

Sherwood Dog Training Club

AKC License Club

October 2026 Newsletter



The Sherwood Dog Training Club (SDTC) was formed in 2003, with official status as a non-profit corporation established in 2006. We also have Tax Exempt status with the IRS as a 501(c)4.

We received our notice that we have become an AKC Licensed Club in August of 2008.

Sherwood Dog Training Club

President: Danielle Silverstein

Vice President: Linda Ruedy

Secretary: Robin Murphy

Treasurer: Jill Faulmann

Board: Darlene Brushwein

Board: Jan Lewis

Board: Helen Hamilton

Newsletter: Darlene Brushwein

Website:

<https://www.sherwooddtc.org/>



Sherwood Dog Training Club is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Join Zoom Meeting / October 7th at 7:00pm

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/2517890074?pwd=VGdKeGhtM3l0T3FOdnJoVEUxRjZoQT09&omn=82537925963>

Meeting ID: 251 789 0074

Passcode: 0Avc7r



Your help is needed:

Claudia Weiss / claudiaadam@msn.com is working on doing a **Scent trial** that Sherwood Dog Club would sponsor.

She is wondering if one of our members is affiliated with any School District. Schools would be a great site for a scent work trial.

For a complete Look at all AKC upcoming Events

Events: <https://webapps.akc.org/event-search/#/search>

Upcoming UKC Shows / www.ukcdogs.com

Washington

Oct. 17-18	Lilac City Dog Training Club, Spokane, WA Nose Work
Oct. 23-25	Puget Sound K-9's, Auburn Nose Work
Oct 30-Nov 1	United Nose Work Tri-cities, Richland, WA Nose Work
Oct 30-Nov 1	Lilac City Dog Training Club, Spokane, WA Obedience & Rally

Oregon

Nov. 13-15	Canine Action Pack, Cornelius, OR Obedience & Rally
Jan 29-31	Canine Action Pack, Cornelius, OR Obedience & Rally
Apr 30-May 2	Canine Action Pack, Cornelius, OR Obedience & Rally

California

Jan 30	Santa Lucia Open Dog Obedience Group, Atascadero, CA Nose Work
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Colorado

Nov 20-22	High Plains KC, Castle Rock, CO Obedience & Rally
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Details at [ukcdogs.com](http://www.ukcdogs.com)

United Kennel Club (UKC) is an international dog registry celebrating bonds, rewarding ability, and preserving the value of a pedigree. <http://www.ukcdogs.com/>



- **Dates: Show dates:** January 21 -24, 2027
- **Closing date:** January 6, 2027

- **Obedience/Rally status at RCC:**

For several years we have weighed the pros and cons of discontinuing obedience and Rally at RCC.

Obedience / Rally entries have declined everywhere and have never been high at RCC. One of the reasons that Obedience / Rally are not as popular as they should be at RCC is because of the impact on Obedience and Rally caused by the huge number of spectators who attend RCC.

In addition, we have not had another place to put Obedience / Rally that we could afford. Long story short, we have worked with Expo to create a special place for Obedience / Rally that is off the beaten path. It is not entirely cut off from the public but should reduce traffic and noise by somewhere over 90% and offer exhibitors a nice space.

Please relay this information to your friends in Obedience / Rally.

Many of you know that we've been going back and forth on this issue for several years.

- **Meet the Breeds:**

Meet The Breeds was an overwhelming success at RCC this year.

We received letters from some of the participating clubs saying how successful it was for them and we even received a couple of thank you letters from spectators, saying how great it was to get to meet "preservation breeders" and see their beautiful dogs.

As a result of the feedback we received from several clubs and the public, we have decided to make Meet the Breeds a bigger part of RCC in 2027.

As always, we are going to give our specialties and supported entries first choice when the event is open to clubs.

We are also going to call on you for input as we begin to decorate and expand our current footprint.

We are very excited about developing this part of our show!

Patti Strand, Rose City Classic
503-756-0826

Obedience Run Through Class in Sandy, Oregon

A monthly Obedience Run Through Class takes place at Penny Harvey's training building in Sandy, Oregon. Dog and handler teams run through the exercises offered at obedience trials. The time can be used for any level of obedience and/or for problem solving specific exercises. Handler choice whether to ask for feedback or simply have the exercises called as in a trial. This class is run by Laurie Rubin.

This month's class Sunday, Sunday, October 25. \$15 via PayPal for each slot of up to 15 minutes or \$16 via mailed check.

Time slots can be reserved by clicking on the following link to fill out your entry information on a Google Form <https://forms.gle/CU43mtBbhRzQ35xr9> **AND** sending \$15/time slot via PayPal <https://www.paypal.com/> to Laurie Rubin. After logging in to PayPal and clicking "**Send,**" search for Laurie Rubin or earthlaurie@sonic.net. My link has a photo of a red merle Aussie. In the box that asks "What's this For?, please type "October 2026 Run Through Class." Zelle and Venmo \$15 payments accepted, too. If you prefer to mail a check for \$16/time slot, be sure to also fill out your entry information on the Google Form linked above. Payments are non-refundable unless the class fills before I receive your entry. In that case, I will notify you and refund your payment.

Entries are non-transferable. **These classes have been filling. Both your payment and Google Form must be received for your entry to count.** The Thursday before the class, the schedule and driving directions will be e-mailed to those who have reserved a slot.

Next class Sunday, November 15. \$15 via PayPal for each slot of up to 15 minutes or \$16 via mailed check.

Time slots can be reserved by clicking on the following link to fill out your entry information on a Google Form <https://forms.gle/MPTu8AybkYn8Gvpy6> **AND** sending \$15/time slot via PayPal <https://www.paypal.com/> to Laurie Rubin. After logging in to PayPal and clicking "**Send,**" search for Laurie Rubin or earthlaurie@sonic.net. My link has a photo of a red merle Aussie. In the box that asks "What's this For?, please type "November 2026 Run Through Class." Zelle and Venmo \$15 payments accepted, too. If you prefer to mail a check for \$16/time slot, be sure to also fill out your entry information on the Google Form linked above. Payments are non-refundable unless the class fills before I receive your entry. In that case, I will notify you and refund your payment.

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Future class dates: December 13, January 17.





Dog Days Obedience Run Through Class With Laurie Rubin

A monthly half day Obedience Run Through Class is starting at [Dog Days Dog Training](https://www.dogdaysdogtraining.com/) in Vancouver, Washington, on the fourth Wednesday morning of the month. Dog and handler teams run through the exercises offered at obedience trials. The time can be used for any level of obedience and/or for problem solving specific exercises. Handler choice whether to ask for feedback or simply have the exercises called as in a trial.

This month. Wednesday, October 28. \$15 via PayPal or Zelle or \$17 via mailed check.

Time slots can be reserved by clicking on the following link to fill out your entry information on a Google <https://forms.gle/9rgNDHNka8Jxys3U7> **AND** sending \$15/time slot via PayPal <https://www.paypal.com/> to Laurie Rubin. After logging in to PayPal and clicking “**Send,**” search for Laurie Rubin or earthlaurie@sonic.net. My link has a photo of a red merle Aussie. In the box that asks “What’s this For?”, please type “Dog Days October 28, 2026 Run Through Class.” Zelle and Venmo \$15 payments accepted, too. Checks made out to Laurie Rubin for \$17/time slot are OK. **Both your payment and Google Form must be received for your entry to count.** Payments are non-refundable unless the class fills before I receive your entry. In that case, I will notify you and refund your payment. Entries are non-transferable. The schedule will be e-mailed to those who have reserved a slot by the day before the class.

Next class. Wednesday, November 25. \$15 via PayPal or Zelle or \$17 via mailed check.

Time slots can be reserved by clicking on the following link to fill out your entry information on a Google <https://forms.gle/yAqhsCjaFxYnn4gA7> **AND** sending \$15/time slot via PayPal <https://www.paypal.com/> to Laurie Rubin. After logging in to PayPal and clicking “**Send,**” search for Laurie Rubin or earthlaurie@sonic.net. My link has a photo of a red merle Aussie. In the box that asks “What’s this For?”, please type “Dog Days November 25, 2026 Run Through Class.” Zelle and Venmo \$15 payments accepted, too. Checks made out to Laurie Rubin for \$17/time slot are OK. **Both your payment and Google Form must be received for your entry to count.** Payments are non-refundable unless the class fills before I receive your entry. In that case, I will notify you and refund your payment. Entries are non-transferable. The schedule will be e-mailed to those who have reserved a slot by the day before the class.

Future class date: Wednesday, December 23.





32400 SW Unger Rd, Cornelius,
OR 97113

Visit the website for trainers and other information
<https://www.trainerstotherescue.net/affiliatetrainers>

BUILDING RENTAL

Practice your skills on your own
in our facility with our
equipment.

OPEN TRAINING

Our training building with
competition obedience
equipment is open on Fridays
2-8pm (last call 7:30pm) to
those working towards their
individual goals. Bring one dog
or seven, stay for one hour or
six, \$10 for current students,
and \$20 for non-students.

Trainers to the Rescue has a few openings for students.

With Sally

Group class / Thursday Rally 7:15 pm

Private Lesson / Tuesday and Thursday (check for availability)

Also looking to put together a Thursday evening open / utility class if there is interest.

With Cindy

Ring Prep / Saturday morning Ring (90+ minute group class)

Online classes / Attention and Marking

Cost

\$80 hour private

\$210 6-week group

Check for Ring Prep cost of class

We are unavailable until after Oct 6th

Contact Sally for more information.

Sallyw61@yahoo.com

503 869 0961



Training Opportunities

Who: Michael Montgomery, CSCC GDMI

Where: Urban Pawsibilities in SE Portland - 3737 SE 21st Ave, Portland, OR 97202

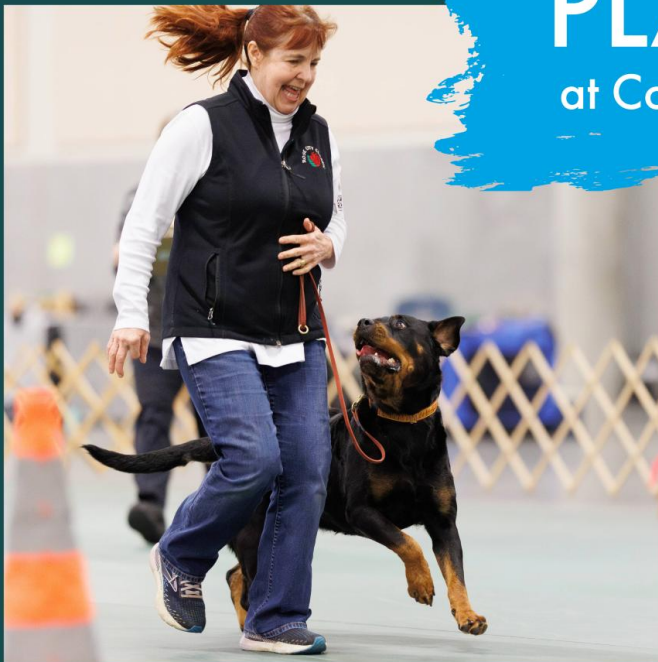
When: Next round starts Sunday July 19th for 5 weeks.

What: Currently only serving novice through advance. The facility only has so much time to rent to me! Higher levels hopefully in the future.

Current openings: 2 openings in Novice competition prep on Sundays at 4:30pm

How to register: Call/text 503-413-0782.

Email: Michael@elusivecsc.com. DM on social media, @elusivecsc on Facebook and Instagram.



PLAY TO OBEY

at Corral Creek Dog Sport Center

Rally & Obedience Classes:

Perri Yinger, Instructor

perripets@gmail.com

Call: 503.537.5028

Text: 503.793.4649

"Never forget that you started this journey because you loved a dog."



This story is **free to read**. <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/09/27/science/dogs-chasing-bears.html?mid=nytcare-ios-share>

Submitted by: Dixie Matsen

Dogs Will Fight Bears. But Not Because of the Reason You Might Think. **By Alexander Nazaryan**

Published Sept. 27, 2026 Updated Sept. 28, 2026

Scientists analyzed hundreds of encounters between bears and canines. The results raise the suggestion that dogs may not always protect people in the wild.

The internet loves an underdog story, especially when the underdog is an actual dog going up against a bear.

Last week, a French bulldog named Cassie made headlines for engaging with a bear that attacked its owner outside their home in Northern California. Earlier this year, an 11-year-old husky in Connecticut named Bella became a viral sensation for scaring away a black bear that was seemingly moments away from pouncing on an unsuspecting 6-year-old playing in a suburban driveway. And Bella followed in the brave but much smaller footsteps of Scout, a five- to six-pound Pomeranian that chased an ursine invader out of a British Columbia home last year.

Exit bear, pursued by furball.

Such stories seem to reaffirm a bond between dogs and humans that goes back at least 10,000 years. But they also belie a more complicated reality. When it comes to bear encounters in or near the wild, dogs are the aggressors in 54 percent of incidents, according to a recent study conducted by bear experts at Brigham Young University and other institutions, and published in the Journal of Wildlife Management. In approximately 36 percent of the encounters, dogs did not come to their owners' defense. And they only successfully alerted their owners to the presence of a bear in about 9 percent of cases.



A husky chased a bear away from a child standing in a driveway in Connecticut.
Credit ...Jeffrey Tazzara, via Storyful

Black bears were 3.6 times more likely to be involved than brown bears, a species that includes grizzlies. Most of the dogs involved were medium-size.

To a contemporary bear, a dog is just a relative of the wolves with which it has to compete for resources in the wild.

"There's been such a long history of antagonism between those two species," said the study's lead author, Tom Smith, a B.Y.U. professor and an expert on bear encounters.



Dogs are the aggressors in 54 percent of incidents in or near the wild, according to a new study published in the Journal of Wildlife Management.

Credit...Jeana Paulson, via Storyful

Dr. Smith said he had been approached by Canadian parks officials to conduct the study after a couple and their dog, a Border collie, were killed three years ago by a grizzly bear in a remote area of Banff National Park in Alberta.

Controlled experiments involving bears, dogs and humans are, for obvious ethical reasons, impossible to conduct. That reality made some experts hesitant to embrace the study's conclusions, even if they are generally sensible.

"I am very cautious of what you can actually conclude from such preliminary studies," said John Hechtel, a retired wildlife biologist for Alaska's Department of Fish and Game.

The researchers knew what they were getting into when it came to conducting this kind of work.

"We aren't doing rocket science. It's much more difficult than that," quipped Lana Ciarniello, an independent scientist in Campbell River, British Columbia, who designed the province's Bear Smart Community Program.

Dr. Ciarniello pointed out that in bear country — places like British Columbia, Alaska, Wyoming and Montana — most encounters between dogs and bears are not formally reported. The researchers combed through newspaper articles, internet reports, books and government records for descriptions of encounters, eliminating those that didn't include sufficient detail about the outcome.

Dr. Smith, Dr. Ciarniello and their co-authors ultimately looked at 326 documented dog-bear encounters that took place between 1901 and 2023. The study included mostly black and brown bears, along with a handful of polar bears. About a third of the incidents took place in "frontcountry," such as the easily accessible parts of national parks or the yards of rural homes. The rest took place deeper in the wilderness.

One clear lesson emerged from the numbers. In 85 percent of encounters, dogs were unleashed.

"If your dog is off leash, it's running ahead of you. It's going to the bush. It has a higher chance of a surprise encounter with a bear," Dr. Ciarniello said.

Because of their evolutionary rivalry, that encounter is unlikely to be a friendly one.

Dogs also often "boomerang" back to their owners after encountering a bear. In 27 of the cases reviewed, dogs ran back to their owners after encountering a bear. In 70 percent of those cases, the human suffered injuries.



Dogs only successfully alerted their owners to the presence of a bear in about 9 percent of cases, according to the study.
Credit...Krista Greener, via Storyful

The study suggests that the presence of a dog doesn't necessarily make a human safer in the wilderness, a conclusion that has led to an outcry from some enthusiasts and experts.

"People aren't wrong to have feelings about that paper," said Nils Pedersen, the director of the Wind River Bear Institute. The organization breeds Karelian bear dogs, which are famous for their ability to scare bears away without causing deadly conflict.

"Just having grown up in Alaska with working dogs, that's a really hard thing for me to hear and take seriously," he said of the study's results. "It depends on what kind of dog. It depends on the circumstances involved."

Certain dog breeds, including the Akbash and the Pyrenean mountain dog, are known to be effective for keeping bears away because they are tough and territorial with a commanding bark. Huskies are not as effective — Bella's heroism in Connecticut notwithstanding — in part because they have a tendency to chase and may provoke a retreating bear.

Ultimately, "the issue is really about control," Dr. Smith said. "Most house dogs are not that well trained." And, he said, "they don't fight your fight for you."

Mr. Hechtel, the retired biologist, wondered if people would really change their behavior based on the study's findings.

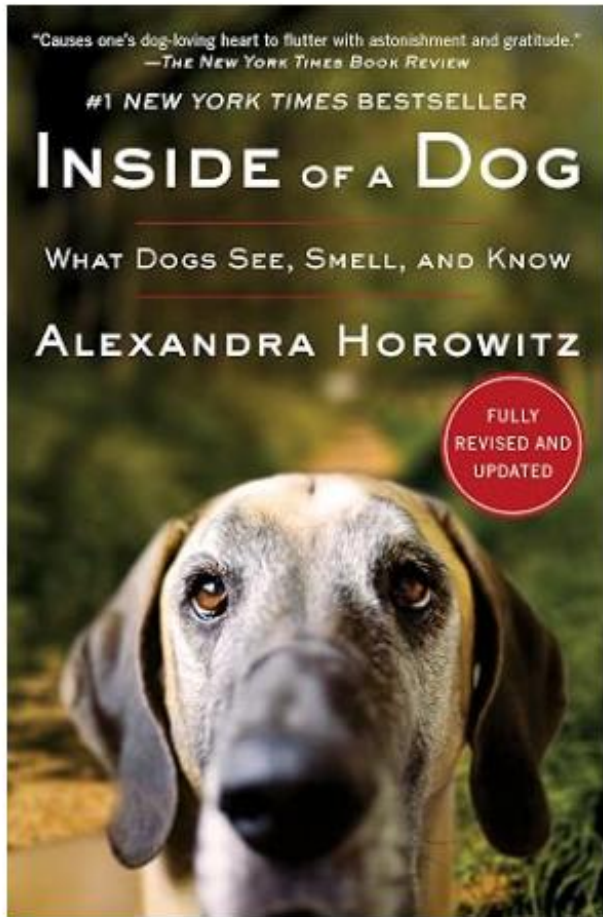
"Everybody thinks their dog is better than their dog really is," he said, "and nobody wants to keep their dog on a leash all the time."

The study authors counter that letting dogs loose in bear country is potentially dangerous for all involved. Cassie, the French bulldog, died two days after her run-in with a bear in California. In addition, Mr. Pedersen said, unleashed dogs can be disruptive to wildlife.

"If you're in a national park, places where bears are supposed to be, let alone moose or elk or deer, you do not want your dog chasing these critters around, harassing them," Mr. Pedersen said. "That's not fair."



I love autumn.



Inside of a Dog: What Dogs See, Smell, and Know

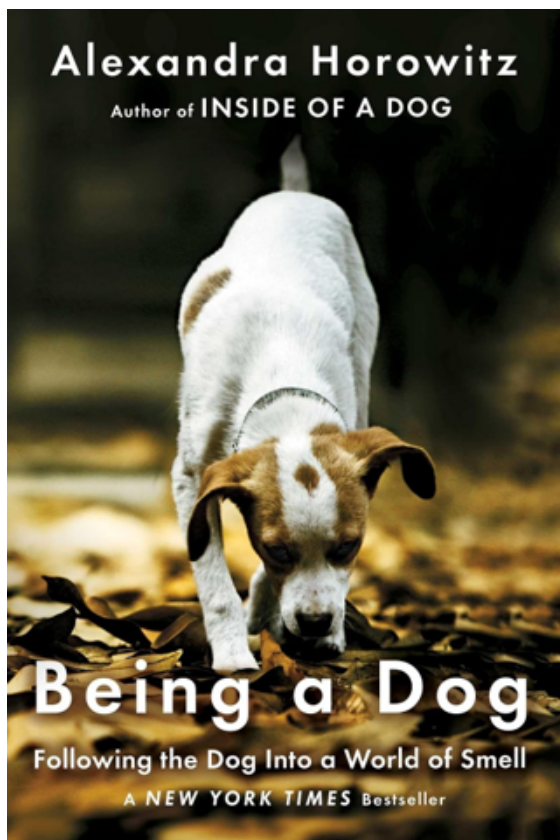
NOW FULLY REVISED AND UPDATED! The beloved #1 *New York Times* bestseller that “causes one’s dog-loving heart to flutter with astonishment and gratitude” (*The New York Times Book Review*).

The instant classic on the mind of the dog is now updated to include the latest results in the booming field of dog cognition. What do dogs know? How do they think? The answers will surprise and delight you as cognitive scientist Alexandra Horowitz explains how dogs perceive their daily worlds, each other, and that other quirky animal, the human. *Inside of a Dog* is a fresh look at the world of dogs—from the dog’s point of view.

In clear, crisp prose, Horowitz introduces the reader to dogs’ perceptual and cognitive abilities and then draws a picture of what it might be like to be a dog. What’s it like to be able to smell not just every bit of open food in the house but also to smell human emotions and even the passage of time? What is it like to have such good hearing that they notice the bodily vibrations of insects and the hum of a fluorescent light? Horowitz’s engaging narrative allows us to replace our urge to anthropomorphize dogs with a true understanding of the canine experience. What’s it like to use your mouth as a hand? How does a tiny dog manage to play successfully with a Great Dane? Why must a person on a bicycle be chased?

This fully revised and updated edition also reflects the latest findings on canine perception, dogs’ understanding of our emotions and of our language, and the evolving story of domestication. Some discoveries are not only informative but curiously amusing, such as dogs’ asymmetrical nostril use and their alignment with the earth’s magnetic field when pooping.

Much more than a scientific exploration, *Inside of a Dog* is a love letter to dogs, filled with personal observations and practical advice for people who live with dogs. With a light touch and the weight of scientific authority behind her, Horowitz offers an unparalleled exploration into the minds of our beloved four-legged companions.





Feature Submission

Obedience Training Is Important for All Dog Sports

By Alan Wilcox

All Front & Finish readers compete in obedience trials, and many compete in other dog sports. I hope each of you will agree how obedience training builds communication and strengthens the bonds you have with your dog and that you understand how important obedience training can be to all dog events and competitions. Ring obedience behaviors are not necessary for all dog sports, but strong communication and bonds between the handler and dog built through obedience training are important for all dog sports.

I have been an AKC and HRC retriever hunt test judge for more than 35 years. During that time, I have judged more than 200 retriever hunt tests, including six International HRC Grand tests. I have seen thousands of handler/dog teams over the years. Some are wonderful to see because the dog and handler are relaxed and in-sync. Sometimes the team is not connected so the dog is out of control and other times the handler has tightened down on the dog so much that they are afraid to make a mistake. The team that is in-sync is that way because the dog was trained beginning with a solid foundation in obedience.

My wife and I have trained our own dogs and client dogs for hunting, retriever hunt tests, obedience, rally, agility, herding, tracking, dancing dog, and earthdog tests. We have trained dogs ranging from 3-pound Yorkies to 160-pound Newfoundland dogs, as well as many retriever breeds, pointers, terriers, Poodles, and, yes, Doodles.

I have also taught people how to train their dogs including service dogs. The most important lesson we learned is that every dog needs basic obedience training-regardless of the dog sport you plan to compete in. That means walking politely on leash, being comfortable around strangers and coming when called.

When teaching an obedience class, I demonstrated the exercises using my 6-month-old Lab then put him in a down stay in the middle a circle of beginner students with their dogs working on heeling, fronts, finishes, sits, and downs. My dog stayed there for over 20 minutes while I was teaching and assisting people. One man with a 3-year-old dog complained about how much trouble he was having keeping his dog under control with the other dogs. I reminded the gentleman what my dog demonstrated and that he remained in a down stay with all the activity around him. He said I must have trained my dog his whole life. I said yes, from 6-weeks to 6-months. There are many stories I could relate about the amazing things that dog did for me because of our bond and his training. The point here is that an obedient dog will listen to commands depending on the level of control and obedience standard the owner demands for each dog sport.

The type of reward or reinforcement and correction varies by dog sport. Timing for the rewards or corrections and cues will vary depending on the dog sport, but a person can do anything with their dogs if strong communication and bonds are built between the handler and dog through obedience training. Excellent communication and strong bonds will provide the control to build the obedience behaviors both in the ring and outside the ring. An obedient dog is a dog that listens to the owner and promptly performs a specific behavior. An obedient dog should be able to walk off leash in heel position anywhere and be under control of the owner and not just perform an obedience routine inside ring gates, but on the street, in the field or on a stage.

A dog doing heeling exercises in an obedience ring requires the same control and obedience as a dog walking to the line in a retriever hunt test, but there is gun fire, birds and excitement with all the people and dogs working around them. In a Utility trial the handler sends their dog on a "go out" to sit at 40 feet on command then sends the dog over a jump with hand signals and voice. Retrievers, in a hunt test, must run a straight line for over a hundred yards, stop and sit immediately facing the handler when a whistle is blown. The dog must then take a cast to a bird using hand signals. The point is that the level of obedience and control a dog requires depends on what dog sports a person competes in and what standard the owner/

trainer demands. The hunt test dog had to learn to sit next to and in front of the trainer just like an OCH and a dog with a CGC. Training a dog to run straight lines of 40 feet to over 400 yards all start the same and build to what is expected of the dog, the sport and breed.

I added breed here because some breeds of dogs, such as retrievers, were bred to look at far distances and run toward a target, but some breeds such as terriers were bred to watch for motion that is close, so they do not see long distance targets. This is why there are so many dog sports, and each require different levels of obedience. However, both the retriever and the terrier must come when called and not pull on a leash when walking on lead and stay in heel position when off leash.

Obedience training is not just about performing specific behaviors needed for a dog sport but also about "good behavior." Basic obedience skills simplify routine tasks like walking and training for different dog sports. Obedience training teaches dogs to respond clearly to commands and build trust between trainers and dogs. Training sessions are interactive and rewarding. Using treats, praise, and play builds affection, respect, and a harmonious relationship. Obedience training reduces stress and makes daily life more enjoyable for both owner and dogs. Training provides structure, clear expectations and a well-trained dog can respond to commands necessary for various dog sports and situations. Dogs that understand acceptable behaviors are more likely to adapt well to social environments.

In summary, obedience training is for the dog to learn commands the owner wants them to know and will use for different dog sports. Basic obedience training helps a dog understand what the owner wants them to do. More advanced and complex obedience training is necessary for dogs that compete in competitions where the dog is judged on things such as performance and accuracy. No matter what dog sport you and your dog compete in it must start with obedience.

Alan Wilcox
AKC & HRC Retriever Hunt Test Judge
Email: fern_creek@yahoo.com



8 DOG EMERGENCIES TO HANDLE UNTIL THE VET OPENS

GRID
DOWN
READY

1. KNOW NORMAL BEFORE ANYTHING'S WRONG



- Temperature runs 101 to 102.5 degrees
- Gums should be pink and refill in two seconds when pressed
- Check on a healthy day so you know your dog's baseline

2. BLOAT CAN'T WAIT UNTIL MORNING



- A tight swollen belly and retching with nothing coming up
- Deep-chested breeds are most at risk
- There is no home fix; drive to an emergency vet now

3. GRAPES, XYLITOL, AND DARK CHOCOLATE



- Sugar-free gum and some peanut butters contain xylitol
- Grapes and raisins attack the kidneys
- Never force vomiting without a vet's say-so

4. MUZZLE FIRST, THEN HELP



- Even the gentlest dog bites when it hurts
- A soft leash or strip of cloth looped around the snout works
- Never muzzle a dog that is vomiting or struggling to breathe

5. BLEEDING STOPS WITH PRESSURE



- Folded clean cloth, firm pressure, five full minutes
- Paw cuts look worse than they are
- Wrap snug, not tight, and keep the dog still

6. HEATSTROKE: COOL, NOT COLD



- Cool water on the belly, paws, and armpits, plus a fan
- Ice baths shut down the blood flow you need
- Stop cooling at 103 degrees and still see the vet

7. YOUR PAINKILLERS ARE POISON



- Ibuprofen, naproxen, and acetaminophen can kill a dog
- One dropped pill is enough for a small breed
- Never dose a pet from your own medicine cabinet

8. THE VET'S CLOSED AND SO IS THE INTERNET



- Toxin lists, doses by weight, what can wait until morning
- A BunkerAI tablet answers offline at 2 AM
- A reference to get you to the vet, not replace one

DOG RULE

When in doubt, go. Retching without vomit, pale gums, collapse, or labored breathing never wait for morning.

TOXIN FACT

Xylitol can crash a dog's blood sugar within half an hour. Read the label on anything sugar-free before it enters the house.

FINAL TRUTH

They can't tell you what's wrong. Knowing their normal is how you hear it anyway.



Currently I'm teaching my dogs Rally moves. And I'm using the exact same approach that I use when training and maintaining obedience behaviors. Some are easy because they are based on competition obedience foundations. My dogs love doing these little pieces! They think they are super fun. The signs they don't know we are working on in tiny pieces. Just like I teach all my behaviors. Teeny tiny. For example, back up three steps. I'm just shifting my weight back, mark, reinforce. That's it. Why? High success rate. Dog feels confident. Dog masters that, maybe a quarter step or half a step. And so on. Because my dogs can master these steps quickly and easily, they feel confident. I don't stay on any one step for too long. I progress relatively quickly. My dogs know how to shape and they love solving problems. Which makes the entire process fun...for all of us.

In general, people either progress too quickly or too slowly. Progressing too quickly or teaching bigger chunks of behaviors causes insecurity. The dog is never sure if they are correct...or not. Their foundation is not solid. And if they are questioning, they will be insecure. And that's not what we want. Confidence is the name of the game. If the dog understands the behavior inside and out, they can't wait to show off. Look at me! I know what to do!! And that will serve you well in the ring. Regardless of your sport. If you stick with one step for too long the dog thinks that's the end behavior. Progressing will be a challenge. And often the dog becomes bored. It's too easy. Or we stop reinforcing too early. Before the behavior is fully fluent. And now the dog is insecure again.

My plan is to teach each sign as a fun trick. Reinforce it heavily initially. Then randomize the reinforcement to keep the behavior strong. I'll train mostly the pieces. I won't do a lot of courses. Why? Because running a full course will make all the behaviors weak. If they only ever get reinforced at the end, what's the point? For some dogs, why put in the effort? For most dogs it leads to insecurity. Reinforcement is information. It tells the dog "that's correct!". If the dog gets no information for an extended period of time, they started questioning. Is this right? Am I doing something wrong? Why is mom/dad not saying anything? Ugh, I'm so unsure right now.... They just want information! Imagine if as an instructor I watched you perform a full run (could be any sport...obedience, rally, agility, etc.) and gave you no information. None. When you were done they say "good job". That's it. Would you feel good? Or would you be a bit frustrated? Confused? Unsure? Would you want to come back for more lessons? Probably not. You want information. So does your dog.

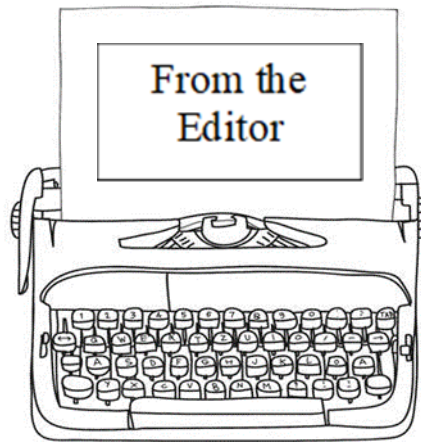
Periodically ALL behaviors get weak. They just do. That's dog training. No worries. I pull that piece out and review it. Just like I taught it. Break it down. Reinforce the pieces. Rebuild the dog's confidence. Create value for the behavior. Keep it fun. High success rate. High reinforcement rate. Before you know it, it's back! Dog is confident and nailing the behavior. Now I can put it back in the chain.

Training is a balance between reducing reinforcement and reinforcing enough. Reinforcement is valuable information. Use it wisely. Have a plan. What are you trying to accomplish? What does your dog need? Are you supporting your dog? Giving them enough information? Is it information the dog actually understands? Or are you making a bunch of assumptions? If you say "my dog knows this" but the dog isn't doing it...sorry, you're wrong. The dog needs help. The dog doesn't know it well enough. Or maybe they do but only in your living room. Think about how frustrated you get when you are trying to learn something and you can't figure it out. When you don't know the answer. You are not sure what to do. Think about how good it feels when someone helps you. Gives you the answer to fix it. What a relief!! The dog feels the same.

Read your dog. Are they confident? Awesome! Stay the course!! Is the dog worried? Unsure? Inaccurate? Displacing? Change something. Give them better information. Often, we think we are being clear. But it only matters what the dog thinks. When I was teaching Zayna to back up three steps, I was saying "right here" and tapping my hip...and she would jump back, but behind heel position. Huh. Then I realized, I wasn't using her "heel" word. Duh. Added the word, and oh look, she was in position. Seems pretty simple. But we make mistakes like this all the time. And that's ok. As long as we realize something isn't working and change it. Figure it out. Solve the problem. Instead of getting annoyed with the dog for not understanding what we want.

Our dogs are trying. Desperately. They want to make us happy. They want to earn the reinforcer. We need to get better at reading them. We need to be better at giving them information they understand. Information that supports them. That builds their confidence. We need to do a better job of balancing reducing reinforcement with giving the dog enough reinforcement so they are confident and motivated. And doing that throughout their career.





SDTC Newsletter Advertising Policy

- Advertisements for rehoming k9 equipment, etc. are always welcome.
- Training programs and classes offered by members will be posted with a link to a website for members only [possibly under a column specifically designated for that purpose].
- Advertising of puppies/litters will not be accepted

We are looking for articles from our membership.

- Do you have a brag or accomplishment?
- Have you written an article that the membership could benefit from?
- Know of an upcoming event? Example: Obedience trial, Scent trial, Specialty, Health clinic..... etc.



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