

Sparkle and the Sports Veterinarian

By Barbara Axel

In the summer of 2005 a call went out for volunteers to take part in a gait analysis study to be held at the site of the Durham (North Carolina) Kennel Club building, conducted by Chris Zink DVM, PhD, of Maryland, and John Sherman DVM, owner of Vethab Rehabilitation Center, Raleigh, North Carolina. Sparkle, a standard longhaired dachshund, was one of about 150 dogs of all ages, sizes and shapes who participated that weekend, and I believe she was the youngest.

A complete medical history of every participant dog was obtained, and the dogs were thoroughly examined by both vets before they were suited up and photographed using specialized “peak-motus” computer/video equipment when standing, walking, trotting, cantering and galloping. I was impressed by the thoroughness of both veterinarians, and their gentle touch with the dogs.

Fast forward another year: Sparkle was looking really good, her coat was long and flowing, and we were ready to start showing her in conformation. Two of her littermates had already been major pointed and one was a champion. We couldn't wait to begin.

However, Murphy's Law intervened. One day this energetic, athletic little being ran through the house, and returned to my side limping. We crate rested her, and soon she was fine.....we thought.

We entered some cluster shows. But it was not to be. Suddenly she had started to limp again.....once in a while.

We took her to our primary veterinarian who had us gait her across the examining room, the back rooms and hallways. Of course while he was watching her gait was smooth and even. He took X-rays of the right side and could find nothing wrong. He palpated her body and found no swelling anywhere. We were given an anti-inflammatory to administer once a day. Two weeks later nothing had changed. Most of the time Sparkle's gait was lovely, and then all of a sudden that limp would appear.

We were frustrated and worried. Doing nothing was not an option. But we could not treat what we did not understand. Seeking a correct diagnosis became of utmost importance.

When several agility competitors mentioned sport vet, we contacted the Vethab office and made the 600 mile round trip journey to consult with Dr. Sherman.

First he had us gait Sparkle at different speeds up and down the long drive in front of his office till he detected that tell-tale limp. Then he brought us into his examining room where in place of the regular table there was a large, soft mat placed on the floor. Dr. Sherman sat spread-eagled on the floor and Sparkle relaxed on her side and back as she focused on this wonderful being as he examined every bone in her body.



Sparkle being examined by Dr. Zink



Suiting up to be gaited.

Suddenly that wagging tail stopped and her eyes rolled. She exhibited that there was now some pain...in her LEFT shoulder. New X-rays showed that she had mineral deposits on her left supraspinatus tendon.

It seemed that as her original soft tissue injury healed these deposits built up...somewhat similar to the build-up of adhesions after surgery. Another analogy is that instead of a smooth strip of highway it was as if there were speed bumps placed along the way so movement would be restricted. Hence the intermittent limp.

Another appointment was made for a shock wave treatment to be administered while Sparkle was under anesthesia to break up and dissolve the deposits. Two and perhaps three treatments would be needed.

Each was to be followed by three weeks at home during which we were responsible for implementing a daily homework schedule. We are delighted that the treatment is non invasive and Sparkle is doing really well. Except for a small patch of missing hair, one would never know that anything out of the ordinary had taken place.

Our young dachshund is sparkling once again, and her show career will soon be on track.

The American Canine Sports Medicine Association is a nation-wide group which can be accessed on line at www.acsma.org. Their membership list contacts are available at this site. Below is how they describe their activities.

"The ACSMA is composed of members who are experts in the diagnosis and management of injuries, diseases, nutritional problems, rehabilitation procedures, and physiologic functions of dogs involved in field sports and working endeavors. Their expertise addresses virtually all conditions that affect a variety of sporting breed dogs.

The mission of ACSMA is to optimize performance, minimize the risk of injury or metabolic damage, and define the best treatments related to the special needs of these performance animals. The ACSMA wants to improve the health and functional longevity of athletic and working dogs, and to disseminate pertinent information to promote the well being of such animals

The American Canine Sports Medicine Association was developed to address the medical and surgical problems encountered in the canine athlete. By investigating these problems, we can provide information useful in all breeds of dogs. Sports medicine has evolved due to the special requirements for performance placed upon the canine athlete. The tried and true methodologies employed in the past are often inadequate for establishing competitive levels of athletic performance.



A soft coated wheaten terrier being examined by Dr. Sherman

The ACSMA strives to promote the health of the canine athlete as we establish the art and science required to achieve this goal.

Sports medicine includes all aspects of veterinary medicine. The scope of canine sports medicine includes traditional medical and surgical problems, prevention and treatment of performance injuries, orthopedics, gait analysis, nutrition, thermo regulation, and exercise physiology. The list is unlimited and no area of expertise is left unexplored. As solutions to these problems are pursued, we hope to bring the answers to the veterinary population. We also aim to promote education and research into these areas of interest."

You will find more information concerning gait analysis studies at www.vethab.com

Do You KNOW Heartworms in Cats?

New Studies Call for Prevention & Redefinition of Heartworm Disease in Cats

The American Heartworm Society (AHS) and The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) announce a joint public awareness campaign, funded by an educational grant from Pfizer Animal Health, to promote awareness of the serious danger of heartworm disease in cats which reveals itself as HARD (Heartworm Associated Respiratory Disease). The **KNOW Heartworms** campaign will educate veterinarians and cat owners about the real threat of this disease and the importance of prevention. It is supported with a clinic education kit, a national media relations campaign, and a newly launched Web site, www.knowheartworms.org.

The campaign is presented by outlining five myths, or misunderstandings, about feline heartworm disease: Dogs vs. Cats, Indoor vs. Outdoor Cats, It's a Heart Disease, Adult Heartworms vs. Larvae and Diagnosis. All of these issues are misunderstood to the detriment of cats' health.

According to Dr. Charles Thomas Nelson, president of the American Heartworm Society, both the veterinary community and the cat-owning public have a long way to go in developing awareness about the risks of feline heartworm disease. Studies indicate that less than 5 percent of U.S. households with cats regularly administer heartworm prevention. In contrast, 59 percent of dog-owning households regularly use a heartworm prevention product.

Dr. James R. Richards, Director of the Feline Health Center at Cornell University and a past president of the AAFP, adds, "That's why it is important that we be aware of the range of risks an animal can face and make sure they receive regular check-ups. As we're learning with heartworm, the dangers are much more significant than previously thought."

The American Heartworm Society maintains updated guidelines on its host site with the latest research to help veterinarians more effectively educate pet owners and manage heartworm disease. The "Guidelines for the Diagnosis, Prevention and Management of Heartworm Infection in Cats" is updated on an ongoing basis. Highlights include revised information on the pathophysiology of feline heartworm disease, interpretation of serology test results and continued support of the recommendation for year-round prevention.

"This is a very preventable disease," says Nelson. "This education program and the updated guidelines are based upon the latest, ongoing research conducted around the world," he adds.

Most veterinarians recommend year-round heartworm prevention in dogs, even in seasonal areas. One reason for this is compliance – making sure the medicine has been given properly by the pet owner. Surveys show that probably only 75 percent of the doses that are prescribed are given. But, even if doses are accidentally skipped, by giving preventives year-round the retroactive efficacy is increased, and it's possible to actually stop some worms from developing into adults. Also, several of the monthly heartworm preventives have activity against some intestinal parasites, which infect 3 to 6 million people every year.

"We are pleased to partner with these organizations to reach out to as many practicing veterinarians as possible. Every practicing veterinarian will benefit from the information presented," says Mike Cavanaugh, DVM, Diplomate, ABVP, Director of Special Veterinary Team, Pfizer Animal Health.

Founded during the Heartworm Symposium of 1974, The American Heartworm Society was formed to facilitate and encourage the generation and dissemination of information about heartworm disease and encourages adoption of standardized procedures for its diagnosis, treatment and prevention. The American Heartworm Society stimulates and financially supports research, which furthers knowledge and understanding of the disease. Its headquarters are located in Batavia, Ill. For more information, visit www.heartwormsociety.org.

The American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) is a professional organization of veterinarians dedicated to feline health care. The association supports professional growth and fellowship by providing outstanding continuing education, and by promoting and sponsoring research and outreach programs intended to improve the health and well-being of cats. Included in its mission is to improve the public stature of cats and to increase the knowledge of veterinarians in the field of feline medicine and surgery. For more information, visit www.aafponline.org.

Horse genome sequence complete

The first draft of the horse genome sequence was recently completed and deposited in public databases for use by biomedical and veterinary researchers around the globe. The sequence will help veterinary researchers better understand the diseases that affect horses.

The \$15 million effort to sequence the approximately 2.7 billion DNA base pairs in the horse genome was funded by the National Human Genome Research Institute, one of the National Institutes of Health. A team of researchers at the Broad Institute, a research collaboration of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, performed the sequencing and assembly of the horse genome.

Sequencing of the horse genome began in 2006, building on a 10-year collaborative effort known as the Horse Genome Project, in which an international group of scientists used genomics to address important health issues for horses. (For more background, *see JAVMA*, [July 1, 2002, page 15](#)).

In addition to sequencing the horse genome, researchers produced a map of horse genetic variation using DNA samples from a variety of modern and ancestral breeds. This map will provide scientists with a genome-wide view of genetic variability in horses and help them identify the genetic contributions to physical and behavioral differences, as well as to disease susceptibility.

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In Their Own Words: From leaders in the animal rights movement.

Do you know the difference between animal rights and animal welfare?

“I find it deeply troubling that most large animal organizations either do not promote veganism at all or treat it as something that only the brave few can do. It should be portrayed as the ‘normal’ or default position of the [animal rights] movement.” **Professor Gary L. Francione, Rutgers School of Law, Interview on Veganism/Abolition in The Vegan**

“Don’t bring any more humans into being. There are enough of us. Spay and neuter every domestic animal possible—there are enough of them.” **Paul Watson, founder Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. SATYA Interview March 2004**

We [Sea Shepherd Conservation Society] have also attracted the support of celebrities, and this has helped considerably. We live in a media culture and this means that actors and musicians have more credibility to speak on a wide range of issues than the experts in their respective fields. Our organization has the support of Pierce Brosnan, Martin Sheen, William Shatner, and Richard Dean Anderson. How can we fail when we have James Bond, Captain Kirk, the President of the United States and McGyver [on our side]? **Paul Watson, founder Sea Shepherd Conservation Society. SATYA Interview March 2004**

“We understand the appeal of battle cries such as “not bigger cages, but empty cages.” But a bit of comfort and stimulation for an animal who will be in that cage her whole life is something worth fighting for, even as we demand empty cages. Not only is it the best thing for the animals in the cages, it’s also the best thing for animal liberation. It’s another stepping stone on the march.” **Peter Singer - author of Animal Liberation and professor of bioethics at Princeton University; Bruce Friedrich Vice President for international grassroots campaigns for People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) SATYA September 2006**

“If people truly want to end terrorism, then they should discard animal flesh from refrigerators, toss bows and bullets into the trash, insist that universities close down their vivisection laboratories, demand that department stores close their fur salons, make circuses shift to only human performers, abolish the rodeo once and for all, and support the courageous ALF (Animal Liberation Front) humanitarians who liberate animals from places of terror.” **Gary Yourofsky, founder of Animals Deserve Absolute Protection Today and Tomorrow (ADAPTT), National Lecturer for PETA**

“While moral progress compelled people to realize the wrong of exhibiting humans, we await the next step whereby the world comprehends the injustice of exploiting animals in zoos.” **Stephen Best, Associate Professor of Humanities and Philosophy at the University of Texas El Paso, Zoos and the End of Nature**

“To those people who say, ‘My father is alive because of animal experimentation,’ I say ‘Yeah, well, good for you. This dog died so your father could live.’ Sorry, but I am just not behind that kind of trade off.” **Bill Maher, PETA celebrity spokesperson, Comedian and host of the show Real Time with Bill Maher**

Walking the Dog

By Barbara Axel

The yo-yo has been around a long time. Two rounded pieces of painted wood or plastic, divided by a short spool in the middle. A long length of string is wound around the spool. To play, the string is let out and drawn up again to make the bottom dance up and down. While children and adults have been intrigued by its actions, only the very skilled players can perform complex yo-yo exercises, one of which is called “walking the dog.”

On the other hand, pet owners of all ages walk dogs for enjoyment and exercise and are frustrated and embarrassed when their dogs behave like yo-yo’s. Why do some dogs behave well, and others pull mightily, get distracted by smells and sights, and feel they must challenge every canine in sight? The answer is intentional or unintentional training.

Correct equipment will enhance correct training. The leash should be soft nylon, leather, or cotton--never chain. The length should be appropriate to the height and size of the dog.the shorter the better so there will be no extra leash to get tangled or to be balled up in your fist.

Collars too, should be appropriate to the size and nature of the dog.

Buckle collars should be fastened so that the dog can not pull his head out if he suddenly backs up. Try this at home in an enclosed spot.

Slip collars can be cloth or chain. Once again, the lightest weight geared to the size of the dog is best.

Some people like martingales, with collar and leash in one. They too should be lightweight and have as short a leash as possible.

All the collars already mentioned control the dog by applying one pressure point when the leash is tightened.

The prong collar is the most humane collar to use when the person is small and the dog large. It is also a good training device if the dog is insensitive to touch. Specialty micro-mini prong collars are manufactured specifically for use with toy dogs such as the Pomeranian or Chihuahua. Again, the best size is the smallest and lightest weight appropriate for a particular dog. Unlike the other collars already mentioned, the prong collar utilizes equal pressure points around the dog’s neck and does not exert a pull at only one point.

Another device fits over a dog’s muzzle and the dog is led by a leash attached to a “D” ring under the chin. These devices have gained much favor recently, but there are some reservations. Read Suzanne Clothier’s comments at our links to her columns on NCRAOA’s website <http://www.ncraoa.com/training.html>.

Harnesses do not provide the handler with control, and should not be used unless the dog has a particular disability.

Flexi-leads are wonderful devices to allow your dog to exercise on an extended leash when you have already reached a destination such as a spacious, uncrowded park, but should NEVER, NEVER be used when walking.

Start training in a place close to home with few distractions. The dog should have his walking equipment already in place. Consistency is the rule.

Walk in one direction till the dog pulls to the end of the leash. Then without warning quickly turn to the right away from him and walk briskly in the opposite direction. When your pal catches up to you, praise liberally and offer him a small, smelly goodie. Continue walking. When he next pulls, you turn abruptly once again, offer praise and goodie as he reaches your side. It may seem as if you are going in circles at first, but soon the dog will be looking only at you, the most interesting and exciting being in the world. Since pleasurable rewards consistently happen only when he is at your side, and it does not feel good when he is not, he will be motivated to stay right there.

As soon as the dog has achieved success in the quiet surroundings, add a bit more distraction. Always be ready to go back to the previous step if the dog is not accomplishing the goals you have set at the higher level. Perhaps you have moved ahead too quickly. The dog learns by repetition and praise for accomplishing an attainable task that will boost his confidence.

Go for a walk by yourself without your dog to first check conditions on the route you plan to take. Be observant for pitfalls.

Do not walk in that neighborhood if dogs habitually run loose, are kept outdoors and challenge every passerby, or are harbored by an invisible fence that a dog may or may not be able to cross. Go into town, or choose a park or campus where dogs are welcome to walk on leash.

For more formal training you might want to join group classes to obtain a Canine Good Citizen Certificate. The CGC training is appropriate to ensure that the dog will be able to be the best companion in situations that mimic experiences that you might meet while walking in crowded places.

You should wear comfortable clothing with deep pockets to contain the equipment you will need. A backpack or fanny pack will serve the same purpose.

Do carry several plastic bags as part of your equipment. Do be a good citizen by using them to pick up if your dog eliminates. Usually there are dumpsters or garbage pails along your route so you can toss away the leavings.

Intentional training = a wonderful, relaxing or invigorating, companionable time spent with man's best friend.

Unintentional training = catching up to a yo-yo in play.

You choose.

Barbara Axel, breeder/trainer/exhibitor, Board Member of North Carolina Responsible Animal Owners Alliance (NCRAOA), has organized and participated in programs promoting responsible pet ownership since the late '60's. Positive interactions between dogs and children under the supervision of adults has been a primary goal.

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