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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CANINE PROFESSIONALS

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The International Association of Canine Professionals is an organization established to maintain the highest standards of professional and business practice among canine professionals. Its aim is to provide support and representation for all professional occupations involved with any aspect of canine management, health, training and husbandry.

The International Association of Canine Professionals' commitment is to develop professional recognition, communication, education, understanding and cooperation across the wide diversity of canine expertise and knowledge.

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AFFILIATE MEMBER — An active interest in a career as a canine professional but lacking the experience to be an Associate or Professional member, i.e., apprentices, students of canine professions, trainees, volunteers, part-time, and devotees of canine related occupations. Cannot use the IACP name or logo for business purposes and may not vote.

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All IACP members receive our SafeHands Journal, have access to our email list, seminars, educational materials, business support materials, events and activity calendars, regional group participation, and our Certification Programs. Discounts for sponsor services are available to members.

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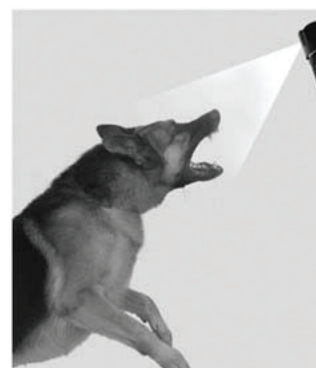
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President's Letter

by Karen Laws

This is my first message as President of the IACP. I am honoured to be chosen to serve as President for 2013. I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the current Board of Directors for entrusting me with this challenging task.

These are exciting times for the IACP. We have several new members who have been elected to the Board and they are as diverse in their canine professions as they are in their geographic locations. The 2013 Board of Directors truly represents the 'International' aspect of the IACP with members from east, west, north and south in the U.S.A and a President from Canada. On behalf of the Board and the membership, please join me in extending a warm welcome to new Directors Anthony Holcomb, Brian Atkinson, Shannon Heggem and Tyler Muto. Their expertise, energy and fresh perspectives are an asset to the many ongoing projects as well as new ones that are yet to be created.

They will be joining current Directors Brad Strickland, Vice President, Marketing; Christine Norris, Vice President, Policy and Procedure; Tawni McBee, Education and Certification; Gayle Justice, Volunteer Coordinator; Chad Mackin, Past President.

New officers to the Board include Jack Clark (CPA, CGFM) as treasurer and Cyndi Graham as secretary. Welcome to all and thank you for your commitment to serve.

Directors who will not be returning to the Board include Denise Collins, past Vice President and outstanding

Conference Manager. Fortunately for us, Denise has volunteered to remain as an advisor to the Board for future conferences and workshops.

Bruce Hartsell, Director for education, has decided to step down from the Board to focus on his growing training business. Pat Trichter has stepped aside as a Director and will remain as an officer to the Board as assistant to the Treasurer. We are grateful that Pat has offered to continue to remain associated with the Board--her wisdom and dedicated service to the IACP is valued and much appreciated.

I would like to thank the past Directors and Officers for their exceptional service to the Board and ultimately to the IACP organization.

Chad Mackin has stepped aside following two terms as President and thankfully will remain with the Board as Past President. His calm demeanour, wisdom and exemplary leadership have elevated the profile of the IACP throughout the professional

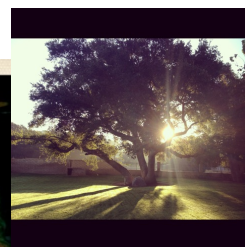
canine community. He has calmly guided the Board through very challenging times. Under his leadership the function of the Board has been enhanced through the implementation of established parliamentary procedures. The dedicated membership is now formally recognized through the newly created Ambassador program.



*Karen
Laws,*
President, IACP

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Success Through Socialization

with Jason Vasconi and Chad Mackin

Editor's note: I first heard the term "Large Field Socialization" from Dick Russell, a master dogman and an IACP legend, at a conference in the early days of IACP conferences. I was intrigued, and soon I began to use the concept (in smaller form) in my own classes—as many of you might be doing in some fashion. But a few of our members do it on a grand scale, and since Dick is no longer with us and I see many queries about his LFS on IACP lists, I thought I'd ask members Jason Vasconi and Chad Mackin, who engage in socialization groups as a framework for training, about their experiences.

Please tell us about you. How long have you been "in dogs"? How long training professionally, and how long a member of IACP? Where are you located geographically?

JASON: My name is Jason Vasconi and I have dedicated a big part of my life to helping families with their pet dogs and I am owner of Transform My Dog. I am married, have two kids, and four dogs of my own. I have been into dogs my whole life, grew up around them and had my first paying customer in 1989. I am located in Dickinson, TX, a small town halfway between Houston and Galveston Island, and have been a member of the IACP for 8 years.

CHAD: I have been into dogs my entire life. Even when we didn't have a dog, I was obsessed with neighbors' dogs and the neighborhood dogs that roamed the streets during the day. I've been training dogs professionally almost 20 years. I live and work near Chicago IL, but most of my career was spent in the Houston TX area.



What do you call what you do ("large field socialization," for instance)?

JASON: I do a small dog socialization class (< 25lbs) and large dog socialization class (>25lbs). I also run a socialization class after my group classes and put the small dogs with the large dogs.

CHAD: I call it socialization. I don't use a large field in most cases, in fact, I don't use a field at all on a regular basis.

When did you first get the idea to do this type of socialization? How long afterwards did you implement it? Were you trained or coached, or did you figure it out on your own?

JASON: I always knew socializing dogs with other dogs was important, but I first got the idea to do a socialization class when Chad Mackin invited me on a road trip to watch Dick Russell run his socialization class. I knew instantly I needed to provide this for my students and started a class that following weekend.

Once, I watched Dick Russell run a yard of over 100 dogs! I learned that keeping everybody in motion and keeping the people from getting personal with the dogs was the key to cutting down the dog's stress, therefore lessening the chance of a fight. My friends and I ran the streets with our dogs as kids and never really had leashes on them, so I had a lifetime of experience socializing dogs and was never shy about doing what had to be done to break up a dog fight if I had to. There was no doubt in my mind that I could do it and keep the dogs safe.

CHAD: I got into socialization shortly after I joined IACP. I went to visit Dick Russell to see what this Large Field Socialization was all about. I started doing it 3 days after I saw Dick's class. Dick had advised me that what he was doing couldn't be done in an indoor setting. But I saw the value of what he was doing and I knew that I had to have it for my clients. So I set about figuring out how to make it work indoors and in a smaller area.

How often do you do it, and tell us about the physical location: indoor, outdoor, acreage, terrain (if it matters), fences or other containment, weather, etc.

JASON: I do socialization three times a day at my place for an hour; once in the morning, afternoon, and evening. This includes my personal dogs, training dogs, and boarding dogs. The amount of dogs is about 10-15. It's done outside in a quarter acre yard, fenced in by chain link.

I teach 3 group classes, at 3 different locations once a week and we do 15 minutes of social at the end and sometimes the beginning of every class. The average amount of dogs I get in each class ranges between 8 to 20 dogs, depending on location. My Tuesday class is indoors and the space is around 1300 sq. ft, my Wednesday class is outside on an 1/8th of an acre, enclosed by a wooden privacy fence, and

my Thursday class is held in a one acre field, enclosed with a chain link fence.

I do a small dog/puppy social class (25lbs and under) on Tuesday evenings for an hour. This is done in an indoor area, about 1300 sq ft. I average around 20 dogs.

I hold my large dog social class on Saturday mornings, for an hour. This is held in a 3 acre field, fenced in by an 8 ft chain link fence. I average about 100 dogs and hold class rain or shine; most dogs prefer rain, owners not so much. The only weather conditions that may cause me to cancel my outdoor social classes is extremely heavy rain and lightning. The people and the dogs don't seem to mind the rain as long as it is not heavy. During the summer, I hold the outside classes at dawn and dusk to escape the heat. You have to do that here

in Houston due to the extreme heat indexes.

CHAD: My socialization classes run twice a week,



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after my basic obedience group class. I run them indoors in the same room I teach classes in.

Why did you choose to do it where you do it?

JASON: I do my socialization class in five different locations. The socials after my 3 group classes are held at those locations, and the socials at my place are held there since that's where the dogs are.

My big dog socialization is held at the local non-kill shelter, Bay Area Pet Adoptions, where I have a 3-acre-field, fenced in with an 8ft chain link fence. It has plenty of parking, within 6 miles of my house, and is a reasonable driving distance for the people. BAPA (Bay Area Pet Adoptions) also has around 15 volunteers that show up to get the shelter dogs out of their kennels so they can participate on Saturday mornings. The volunteers are so dedicated to what they do, most of the time they are able to get every dog out of the shelter that is eligible to participate; they even put yellow bandanas on the shelter dogs so the other people can see who's up for adoption. I like the big field because I prefer to have a lot of space when I do

my class. I feel that the more area the dogs have, the more options they have. The more options they have, the less the stress they are under, and of course, less stress means fewer dog fights. Also, I think having a good percentage of dogs interested in the distractions that Mother Nature provides sets a good tone and energy for the rest of the dogs to feed off of.

I attended 3D Workshop (Dealing with Difficult Dogs Featuring Pack to Basics) with Heather Beck and Chad Mackin earlier this year and realized more than ever how important spatial pressure is in dog communication. Giving the dog more space and more options makes it easier for them to resolve problems. The downfall to this is if you do have a problem you have more ground to cover before you get there to help. Being fit, physically and mentally, is something not to be overlooked if you are going to run 100 dogs off leash in a 3 acre field and keep them safe.

My small dog class is done in a pretty small area indoors. The dogs don't have as much of an option to use distance as a tool for communication as do the dogs in my large dog class, therefore, I have to referee

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the floor more often. Also, small dog owners prefer to do the social indoors because the dog's coats stay clean. Most small dogs are allowed anywhere in the house; you know how that goes.

CHAD: Safety, security and availability.

What dogs are eligible for the sessions (have you met them first, for instance)? Are they your former or current students? Are there any breed restrictions, or restrictions on size, play styles, or anything else? Dog-to-dog aggressors: allowed?

JASON: 90 percent of the dogs that attend my small dog socialization and large dog socialization classes have been involved with one of my training programs, but it is not a requirement to attend the social classes. If our first meeting is over the phone, there are a few questions I will ask before I offer the class or let them know if their dog is eligible to attend:

- Do you think your dog is aggressive?
- Has your dog ever been in a dog fight?
- Why do you think your dog is aggressive?
- Has your dog ever gotten along with other dogs it doesn't know on or off leash?

Questions like this give me a good idea whether they can come to class or if we need to do some ground-work or evaluation before they can attend.

As for the people that just show up on Saturday for class, with whom I have never spoken, my dogs Gridge (pit bull) and Snookie (Boxer) will greet every dog as they get in line to sign in (not something I taught them, they just do it). If I see something in their interaction that tells me the dog might be a problem, I will ask them some questions to give me an idea if they are able to attend or wait until we put some work into the dog.

I allow any breed to attend as long as they are of weight. Although, I am more cautious with the battle breeds; the more powerful the dog, the more damage they can do.

About 1/2 of the dogs that attend social class had problems around other dogs and probably wouldn't do well at a public dog park. Some of these particular dogs had to have some training with me to get them to a point to where they could be allowed in socialization class.

CHAD: Often the first time I see a dog is when they walk in for socialization. But I am watching that dog carefully at first. Usually, there's been a phone con-

sultation prior so I understand the basics of the dog's history, etc. But I have no hard-and-fast rules about who comes in. A dog who is truly dog-aggressive is not allowed, but in twenty years I've only seen true dog-to-dog-aggression once. Mostly, I see dogs who are reactive to other dogs out of fear or lack of manners.

What equipment do you use, if any? Please explain. What equipment do the dogs wear, if any?

JASON: As far as equipment, there's not much. I use a dressage whip (buggy whip--I call it my stick) to break up any fights. I also use the handle end to poke a dog for mounting or bullying another dog. Sometimes I will have a new dog wear a choke chain with a pull tab attached to it. This comes in handy if I have a dog latched on to another refusing to let go and here recently I will use a muzzle and 10 ft leash along with my stick to introduce a dog at a quicker pace to the class--a technique I learned when I attended the 3D Workshop (Dealing with Difficult Dogs Featuring Pack to Basics). It's very effective, giving you a direct line of communication to guide the dog as it learns how to have a productive and non-confrontational conversation with the other dogs.

For my small dog social, all that I have to use is my stick. I haven't had a small dog that one timely correction didn't convince them to make better choices with the other dogs.

CHAD: Dogs can wear any type of collar except pinch collars (too much of a danger of getting tangled with other collars). If they have an e-collar, the remote goes in the owner's pocket. I carry a dressage whip as an extension of my arm that helps me control space a bit better. I will use it for corrections when necessary to ensure safety, but mainly I just block a dog's movement and redirect them with it.

Where are the owners during the sessions? How long are the sessions typically? Do you have assistants or helpers?

JASON: Occasionally, I let a dog owner turn the dog loose a step outside the gate and watch to see if the human is not physically able to walk for a long period of time. Other than those few, the owners stay in the yard and walk the fence line, constantly walking in a counter clockwise direction. Everybody must stay in motion while they are in the yard. All my socials last one hour except for the ones following my group classes. This seems to be a perfect amount of time. When I have tried doing a two hour class, some dogs would start to get tired and a bit snarky at the half way point.

I run all of my socials by myself, but I never turn away help from someone attending if they offer and are physically fit to assist.

CHAD: The dog's owners are usually present. Having people there helps dissipate stress if the people are moving. I typically don't have any assistants, although it's easier and safer if I do. Circumstance just hasn't afforded me that luxury so I've learned how to do it without them.

How do you handle fights or spats between the dogs? I assume these are pretty rare; why is that?

JASON: If two dogs start fighting or arguing, I will try using my stick, which 99% of the time is very effective. How assertively I use the stick depends on how committed the two dogs (or one of them) is/are to causing physical damage to each other. If that doesn't work, I grab the back legs and lift one of the dogs (preferably the more aggressive) and drag it sideways to throw it off balance towards the nearest gate or door to split them up. If I have a latcher (a dog that bites and holds on), I will use the choker chain and pull the tab and apply pressure 'til the dog lets go or falls asleep, whichever comes first. If the latcher does not have a pull tab connected to a choker I will use my arms to choke the dog out (rear naked choke). I haven't had to use this method, but would not hesitate if I needed to keep a dog from getting hurt any further. As horrible as the mental picture you get while reading that, I rarely have a real dog fight, maybe one a year. I see arguments, but rarely dog fights. The difference is that during a fight, one or both of the dogs is fully committed to causing serious physical harm to the other dog. An argument would be two dogs screaming and shouting at one another, occasionally delivering an uncommitted bite that might cause a puncture wound or two.

The reason why there are rarely fights is I set the dogs up for success. It starts with making a good decision about when you can start the dog in the class and doing the proper groundwork to get them ready to attend. The rules of the yard play a huge part. The rules keep the dogs from enduring any extra confusion and stress other than what they cause each other.

The rules are:

- Everybody must stay in motion walking in a circle for the whole class. This keeps the dogs moving and something to focus on. It gets them walking together. Dogs that walk together are less likely to fight. Having people stay in motion also helps prevent personal space becoming an issue,

whether it's the space around their owner or their own personal space. The walking in a circle also strengthens dogs pack drive.

- No one can touch or talk to their dog or anybody else's dog. This keeps the owners from adding any extra confusion to the dog's situation. Confusion leads to anxiety and stress and that leads to aggression. It also reassures that all the dogs will come to their owners when called at the end of the class.
- No one is allowed to discipline any of the dogs-this is my responsibility. This is done so no dog is corrected for the wrong reason at a wrong time (like most public dog parks), and I don't want any of the dog owners getting hurt. A yard full of people running around correcting dogs for the wrong reason at the wrong time would not be beneficial to our goals.
- Dog Rules
 - ~No fighting
 - ~No bullying
 - ~No mounting
 - All else is permitted. Dogs are pack animals. They're genetically designed to get along. Most difficult dogs, when given guidance and opportunity, show this to be true and eventually become productive participants of the class.

CHAD: The first trick is to avoid them in the first place. Managing the adrenaline in the room is a great start to that process. Fights don't happen unless someone adrenalizes. You don't wait until you are in a skid to slow down on an icy road. If you wait until dogs are in a fight to step in, you've made everything harder on yourself and on the dogs too. I spend a lot of time making sure I don't have to break up fights. But once it gets to a fight stage, there are no safe options--only safer options. I have a variety of techniques that I use, but they all involve varying degrees of danger to the handler and the dog. They are really not something that should be taught via written word. I go over them in my workshops.

How many sessions does it take to see a difference in dogs that were previously shy or aggressive? Does what they learn in your sessions carry over into leash walks and dog park play? Does it carry over into general obedience at home?

JASON: Every socially challenged dog that I work with is different. Once they are introduced to the class, it

may take one to five classes before I can trust them enough to take my eye off of them from time to time.

The socialization class makes a dog better in all aspects of its life: home skills, walks around the neighborhood, obedience on every level, and other types of training. Although I think that a public dog park is not a place for some dogs, going to a structured socialization class will better the chance of things going well when they are attending the public dog park. I think the most valuable thing that socialization class teaches the dog is control over their emotions--impulse control. Dogs are very emotional creatures and the decisions they make depend on what emotional state they're in. A dog with a good impulse control makes better decisions than one without, therefore, making the first dog a smarter and better dog.

CHAD: There is no universal answer. It's usually a process taking several sessions, but sometimes it's almost instant. The same is true with the carryover. If

the owners do nothing besides socialization, it sometimes solves their problems everywhere, but it happens much faster if they couple it with training in other contexts. There is a synergistic effect when good socialization meets good training. Socialization strengthens obedience. Obedience strengthens socialization.

If you haven't already done so, please briefly describe how a session begins, proceeds, and ends (i.e., all dogs released at once, or dogs come in piecemeal through a double gate, etc). What are the hard-and-fast rules, if any, and why do you have them?

JASON: Class from beginning to end:

- Everyone must sign in; first timers also have to sign a waiver and I will go over the rules with them. This also slows down the group entering the yard and gives me a chance to oversee everyone coming in.



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- I close the gate, walk to the middle of the field, and scan the yard to find the dog or dogs I may need to keep my eye on. Everyone is standing at the fence line with their dogs on leash in a circle around me. I say, "turn 'em loose" and everyone unleashes their dog as quickly as possible and starts walking immediately.
- After an hour of class I tell everyone to call their dogs; amazingly, they all go running to their owners.
- When they are all leashed up and standing at the gate to get out, I make announcements; such as class info, events, giving credits to the volunteers, giving a round of applause to a difficult dog that attended for the first time, and I am even good for a joke now and then.

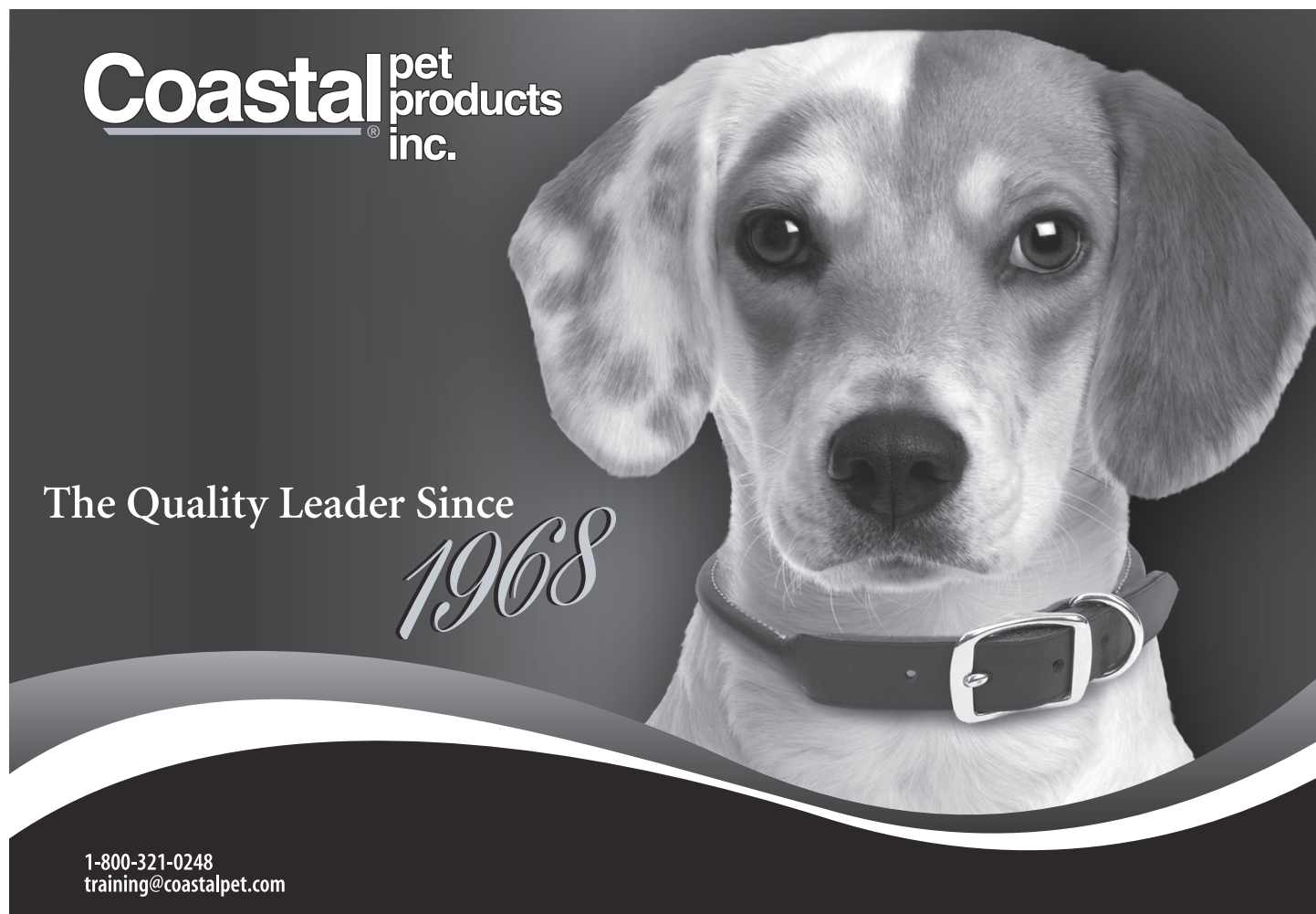
CHAD: I start the dogs in a circle usually, and I say "Leashes off, get to moving," and they do. I don't usually allow dogs to come in piecemeal because it upsets the balance of the room. I do make exceptions sometimes, but as a general rule it's frowned upon.

I don't allow fighting or humping or marking. I don't allow excessive barking. If a dog says "no" and another dog ignores him, I will help out making sure both dogs understand that "no" means "no." I don't allow any over-adrenalized behavior because it destabilizes the room.

Do you charge a fee to dog owners for your service? Why or why not?

JASON: There is no charge for either of my social classes. There is a tip bucket that someone brought to class for me about 5 years ago. She demanded that I put it out before every class. I told her "yes ma'am," and it's been out ever since. She still comes on a regular basis. It's worked out; people put in what they think they get out of the class and I have enough money to take my family out to a nice dinner that night.

I don't charge a fee for the class because it's my biggest advertisement. I pick up more obedience training students as a result from my socialization class than any other source. When I first started holding classes, I asked Chad if he charged for his class and he told me (probably not in these exact words) that "if you give



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someone a gift that you know in your heart that they truly need, it will always come back around." It proved to be true.

CHAD: I do not charge. This is too necessary for me to deny people access to because of money. I don't want them trying to get the same effect in the local dog park either. (*Editor's note: see Jason's Chad quote above.*)

Finally, what are you hoping to achieve ultimately with your method? Not just in each session, but overall?

JASON: The goal with each class is for us to meet one big part of the dog's expectations and needs in life, to move them one step closer to fulfillment and happiness. A dog can't reach its full potential without socialization on a regular basis.

CHAD: I hope to allow dogs to get out of their isolation and learn how to be dogs in the company of other dogs as free from human interference as it is safe to do. I want to improve their mental stability and balance, and allow them to explore their native language in a safe and healthy environment. It was reported to me that a well-known shelter advocate was at a large conference saying that there is no redeeming value in allowing dogs to play together. That is such a dangerous attitude. She went on to say that dogs playing are really rehearsing killing each other. I disagree with that

notion strongly. When dogs play properly, they practice impulse control, conflict resolution, spatial awareness, and respect for others. They sharpen their communication skills and learn how to interact with others. All this is to say, play behavior is not rehearsing to kill other dogs. Quite the opposite--it is learning how to get along with them. I believe the value of that goes on forever.

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Zen and the Art of Skijoring

by Georg Schluender

Many would say my mind is as unhinged as Robert Pirsig's (author of *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*) when it comes to playing in the woodlands with my pack of German shepherds. Yesterday was Thanksgiving and a balmy 65 degrees in Northern Michigan. Months of preparing the trails for the first snow are coming to a close, and a major weather system that swept out of the Pacific Northwest is on its way. Now it's conjuring-up lake effect snows in northwest Michigan as we rush up and down the hills removing debris and banking cornering tread for easy switchback transitions. The skis are waxed and tuned, boots and bindings are adjusted, harnesses and lines checked, quick-releases prepped with silicone, and adaptations to equipment secured.

If you're not a snow lover then I ask you to remember how you felt the night before Christmas when you still believed in Santa--and if you don't "do holidays," think of any day that makes you giggle with happiness. This is the dogs' and my state-of-mind when the snow starts to fly. The energy is overwhelming; even as I peck at the keyboard, close to 300 pounds of shepherd nudges me into and around my desk with snow squalls becoming more frequent out the window. It's as if they know it's time.

Of course, we've been at it all year if you've been following the series. We canicross, rollerjor, scooter, or bikejor no less than 6 miles a day (usually 3 in the AM and 3 in the PM). But when the temperatures dip and the snow blankets woodlands, lakeshores, and river banks, my college ski

bum mentality kicks in for middle-aged skijoring! I rarely change our clothing or harnesses, and sometimes, the closest I get to a shower is the pack licking my feet. We devour animal proteins and I lap my water from a cup. December through March last year we averaged 120 miles a week skijoring / bikejoring the backcountry.

Several hundred years ago, the Scandinavians traversed the harsh winter landscape on wooden skis towed behind reindeer ("ski-driving"). Archeological evidence suggest humans wouldn't have survived in Siberia over 4,000 years ago without sled dogs. The Walt Disney movie *Iron Will* was actually derived from the first written accounts of sled dog racing between Winnipeg and St Paul beginning in the 1850's. Then at the 1932 Lake Placid Winter Olympics, a 7-dog team demonstration was held. Another 20 years passed until at the 1952 Oslo Olympics, sled dogs were once again featured in the form of pulka racing--where a skier accompanies the dogs behind a toboggan or pulka. Today the International Federation of Sleddog Sports, with affiliates in 40 countries, is working with the International Olympic Committee to get skijoring into the Winter Olympics.



A sport all its own in European countries and the United Kingdom, skijoring (once something only mushers did to condition sled dogs) is getting more mainstream attention in North America. Urban families are now hooking up their canine family members to skijor local trails, and even ski resorts are starting

to designate skijoring groomed trails (although don't win a Darwin Award by tying a lead around your waist, hooking it to your canine's collar, and yelling "Mush!").

A disclaimer is warranted at this point:

- Check with your doctor and vet and make sure you and your dog are both up to this incredible cardiovascular activity.
- You must have some knowledge of cross country skiing – both skate and classic.
- Utilizing the commands we've discussed throughout the series:

If you already have your cross country ski equipment, you have 2/3's of the cost of getting into skijoring covered. Now you only require a hip belt, towline, and dog harness, and the choices become simple, for there are very few manufacturers of skijoring equipment. The easy answer is to purchase Ruffwear's Omnijore for \$150.00 from a local retailer or www.ruffwear.com. Skijor Now (www.skijornow.com) is specifically designed by professional skijors and you can tell the difference in the manufacturing.

The hip belt should have back support with an initial shock absorbing tether secured to both sides and a quick release connection that hooks to the towline as minimum requirements. This tethering quick release can mean the difference between running your dog over and/or wrapping yourselves around a tree. The towline should be between 8-10 feet in length with the ability to stretch at least a third of its length. The dog harnesses specific for joring need to be cushioned in the breast plate area of the dog. The towline attach loop should extend past the hindquarters, but no farther than the beginning of the tail--which means measuring your dog for proper fit, safety, and performance abilities. Avoid any metal rings or buckles that will press against the chest area

or impede or chafe the dog's gait. Lastly, booties should be considered for breeds with longer hair on the paws to prevent ice buildup, or at least a tin of Musher's Wax for any cuts and abrasions they may suffer on the trail.

The dog's safety is paramount, but its confidence in your abilities can mean the difference between being motivated to pull you or intimidated by being run over. So you must have knowledge of Nordic skiing and a consistency in the use of skijoring commands (see SHJ, Spring 2012, p. 9, for a list).

I was fortunate enough to discover skijoring while living on Drummond Island where I had close to 80 miles of groomed snowmobile trails and a two-year-old Belgian Malinois named Gracie who didn't know how to stop running. A Tibetan Spaniel doesn't have the stride, nor does a Manchester Terrier weigh enough, but a 35 – 45 pound high-energy dog will start a doggie jig when they see the harness come out of the closet. Ideally a dog weighing 65 pounds is preferred by professional racers who want to average more than 20 mph--but you'll be perfectly content topping out at 10 mph. Typically the sporting and herding breeds or an "American" mix of them will perceive skijoring as a call to duty.



So you've got your non-metal edged skis, your dog, and the rest of your equipment, and you are heading into the wilderness to find epic snow covered trails, but what do you know about snow conditions? As important as the terrain is the snow

pack and depth of snow you'll be traversing. You'll discourage your dog companion trying to kick fresh tracks into the wilderness and it could make them give up pulling you altogether. Personally, I like to head into the backcountry for a few days. The first day kicking in a fresh trail packs the snow and sets tracks that will stiffen and freeze. This allows you to become familiar with any terrain obstacles and wilderness observation points. Obstacles can be downed trees covered by snow, or a downhill that you'll need to be able to release your dog prior to.

DOWNHILLS CAN BE DEADLY and should never be attempted while connected to your dog!

Now if you're looking to go out on your locally groomed trails, be forewarned--dogs typically aren't welcome, although many resorts and clubs are starting to groom trails for skijoring and other k9 silent sports. Check these sites for locations and resources:

- New England Sled Dog Club - www.nesdc.org
- Alaska Skijoring and Pulk Association - www.alaskaskijoring.org
- Chuck & Don's Skijoring Loppet and Two Dog Skijoring Championship - www.loppet.org/cityoflakesloppet/loppevents/chuck-dons-14k-skijoring-loppet/
- The Midwest Skijors Club - www.skijor.org
- North American Skijor and Ski Pulk Association - www.sleddogcentral.com/skijoring.htm



When I started sharing my k9 silent sport lifestyle with you, vets, and other dog business folks a year ago, I didn't think it would introduce me to so many incredible people from around the world. From Dogsport Bulgaria to a sled dog rescue in South Africa, we have all been brought together by dogs. Something about that unconditional love dogs offer must spill over between us too. Those that have chosen to live a k9 adventuring lifestyle are seeing the difference on the scale, in their dog companion's physique, and often in behavior.

What we once considered bad habits are habits no longer, for not only is the dog's mind and body at peace...so is yours.

Georg Schluender is a certified dog trainer who has been rescuing German Shepherds for over 20 years. He is the developer of DoggieTrek Fitness, based in Traverse City, Michigan, specializing in "nature based wellness for dogs and their human companions." Email him at: packleader@doggietrekfitness.com

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Treadmills Aid in More Than Weight Loss

by Barry Ravegum

The canine community has seen countless articles and studies documenting the growing obesity problem with dogs. Poor diet, and most importantly, lack of exercise are key contributors. Many pet owners are changing the diets of their pets, but diet alone is not enough.

Our pets are natural pack animals and their wild habitat is that of regular movement – exercise. Doggie gyms, doggie daycares and boarding facilities utilizing canine designed treadmills is a growing phenomenon to provide dog owners with an outlet for their dog's exercise needs. What's more, these businesses are cashing in on this trend, charging up to \$1.00/minute for canine treadmill workouts.

The majority of dog owners not only lack the motivation to exercise their dogs enough but are, as is the case with larger breeds, unable to. Consider an example of a couple who owns a Lab mix. Their day with their pet begins with waking up, taking the dog for a walk, then feeding the dog. They then go to work for 8+ hours while the dog sleeps in the house all day. When they get home from work the dog is taken for a walk followed by another feeding. The couple eats dinner while the dog lies at the foot of the table. Then the couple retires to the couch to watch television while the dog lies with them. Eventually the couple goes to bed and so does the dog. The life of an average dog is one of sleep, eating and bathroom breaks.

A rapidly growing segment within the canine community is exercise equipment designed specifically for dogs. Joe Ward, Executive Director of GoPet, LLC (www.gopetusa.com) reports that sales of their PetRun brand treadmills has been

steadily increasing for the past 3 years. "We have seen a growing awareness for the fact that owners cannot exercise their dogs enough." Ward goes on to note, "owners of small, toy breed dogs tend to walk too fast for their dogs to be comfortable and get worthwhile exercise while owners of large breed dogs such as Weimaraners are unable to walk fast enough to allow the dog to run at its normal gait."

Treadmills are an excellent source of exercise for dogs and treadmills designed specifically for dogs are a great choice. Canine treadmills are lower to the ground than human treadmills, making it easier for a dog to get on and off. They are also longer, include side rails, and have running surfaces designed for a dog's paws.

The length of canine treadmills is an important point. The running surface should be at least 1/3 longer than the length of the dog from snout to base of tail. This allows the dog to trend forward and backward while running

without worry of sliding off the back or running over the front of the unit. Most human treadmills are not long enough to accommodate medium and large breed dogs.

There are several sizes of canine treadmills available, from toy breed sizes to giant breed. Ward went on to say "our most popular model has become our Large Breed model. Owners are finding that this model is the most versatile, working for a toy Chihuahua to a Mastiff, and it is showing up in doggie gyms and daycares across the country for this reason."

Owners of dog treadmills and doggie gyms and daycares using treadmills all report that there are



numerous benefits to daily treadmill workouts. In addition to weight loss, dogs are found to be better behaved, more toned and will ultimately live longer, happier lives. The dog show community is catching on too, with show judges encouraging handlers to run their dogs on canine treadmills to encourage proper toning and gait. As with human treadmills, these units have gradual speed adjustment so that the ideal pace for a particular dog can be found. Additionally, some units have incline adjustment for a more spirited workout.

As far as how long and how often a dog should run on a treadmill, Ward states, "It depends on the dog. "Dogs just starting out that are overweight should begin with just a walk for 2-3 minutes, 2-3 times a day. Eventually they will build up, as a

human would. Dogs that are more fit and running on a treadmill regularly can run at their natural gait for 30 minutes or more (2) times a day."

Treadmills should not be used as an alternative to time spent walking or running with your dog. They should be used as a supplement. They are a great source of exercise for dogs at their natural gait and are great to have when the weather isn't conducive to outdoor exercise.

Barry Revegum is President of Keystone Dock Dogs, and he and his wife Jen are passionate about the well-being of the canine community. Their three dogs, Dutch, Cooper and Lola, are avid dock divers. Barry and Jen are passionate about their dogs' health and wellness and regularly use canine treadmills to supplement their workouts.

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Training a dog to use a canine treadmill

Training a dog to use a canine treadmill is fairly straightforward. To begin, ensure that you have created a positive energy environment that is full of praise. Then, follow these suggested steps.

NOTE: The use of a treat is of personal preference. Some handlers find it to be useful for dogs that tend to be more skittish.

1. With the dog on a lead/leash, walk them around the treadmill, encouraging their sense of inquiry. Again, keep the mood exciting and positive.
2. Entering from the rear, walk the dog up onto the treadmill and allow them to walk completely through and over the front. The handler should have the lead/leash taut and be standing at the side of the dog, as if they were taking the dog for a walk.
3. Entering again from the rear, walk the dog onto the treadmill and have the dog stand in position for a few seconds. Again, keep the mood exciting and positive. Then allow them to walk over the front.
4. Entering from the rear, walk the dog onto the treadmill and have the dog stand in position for a few seconds and then start the treadmill on the slowest setting. Be sure to standing next to the dog, again as if taking it for a walk.
 - a. As the treadmill begins to move the dog will tend to go with it (slide backwards). Keep the lead/leash taut so that the dog is encouraged to keep up.
 - b. Gradually increase the speed of the treadmill until the dog is at its natural gait.
 - c. Again, keep the mood exciting and positive with plenty of reward.
5. After 15-30 seconds of steady gait running, slow the treadmill down to a stop. Have the dog exit off of the front and give them a great deal of praise. Then repeat this process a few more times the first day – increasing the length of the runs. Eventually the lead/leash will be slack and the dog will learn to stay in position. At this point the lead/leash will no longer be needed.
6. A vast majority of dogs learn how to use a canine treadmill in a few minutes. Others can be a little more challenging and may take several sessions or a few days.
7. Once the dog is training and comfortable on the treadmill, the workouts can increase in length and speed as the handler sees fit.

Coping Medicine

by Ron Bruce

Cope: to deal with and attempt to overcome problems and difficulties

When you really consider it, our job as professional canine trainers very often involves helping dogs learn to cope with what is stressing them. We do that many times by establishing solid obedience skills and then through incremental steps start to present accomplishable challenges for our training dog until the original stressful scenario is under control.

Fear-based conditions or behaviors can be scenarios where the dog does not cope well. What we find is that even if there is an obedience foundation, the dog can not deal with the particular situation. The stress response releases the stress hormones and the dog starts to function in the fight or flight mode.

Back in the '70s Dr. Nicholas Dodman appeared on one of the magazine shows talking about the use of Prozac for dogs with fear-based conditions. The thought was that dogs, like humans, suffer from anxiety producing conditions that can affect their behavior. Well, over the years this has become an accepted premise. But what is not so widely accepted is the use of anti-anxiety medications to help the dog deal with the stress levels – especially in the training community. What I have seen over my 16 years in the canine training field is that older, traditional-type trainers would rather stay with obedience training solutions and the newer, positive trainers and behaviorists will go with the slow, accommodating type training that can stretch on for months. In the former, the dog is still displaying the stress patterns and in

the later, the client is wondering when anything is going to happen.

If we are doing a thorough evaluation of the dog, its environment, and family life, then we should have a pretty good idea of the severity of the dog's stress levels. If there is any question, get the input of the dog's veterinarian regarding possible medical causes for the dog's current stress load as well as considerations for the use of anti-anxiety medications. It has been my experience that some veterinarians are reluctant to use anti-anxiety medications, so do your research so that you are familiar with the medications and their use and are prepared to discuss them with the veterinarian.

I grossly evaluate the dog's stress level on a mild, moderate or severe/significant scale.

Mild might involve the dog being clingy with the owner but not exhibiting separation anxiety. Moderate could involve separation anxiety where the dog is displaying destructive behavior when the owner is gone. Severe symptoms could be a dog that actually shivers and shuts down when taken out in public or could be the dog, that if confronted by a stranger and can't get away, will bite the stranger to increase that critical social distance. Obviously, reading the dog's body language during the stress reaction will provide much information.

Now that we have established in our minds the severity of the dog's stress level, we can add this to our overall considerations for training. This is where individual experience in handling these types of cases is very important because you have a comparison history of other dogs which can help you gauge your current training dog. If you know

**If you know
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you are dealing with a severe level of stress, then you know that successful results could be slow or nonexistent with your usual approach. This would be an indicator for me to make the use of medications in conjunction with training/behavioral modification a primary consideration. You help the dog feel better in the short term and while you are doing your obedience training and behavioral modification you allow the dog to learn that it can cope with the previously stressful scenario.

There is a ton of information online about fear based canine behavior and the use of anti-anxiety medications so I urge you to research it. The simple explanation of how these medications work is that in many cases the level of serotonin is increased in the brain which reduces the dog's stress load and this allows the dog to feel better. Medication considerations may depend on the preference of the veterinarian that you are consulting with. Prozac is one of the most common medications used presently, and one that I have personally seen the best improvement with. Other medications include Elavil, Buspar, Paxil and Clomicalm.

I usually recommend that the dog be on the medication for about 2-3 weeks before starting the basic obedience training. I tell the client that we don't want the dog "dopey." We look for a reduction of the dog's usual stress behavior. Medications may have to be adjusted or changed – just like in human medicine. During the basic training I can evaluate how the medication is helping the dog. I prefer bringing the dog in for the 2-3 week board & train program. I know I can get the obedience training done in an efficient manner without unduly stressing the dog. I am also removing the dog from possible stressors at home. We all know that the owner/dog relationship can be a major contributing factor to the dog's stress. The program then progresses to owner handling instruction and education, group class work and then "street" work. So while the dog's stress is

being managed by medication, we are getting the dog's foundation work performed. Medication may be continued and then weaned off over a 2-4 month period. You don't want to discontinue it too early – not until the dog's experience level and practice have handled the bulk of the previous stressors.

Medication is not the cure-all for a dog's behavioral issues. I do feel it can be an important adjunct to our training/behavioral modification programs in the severe fear-based behaviors because it helps the dog in the short term, it allows us as trainers to accomplish the necessary training goals and it also eases some of the client's concerns as they see the dog's behavior and stress improve.



Ron has been the canine training field for 16 years. He previously was a board certified podiatrist but left the medical field to pursue his passion for working with dogs. He served a two year apprenticeship with master trainer Mark Castillero of San Diego, CA and then moved to Denver CO. He owns Dog Train, LLC and has been the head trainer at Tenaker Pet Care in Aurora, CO for the past seven years. He is a professional member of IACP and can be reached at ron@dogtrainllc.com

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The SafeHands editor is looking for submissions relating to all aspects of professional canine care. Articles should be of interest to a diverse membership of canine pros and should range from 800 to 1,500 words. Articles are subject to editing. See page 2 for details.

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