



Newsletter for October 2008
Written by David Greenberg

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Maybe some not-so-interesting
stuff....who knows?

Step outside folks and feel the cool air, smell the fall leaves and revel in the change of seasons. Sadly these changes in the atmosphere also signal the end of our agility season. Still, we can all feel good about the exciting times we have had this year and we can also look forward to a winter of training and practicing, secure in the knowledge that we will be even better competitors next year!

We have had some awesome runs, some Qs, some titles and a whole lot of good times on the agility fields.

In the last issue I reported the results from the spring trials and our BC/Yukon regionals. This time I have for you the titles earned at the late summer trials. First, let me start with the corrections from last time. If you recall, when I started writing the club newsletter I promised fairly inaccurate reporting and in keeping with that motto I left a team out when I covered the regionals. Again. Last year I forgot Diana and Mason, this year it was Joy and Hannah. Oops. Anyway, they finished twenty-second in the 16 inch Veterans division with a score of 380.51.

Actually it has been a very busy summer for Joy Miller; Hannah got her championship (more about that later) and Joy got a new puppy. She has a red

colored Border Collie named Zest. Joy is not the only one who has a bigger dog family. Kim has a new Border Collie named Synge, Kris has a new Wiemeraner puppy and Donna has a wee little red Kelpie pup named Blur. As of mid-October Blur is eight weeks old. Rayne is said to be trying to get along with the new arrival; Warjac has told Blur to "leave me alone!" Here is what Kris has to say about her pup: "Fly is almost 4 months old. She is Faith's Great-niece, and came all the way from Maine. She is very busy, loves to run and her favourite toy is Breeze. Breeze is the perfect Nanny, she keeps Fly entertained and in line. Faith hasn't been doing much playing lately as she is still recovering from surgery. However, whenever Faith is napping Fly loves to snuggle up next to Great-auntie.

I think in the last newsletter I mentioned that Angel and Peter have a new puppy too. His name is Indy and he is another Brittany Spaniel. According to Angel he is a typical bratty little brother. Driving his sisters crazy, Vicki loves him; the other two tolerate him. They'll play with him when they think Angel is not paying attention. More mellow than Vicki, but still a Brittany...

Demos

Our attempt at putting on a "Hoof n Woof" demonstration at the PGX failed; it seems that the dogs and handlers were ready but the horse people were not. We did get to put on a good show for the PGX crowd with our own agility set up in the Agriplex. Thanks go to Kim Collins who organized and ran the show and to the usual Grumpy Old Men who took care of the equipment. We look

forward to next year's Expo as this is a well attended function and we get lots of good publicity when we attend. We also had a good turn out for the "Paws for a Cause" fundraiser for the

SPCA. This year it was held in the parking lot up at the University access to the Greenway up on Cranbrook Hill. Once again Top Dog took first place in Prince George for fundraising!

Regionals Fund Raising

If you are planning to go to the BC/Yukon Regionals this coming May you may want to get in on the fund raising. To be included, pay Donna Holmgren \$20 as seed money. Then participate in as many of the fund raising activities as soon as possible. Already the group made some money by picking weeds. There will be a raffle table at the November trial and perhaps another dinner and dance in the spring. Also, June West has made some special plaques to hang your dog's ribbons. You can see these at Quackers. If you are pretty sure you are going to Campbell River, contact Mike or Veronica Shortland as they will be making a group reservation for the campground down there.

Pet Food Recall

There was another pet food scare this fall. This time it was not poison in the Another health warning worth repeating is about stuffing food into toys. When we leave our dogs we put some peanut butter into the hollow part of a beef shin bone and I know other people put soft food into Kong type toys. Please be sure your stuffed toy has a hole in both ends. Apparently when dogs stick their tongues into a toy with just one hole the vacuum created can suck the tongue into the rubber with disastrous results. For more disturbing information go to: <http://thechaistory.blogspot.com/2008/08/chai-story.html>

Trial Results:

Okay, I started to try to copy the results from the AAC web page. After about a half an hour of frustrating work I decided to try a different approach. If you wish to see the trial results, go to your computer and travel to this destination:

<http://www.aactrialresults.com/tr/trialresults2008.html>. From there you can find the Clear Sailing trial and Pawsitive Steps in July, Top Dog in August and Clear Sailing in September. Consider this your first in a series of "do-it-yourself" newsletters!

However, I will report here the titles earned over the summer.

At the July Clear Sailing Trial Sheldon and Able earned their Masters Snooker Dog of Canada, Kim and Peak titled in Steeplechase, Ken and Blitz got their Masters Jumpers, Rob and Timber completed their Masters Team Relay Dog of Canada, Mike and Shenia earned the Masters Snooker Dog of Canada, Belinda Stewart and Indy-Anna finished their Advanced Gamblers, Karen Stewart and Roch got their Starters Game Dog, Laura Norie and Ellie earned Masters Gambler, Masters Team Relay and (drum roll....please) AtchC! Yay Laura! Cassie and I got our Masters Snooker and Advanced Game Dog of Canada titles and June and Benson finished their Masters Team Relay title which also gave them their AtchC! Way to go June!

At the Pawsitive Steps trial in Quesnel Robbi Holms and Nova received their Agility Dog of Canada title. Kim Collins and Peak got their Master Agility Dog of Canada and Pat Krebs and Spryte finished the Advanced Agility Dog of Canada. Carolyn

Gerrie and Wren earned Agility Dog of Canada and so did Lenore Trudel and Lacey. Margaret Smithson and her beagle Ben finished their Advanced Agility Dog of Canada title. Ken Sharp and Blitz were another Agility Dog of Canada team, Linda Carter and Lucas did their runs to earn Starter Game Dog of Canada. Sunshine and Denise McLean earned their Masters Agility Dog of Canada, as did Terry Simons and Reveille. They also took their Masters Jumpers title. Donna Loftsgard and Jetta were also Masters Jumpers Dog recipients. Finally, Catherine Lundin and Jiggysy earned the title of Advanced Game Dog of Canada.

Top Dog's August trial produced quite a few Qs and the following titles: Sheldon Pineo and Able finished their Masters Agility Dog of Canada, Roger Ryf and Biscuit got their Advanced Gamblers and Masters Team Relay titles. Dirk Blok and Rex earned the Advanced Agility dog of Canada title. He also earned that same titled with Jack. Jennifer Fraser got a Masters Dog of Canada with JP, Linda Kikkert and River now hold the Starters Game Dog of Canada title as do Laura Radridge and Applejack. Glen McNab and Max now have their Masters Agility Dog of Canada.

Clear Sailing's second trial was held in Quesnel in September. Mike Shortland and Dazzle became Masters of Team Relay. Robbi Holm and Nova won the Starters Game Dog of Canada title as did Denise McLean and Keeper and Shannon Mercer and Toque. Michelle Klein and Zap took the Masters Snooker Dog of Canada title and Ken and Blitz earned the Advanced Game Dog of Canada title. Mike and Shenia now have their Masters Agility Dog of Canada. Christy Wheeler and Denver joined the group of Starters Game Dog or Canada winners. Diana Spelay and Mason earned their Masters Snooker Dog of Canada title. As I mentioned before, Joy and Hannah had quite a spectacular weekend. Hannah Qed a standard run to achieve her Masters Agility Dog of Canada and a snooker course to get he Masters Snooker Dog of Canada and that gave her an AtchC! So three big loud cheers for Joy and Hannah!

You may note that I did not attach a V or S to any titles; I believe a title is a title and does not need to be designated as special or veteran.

Ken and Blitz

While we are listing accomplishments, we need to pause and take a deep breath and offer up a huge hurrah for our good friend Ken Sharp and his tiny friend Blitz. First of all Ken made the wise decision this June to stop hanging around with great herds of little kids and retire from teaching...congratulations Ken! Then Ken and Blitz rolled on into Abbotsford and took first place in the ten inch regular division. So, then they trained and practiced and competed through the summer until it was time to head all the way East to New Brunswick for the Canadian National Agility Championships. There they ran nearly perfectly to come home with second place for the entire nation. Wow! We are all so very proud of you and your accomplishments.

Paddock

You have likely heard that the equipment is tucked away and the paddock is closed for the winter. Already we are looking forward to next season. Thank you so very much to Al and Anne for the use of their property for the spring, summer and fall. What a great place it has been for training, fun matches, rally-o and agility trials and getting together.

World Championships

If you go to this site: <http://ca.youtube.com/user/bl0art> you can see a bunch of videos of world class agility performance. Also, try this one :

http://smoothmovesagility.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=category§ionid=6&id=40&Itemid=173

While I am sending you of to different corners of cyberspace, go to www.namethatwhatever.com/quiz/dog-breeds if you would like to try out a “name-that-breed” quiz.

Coming Events

Evan as our season comes to a close we have a few events for you to note on your calendars.

Halloween Fun Match.....Sunday, October 26 from 1:00pm until 5:00 pm at the Agriplex. Late entries including entries at the door are being accepted. Top Dog members pay \$6 per run, non-members \$7. The Jumpers run at the end of the day (if we get to it) is free. We are running two levels of Standard, a gamblers, steeplechase and (maybe) jumpers. Also there will be costume judging and refreshments.

November AAC trial.....Saturday, November 1 and Sunday November 2 back at the Agriplex. Likely early in the morning. Donna, Shannon and I will be judging.

AGM.....Sunday, November 16, 4:00pm at the centre on 1st Avenue. You can run for an executive position, discuss important matters or just visit with your agility friends. Snacks after the meeting.

Christmas Party....November 29 at St. Michaels

March AAC trial...March 14/15 2009.

AAC Affairs

The date and location for the 2009 nationals have not yet been announced. The Standing Rules Committee is looking into the possibility of changing the spacing of weave poles and of shortening the required length of the chute.

Fairy tales

Provided by: Jean Donaldson, Dogs in Canada

The Top 10 dog behaviour myths

I read this article by Jean Donaldson on the Yahoo page and was so impressed by what she had to say that I wrote for permission to reprint the article in this newsletter. Ms. Donaldson and the good folks at Dogs in Canada were kind enough to grant permission so I can share these ideas with you. I am reprinting the article in its entirety; however, at times you will notice I have added my own editorial comments. I urge you to respond with your own thoughts and I will carry them in the next newsletter.

There are a lot of myths about dog behaviour so I whittled it down to ones that were pervasive and that made myth criteria, which are:
a) there is no (zero) scientific evidence supporting the contention;

b) there is scientific evidence against the contention and/or scientific evidence supporting alternatives.

- 1) Dogs are naturally pack animals with a clear social order. This one busts coming out of the gate as free-ranging dogs (pariahs, semi-feral populations, dingoes, etc.) don't form packs. As someone who spent years solemnly repeating that dogs were pack animals, it was sobering to find out that dogs form loose, amorphous, transitory associations with other dogs.

David's comments: I am very glad to read this one. I get tired of hearing dog trainers blame every single dog behavior on dogs trying to find their position in the pack. I have not observed this and I think it is a lazy way of coming up with a "one-size-fits-all" answer to training issues.

- 2) If you let dogs exit doorways ahead of you, you're letting them be dominant. There is not only no evidence for this, there is no evidence that the behaviour of going through a doorway has any social significance whatsoever. In order to lend this idea any plausibility, it would need to be ruled out that rapid doorway exit is not simply a function of their motivation to get to whatever is on the other side combined with their higher ambulation speed.

David: Both of my dogs love to bust out of the door as fast as they can and they are the least dominant animals you have ever met. I am sure they want to get out first because they are motivated to do so and not to "show me up."

- 3) In multi-dog households, "support the hierarchy" by giving presumed dominant animals patting, treats, etc., first, before giving the same attention to presumed subordinate animals. There is no evidence that this has any impact on inter-dog relations, or any type of aggression. In fact, if one dog were roughing up another, the laws governing Pavlovian conditioning would dictate an opposite tack: Teach aggressive dogs that other dogs receiving scarce resources predicts that they are about to receive some. If so practised, the tough dog develops a happy emotional response to other dogs getting stuff – a helpful piece of training, indeed. No valuable conditioning effects are achieved by giving the presumed higher-ranking dog goodies first.

David: I agree. I once watched a noted dog trainer on television demonstrate that severe behavior issues could be solved by having the dog watch the human eat a carrot stick before getting their dog food in order to teach the dog its place in the order of things. I really doubt the dog could care when, where or how we eat our carrots.

4) Dogs have an innate desire to please. This concept has never been operationally defined, let alone tested. A vast preponderance of evidence, however, suggests that dogs, like all properly functioning animals, are motivated by food, water, sex, and like many animals, by play and access to bonded relationships, especially after an absence. They're also, like all animals, motivated by fear and pain, and these are the inevitable tools of those who eschew the use of food, play, etc., however much they cloak their coercion and collar-tightening in desire to please rhetoric.

4) Rewards are bribes and thus compromise relationships. Related to 4), the idea that behaviour should just, in the words of Susan Friedman, Ph.D., “flow like a fountain” without need of consequences, is opposed by more than 60 years of unequivocal evidence that behaviour is, again to quote Friedman, “a tool to produce consequences.” Another problem is that bribes are given before behaviour, and rewards are given after. And, a mountain of evidence from decades of research in pure and applied settings has demonstrated over and over that positive reinforcement – i.e., rewards – make relationships better, never worse.

David: Again I agree and I think that the treats we use are mostly a way to communicate to the dog that they made the right decision.

5) If you pat your dog when he's afraid, you're rewarding the fear. Fear is an emotional state – a reaction to the presence or anticipation of something highly aversive. It is not an attempt at manipulation. If terrorists enter a bank and order everybody down on the floor, the people will exhibit fearful behaviour. If I then give a bank customer on the floor a compliment, 20 bucks or chocolates, is this going to make them more afraid of terrorists next time? It's stunningly narcissistic to imagine that a dog's fearful behaviour is somehow directed at us (along with his enthusiastic door-dashing).

David: Thank you Jean for this one. I have been corrected in training class for comforting my dog when she was frightened and it makes

more sense to me to offer the same level of comfort that we, as frightened humans would seek.

- 6) Punish dogs for growling or else they'll become aggressive. Ian Dunbar calls this “removing the ticker from the time bomb.” Dogs growl because something upsetting them is too close. If you punish them for informing us of this, they are still upset but now not letting us know, thus allowing scary things to get closer and possibly end up bitten. Much better to make the dog comfortable around what he's growling at so he's not motivated to make it go away.

David: I let my dogs growl; however when it escalates to snarling I make them separate and quiet down.

- 7) Playing tug makes dogs aggressive. There is no evidence that this is so. The only study ever done, by Borchelt and Goodloe, found no correlation between playing tug and the incidence of aggression directed at either family members or strangers. Tug is, in fact, a cooperative behaviour directed at simulated prey: the toy.

9) If you give dogs chew toys, they'll learn to chew everything. This is a Pandora's box type of argument that, once again, has zero evidence to support it. Dogs are excellent discriminators and readily learn with minimal training to distinguish their toys from forbidden items. The argument is also logically flawed as chewing is a 'hydraulic' behaviour that waxes and wanes, depending on satiation/deprivation, as does drinking, eating and sex. Dogs without chew objects are like zoo animals in barren cages. Unless there is good compensation with other enrichment activities, there is a welfare issue here.

10) You can't modify “genetic” behaviour. All behaviour – and I mean all – is a product of a complex interplay between genes and the environment. And while some behaviours require less learning than others, or no learning at all, their modifiability varies as much as does the modifiability of behaviours that are primarily learned.

David: As I read this piece I found myself very much in agreement and I shudder to think about how many people are overly influenced by televised dog behavior experts who base their theories on casual observations alone with no research. It is good to know we can pet our dogs when there are firecrackers in the neighborhood, we can walk them without insisting that they walk in the proper pack position, we can play tug, let them chew and growl and be dogs.

Well folks, it has now been about two years since Cali disappeared and although I have not given up hope that she will surface someday, I must admit that is hard to stay optimistic. She remains in our thoughts and hearts.

It was my intention to include a dog book review in this newsletter, in fact I was aiming for the July letter. Well the book has been read and I know what I want to say, I just have not yet gotten it written so you can just wait until next time.

Next Issue:

News from the AGM

Results from the November trial

A review of the book: "Merlin's Door."

A look ahead at the 2009 season