the call later in the US, the UK and Australia, and all four countries shortly after formed "sister" organizations. Canada, if I remember right, was first to declare its launch, as CAPDT, which then stood for Canadian Association of Pet Dog Trainers. (A second "P" was added for Professional a year later, and it wasn't until the 2020s that we dropped the Pet "P" and went back to the five-letter designation.)

“

Dunbar repeated the call later in the US, the UK and Australia, and all four countries shortly after formed "sister" organizations. Canada, if I remember right, was first to declare its launch, as CAPDT, which then stood for Canadian Association of Pet Dog Trainers.



Conference speakers: (from left) Dr. Susan Simmons, Dr. Pamela Reid, Cheryl Smith, Dr. Gary Landsberg, Jean Donaldson (Photo credit Andrew Perkins)

In the fall of 1993 we held our first meeting, with an interim executive board of volunteers chaired by Donna Davidson. Donna shepherded the group as we marketed for members by mail up to our first election in the fall of '94, when Donna stepped aside and didn't run, and we elected (by mail) a full slate of executives chaired by Pat Renshaw, from among 58 registered members.

That fall was busy. We launched FORUM, our national newsletter, with me as publishing editor, Pat wrote our first constitution and by-laws and I wrote our Code of Ethics. Membership more than doubled to 140 in a few months with the FORUM going to members and prospective members to attract registration.

In those pre-internet days, our quarterly newsletter was our connective tissue. We sold advertising to offset the cost of printing and mailing, and were supported by sponsors like Benny Bully's, Garadun Sales (dog training and grooming equipment) and Professional Animal Behaviour Associates (who held trainers' seminars and were and continue to be the Canadian distributor for Gentle Leader).

FORUM grew from eight pages to 16, and added inserts like advertisements, election ballots and conference flyers. The principle, and the reason

for the name, was that it should be a vehicle for peer-to-peer sharing. If members with varying experiences and origins gave their own perspective and insight, the best information would naturally win, and we all could benefit. We started with writers mostly from southern Ontario, because I knew them and could cajole them, but eventually we had contributions from across Canada offering their insights on training technique, products, books and videos, ethics, behaviour issues, business issues, even on the direction of the Association itself.

I printed a master (with blank spaces for photos) at first on a dot-matrix printer, and gave it to a local print shop with photos printed at Costco and cropped with a knife, to be inserted when they photographed a plate before the print run. Even with the hand scanner and laser printer I got soon after, it was archaic compared to the desktop publishing capability that would soon follow.

The mailing was a big job. That print shop also provided address labels, and I would take a stack of 600 newsletters, all the inserts, envelopes, stamps and labels to my in-laws at Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, whatever visiting occasion came nearest to deadline, and our whole family would make an assembly line folding, stuffing, labelling and stamping. It filled an afternoon, busying our hands while we did the usual family-event chatter.

Those sponsors, along with numerous others, also exhibited at and supported our annual conference. Our first national conference was in Toronto in 1996. Over the years we've hit a high of

more than 700 members and held conferences for audiences as large as 350 in four provinces, featuring presentations from some of the most prominent training and behaviour names of those times, such as Dr. Dunbar, Jean Donaldson, Dr. Roger Mugford, Sue Sternberg, Suzanne Clothier, Gary Wilkes, Dr. Stanley Coren, Gary Priest, Dr. Pamela Reid, Turid Rugaas, Donna Duford, Steve White – and that's just a quick selection.

Our events attracted attendees from across Canada, but also from the US, the UK, Europe and Australia. More than once international

travellers told me they thought ours was the best of the international association conferences they attended, and some put ours in their calendars as their priority.

These were “glory years” from the mid-‘90s to the late 20-oughts, where those annual conferences gave me some of my highlight memories – I was on the conference organizing team most years, and chaired it once.

“

Our events attracted attendees from across Canada, but also from the US, the UK, Europe and Australia. More than once international travellers told me they thought ours was the best of the international association conferences they attended.

We found our way onto the primitive web in 1998 with our first website, launched as a sub-page of a site called PawPrints.com, for animal professionals. I looked back through documentation for the first mention of our own domain, CAPPDT.ca, which appeared in 2003, and online membership registration would come soon after.

Like the kids who grew up in my analogy, the Association has also had its awkward adolescence, punctuated by periods of darkness and indifference. In our case, it was a few years where volunteers were hard to come by, and as a

group we kind of just went to school and hid in our bedrooms, brooding. All us “parents” were up to doing for it was to keep it alive, stay in touch with it, and hope the darkness passed.

Which it did.

After about a teenage-long depression, we emerged into what I see as our adult form when Helen Prinold, who had served a term some years earlier as newsletter editor after my retirement, stepped up to chair the Association and injected new life and energy into our activities. Helen has been a hurricane, whipping up initiatives and projects by the handful, and while not all have landed, her strategy of getting so much going at once that could attract attention succeeded at drawing in more volunteers, more excitement. The spaghetti that stuck to the wall has been plentiful, and now CAPDT fairly bubbles with pots on every burner.

Under Helen, with the expertise of Megan Stanley, who brought executive experience from her work at APDT, we built a proper leadership succession plan to ensure against future inactivity. Because of that plan, the helm has since been passed to Scarlett Mackenzie and now Megan herself, and a

well-populated leadership team will be able to keep us chugging along without interruption.

We are no longer pioneering, stuffing envelopes at family gatherings, making a place for ourselves in the world and defining what we are. But that doesn't mean we aren't an engine for progress. Helen made ongoing education a condition of membership. We updated our Code of Ethics. Scarlett opened up channels of cooperation with complementary organizations that will likely provide a groundwork for new co-initiatives.

There's still a ton of opportunity for our future. The mission of CAPDT has always been about providing education and learning resources, and there's so much more we can still accomplish within that vision.

While it's been great to partner with our American counterparts in presenting an ADPT-CAPDT conference in Florida last year, and this fall in Kentucky, I earnestly hope we are able to put on our own Canadian events again in the coming years.

COVID made the online conference and webinar commonplace, and in addition to in-person conferences, I hope we will move to hold more



(Above) Turid Rugaas gives a workshop at our annual conference



(Above) The first three Life Members: (from left) Gary Wilkes, Pat Renshaw, Dr. Ian Dunbar

(Right) Dr. Ian Dunbar receives the first Life Membership from Chair Pat Renshaw

(Photos Andrew Perkins)



focused seminars or mini-conferences online. These could be a source of revenue to fund other initiatives, using admission fees or, if they're free, sponsorship and post-event viewing fees.

I'd like to see a fund developed for applied, practical research, where members could submit a proposal for a grant to test a hypothesis and produce a paper, a peer committee could be assembled to review it, and CAPDT could be its publisher.

I hope we'll see renewed enthusiasm for the peer-to-peer nature of FORUM, with more voices from more corners of our country and more varied experience offering their contribution.

I expect smarter people than me to come up with other ideas that fill that education and resource mandate. If we also grow outside that vision, I hope it will be within the scope of what we can really impact or achieve; ambition is brave and good, but it must be tempered or our failures will be a distraction.


“

Our core value on Day One was simple, and as easy to express then as it was in that lovely plaque you gave me in the spring: “the betterment of dog training.” Whatever we set out to accomplish, please let's ask ourselves at each first step: Is this consistent with who we are? Will it make dog training better?

Scarlett and the CAPDT board conspired with my wife Kathryn before the last AGM to surprise me, in a recorded interview, with the gift and honour of a Life Membership. When they sprung it on me I was, literally, speechless. Scarlett offered me a chance to say something further (having already interviewed me for over half an hour, so you'd heard plenty from me already), and I was so moved by the moment, I had nothing at all. I missed an opportunity to offer my heartfelt gratitude to the last few boards who have picked up and carried the organization so I could step aside.

Thank you.

I also missed the chance to say how important CAPDT has been to me for these 30 years. I've learned so much about training and behaviour from its members and guests, but also about people, about leadership, about the importance and value of volunteerism – to both the volunteer and to the community. I've had the joy of planning huge projects and seeing them bloom, and the fulfilment of knowing that I participated with a group of people who made something significant and lasting that is, in our very small and kind of closed corner of the universe, a force for Good.

Here's the last of my hopes for the future of CAPDT, as I adopt the role of a dad who steps back and watches the adult offspring flourish with minimal parental input: that we never lose sight of who we are. Our core value on Day One was simple, and as easy to express then as it was in that lovely plaque you gave me in the spring: “the betterment of dog training.” Whatever we set out to accomplish, please let's ask ourselves at each first step: Is this consistent with who we are? Will it make dog training better? 

Membership has Benefits



Photo credit Jess Smith Photography



Effortless Marketing

Succeed Online - Step by Step

Clicks!
with **digipaw** woof

Being Open to Change:

Sue Ailsby's journey from compulsion to positive reinforcement

By Jennifer Berg, CDBC, CPDT-KA

Oberhund.com

The following is a revised version of an article previously published in the Winter 2021 issue of FORUM and the Spring 2022 issue of APDT Chronicle of the Dog. Photos courtesy of Sue Ailsby.

I've always been interested in trainers who have changed the way they train, in particular "cross-over trainers" who have switched from compulsion-based methods to force-free, positive reinforcement methods. What motivated them to make the change and did they ever question their decision? What obstacles did they face and how did they overcome them? Sue Ailsby (a pioneer in the dog training industry) and her training journey provides some insight into our human tendency to resist change despite the concrete evidence and logical arguments in front of us.

Over the past six decades Sue Ailsby has pretty much done it all, including (but not limited to) show ring competitor and judge, training and titling in nearly every dog sport, training her own service dogs as well as PTSD alert dogs, and dabbling in Search and Rescue dog training. Sue is a well-known international speaker, a faculty member of Fenzi Dog Sports Academy, and the author of *Training Levels: Steps to Success Volumes 1 and 2*, a well-received step-by-step training manual. But one of the most important things Sue is known for, especially in Canada, is promoting non-aversive, positive reinforcement-based training, particularly clicker training.

Sue began training dogs when she was nine years old, and in her early teens was an apprentice trainer at her local dog club — she used to smuggle her Chihuahua in her coat to ride the bus to dog class. By the early 1970s, Sue, now a

young adult, had been competing and judging in Obedience, Conformation, and Tracking (the only options available at the time). It was around then when she started on her path away from traditional, compulsion-based training.

Sue describes the beginning of her search for an alternative type of training as a subliminal thought. "I was raising my first litter and it occurred to me that I didn't want to train a puppy in front of the bitch, or train the bitch in front of her puppy. I thought 'Why not?' And then I thought 'Well, because I don't want the puppies to see their mother getting treated like that.' I



Sue with Scuba at a show in Connecticut in 1997. Scuba was the first dog Sue trained as her own service dog, and was the first dog she used with Freedom Dogs (PTSD service dogs for marines).

wasn't being any harsher than anybody else; it's just when you've got a choke chain on a dog, you're using the choke chain."

Her next pivotal step happened when she won Best In Show with one of her Giant Schnauzers. "When you trained in Conformation it was all positive — the attitude is the most important thing: the dog has to be excited, interested, enthusiastic. We were waiting for the photographer and my dog was starting to fuss. I turned around and said 'Sit' to get her to stop, and she put her ears back and stopped looking like a Conformation dog. At that moment I made the decision to stop training Obedience because at the time I knew of no alternative to compulsion-based training. I said to myself 'Okay, I won't do Obedience anymore because I'm not going to do that to another dog, so I guess all I can do is Conformation and Tracking.'"

But big changes were starting to happen in North America and Sue's training options were about to open up.

"Back in the early 1980s I started hearing rumours about some people using food to train dogs. There wasn't any of that happening in my area; it was just people talking about it. There was no Internet in those days, I mean it was very very young. I don't remember where I heard about

it the first time, but when I did hear about it, I was actively pursuing it because I wanted to make a change in the way I was training.

"I read an article in *Dogs in Canada* called 'Food vs Force in Training' so when I was in Toronto for a dog show I phoned the author. This was before long distance calling was free. He told me Ted Aranda in Detroit was doing some stuff, so I looked all over the place and I found Ted doing a seminar in Detroit. I took a train to Windsor and rented a car to attend that seminar.

"But it wasn't a How To seminar, it was a Problem Solving seminar. He didn't explain anything at all about what he was doing; he just got one dog up after another and solved the problem. So I went home from this seminar and tried to reverse engineer what he was doing."

Sue says she was having lots of success, but her understanding took a giant leap forward when Grace MacDonald, a trainer from Winnipeg, came to her house one day.

"Grace was probably like five minutes ahead of me in her discovery of this stuff. I had judged her husband in Obedience a couple of months before she came to visit me. He was showing a St. Bernard in Obedience and I couldn't believe this St. Bernard. I had never seen anything like it. The

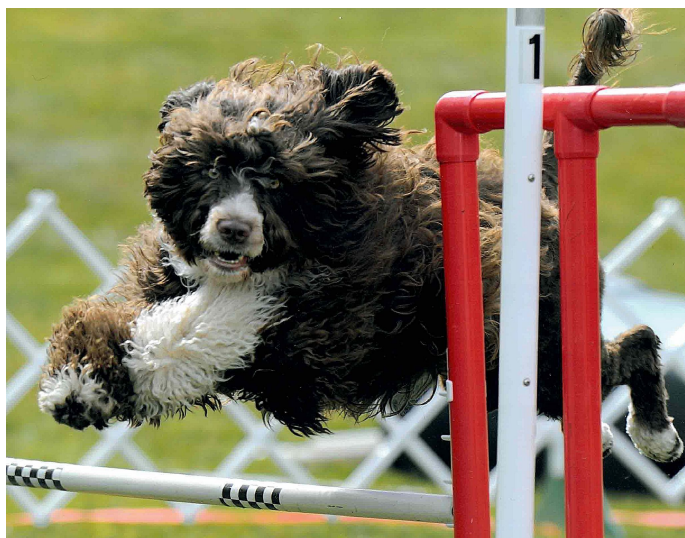


Sue and her Giant Schnauzers enjoying the winter in Regina, Saskatchewan in the early 1980s.

"A newspaper photographer stopped me on the lake and asked if he could take a picture of them pulling. I said, 'Sure.' He said, 'OK, I'll just stand here and you tell them to go.' I warned him that he was too close (5' away) but he insisted. We knocked him right over. After that he decided maybe he'd stand 15' away to try it again."

dog was excited, interested, and enthusiastic, and I had never seen a St. Bernard work like that before. And I had shown St. Bernards! Grace's husband had done a bunch of double-handling and things like that but I didn't nail him for it because I was just so impressed with how his dog was working.

"Grace and I were standing in my kitchen talking about training and she said 'You've got one more half a step to take.' And she showed me how to use the clicker. Soon, I was using it to get my dog to touch my hand, and then my knee, and then my hand again, and so on. Suddenly my dog turned and ran up the stairs to the second floor and turned around and ran back down and touched my hand again. And I thought 'Huh.' One half of my brain is saying 'Why did she do that?' And the other half of my brain is saying 'My dog can't walk away from me in the middle of a training session!' So I asked Grace, 'Why did she do that?' and she said, 'Well, because she was feeling a little like she'd been thinking a lot and she felt like she just wanted to take a little time off so she ran up the stairs and realized she was okay and ran back down again.'



Syn, a female Portuguese Water Dog, in an Agility trial.

"I was faced with the realization that I'm allowed to let the dog think. After that moment, it was just me bounding along learning things and finding people who were also exploring."

Sue returned to training Obedience but this time with the new methods she was learning. But she discovered she had one more barrier to push through.

It was the first time Sue would be entering an Obedience trial with a dog she trained without a choke chain, a dog trained without any physical corrections. "One half of my brain is saying 'Okay, we have a trial coming up in a week and she's doing great. Don't change anything about what you're doing.' But the other half of my brain is saying 'But she doesn't understand that she has to heel. She thinks it's negotiable. I'm just going to tell her that she has to do it. I can do it. I can be nice.' So I put the choke chain on her while the other half of my brain is screaming 'Don't do it! Don't be stupid!' And we start practicing.

"This Giant Schnauzer is actually doing a strut step heeling, which Giant Schnauzers don't do. She hears a little noise off to the left so she looks off to the left and I give her the tiniest little pop with the choke chain and keep right on going all cheery and great. But I could see in her posture that she thought that was weird. We go along again and she looks off to the left and I give her a tiny little pop with the choke chain saying happily 'Come on, let's go!'

"And she stopped dead.

"The one half of my brain is saying 'You've done it now! Ten months of work and you just ruined it! You'll never get her to heel now!'

"And the other half of my brain is saying 'She can't stop in the middle of my training!'

"And while I was standing there arguing with myself, suddenly her ears came back up. She wagged her tail and she whipped around to my right side all ready to start heeling again. The

“

“I can’t see something like that and think about what happened without knowing that I spent 20 years of my life not understanding the animal I was working with.”

conclusion she came to was that maybe she should be trying this behaviour on the other side of me where the hurt wasn’t happening.

“Right then I just sat down and cried. The choke chain wound up in the garbage can that day and I never used one on a dog again.”

Sue describes a pivotal moment in her training journey when she first attempted to clicker train one of her dog’s to do the broad jump.

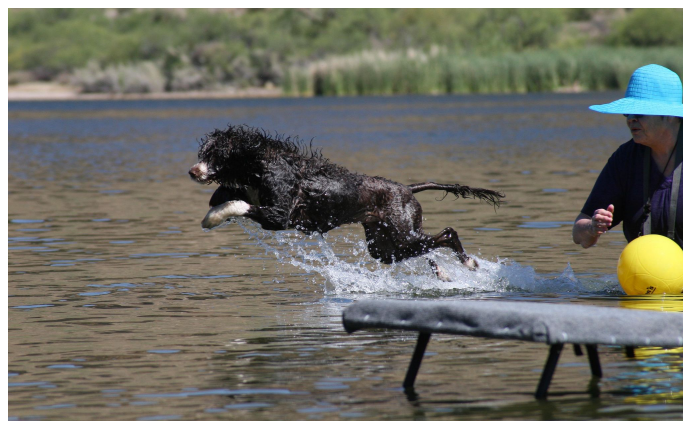
“We were having a CKC meeting at my training building and I was there a half hour early so I could open the door for people. I was hanging around and I thought I’d see what my dog and I could do with a broad jump. At this time I had never trained a broad jump using a clicker. I was too lazy to go and get all of the boards so I was just using two that were nearby. I set the two boards 6 inches apart and I clicked the dog for looking at them, walking towards them, and so on. I spread them apart a little and we did it again. And then I was shaping her to jump over them. And I spread them apart again and got her to jump over them until she’s jumping over four feet with two boards. With me sitting about 10 to 15 feet away. I was all excited because she knew how to do the broad jump.

“So I went over and got the two other boards and put them down, thinking we can do a whole broad jump. ‘Okay, jump!’ She jumped and landed

between the 2nd and 3rd boards proudly. Ta da! I was stunned. I was not expecting that to happen. She was jumping almost 5 feet before. And now she can’t jump 36 inches over 4 boards? That’s ridiculous! I was standing there trying to figure out what was going on, and she was standing there proudly and expectantly Ta da! Then she got mad. She started pacing around grumbling as if muttering to herself ‘I just did an amazing thing and I don’t even get a click for it! There ought to be an 800-number for this kind of abuse!’

“And then she looked at me, and she backed up, and she ran and she jumped all four boards. Now, think about that. In her first attempt she did exactly what I taught her to do, but that’s not what I thought I was explaining to her. I didn’t understand when I saw the mistake that I made, but the dog recognized the mistake and corrected it. Before I could think ‘oh, did you think I meant two boards?’ She said ‘Wait a minute, were you talking about the full distance and not two boards?’ And then she asked me if that’s what I was thinking.

“Now, imagine if the dog had been corrected for making the mistake. In the past, she would have been given a correction for jumping just the two boards and it wouldn’t have been her fault. And I



Sue with Syn practicing for the Water Trials for Portuguese Water Dogs around 2013 in Canyon Lake, AZ. The water trials mimic the traditional jobs on fishing boats.

“

“I’ve since learned you can’t tell people things that they don’t want to know. We get so embedded in what we’ve been told to do and so it must be right.”

never would have seen that mind-boggling mental ability in her to see the mistake that was made in communication before I saw it. I can’t see something like that and think about what happened without knowing that I spent 20 years of my life not understanding the animal I was working with.”

Sue was finding amazing results with this new approach and she expected other dog people around her would be very interested in learning these methods, especially her fellow trainers in the dog club.

“We had such a good bunch of people training in those days in the club. We had an actual apprenticeship program and a trainers meeting once a month. It was a wonderful environment so I was excited to share all this fabulous new stuff that I was finding. At a meeting I showed the group of 12 or so trainers how I could easily train a dog to do all sorts of behaviours quickly using a clicker and food. And they responded with ‘Well, that won’t work. We can’t do that. That’s stupid.’

“I was absolutely gobsmacked!”

She tried another approach and suggested the club let her teach a class so they could see what happens. The club agreed. “At the time, the club’s limit was 10 dogs per class with one trainer and one apprentice. They sometimes allowed up to 12 dogs if there were lots of small dogs or several

trainers taking the class. Well, they signed up 23 people in my class! And I didn’t even have an apprentice, so you can imagine what the first week was like.” After that experience, Sue realized if she wanted to teach a clicker training class, she would have to do it without the support of the kennel club.

She decided to teach a free class in a park and invited some people she thought would be open to learning something new and weird. “Some people attended and it went very well. I remember there was a kid in the class with a Springer. We were working on heeling around the figure 8 and he came the next week and said watch this: and he heeled around the figure 8 backwards! As soon as I started teaching the free class, I was done with the kennel club. I didn’t stamp my foot. I just quit.”

“I’ve since learned you can’t tell people things that they don’t want to know. We get so embedded in what we’ve been told to do and so it must be right.

“When I was about 13 years old, I was assisting teaching in an Obedience class with a club in Saskatoon. There was a woman in the class who wouldn’t use a choke chain on her German Shepherd. She said things like ‘Mommy said lie down’ and ‘I’m so disappointed. Can you please lie down?’ We made so much fun of her when she was not there. But her dog was the best in the class. And the dichotomy of her having the best dog in the class and her not using a choke chain and talking to the dog as if he knew something never really presented itself to us. What we were seeing was not jibing with what we believed, yet we never thought we should ask her a question.

“A similar thing happened to me when I had a Portie I wanted enter in Novice Obedience. About a month before the trial I put her in a Ready to Trial Open Class to get her used to working with other dogs around. I suddenly realized she didn’t know how to do a broad jump. Back when I had decided I wouldn’t train Obedience anymore I had

“

“It’s much easier now to make the switch if you’re in the right place mentally and have the right people around you. I mean, there are people who are still in my old kennel club who are being told the exact same thing as forty years ago, and it would be just as much of a break for them as it was for me or anybody else. It’s your whole social circle.”

given away my broad jump. So, just for the sake of the class, I asked the club if I could borrow their broad jump and bring it back next week. Everybody in the class saw that she did not know how to do a broad jump the first week. I came back the next week and she was doing the full length broad jump. There were people there who had been talking amongst themselves expressing the fact that they had been training the broad jump for two years and their dog still didn’t know how to do it. So in one week, I went from no broad jump to a full broad jump and nobody in the class asked me how I did it. Not one person.”

Sue shares another experience of the cognitive dissonance can happen when deeply held beliefs are challenged.

“In the early 1990s my vet asked me to come to a Vet Association meeting and talk about dog training. Normally there would be 12 vets there, but for the night of my talk the room was standing room only because the vets had brought their families. With everyone sitting/standing in a big circle, I put my puppy, Scuba, on the floor in the middle and said ‘Okay, I’m going to make Scuba

go and touch your boot’ and then I’d use the clicker and drive her over to the boot. ‘Now I’ll get her to go around your chair’ and I’d drive her over there. And then ‘Now I’ll get her to spin in circles’ and so on.

“I worked Scuba for 20 minutes, and then I picked her up — totally unbrushed — and I said ‘Okay, I have two questions: What is it? And how old is it?’ They all agreed it was a mongrel and somebody said ‘Well, you wouldn’t have been able to teach her all that stuff in probably less than about five years so I’m saying she’s five years.’ I said, ‘This is a Portuguese Water Dog, so mongrel was a good guess because you’ve likely never seen one before. This is a Portie and she’s three months old.’ One of the vets exclaimed ‘You couldn’t teach her all that stuff in three years!’ I had to pass the puppy around the circle so the vets could look at her teeth because they didn’t believe she was a puppy.”

Sue has since learned to accept that people need to be open for a shift to happen. “When the pupil is ready, the teacher appears. But look at what I discovered when I opened myself up. I had to actually say ‘I don’t do that anymore’ before I could start seeing what were the little tiny shoots of what was going on around me.”

Sue persevered through the obstacles, including the ones created by other dog people in her community who didn’t understand the new



Syn retrieving a bumper in a Water Trial.

“

“If you’re thinking of making the switch away from compulsion-based methods but you aren’t sure you want to take the risk, try teaching a behaviour that isn’t important, like a trick, and then you can see what happens. You do not want to start with something important to you because you’re going to make mistakes.”

methods she was using. She kept learning as much as she could about the science of dog behaviour, clicker training, and the potential of, as Sue puts it, “the little persons inside the dog suits.”

“It’s much easier now to make the switch if you’re in the right place mentally and have the right people around you. I mean, there are people who are still in my old kennel club who are being told the exact same thing as forty years ago, and it would be just as much of a break for them as it was for me or anybody else. It’s your whole social circle.

Sue has a helpful tip for those trainers thinking of crossing over. “If you’re thinking of making the switch away from compulsion-based methods but you aren’t sure you want to take the risk, try teaching a behaviour that isn’t important, like a trick, and then you can see what happens. You do not want to start with something important to you because you’re going to make mistakes.”

“There is one thing I will absolutely guarantee you as a crossover trainer: if you have a dog you started the old way and cross over and then get a puppy, you will not have the same strong desire to train the old dog anymore. You will be so excited by what the puppy is teaching you that all your effort will go into the puppy. This has happened a hundred times.” 🐾

S

SEVERE

T

TECHNIQUES

O

OUTDATED

P

PROCEDURES

As of December 2022, CAPDT Members are not to introduce severe techniques and outdated procedures into the training plan, including (but not limited to) prong/shock/choke collars, noise- or startle-based methods, or cinching the thorax, abdomen, or prepuce with a leash.

See the CAPDT Code of Ethics for a full description.



Membership has Benefits



Photo credit: Lori-Lee Regimbald



Riding the Lines: How to remain hopeful and engage with the public about shock collars

By Kristi Benson, CTC PCBC-A

KristiBenson.com

This article originally appeared in the Summer 2023 issue of FORUM.

Recently, I got an email that was both heart-breaking and heart-warming. The sender, a man we'll call John who was based in the United States, had a question for me: "did my shock-collar based fencing system further harm my very fearful dog?" At the start of his email, John described his dog as a pit-bull type dog who had come to his family as a rescue years ago. John described the dog as a well-loved family pet, but one who had come to the family with what sounds like generalized anxiety and stranger fearfulness. Although she had warmed up to members of her immediate family—John, his wife, and his children—she did not ever come around to being comfortable with novel humans, and displayed aggression towards them. Despite this, the dog in question had passed away an elderly dog a few years ago after a long and happy life with her adopted family.

“

Recently, he had read a blog I had written about alternatives to shock-collar based fencing systems and wanted to know: had his fencing choice harmed his dog? Did the shock collar cause, or worsen, her aggression towards people?

To contain this dog on their large, open lot, John had installed and used a shock-collar based fence with this dog, who was on this fence system for her whole life. Recently, he had read a blog I had written about alternatives to shock-collar based fencing systems and wanted to know: had his fencing choice harmed his dog? Did the shock collar cause, or worsen, her aggression towards people?

As dog professionals, we ride a fine line in these situations, don't we? We ride a few fine lines, truth be told. The first line is, should I bother to engage here? My own mental real estate for handling questions about shock collars is finite, and chatting with every e-comer about them could be draining. Those who ask with seeming innocence but a usually poorly-concealed pro-shock agenda each present a rather painful cobble on the short road to burn-out. It is not my job, it is never my job, to accept the floggings of the staunchly pro-shock contingent. Luckily, they are not usually as convincingly congenial as they think they are, and John was clearly asking because he legitimately wanted to know: did he, unknowingly, make his dog worse?

Another set of lines we have to ride is how to approach these situations, professionally, ethically, and pedagogically. Professionally speaking, I did not have enough information from his email to determine why the dog was barking, snarling, and biting strangers; nor was John a client with buy-in and signed waivers in the first place. Although my time to engage with non-paying clients is limited, this dog had already passed on and did not present a welfare concern or public safety issue. For these reasons, I decided that I would engage. John was reaching out with an honest question, open to learning, and curious about his dog. Personally, I find curious

dog guardians who want to educate themselves and improve their dogs' lives to be my favourite people to engage with—isn't that just catnip to us, as pet professionals?—and I knew I would be able to get it across to John that there were enough details unknown that any musings on my part would be just that: musings.

Ethically and pedagogically speaking, I was presented with a challenge. I do not typically back down from telling my clients about the risks of aversive tool use. John had indicated that he was no longer using the shock-collar fence and did not plan on ever using shock again, so there was no urgent appeal to be made, no dog suffering currently. Nonetheless, I could have been upfront, and stridently stated that it was my professional opinion that it's unlikely that shock was benign to this dog. But would this kind of shame and blame helped John? Helped his future dogs? Helped his previous dog? No, no, and no. So instead I went with another approach, one which I believe was reasonable in this context: I let him know that shock collar manufacturers are clever and motivated to sell their product to those of us who love our dogs. They in fact capitalize on our affection and desire to do right by our dogs, by offering images of freedom and increased welfare in association with these fences.

I did outline, in the abstract, how shock as an aversive stimulus may have made this dog worse

“

I let him know that shock collar manufacturers are clever and motivated to sell their product by offering images of freedom and increased welfare in association with these fences.

or contributed to the dog's degrading behaviour around strangers. I also discussed, in the abstract, how dogs can simply be scared of strangers as novel social stimuli—that stranger fearfulness is not always (nor possibly even commonly) a fully-learned fear; and in fact it is something that we, as dog professionals, need to be fighting back against using all the tools at our disposal: breeding choices, socialization, public education, and the use of positive reinforcement training. In other words, I was gently honest about how the shock collar may have contributed to stranger fearfulness (if a stranger -> shock contingency had been created), but also about how dogs typically come to have stranger fearfulness.

I'm not sure if my approach was the clear right choice, and I'm not even sure if there was a clear right choice here. In the end, I hope I got several important points across: we all love our dogs, we all want the freedom that shock collar fences seem to promise, shock collars are not without well-established negative side effects, stranger fearfulness is complex (if largely preventable with breeding and training choices), and that his educational journey towards non-aversive training and management was fantastic for his current dogs and oh-so-heart-warming for me as a dog trainer.

I hope that I hit all the right notes. I hope that he takes his newfound knowledge and becomes an advocate for gentler, kinder dog training among his friend group. And I hope, quite desperately, that at some point in the future, none of us have to ponder how to answer these emails that show up every time we cautiously hit “refresh” on our email inboxes, because shock collars will have become banished—much to the relief of dogs—to the trash heap of history. 🐾

Membership has Benefits



Photo credit: Scarlett MacKenzie



THE VALUE OF CERTIFICATION

In our unregulated industry, reputable certifications are increasingly important for consumer confidence and to elevate the industry to professional standards. Industry professionals need to be educated in current science and the best practices to ensure humane and ethical treatment of animals.

- Megan Stanley writes about the importance of education and community when striving for success as a dog trainer
- CAPDT members share their thoughts about some reputable and highly regarded certifications within the dog training industry; and
- Shelley Doan encourages trainers to harness the science of leadership and promote their certifications when introducing themselves.

The Path to Success for Professional Dog Trainers: Continued Education and Community

By Megan Stanley, CPDT-KSA, CBCC-KA, FFCP
(Trainer)

DogmaAcademy.com

Megan is the founder of Dogma Academy, an online dog trainer education program.

Becoming a skilled and effective professional dog trainer is much more than just mastering basic commands and leash techniques. It's an evolving journey that requires a commitment to continuous learning, seeking certifications, finding mentors, and building a supportive community. Continued education and certification are vital for professional dog trainers and fostering a network of mentors and peers can elevate one's career to new heights.

When I first started my journey to becoming a professional dog trainer, there were limited options for getting a formal education. Training schools were few and far between and many taught out-dated methods. Most trainers worked under a mentor and some went on to validate their skills via CCPDT (Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers).

Once my business began to grow, I was often approached to mentor aspiring trainers. I enjoyed this but felt like they would benefit more from structured learning, hands-on practical experience, and a way to validate their skills. I started Dogma Academy to better provide these to those who needed a formal bridge between learning and obtaining certification from CCPDT. Today, to maintain the highest level Dogma Academy certification, a commitment is required to obtain a CCPDT or IAABC designation within two years of graduating. As well, Dogma Academy offers online and self-paced options and mentorship. Internship opportunities.



Sarazin Photography

I've mentored hundreds of trainers through Dogma Academy and the factors below are what I consider critical to a trainer's success.

Staying Ahead in an Evolving Field

The field of dog training is dynamic and always evolving. New procedures and discoveries in animal behaviour are continually emerging. To provide the best services to clients and their canine companions, staying up-to-date with the latest trends and techniques is essential. Continued education ensures that trainers remain informed about the most effective, humane, and evidence-based approaches to dog training.

Demonstrating Credibility and Expertise

Obtaining certifications from reputable organizations showcases a professional's commitment to their craft and validates their



Continued education and certification are vital for professional dog trainers and fostering a network of mentors and peers can elevate one's career to new heights.

expertise. Certifications provide tangible evidence of a trainer's skills and knowledge, instilling confidence in clients who are seeking reliable and competent trainers for their dogs. Moreover, certification adds a level of credibility and professionalism that can set a dog trainer apart in a competitive industry.

Navigating Complex Behaviour Issues

Dogs are unique individuals with diverse backgrounds, personalities, and behavioural challenges. Professional trainers often encounter complex behaviour issues that require specialized knowledge and skills. Continued education equips trainers with the tools to address a wide range of behaviour problems effectively, helping dogs and their owners achieve positive outcomes.

Finding Inspiration and Innovation


Being part of a community of fellow trainers and mentors provides a wealth of inspiration and innovation. Connecting with like-minded professionals opens doors to exchanging ideas, discussing best practices, and finding solutions to common challenges. By learning from each other's experiences, trainers can broaden their perspectives and refine their techniques, ultimately benefiting their clients and their furry friends.

Building a Supportive Network

The journey of a dog trainer can be both rewarding and demanding. There will be moments of success and moments of frustration. Having a network of mentors and peers provides invaluable emotional support. These individuals understand the unique challenges of the profession and can offer guidance, encouragement, and a listening ear during tough times.

Nurturing Lifelong Learning

Continued education should not be viewed as a one-time obligation but as a lifelong commitment to learning and growth. As trainers advance in their careers, they may want to specialize in certain areas, such as service dog training, agility training, or behaviour modification. By constantly seeking out new knowledge, trainers can adapt to changing industry trends and broaden their skill sets.

In conclusion, the journey of a professional dog trainer is marked by continuous learning, certification, mentorship, and community-building. Embracing these aspects not only elevates a trainer's skills and credibility but also contributes to the overall well-being of the dogs and their owners. The bond between humans and their canine companions is profound, and professional dog trainers play a pivotal role in nurturing that bond through education, expertise, and unwavering support. 



Used with permission

The Fear Free Frontier

By Rose Browne KPA CTP, Fear Free Certified® Professional (Trainer)

DynamicCanines.ca.

“Fear is the worst thing a social species can experience, and it causes permanent damage to the brain.” (Dr. Karen Overall, PhD., DACVB)

You probably just quickly read the quote above, right? If so, please, take a moment, go back, and read it again – slowly.

Let this sink in: FEAR = PERMANENT. BRAIN. DAMAGE.

As a dog trainer how does this make you feel: sad, angry, overwhelmed, validated, regretful, inspired or a combination of all the above? If this is the first time you’ve seen this quote your mind may be spinning out of control as you begin to process the harsh reality of this statement. Will it haunt you? Or inspire you to help make a change?

A Fearful Reality

‘Haunted’ is the exact word Dr. Marty Becker has used to describe how he felt after hearing the iconic statement from Dr. Karen Overall, a world-

“

“Fear is the worst thing a social species can experience, and it causes permanent damage to the brain.” ~ Dr. Karen Overall, PhD., DACVB



Photo courtesy Rose Browne

renowned veterinarian behaviorist at a veterinary conference he attended back in 2009.

I can’t know exactly how this statement made Dr. Becker feel, but I’m sure many of us (especially crossover trainers like me) can appreciate how devastating and humbling it feels when you realize that what you believed was helping instead caused harm to the dogs under your care. This is a pivotal life-changing moment where we have a choice to make: stay on the same path or forge a new one.

Facing Fear Head On

Fortunately, Dr. Becker’s ‘haunting’ became his inspiration to change the fear-inducing, harmful practices within the veterinary world. From there Fear Free® was born with a mission ‘to prevent and alleviate fear, anxiety, and stress in pets by inspiring and educating the people who care for them.’

Dr. Becker put together a team of experts covering all aspects of the veterinary world who worked with him to design, develop and launch the inaugural Fear Free Veterinary Certification program in 2016.

Personally and Professionally Fear Free

I first heard about Fear Free® from a good friend who was (and still is) a member of the team working with Dr. Marty Becker on the development of the programs. When the inaugural course launched, I jumped at the opportunity to enrol, for personal and professional reasons.

Despite being a certified trainer who used force free training and behaviour modification techniques, I was also the pet parent who avoided going to vet with my GSD Bella. She'd experienced several traumatic events at the vet clinic when she was younger resulting in such a high level of fear, anxiety, and stress that she would begin trembling with fear the moment we pulled into the parking lot.

It was gut wrenching to witness this level of anxiety, and despite my best efforts to help her, without having cooperation and understanding from the veterinarian side it was impossible to reduce her fear of the vet clinic. Once I completed the Fear Free program, I had a clearer understanding and new knowledge of how I could partner with my veterinarian to help Bella. Without the implementation of the program's techniques, I know we would never have been able to reduce Bella's fears and anxiety in that environment.

“

Once I completed the Fear Free program, I had a clearer understanding and new knowledge of how I could partner with my veterinarian

As I'd personally experienced the benefits of Fear Free, I was excited to take the Fear Free Animal Trainer Certification Program when it launched in 2018. This is a distinctive certification program that is unlike any other dog training certification with a specialized focus on training for the emotional well-being of the animal. It provides trainers with the ability not only to partner with the veterinary community but also to help reduce, protect, and prevent the animal from experiencing fear, anxiety, and stress in a myriad of other contexts beyond the veterinary clinic.

The prerequisites for the program include having at least one certification/license from their approved list of animal training academies and/or organizations as well as taking an entrance exam with a passing score of 80% or higher. By bringing the existing world of positive reinforcement organizations together and requiring an entrance exam, Fear Free® is ensuring that animal trainers are 'above board' and already align with their mission and goals which, in my opinion is a win-win for our industry.

The Fear Free movement has been both a personal and professional journey that has enabled me to help educate clients, veterinarians, and veterinarian staff about the impacts of fear, anxiety, and stress on dogs, whether it's at home, in a vet clinic, or training environment; and to help implement ways that we can successfully manage, reduce, and prevent these negative emotions from happening in the first place.

The Many Faces of Fear Free

Since the launch of the Fear Free Veterinary Certification program, many other experts from the various fields of animal care have joined Dr. Becker's team, working tirelessly to bring Fear Free's mission to the rest of the companion animal world, not just for professionals but also for pet parents. And it shows! As of this writing there are Fear Free® Certification programs for trainers, groomers, pet sitters, boarding,

daycares, and a free shelter program. Fear Free Happy Homes is a 100% free online community devoted exclusively to pet parents, providing the most up to date information and free education for behaviour, training, grooming, veterinary visits and much, much more.

A United Frontier That's Conquering Fear

Never in the history of the companion animal world has there been a single entity that is bringing together under one umbrella all the various pet modalities who are united together with the same mission that's focused on educational training specifically designed with the emotional well-being of animals for all aspects of their lives. This is a huge, groundbreaking accomplishment that is transforming the pet world as we know it. Fear is at the forefront and we're learning how to conquer it together.

I can't predict the future, but when it comes to Fear Free, I have a strong feeling that this movement will continue to grow and fearlessly forge ahead to new frontiers for the world of companion animals and those of us who care for them for many years to come.

Interested in becoming a certified Fear Free® Professional? Learn more at [FearFreePets.com](https://fearfreepets.com)



Used with permission

FIVE FREEDOMS

OF ANIMAL WELFARE



Freedom to express normal behaviours that promote well-being



Freedom from pain, injury, or disease



Freedom from hunger and thirst



Freedom from discomfort



Freedom from fear and distress

My Journey to Becoming a Certified Dog Behavior Consultant (IAABC)

By Michelle Wieser, KPA CTP, CDBC

WiseCanine.ca

Like many trainers, my journey into the world of professional dog training was born out of personal necessity. Timber, my bully-breed mix, faced significant behavior issues, including anxiety, reactivity towards other dogs, travel phobias, sound sensitivities. Basically, she was a mess. She's doing amazing today, but that's a story for another time.

I've worked extremely hard to develop the knowledge and skills to help Timber live a safe, stress-free, and enriching life. As a trainer, I'm driven to help pet parents who are struggling with complex behavior concerns.

After completing my certification as a Karen Pryor Academy Certified Training Partner (KPA CTP), I wanted to enhance my qualifications to work effectively with dogs struggling with severe behavior concerns. I've completed many behavior related courses and webinars over the years. I highly recommend the comprehensive 'Aggression in Dogs Master Course' developed by Michael Shikasho, CDBC. It was during this time that I discovered the International Association of Animal Behavior Consultants (IAABC) and the Certified Dog Behavior Consultant (CDBC) certification process. What drew me to this certification was its depth, industry respect, and knowledge-based assessment.

What is a Certified Behavior Consultant?

A Certified Dog Behavior Consultant is a professional equipped with the knowledge and expertise to resolve a wide range of problem behaviours exhibited by dogs. These issues include aggression, anxiety disorders, guarding



Christina Sobol Photography

behaviours, fears, phobias, and other abnormal behavior concerns. What sets CDBCs apart from traditional dog trainers is their ability to address complex behavior issues that arise from the dog's emotions. While obedience and manners training is important, it primarily deals with surface-level behaviours. Dogs struggling with emotional concerns require specialized behavior modification strategies to get to the root of the problem.

What is the Certification Process?

The CDBC certification process is designed to ensure that consultants meet these high standards. It involves the submission of written case studies, responses to challenging questions, and the demonstration of competence in assessment and intervention strategies, consulting skills, knowledge of animal behavior, and species-specific knowledge of health, and behavior. CDBCs are required to stay current in the evolving science of animal behavior and consulting through continued education, including coursework, conferences, seminars, and webinars.



Christina Sobol Photography

The IAABC CDBC exam process was extremely challenging, I spent months pouring over my computer providing as much detail as possible to demonstrate my knowledge and skills. While the exam process was extremely challenging, it was extremely rewarding. It allowed me to validate my expertise in modifying concerning behavior, consulting with pet parents, and collaborating with veterinarians and veterinary behaviourists. Most importantly, it empowered me to confidently promote my skills to clients. As the only CDBC in the Yukon Territory, I regularly work with dogs experiencing significant behavior issues. I'm able to investigate each dog's unique history, triggers, and evaluate potential mental health or health concerns. I know when to suggest veterinary support, how to create safety and management plans, and how to design behavior modification plans to address each unique set of behavior concerns.

The Need for Certification

In the world of dog training and behavior consulting, there is a concerning lack of standardized regulation. I'm often not the first trainer clients have worked with. Prior to working with me, many have worked with trainers who recommend fear, pain, intimidation and deprivation strategies. These practices often create worsening fear, anxiety and other unpleasant emotions. They can worsen or create new behavior concerns. No one wants that.



Christina Sobol Photography

Becoming a CDBC has been a transformative experience in my career. It was a confidence building experience, proving to myself that I am suited for behavior consulting. It attests to my knowledge and experience and ensures that I provide the highest level of expertise for my clients.

For dog owners, recognizing the value of a CDBC certification when seeking professional help for their dogs can make all the difference in achieving desirable behavior outcomes. For fellow dog trainers and industry professionals, considering this certification can elevate your skills and open doors to a fulfilling career in behavior consulting.



Used with permission

Certification Through the Karen Pryor Academy Dog Trainer Professional Program

By Andre Yeu CPDT-KA, KPA CTP, TAGteach Level 1

WhenHoundsFly.com

Andre is part of the Karen Pryor Academy Faculty. Photos courtesy Andre Yeu.

The world of dog training is vast, with countless techniques, methods, and schools of thought. For the professional dog trainer, continuous education and refinement of skills is paramount. One program that stands out among the myriad of choices is the Karen Pryor Academy Dog Trainer Professional Program.

Because dog training is an unregulated industry, it's up to us to individually decide how we want to present ourselves to the world, and how we want to answer when someone asks "Are you certified? Where did you learn how to train dogs?"

When I was considering starting a dog training business back in 2009, I decided that I wanted to have some kind of bedrock certification that would accelerate my learning, slingshot my development as a professional, and serve as a solid foundation to build upon, so I enrolled in the Karen Pryor Academy and studied under Steve Benjamin, and attended workshops in Endicott, New York.

As a graduate of the program myself (2010) and becoming a Faculty Member of the Academy (2021), here are some of my thoughts on why every trainer should consider the Karen Pryor Academy Dog (KPA) Trainer Professional Program.

1. Grounded in Science-Based Training Techniques

Science-based, positive-reinforcement training is at the heart of the KPA Dog Trainer Professional Program. The principles of operant conditioning



Learning how to handle chickens with Terry Ryan, at ClickerExpo 2017. (Photo credit Andre Yeu)

and clicker training, both of which have their roots in scientific research, form the core of the program's teaching. This ensures that trainers receive an education grounded in methodologies that are proven to be effective, humane, and yield long-lasting results.

Since Karen Pryor's retirement, Ken Ramirez, who needs no introduction, heads the entire Karen Pryor Clicker Training organization as the Chief Training Officer, and ultimately is responsible for the curriculum as it is taught today.

2. Renowned Reputation and Global Recognition

Karen Pryor is a name synonymous with clicker training and positive reinforcement. Her reputation in the dog training community is unparalleled. By completing the KPA program, trainers align themselves with this gold standard, enhancing their credibility and marketability. The certification is recognized globally, which means that KPA graduates possess a qualification that travels with them wherever they go. The list of world-class professionals that have the KPA CTP certification across the globe is considerable.

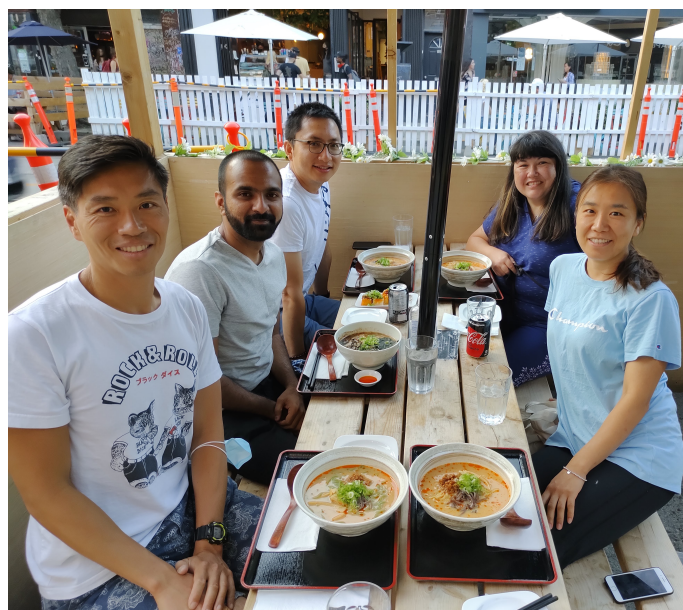
3. Comprehensive Curriculum

The KPA program offers a blend of online and hands-on training, ensuring that trainers receive a well-rounded education. The online components allow flexibility, making it easier for working professionals to pursue the program without significantly disrupting their schedules. The in-person workshops are led by experienced KPA faculty who provide invaluable feedback, ensuring that trainers can translate theory into practice seamlessly.

Since 2021, I have personally delivered the program to many cohorts across the country, and the unique combination of online learning, remote video submission, and in-person workshops is an unbeatable formula.

4. A Strong Network of Professionals

Graduating from the KPA program means joining an elite network of dog trainers who share the same foundational training principles. This network becomes an invaluable resource for exchanging ideas, seeking advice, or even collaborating on projects. The connections made during the program can have long-lasting benefits for a trainer's professional journey. Being part of the KPA CTP community means you are never alone, and can both give and receive referrals across the globe, and easily network for partnership or employment opportunities.



KPA CTPs often hold informal alumni meetups in major cities around North America, and the world. In Toronto, we often get together a couple of times a year for educational opportunities or just to socialize.

5. Continuous Learning Opportunities

KPA understands that the world of dog training is ever-evolving. As such, they offer alumni access to resources, workshops, and seminars to keep updated on the latest techniques and research. This commitment to continuous learning ensures KPA graduates remain at the forefront of the industry. For example, at ClickerExpo (Karen Pryor's annual animal training conference) KPA CTPs are given exclusive access to pre-conference workshops, such as a one day chicken camp at ClickerExpo 2017, hosted by Terry Ryan.

6. Business and Marketing Guidance

For many dog trainers, the passion for the job is evident, but the intricacies of running a successful business can be challenging. The KPA program doesn't just teach dog training techniques; it also provides guidance on business and marketing ensuring that trainers are equipped not only to train dogs, but also to successfully market their services and grow their businesses.

When I graduated from Karen Pryor Academy in 2010, I founded my own training company, When Hounds Fly, which is now approaching its fourteenth year, has multiple locations across Canada and a team of over twenty people working together to spread positive reinforcement training in our communities. I try to add Canadian context to my students in workshop, and I'm proud to see many of my graduates launch or grow their own successful businesses over the last couple of years.

7. Ethical Training Focus

In an industry where methods vary widely, KPA places a strong emphasis on ethical training. This means not just being kind to the animals, but also being transparent with clients, setting clear boundaries, and continually striving to improve one's knowledge and skills. This ethical foundation is crucial in building trust and credibility in the dog training community and with clients.

The Karen Pryor Academy requires all KPA CTPs to sign and adhere to the KPA Pledge, and as an organization, takes violations of the code of conduct in this pledge very seriously.

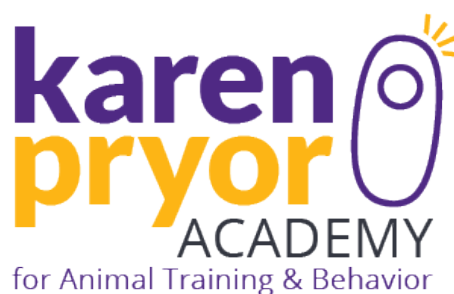
8. Commitment to Excellence

The rigorous standards maintained by the KPA program ensure that graduates truly embody excellence in their field. The commitment to maintaining these high standards, combined with

the emphasis on continuous learning, ensures that KPA trainers are always at the top of their game. I'm proud to say that if you go on social media or any online community and ask for recommendations of programs or trainers, Karen Pryor Academy and KPA CTPs always are recommended without hesitation.

Learn More:

For professional dog trainers, the Karen Pryor Academy Dog Trainer Professional Program offers more than just a certification. It presents an opportunity to align with the best in the industry, adopt science-based and ethical training methods, and gain a holistic understanding of the business. The program's blend of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and business insights makes it a comprehensive training ground for those serious about making a significant impact in the world of dog training. 🐾



Used with permission

A Community of Learners: The Academy for Dog Trainers

By Kristi Benson, CTC PCBC-A

KristiBenson.com

Kristi is an employee of The Academy of Dog Trainers.

As I sat down to write this article, I checked on the timeline for my interactions with Jean Donaldson's two-year intensive dog training program, the Academy for Dog Trainers. After a long scroll down to the very bottom of my Academy email folder, I saw that I had applied for admission in 2013. Incredibly to my mind, it has been just ten years since I got my acceptance email! I graduated in 2015 and began working there in 2016; my offer of employment at the Academy remains one of my greatest honours.

Prior to my application to the Academy, I had researched various schools that offered dog training education to find a good fit for me. I also read stacks of books and attended numerous telephone-based seminars (anyone remember those? From pre-webinar days, when we had to use the actual telephone!). I ended up choosing the Academy for a few reasons: it was wholly online, which suited my geography in rural Canada; it seemed to be a much more rigorous than other programs I looked into at that time, which I felt did a great service to dogs with behaviour issues in particular; and it included a focus on counselling humans, in addition to competency training dogs. Although all the programs I checked used positive reinforcement instead of aversive tools and techniques, the Academy's staunch position and ongoing advocacy on that topic was also important to me.

Now that I am an employee of the Academy, I am frequently asked who is a good fit for the Academy. Some qualities don't really seem to matter—the applicant's age and other demographics, previous work history (with the exception that all applicants do need some



Photo courtesy Kristi Benson

experience handling dogs beyond just having a pet), previous educational discipline (we have amazing students and grads from all sorts and kinds of educational backgrounds, from physics to music!), for example. But those who have a keen interest in or curiosity about dogs (rather than just dog training) and an openness to working positively with dog guardians do seem to thrive, in particular, in our program.

The need to work positively with dog guardians seems self-evident when considering the mission of the Academy, which takes into account the welfare of dogs, dog trainers, and dog guardians. But negativity towards dog guardians is still common in the industry, and the basic mechanics of a good “helping” relationship are not well-understood by all dog professionals. An entire unit on client counselling is included in the Academy, and it is refreshing in its focus on positive, caring,

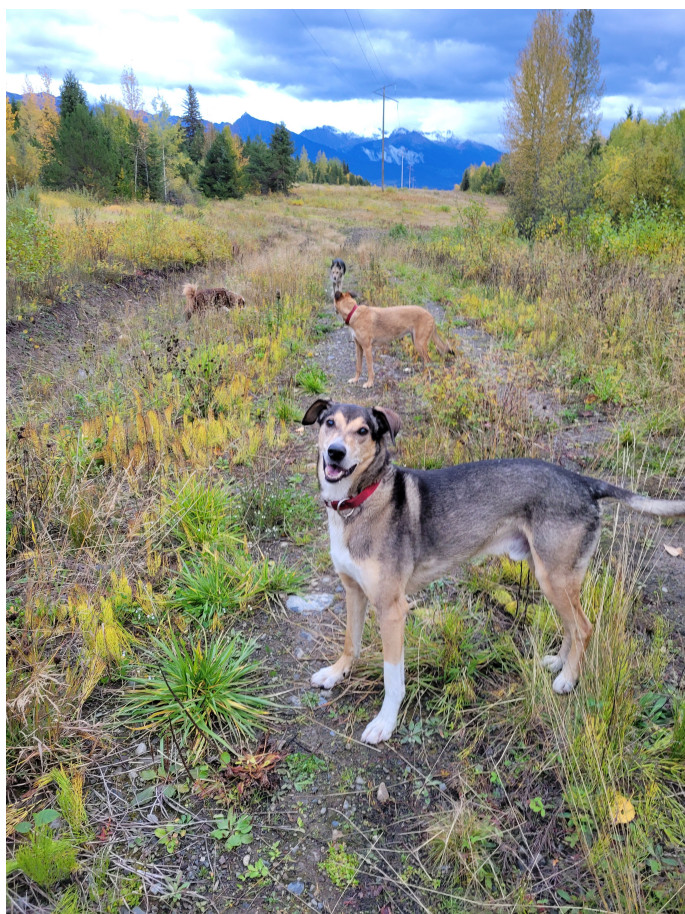


Photo Kristi Benson

Timber, Sitka, Soleil, and Datson on an afternoon walk at the author's ranch near New Hazelton in northern British Columbia

and effective skills to help our human clients.

The need to consider dogs in their fantastic entirety is something that is becoming more and more accepted by the dog training community at large, much to the benefit of dogs. In the Academy, this includes instruction on ethology, genetics, evolution, behaviour, learning, development, and so much more. These two themes—how to work with human clients and the bigger picture of dogs as functioning organisms—are vital to our graduates' ability to work with human clients of all types and sorts of dogs, and all types and sorts of behaviour issues and training goals.

And finally, the Academy's focus on the welfare of both humans and dogs, and how to manage human interactions, sets the stage for a fantastic community of learners. Rarely does a week go by that I don't thank my lucky stars to have such a group of committed, clever, warm, and experienced trainers in my midst. 🐾



Used with permission

Why Did I Become a CPDT-KA?

By Helen Prinold, M.Sc., B. Comm., CDBC, CPDT-KA, FFCP

DogFriendship.Weebly.com



You can see from my byline that I have several letters after my name that relate to dog training, and if you're not a dog trainer they may seem like alphabet soup. Indeed, many folks don't know what weight to give each of the sets of initials, and in my email signatures

I try to provide extra information so that folks can understand what knowledge and skills I am stating as my background. At the bottom of my emails I add the following note about my certifications:

M.Sc. Animal Behaviour & Welfare & B. Comm, Management and Economics - University of Guelph

CPDT-KA – Certified Professional Dog Trainer – Knowledge Assessed (ccpdt.org)

CDBC - Certified Dog Behaviour Consultant (iaabc.org)

FFCP - Trainer – Fear Free Certified Professional (fearfreepets.com)

I do this, in part, because I want people to learn more about the certifications if they are interested. I want them to understand that the places I got the alphabet soup letters from are reputable, and aren't simply "diploma mills" (entities that hand out titles to anyone who pays the fee).

After all, finding a well-trained and qualified dog pro can mean the difference between getting

state-of-the-art information backed with scientific evidence and strong experience that can help your dog versus finding an unqualified person who has perhaps just started training, or (perhaps worse) has learned old-fashioned training methods that can harm the dog they are trying to help. And without any government-regulated certifications in Canada, a trainer's claims about their methods can be hard to check and compare to others who state they are "dog whisperers."

Third-Party Testing is Important

Now, to be fair, at the time there were some great programs run by excellent trainers who produce good graduates. But there were no third-party checks and balances on their systems that would help consumers distinguish them from folks preaching old-fashioned (and often harmful) training. And this lack of third-party accountability is a reason that many veterinarians and others were unwilling to recommend a specific type of trainer certification to their new dog-owning clients. Generally only dog trainers who knew the



Third Party Certification

An entity independent of both the student and the organization giving the certification declares that the recipient meets the competency requirements.

The third party has no interest (financial or otherwise) in whether or not the student attains the certification.

“

The letters can be confusing to some people. To be clear, the CCPDT is not the Canadian Association of Professional Dog Trainers (CAPDT), although the CAPDT does require some of the same things from their members.

strengths and weaknesses of each program were able to evaluate the certifications.

Today, if I was planning to aim my business at selling information and services to my fellow dog trainers, I would probably add one or two non-third-party certifications to my alphabet soup. Places like (but not limited to) the Academy for Dog Trainers, the Karen Pryor Clicker Training Academy and the Pet Professionals Guild produce graduates that many dog training gurus feel are extremely well-qualified.

Yet, if I want to get dog guardians to bring their new puppies and wild-child teen dogs to me, even today I would choose only education and certifications that have third-party standardized exams, and certifications that are being spoken about by vets and written about in consumer publications as the minimum requirements a novice dog-owner should look for in a trainer. For example, the American Kennel Club's "How to Find & Choose a Dog Trainer" lists the Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers (CCPDT).

The CCPDT is run by an industry board of directors that follows international standards for certifying bodies and is a leader in producing graduates who have taken standardized third-party tests. Some of the CCPDT credentials

include CPDT-KA (Certified Professional Dog Trainer-Knowledge Assessed) which is the entry-level certification, CPDT-KSA (Certified Professional Dog Trainer-Skills Assessed), and CBCC-KA (Certified Behavior Consultant Canine-Knowledge Assessed)

Requirements for the CPDT-KA include a minimum level of education, experience, and compliance with a Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice that includes the policy that trainers use methods that are based on choosing the Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA). To maintain the credentials, every three years certificants are required to take a minimum amount of continuing education from recognized professionals (or rewrite the exam).

I support the work of the CCPDT to bring third-party testing to the industry and to help set a minimum standard that sets apart their graduates from folks with no training or experience who have just "put out their shingle." Yet there is more work to be done!

The Canadian Association of Professional Dog Trainers is currently working on a "made in Canada" national curriculum and testing that will ensure colleges, universities, and private trainers have standardized information to teach and standardized testing to ensure the student has learned the information and can apply it in the real world. In the meantime, if you are aiming to reach clients and their dogs in the general population, a CPDT-KA is a good initial certification to consider.



Certification Council for
Professional Dog Trainers

Used with permission

Big Introductions and the Science of Leadership

By Shelley Doan CPDT-KA, CBCC-KA, B.Sc

2020CanineConsultants.ca

“Hi My Name is Shelley and I am a certified dog trainer. My certification means not only do I have lots of experience living and working with dogs, but I also have spent several 100 hours apprenticing with a knowledgeable, educated mentor and have spent hours and hours educating myself by learning all about behavior modification and best practices. To maintain my certification I am required to continue my education, learning the latest dog training and behavior information from other canine professionals such as behavior scientists, animal ethologists, vets, and canine sports professionals. When I am not learning from other professionals, I am doing my own scientific reading and writing. I am also a member of the CAPDT, IAABC, CCPDT, my local Rescue organization, and I have a dog named Sydney.”

This, or some version of it, is my introduction to the start of all my dog classes. At first it felt awkward to share this about myself because, as one colleague said to me, it seemed like self-promotion. That is, until I read *The Science of Good Leadership: Lessons from Research for Organizational Leaders* by Julian Barling, a Queens University professor.

“

So take some time to develop your own big Introduction and don't be shy about highlighting your credentials. You earned them!



Shelley Lynn Photography

The Importance of First Impressions

Barling writes about the importance of first impressions and why having an introduction such as the one I just shared creates more trust in me from my clients. There is so much contradictory information published about dog training that it can be hard for an owner to figure out what the answer is to help their dog. By sharing this introduction it helps my clients better understand why certification is important and it creates more buy-in to what I am teaching. More buy-in from clients means I can help more dogs. So take some time to develop your own big Introduction and don't be shy about highlighting your credentials. You earned them!

In addition to making a good first impression, there were other things that I learned from *The Science of Good Leadership* that I began to apply to become a better dog trainer.

The Science of Good Leadership

Good leaders build and align people to a common purpose. What more common purpose do we have than helping the dog? I understand that the owner, just by virtue of reaching out to me, wants help, but I don't need to correct everything they say or do. I do need to show them what success might look like for their dog. Good communication is required to make sure that first, I have heard and understood what their objectives are in training; and second, how we are going to reach those objectives. This means that a training plan needs to be one that the client can commit to and that suits their family. The end goal is the same: to work on building a better relationship between the dog and client through training.

Good leaders make people feel safe. Bring as much compassion, curiosity, and patience as you can to make a safe place to share. This means leaving your judgements behind. I have sat and listened to clients talk about the need to dominate their dog, to be the alpha, only to find out later that they spoke that way because they thought that is what a dog trainer wants to hear. By not confronting them directly and by being curious and empathetic to their struggles, the owner feels safe to share and give me all the information I need to help the dog. Most often I find we have the same goals but maybe different ways to reach that goal.

Good leaders devise strategies that help people succeed by simplifying the complex. In order to help the client succeed, I work hard to present things in simple ways. This is because people only remember four percent of what you tell them — and maybe less when you consider that they brought their own distractions: Fido. To keep it simple for my clients, I often repeat the four foundations that are part of most training: SETTLE, FOCUS NAME GAME, AND FOLLOW ME. Each week we work on some version of these four foundations by increasing the difficulty of the exercises. This gives the handler an image of

what the objective might look like. For example, FOLLOW ME is what walking on a loose leash looks like, yet there are many skills involved: how to hold the leash; how to direct the dog on a loose leash; how to work with lunging and pulling; how to work around various distractions; and how to use other rewards such as the reward to 'go sniff.'

Good Leaders pay attention to the little things that are important to people. This could be as simple as showing up on time for scheduled appointments; ending classes when they are supposed to end; and dressing professionally. Maybe you want to take it a little further such as sending personalized emails to each person, inspiring them, noting a key factor of success, and giving them something else to work on that might be related to their end training goal.

Finally, the best thing I learned from Barling's book is that leadership is a skill that we can all practice. The more we practice good leadership the more the dogs and owners we can help. 🐾

Leadership is a skill that we can all practice. Good leaders:

- build and align people to a common purpose.
- make people feel safe.
- devise strategies that help people succeed by simplifying the complex
- pay attention to the little things that are important to people.

Membership has Benefits



Photo Paul Dearlove www.OnGoldenPaws.com



BUSYPAWS

HAPPY DOGS IN A HUMAN WORLD

An underlying core value for improving dog training is the desire to help dogs be happy and safe in our human world. CAPDT members share some practical tips for improving dogs' lives.

- implement dog-centric walks, enrichment, and training opportunities that tap into a dog's natural behaviours;
- create a pet-safe home; and
- change human behaviours at a dog park to help prevent dog conflicts.

Why Letting the Dog Out Into the Yard is Not a Walk

By Zazie Todd

CompanionAnimalPsychology.com

Adapted with permission of the publisher from the book Wag: The Science of Making Your Dog Happy, written by Zazie Todd and published by Greystone Books in March 2020. Available wherever books are sold.

Why Letting the Dog Out into the Yard Is Not a Walk

One reason some dogs don't get walked is because their owners think the dog will get enough exercise while hanging out in the yard. But it turns out dogs are inactive for most of this time. Researchers in Australia took video of fifty-five young Labrador Retrievers in suburban backyards over a forty-eight-hour period. 11 Of those dogs, 52 percent got a daily walk of between thirty and sixty minutes, but 31 percent were not taken for a walk at all. On average, 74 percent of the time spent in the yard was inactive, ranging between 45 and 96 percent.

The dogs in the study were more active and played more when a person was in the yard with them, though they did sometimes play with objects on their own. A dog was more active when more than 1 percent of the yard was foliage (as opposed to a flat expanse of grass); when the dog was kept inside the house at night and also had a dog house in the yard; when the dog was reported to obey commands when given; and when the dog moved around from one door to another, to a window, to the gate, and back again trying to keep tabs on their owner in the house.

In this study, problem behaviors (barking, chewing, digging, and carrying or manipulating objects) were more common in the yellow Labs than the brown and black Labs, in dogs who had not been trained, and in dogs who were more active. Since some of the activity was related to transitions from one place to another, apparently to check on their people, it is possible some of the problem behaviors were related to the dog not liking being apart from their people.

This study shows that the design of a yard will affect what dogs do there. Putting the dog out in the yard is not a substitute for a proper walk, but having foliage gives dogs something to explore and may also bring birds and wildlife for the dog to observe.

Sometimes people don't walk their dog at all, or as often as they should, because of dog-related issues. Having a reactive dog who barks, lunges, or growls at other dogs or passersby; being concerned about other dogs in the neighborhood; and dealing with a dog that pulls on-leash so much that walking feels difficult are just a few of these reasons.

No words are more likely to strike fear into the heart of the owner of a reactive dog than "He's friendly!" It means someone is about to let their dog run right up to yours, even though you are trying hard to stay at a safe distance. This can undo weeks of hard work in an instant. We all make mistakes or find ourselves in a situation where our dog's recall isn't as good as we thought, but unfortunately some of the "He's friendly!" crowd are oblivious to the idea that others don't want their hairy, muddy dog to jump and slobber all over them and their dog.

When a dog is reactive on-leash, it can be really hard to tell if the dog is friendly to other dogs and just frustrated because they can't get near to

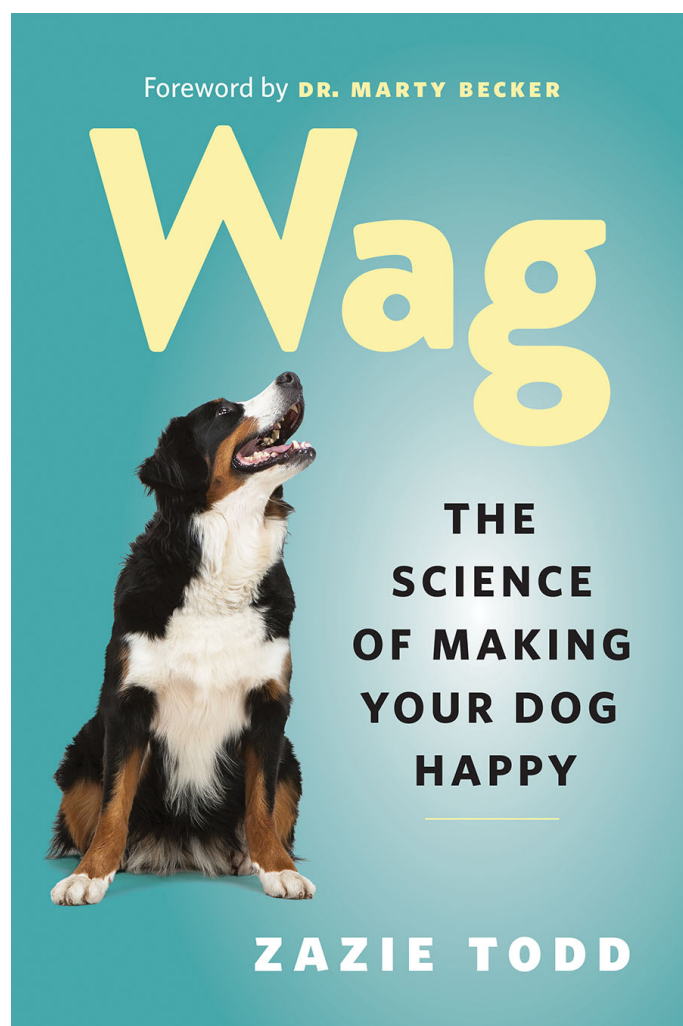
them and play, or if they are actually terrified and desperate to keep the other dog away. For the friendly dogs, lots of off-leash play opportunities can help, because dogs are sociable creatures and enjoy hanging out or playing together. But it's important to keep fearful dogs safe, which means keeping distance between them and the other dog. And at the same time, you can teach them to like other dogs after all by making something nice happen, like feeding them pieces of steak, when another dog is in sight.

Walks with a reactive dog require stealth and planning: it means having your eyes and ears open for other dogs at all times, and being alert and ready to move behind a car or tree or change direction to keep the other dog out of sight. For some reason, this avoidance behavior sometimes offends other dog owners, and then you have the added issue of keeping your fearful dog away from a shouting person trying to advance with their “friendly” dog while giving completely wrong advice, like “Just let them work it out.” Try to stay calm, and do your best to move away from the kind of experience that made your dog fearful in the first place.

How to Apply the Science at Home

- Go for walks. They are good for your dog—and good for you too. If you are not in the habit, try to develop a routine—your dog will soon learn it and come to remind you when it is time! Whether it's one or two walks a day (not counting toilet breaks) depends on you and your dog.
- Use appropriate gear (e.g., a no-pull harness) and train your dog to walk nicely on-leash and to come when called.
- If you need help to resolve problems such as fear or reactivity, hire a qualified dog trainer. Think about ways to manage the problem while you work on it (e.g., avoiding places where dogs are off-leash or walking at quiet times of the day).

- If you see someone trying to keep their leashed dog away from you and your dog, cut them some slack and give them space; they may be trying hard to keep a reactive dog feeling safe. Insisting that your dog meet theirs or offering unwanted training advice will not be welcome or helpful.
- If dogs must be on-leash in your neighborhood, get creative to find off-leash opportunities such as dog parks, fenced fields, tennis courts for hire, or a friend's fenced yard. 🐾



Canine Enrichment: Everyone Wins!

By Kyla Denault, author of *Brain Games for Your Dog*

EasyBreezyDogs.com

As dog trainers, we know how important mental exercise is for our furry friends. How often have we heard “I took him to the park and played fetch for 45 minutes and he came home and he was still crazy!!” I ask my clients how they feel after they go to the gym or after they have played a sport. “You feel energized correct? Now how about when you spend a day studying or when I was in the corporate world, doing budgets all day long. You get home and you are exhausted!!” I explain that getting their dog to use their nose or brain can help their dog relax and get their nervous system back to baseline. Mental exercise can help calm the dog and an enriched dog is a mentally satisfied, relaxed dog!



Six Categories of Mental Enrichment:

1. **Sensory** - anything that stimulates your dog's senses, such as sight, sound, smell, and touch. Examples of sensory enrichment include playing calming music, providing a variety of textures for your dog to walk on, or introducing new smells for your dog to investigate.
2. **Feeding enrichment** - involves making meal-time more engaging and enjoyable for your dog. Examples of feeding enrichment include using puzzle feeders or hiding treats around your home for your dog to find. This type of enrichment can also help slow down your dog's eating pace and is great for those picky eaters!
3. **Toys and puzzles** - providing your dog with toys and puzzles that require them to use their brains and problem-solving skills. Examples of toy and puzzle enrichment include interactive toys that dispense treats when your dog figures out how to manipulate them, or puzzle games that require your dog to move pieces around to access a reward.
4. **Training** (my fav!) - teaching your dog new skills can help keep them mentally stimulated and engaged. Examples of training enrichment include teaching your dog to perform tricks, or practicing obedience training circuits to improve your dog's listening and response skills.
5. **Social interaction** - providing your dog with opportunities to interact with other dogs and people in a safe and positive way. Examples of social interaction enrichment include dog parks, doggy playdates with friends' dogs, or training classes where your dog can socialize with other dogs while learning new skills.
6. **New environment** - exposing your dog to new sights, sounds, and experiences outside of their everyday routine. Examples of new environment enrichment include taking your dog on hikes or walks in new locations, or visiting dog-friendly businesses or events.

More Enrichment Ideas

Circuits are a great way for puppies and older dogs to be focused on their owners, have some fun and get in those repetitions! We do a series of circuits in my puppy classes before they have some off-leash time. It's incredible to see all the young pups completely focused on their owners! Encourage dog owners to do a variety of different circuits sprinkled throughout the day. Two minutes here and eight minutes there adds up.

If you have a family with children, consider getting everyone involved in fun activities! *Brain Games For Your Dog* is a book that can help deepen the bond between you and your furry friend. The book includes over 50 fun ideas and a QR code to scan for DIY videos. Additionally, there is a French

version available. Encourage your kids to get creative and find at least one item in the recycle bin that can be used for enrichment. They'll love it!

Learning Can Also Be Fun for Humans!

If you're looking for ways to train your dog, consider checking out the colouring books created by the author. The children's book, *Bad Dog - But are they really?* and the adult version, *My Dog is an A**hole* provide training challenges and tips to overcome them. The books also include hidden objects to find, circuits to do, and adorable doggie cartoons of the author's client's pooches. Remember, your dog isn't bad, they just need training! 🐾

Print these circuits
postcards and have
fun with your dog!



3D'S
DISTANCE
DURATION
DISTRACTION

YOUR PLACE

DOWN W/ MOTION

TOUCH

SIT/STAY

AROUND

WORK ON EACH
USING ONE OF
THE 3D'S

3D'S

EASY BREEZY
Dog Training

TOOTHBRUSH CHALLENGE

HAPPY FEET

HIGH FIVE X3

PUPPY PUSH UP

TOUCH X10

BURPEE X2

DO THIS CIRCUIT ONLY
USING HAND SIGNALS
WHILE BRUSHING
YOUR TEETH!

GIVE PAW X2

DOWN W/ MOTION

TOUCH X10

BANG YOU'RE DEAD

CLOSE DOOR

CHALLENGE! PICK A TIME
2, 4 OR 6 MINUTES.
SET YOUR TIMER &
HAVE FUN!

CIRCUITS

enriched dog

The Top 3 Scent Detection Tips to Reinvigorate Your Training

By Dr. Carla Simon, MD, BSc, MBA

ScentDetection.HuntersHeart.com

In scent detection, every search is an opportunity to have fun finding everything that was hidden or learn how to improve your performance. Over my 20 years of scent detection I've learned much about what not to do and what helps most clients. Listed below are my three favourite tips for canine scent detection:

Tip #1: Reward Menu

Scent detection is all about the rewards. And if you haven't tried letting your dog select from a reward menu yet, you might be missing "uncaptured" motivation that could take your training to the next level.

Dogs learn best when earning rewards they love rather than accepting or tolerating. In professional scent detection, dogs find target odours like cancer cells or produced gas condensate, which are not inherently fascinating to the detection candidate. We build the value for finding those scents by rewarding them literally hundreds of times. If the rewards aren't sufficiently rewarding, some dogs might stop searching for target odour and start sniffing the ground for pee-mail or chasing gophers.

To explore what a dog wants, the best method I've found is presenting a "reward menu" for the dog to choose from. Start by placing a series of 8-12 food and toy rewards on the floor for the dog to interact with off-leash. If you usually train with cheese or wieners, try smelly tripe in a small plastic container, tuna fudge, squeaky balls and bunny tugs. Notice which rewards the dog



Photo credit: Furever Reflections

This Brittany Spaniel is Boo, a professional detection dog, and he is doing an exterior search. Carla Simon is Boo's breeder, trainer, and handler.

interacts with longer, appears more excited by, and keeps going back to despite distractions.

If that sounds easy, it should be. The magic happens when you do the homework and present a reward menu for the dog you want to motivate.



I've seen entire levels of dogs fail in competition because they rushed ahead and missed the scent hidden on the threshold. Given limited time in tests and deployments, you don't always have time to go back. Great searches don't begin with zooming around like a hooligan. They begin with intense focus right from the start.

Tip #2: Tap the Threshold

In scent detection, when the target odour is located right at the front door where the search starts (the threshold of a room), it's known as a threshold hide. I've seen entire levels of dogs fail in competition because they rushed ahead and missed the scent hidden on the threshold. Given limited time in tests and deployments, you don't always have time to go back. Great searches don't begin with zooming around like a hooligan. They begin with intense focus right from the start.

Luckily, it's easy to train thresholds at any age. Start by restraining the dog beside you in a doorway. (If you do it in an open room, there are too many choices). Ensure the dog is watching you while you put one bite-sized high-value reward between their paws on the floor. Tap your fingers next to the food/toy, then release the dog. They should lower their head down to the ground to immediately grab the reward. Repeat up to four more times, then stop training.

Repeat the game daily for a few days so the dog is confident. Then try putting the food down in the doorway when the dog is not watching. Bring

them to the doorway and tap the ground near their paws. Having been patterned to expect rewards at that threshold, they should drop their head down to search for the food or toy. They are rewarded with a fast, easy win. If the dog is struggling, place the food at their nose so they see you putting it on the ground before you tap.

You can also generalize tapping as a cue to search locations other than thresholds. For example, tap to tell the dog to check a specific area, like a corner you wonder if they missed. Or, when you start searching vehicles, restrain your dog right next to the wheel and tap the wheel to help your dog begin searching the wheel rather than the surrounding grass.

Tip #3: Halftime Play

In sports, halftime occurs when the event is halfway completed. In scent detection, halftime occurs halfway through the allotted training time, search area, or rewards in your pocket. It's the perfect time for an enjoyable break. Play can help relieve stress if the training session is not going well, the dog is getting tired, or you have a puppy with a short attention span who needs to refocus.

Which game to play at halftime depends on your dog's behaviour on that day in that environment. Most dogs fall into one of two categories: they have a need for speed, or they are crying for control.



Which game to play at halftime depends on your dog's behaviour on that day in that environment. Most dogs fall into one of two categories. They have a need for speed, or they are crying for control.

If your dog has a need for speed, aim to increase their arousal by playing exciting games using movement. Playing with food can be more exciting than calmly dispensing food. Try throwing food back and forth on the floor and encouraging them to chase it, chasing a frisbee, doing several tricks, or surprising them by running away. I distinctly recall a German Shepherd who came to me with reports of low motivation at search and rescue practices. She was so surprised when I started chasing her that everyone in the room couldn't help but laugh. Use your imagination and experiment with new games.

On the other hand, if your dog is crying for control, calm them down at halftime by quietly placing 5 or 10 pieces of food on the ground for them to find. This can be a game changer for reactive dogs since it's challenging to bark at distractions in the distance when they are preoccupied with steak in the grass. Or ask for skills like hand touches followed by heeling.

After taking their arousal down a notch, you can return to your training session with a dog who's better able to learn.



Photo Carla Simon, Hunter's Heart

In scent detection, halftime occurs halfway through the allotted training time, search area, or rewards in your pocket. It's the perfect time for an enjoyable break.

I hope you try at least one of the tips that resonates with you. Please share how it goes by emailing me at webmaster@huntersheart.com.

Happy hunting! 🐾

BECOME A CAPDT MEMBER

Help support Canada's national professional association for people who train dogs, work with dogs, or provide dog care services.

I WANT TO JOIN ➔

www.CAPDT.ca



Membership has Benefits



Photo credit Angela Hansen



tawzerdog

 **DOGMA
ACADEMY**

Simple Ways to Reduce Dangers Around Your Home

By Scarlett MacKenzie, CPDT-KA, FFCEP, and
 Certified Pet First Aid Instructor
NiceDogScarlett.com

Whether you're a seasoned dog professional or a first time owner, accidents can happen anytime. Prevention is always better than cure, but in case of the unexpected, have an emergency plan in place ahead of time. Prepare a pet first aid kit, and have your vet's phone number and the pet poison helpline 1-855-764-7661* programmed into your phone. If a problem arises that you're not sure requires a vet visit, or if a vet is unavailable, you can speak to a vet on a telemedicine app. Make sure to check that it's available in your province before it's an emergency.

When choosing what cleaning products to buy, be mindful of any toxic ingredients they may contain. Always choose dog-safe alternatives whenever possible, and keep cleaning products in hard-to-reach areas with child-proof locks. Dogs can open kitchen cupboards, so under the kitchen sink is a common place where curious dogs can get into harmful chemicals. Garages and sheds are also places dogs tend to spend time, so be aware of what you store in those places; motor oil, antifreeze, rat poison — all of these are harmful in very small amounts if a dog gets into them, or if they spill onto the floor.

If you can, use only non-toxic cleaning products. Some commercial floor cleaners can leave a residue behind that pets might lick and make them sick. A dog's nose is so more sensitive than ours that even smells we might find pleasant like air fresheners and scented candles can be nauseating to a dog due to their potency. Some essential oils, if undiluted, can cause severe health problems for animals. Air quality is also a major factor, as dogs, and especially cats, can

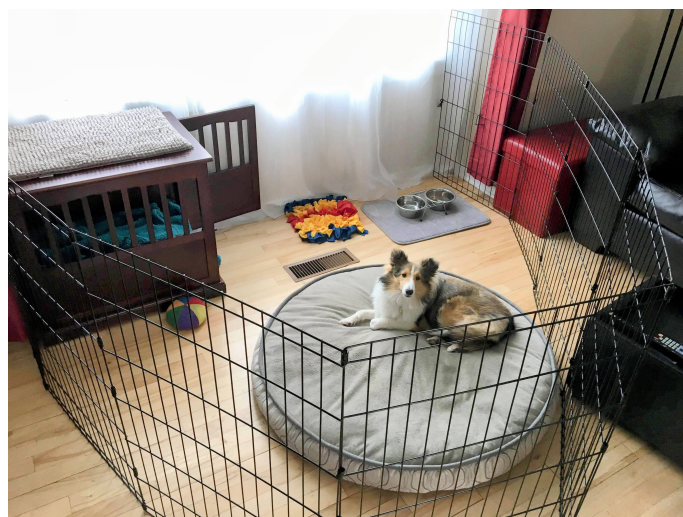


Photo S. Mackenzie

Set up a safe zone for each dog (also known as a Zen Zone, a personal space, or a puppy playpen). It will become the default place for them to be if you can't be supervising or actively training them. The safe zone will keep them from getting into trouble so they will not be practising undesirable or harmful behaviours.

Make the safe zone a comfortable location for the dog when you're otherwise occupied, and condition them to enjoy going there.

Remember, it's not a punishment!

A safe zone will go a long way to preventing chewed electrical cords, chewed couch cushions, or raiding of the garbage.

have respiratory problems due to irritants in the air. It's better to just open a window to freshen the air instead of masking odours.

Be aware of what you're putting on your skin. Some moisturizing creams and lotions contain



All photos are from Canva, and compiled into that configuration by S. MacKenzie



ingredients that are harmful for dogs if ingested. Some topical creams and lotions even have xylitol in them! Always read the label for ingredients. Other names for xylitol include 'birch sugar', 'wood sugar', and 'extract of birch bark'. Medicated lotions or ointments for muscle pain are extremely toxic to pets if licked off of your skin.

Things in your garbage can be hazardous as well. An empty bag of chips can be deadly. When a dog puts their head inside a bag of chips to lick the flavour residue, their breathing can cause the bag to cling to their neck, making it virtually airtight, causing them to suffocate. Any jar or container that an animal can get their head stuck inside can cause suffocation. To prevent these types of accidents, whenever you finish a bag of chips, get into the habit of ripping the bag open before discarding. Store jars and containers for recycling with the lids on to prevent curious dogs

from trying to get that last lick of peanut butter out of the jar.

If you have a yard, ensure that the fence is secure and your dog can't climb, jump over, or dig under it. Be sure to accompany your dog anytime they're outside. You never know when a utility reader might enter your yard and leave without adequately securing the gate. The best way to prevent yard escapes is to always supervise your dog when outside. This will also help to protect against your dog being teased, stolen, or otherwise harmed by other humans.

When planning your garden, consider planting only non-toxic plants. Daffodils, tulips, lilies, and many other common garden plants are harmful if ingested. There are plenty of beautiful and functional plants you could plant in your garden instead. Try lavender, calendula, and violas for a rainbow of colours. Herb gardens of rosemary and sage will have your yard looking and tasting great!

Basil grows well in most Canadian climates in the summer and thyme can be grown as a perennial ground cover.

Want to look up what's toxic and what's not? The ASPCA.org website has a search function where you can type in the name of the plant or product and it will give you information on how toxic it is to cats, dogs and horses.

Dogs can, and will, get into (and onto!) everything. Look around your yard for escape points, and objects they could climb or jump over. Curious adolescent dogs might use several objects like stairs to get to an area you thought was inaccessible. Perhaps there's a woodpile that's stacked next to an angled carport that agile dogs could use to jump onto the roof, and then a neighbour might call to tell you there are dogs on your house. Does that scenario sound oddly

specific? It happened to yours truly two decades ago. Watch out for windows — dogs can easily fall out of a window if it's open and they push the screen out of the frame. I had the opposite happen when a dog made his own doggy door by pushing the screen of a basement window in. (No dogs were injured in either unexpected event).

In short, take some time to remove potentially dangerous items in and around your home. Plan what's in your garden, rather than just choosing what looks pretty at the garden centre. Have a plan of what to do in case of an emergency. Best case scenario, you will have done all this planning, and absolutely nothing will happen.

**US number, credit card number required*



Membership has its Benefits

CAPDT members have access to discounts on a variety of products and services needed to run a business, such as business insurance, conferences, books, seminars, equipment, etc.

www.CAPDT.ca



Membership has Benefits

Photo credit Kelly Dearlove www.OnGoldenPaws.com



A Safer Visit to the Dog Park

By Jennifer Berg, CDBC, CPDT-KA

Oberhund.com

The following is a revised version of an article previously published in the Fall 2020 issue of Forum and the Summer 2020 issue of APDT Chronicle of the Dog



Dog parks have never been more popular. They fill an important need as yard size shrinks and cities become more densely populated, and many caregivers believe that taking a dog to the dog park is a necessary part of being a good pet parent. However, as dog park use increases so does the risk of dog fights. For this reason, many trainers advise caregivers against visiting dog parks, but this doesn't help those who rely on these spaces, nor does it dissuade those willing to take the chance for the enjoyment they and their dogs experience at the parks. It is essential that park users are fully aware of the risks and understand how to use these spaces more safely.

How common are dog fights in dog parks?

"In smaller city parks where the dog population is high, many people want to provide their pup with off-leash time regardless if it is the right environment20 plus dogs in a place the size of my living room with absolutely nothing to do .. and this is their only time out of the house/outlet for interaction of any kind? I'm more surprised when conflicts don't arise!" ~ survey respondent #88

"I think sometimes they are playing and accidents happen. It's the owners that sometimes blow things out of proportion" ~ survey respondent #9

Some dog park users and people who study dog behaviour insist that interdog aggression at dog parks is rare and not a significant concern. On the other hand, many others, including dog behaviour professionals and veterinarians, believe dog fights are common in dog parks and caution people about using them. How can there be such a difference of opinion?

Certainly, people differ in their risk tolerance, and there can be vast differences in experiences and knowledge that shape viewpoints. Some may interpret a dog interaction as aggression while

others believe it is normal dog communication or even play. Veterinarians and dog trainers are often consulted when dog park visits go wrong, so they may perceive dog fights as being frequent with a high risk of severe consequences. On the other hand, caregivers of “bomb-proof” dogs with excellent social skills may believe dog fights are uncommon and rarely result in injuries. Anecdotal evidence has value and should not be ignored, but it needs to be weighed against hard data gained from formal observation and scientific study.

What does some research say about the risk of dog fights in dog parks?

Surveys distributed at dog parks are likely to result in low risk/concern about dog fights because of selection bias. Many caregivers stop visiting dog parks after a dog fight so their responses are less likely to be included in on-site surveys of park users. A possible example of this type of bias can be found in a study of four dog parks (Lee, 2007). The survey for the first dog park was mailed to all residents in the area whether they were current park users or not, and concern about dog fights ranked second; the surveys for the other three parks were handed directly to park users, and the concern about dog fights ranked fourth.

Misinterpretation can happen when conclusions from research papers are taken out of context. For example, “*Bark Parks’ — A Study on Interdog Aggression in a Limited-Control Environment*” (Shyan, Fortune & King, 2003) calculated that dogs in the park spent 0.5% of their time in aggressive interactions, and this study is frequently cited as evidence that interdog aggression in dog parks is rare. However, a closer examination reveals a different interpretation. From March 2001 to November 2001, researchers visited one dog park 72 times (for one-hour each visit). During this time, researchers calculated 21



There are numerous variables that affect dog behaviours, such as the design and size of the park, the behaviours of the caregivers, the number of dogs in the immediate area, and the dogs’ sociability, play-style, and training. Even the same dog park can be a very different user experience depending on the day of the week or time of day.

minutes of aggressive dog interactions (14 unambiguous conflicts lasting less than 1 minute each; 14 ambiguous conflicts lasting less than 30 seconds each). If one were interested in the amount of time dogs were aggressing compared to all other interactions, then the 0.5% calculation would be useful (21 minutes divided by 4,320 minutes). However, caregivers want to know the chances that a dog fight is likely to occur at a dog park, and based on the data from this study, incidents of interdog aggression occurred 19% to 39% of the time (14 to 28 incidents in 72 visits).

Another limitation of formal studies is that the conclusions are unlikely to generalize well. There are numerous variables that affect dog behaviours, such as the design and size of the park, the behaviours of the caregivers, the number of dogs in the immediate area, and the dogs’ sociability, play-style, and training. Even the same dog park can be a very different user experience depending on the day of the week or time of day.



The “Bark Parks” study and the Howse study may not be well-suited for supporting claims that interdog aggression in dog parks is rare, but they are helpful for developing maximum capacity guidelines and arguing for larger dog parks for safety reasons.

An example of this can be found in “Exploring the Social Behaviour of Domestic Dogs (*Canis familiaris*) in a Public Off-Leash Dog Park” (Howse, 2016). In this study, observers did not witness any incidents of serious unambiguous aggression which suggests that interdog aggression in dog parks is uncommon. But this study does not represent a typical dog park experience because the dog density in this study is extremely low. Data collection occurred in two-hour sessions between 1:00 pm and 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. Observations were purposely made during this time frame because the low rate of dogs entering the park made it easier for the researchers to collect data. The average peak density conditions were 5.9 dogs in the 30,000 sq ft park which works out to be over 5000 sq ft per dog. This is a generous amount of space for dogs to avoid conflicts — a density that is far below many city dog parks, especially during peak use. Compare this density to that of the “Bark Parks” study where 14 to 28 incidents of aggression were observed. Data collection in the “Bark Parks” study occurred between 4:00 pm and 6:30 pm three to five times a week, and peak

density ranged from 30-50 dogs in the 87,000 sq ft park: approximately 2,900 to 1,740 sq ft per dog.

The “Bark Parks” study and the Howse study may not be well-suited for supporting claims that interdog aggression in dog parks is rare, but they are helpful for developing maximum capacity guidelines and arguing for larger dog parks for safety reasons.

Formal dog park studies can also be biased towards a low incidence of interdog aggression because the presence of observers and video cameras can alter caregivers’ behaviours and, consequently, the dogs’ behaviours. In both the “Bark Parks” study and the Howse study, park users were fully aware that they and their dogs were being observed and recorded: signs were posted, video cameras were in full view, and two or three researchers on site often engaged with park users directly to gather more data. It could be argued that this likely resulted in fewer incidents of interdog aggression than would normally occur. Some caregivers would have avoided the park if they felt there was a risk of their dog aggressing in front of witnesses (and cameras), and those using the park would have changed their behaviours to portray themselves and their dogs in a positive light. For example, park users likely would have reduced risky behaviours such as tossing a toy when other dogs are nearby or staying too long; and increased management behaviours such as attending to their dogs, creating distance from potential problems, and interrupting mounting and other behaviours that could be precursors to aggression.

Perhaps a more effective approach to help dog caregivers mitigate the risks at dog parks is to take a closer look at incidents of interdog conflicts at dog parks.



A dog's size did not seem to be a factor, but a dog's age did seem to be. All aggressors were older than their recipients, and most recipients were less than a year old.

Are some dogs more likely to be involved in a dog fight?

More study is needed, but the “Bark Parks” study reveals some patterns that could be significant to guide future research. Of the 177 dogs observed, there were 14 clearly aggressive incidents involving 9 aggressors and 12 recipients. A dog's size did not seem to be a factor, but a dog's age did seem to be. All aggressors were older than their recipients, and most recipients were less than a year old. The aggressors tended to be adults between 16 months and 7 years, were an even mix of male (4) and female (5), and all were neutered/spayed. (It's important to point out that 85% of all the dogs were neutered/spayed and that more research is needed to determine if the intact status is a factor in interdog aggression in dog parks.) Most recipients were male (9 males, 3 females) and were an even mix of intact and spayed/neutered (4 neutered, 2 spayed).

The sample size is very small and more research is needed, but perhaps it would be prudent for caregivers of adult dogs to be more attentive when their dogs are around adolescent males; and for caregivers of adolescent males to avoid dog parks or use them with caution, such as visiting during non-peak times, ensuring they have trained a very good recall, and supervising carefully in order to disengage their dogs from potential trouble sooner.

What are the risks to a dog if a fight occurs?

“My pup is now skittish of bark park.. a friendly social pup” ~ survey respondent #226

“He loves the dog park but I'm the one who is more scared since the attack.” ~ survey respondent #221

“My dog's behaviour towards other dogs has not changed, but he now hangs out near the gate, wanting to leave the park at that particular location. (We don't go there often anymore.)” ~ survey respondent #253

“I'm so thankful that my dog's behaviour wasn't affected after the attack. Yes he was scared immediately after, but then returned to his normal self.” ~ survey respondent #5

Between September 2019 and February 2020 I circulated an informal survey through Facebook to dog park groups across USA and Canada. In this survey, 272 dog park users answered questions about one conflict their dog experienced at a dog park. Certainly, more extensive studies are needed but this informal survey illuminates areas of interest.

According to the data collected from this survey, if a dog is involved in an interdog conflict at a dog park there is a 46% chance the dog will sustain physical injuries. As to the severity of injuries resulting from a conflict, it can be expected that about 40% of the injuries will require 3 to 10 days to heal and about 20% will require more than 10 days to heal. For conflicts between dogs significantly different in size, the survey suggests that larger dogs are at a slightly higher risk of receiving a bite from a smaller dog, and smaller dogs have a greater risk of serious injury from a larger dog.

Physical injuries are not the only risks when it comes to dog conflicts. The experiences of the respondents suggest there is about a 60% chance that a dog will develop behavioural changes (fear, aggression, and/or reactivity towards other dogs)-



The experiences of the respondents suggest there is about a 60% chance that a dog will develop behavioural changes (fear, aggression, and/or reactivity towards other dogs)-

Behavioural changes range in duration with a 25% chance the behaviours will last less than a week and a 48% chance they will last longer than 6 months.

What can park users do to reduce the risk?

"I feel I have to stay guarded especially when there are a bunch of dogs that are all in a cluster. I think entrance can be an issue. The dog park we go to has a small area for when they come in but dogs all gather in around the newcomer. It can be intimidating for even the most experienced park pups." ~ survey respondent #206

"There were 20 dogs swarming my dog as soon as we walked in. We immediately left." ~ survey respondent #180

By far, the riskiest zone for dog conflicts is the entrance/exit area. Dog behaviour professionals and formal studies assert this to be the case, and the results from the survey confirms it. According to the survey, 68% of the dog conflicts occurred inside the dog park within 100 ft of the entrance/exit (with nearly half of those within 20 ft of the entrance/exit).

The entrance/exit area is a "perfect storm" of amped-up dogs in crowded conditions. People tend to loiter near the entrance area while their dogs race around nearby and rush the gate to meet newly arriving dogs. If park exits and entrances are in close proximity, traffic is funnelled

to the same area, creating additional congestion and forced encounters between tired dogs and excited new arrivals. Dogs need sufficient space to avoid conflicts. Some dog professionals recommend at least 1000 sq ft per dog for playgroups with ideal conditions (a private area, fewer than 5 dogs, all dogs pre-screened for sociability and behaviour). In the context of a dog park, some dog professionals recommend 8000 sq ft per dog (5 dogs per acre).

Caregivers can help dogs avoid conflicts by waiting for congestion to clear before entering, using an alternate entrance/exit, immediately moving out of the entrance area and farther into the park, and calling their dogs away from newly arriving dogs. Additionally, when their dogs are near the entrance area, park users could avoid high risk behaviours such as throwing a toy, using cell phones, or having involved conversations with other park users.

"The First Rule of Dog Parks is: Keep Moving!" ~ survey respondent #268

Many dog behaviour professionals experienced in managing groups of off-leash dogs believe that dog conflicts occur less frequently when the dogs are kept moving along, and that conflicts are more likely to happen when dogs are hanging around in the same area. The data from the survey seems to support this belief — 68% of the dog conflicts happened while the caregiver was sitting or standing but only 32% while walking — but more research is needed to investigate and test the accuracy of this claim.

"The aggressor didn't want to enter park but was carried in by owners." ~ survey respondent #191

"I don't hesitate to holler at other dog owners if they're not supervising their dogs appropriately." ~ survey respondent #254

"My dog was tired and was laying down beside me and the other dog kept bugging her. She warned him three times and then snapped on him." ~ survey respondent #38

Many park users believe dog conflicts are largely due to the behaviours of other caregivers, particularly their inability to recognize canine stress signals and interrupt inappropriate behaviours. This is echoed by Louise Ginman PCT-A in her book *The Art of Introducing Dogs* (2013). Ginman, who has used dog parks for many years, asserts that she frequently witnesses dog behaviours that humans misinterpret as dogs playing, and that dog caregivers are always surprised when the interactions result in aggression.

A dog park study done in 2014 (Mehrkam, L., et. al.) looked at play bouts to learn if there are behaviours that could reliably signal if a play bout would likely end in play or play-induced aggression. Data showed that there was not one particular behaviour that could predict aggression during play, but "growl, bite-at, squirm, belly exposed, fleeing, and a tucked tail were significantly more likely to be exhibited by the initiator of aggression, indicating that the majority of play-induced aggression is "defensive." Play bouts that ended in play-induced aggression were more common in play groups of 3 or more dogs than in groups of 2 dogs. The study also indicated that social wrestling was the most likely to occur in a bout that ended in aggression (when compared with chasing and play that included a toy.)

Mounting is a common behaviour at dog parks and is commonly misinterpreted and mishandled by caregivers. Many park users will often react with embarrassment, laughter, and even sex jokes; but mounting in a play group is often a stress-induced behaviour (like a displacement behaviour) or an awkward attempt to initiate play by a dog that does

not have the social skills. In the dog park study mentioned earlier (Mehrkam, L. et al., 2014), mounting was listed as a behaviour that was associated with play-induced aggression but it was lower on the list and not a strong predictor that the play bout would end in aggression. To err on the side of caution, caregivers should calmly interrupt mounting behaviour when they see it and consider it an indication that the dog that was mounting might need a break or more careful supervision.

Caregivers who are unsure about dog body language and what constitutes appropriate play can perform a simple consent test by interrupting



Image by Katrin B. From Pixabay

“

Play bouts that ended in play-induced aggression were more common in play groups of 3 or more dogs than in groups of 2 dogs. The study also indicated that social wrestling was the most likely to occur in a bout that ended in aggression (when compared with chasing and play that included a toy.)

“


Dog parks ...are places for highly social dogs to play, not places to test a dog's social skills....Dog fights at dog parks are a genuine concern, and although park users may not be able to change the behaviours of other park users and their dogs, they can make some small changes in they way they use the parks to help reduce the chances of their dogs getting involved in a dog fight.

the dogs briefly and then letting the dogs reengage. If one dog does not want to reengage, then the “play” was not consensual. It is too risky in the context of a dog park to let inappropriate behaviour escalate to a conflict with the hope that one dog will “put the other in its place.” This is how dogs can learn to be bullies or to immediately default to behaviours like lunging and snapping to get distance. Letting dogs with unknown behaviour histories “work it out” is risky. It is safer to intervene early in the least intrusive, minimally aversive (LIMA) way to deescalate situations.

“The owner said this was the 1st time her dog had been back to an off leash park because she was aggressive in the past. This was “experimental” to see how she would behave.” ~ survey respondent #197

“We were foolish and took a dog we had just adopted and had for less than a week to the run based on the rescue org saying she was “good with other dogs.” We should have taken more time to get to know her first. It happened so fast we're really not sure which dog started it.” ~ survey respondent #210

“In retrospect, I realize that my dog was already fearful/reactive/aggressive toward other dogs, but I either didn't fully recognize that (hence, why I was still bringing my dog to the dog park) and/or kept thinking “I need to ‘socialize’ her to let her get better!” Oops.... I fell into the trap/mindset that exposing my dog to more experiences would help her learn, but now I see that she was learning to become more reactive.” ~ survey respondent #269

Dog parks can be wonderful places for dogs to romp free and be dogs, but they are places for highly social dogs to play, not places to test a dog's social skills. Dogs that are not highly social but are tolerant of most other dogs can usually manage okay in a dog park environment under ideal conditions, but dogs that are selective or intolerant of other dogs will be stressed in a dog park and become increasingly intolerant each time they visit one. Dog fights at dog parks are a genuine concern, and although park users may not be able to change the behaviours of other park users and their dogs, they can make some small changes in they way they use the parks to help reduce the chances of their dogs getting involved in a dog fight. 

REFERENCES:

Bekoff, Marc “Dog Parks: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” (153) from *Canine Confidential: Why Dogs Do What they Do*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018.

Dog Park Body Language. <https://apdt.com/resource-center/dog-park-body-language/>

Dunbar, Ian. “Dog Park Attack — Ask An Expert.” *Modern Dog Magazine* Retrieved March 3, 2020. <https://modernmagazine.com/articles/ask-expert-dog-park-dog-fight/24114>

Fratt, Kayla and and Ursa Acree CPDT-KA, CDBC. Online conversations October 22, 2019 November 12, 2019.

Ginman, Louise. *The Art of introducing Dogs*. (2013) Balboa Press.

Howse, Melissa. "Exploring the Social Behaviour of Domestic Dogs (*Canis familiaris*) in a Public Off-Leash Dog Park." MS thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 2016. Retrieved February 27, 2020 <http://research.library.mun.ca/11670/1/thesis.pdf>

Jackson, P. "Situating Activities in a Dog Park: Identity and Conflict in Human-Animal Space." *Society and Animals* 20 (2012): 254-72. Retrieved March 11, 2020 <http://www.animalsandsociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/jackson.pdf>

King, T., & Long, T. (2004). "Dog Parks: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly" *The APDT Chronicle of the Dog*, Vol.XI (6), 1-5. Retrieved March 17, 2020. <https://apdt.com/resource-center/dog-parks-good-bad-ugly/>

Lee, Hyung-Sook. *A Study of Use Patterns, User Satisfaction and Willingness to Pay for Off-Leash Dog Parks: Post-Occupancy Evaluations of Four Dog Parks in Texas and Florida*. Dissertation. (2007) Retrieved March 2, 2020. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/474e/2b28484e4625d6dc026b09a9aa18705db522.pdf>

Mehrkam, L., et. al. "Identifying behavioral precursors to play-induced aggression in pet dogs in public off-leash dog parks." Poster presentation at the 2014 Association of Professional Dog Trainers Annual Convention. (Hartford, CT) The study was made possible by a grant from the Association of Professional Dog Trainers Foundation.

Miller, Pat. "The Pros and Cons of Dog Parks." *Whole Dog Journal* Retrieved March 12, 2020. <https://www.whole-dog-journal.com/care/socialization/the-pros-and-cons-of-dog-parks>

Shaw, Julie. Learning to Listen: Canine Language TEAM: Education in Animal Behavior webinar Viewed April 18, 2020 <https://www.teamanimalbehavior.com/webinars>

Shyan, Melissa R., Kristina A. Fortune, and Christine King. "Bark Parks' — A Study on Interdog Aggression in a Limited-Control Environment." *Journal of Applied Animal Welfare Science*, 6 (1), 2003: 25–32. DOI: 10.1207/S15327604JAWS0601_02 · Source: PubMed. Retrieved August 23, 2023 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/10717357_Bark_Parks-A_Study_on_Interdog_Aggression_in_a_Limited-Control_Environment

Smith, Cheryl S. *Visiting the Dog Park: Having Fun, Staying Safe*. Wenatchee, Washington: Dogwise Publishing, 2007 (p.24)



— CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF — PROFESSIONAL DOG TRAINERS

Members Only Benefits



*New benefits are always
being added!*