

## Tools for Teaching *by Barbara Axel*

Healthy dogs walk and run. They stand, sit, and lie down. Well trained dogs walk, run, stand, sit and lie down also, but they have been taught to perform these ordinary behaviors on cue. They come when called too, a skill that one day might save their lives. Civilized dogs walk alongside their owners on leash without pulling. Since most dog owners acquire their canines for companionship they want to be assured of a reasonable level of behavior from their pets. So how does one achieve this goal?

Dogs derive comfort from living in a somewhat structured environment. They need to know what is expected from them. Owners provide intentional and unintentional training whenever there is a dog/owner interaction.

Have you become annoyed because your dog noisily begs food from the table when you sit down to eat, and especially when you are entertaining company? Someone standing inside your skin taught him that. Who runs out the door as soon as it is opened, trips his owner and jumps on guests? Wonder how he learned that trick? So your dog barks, whines, and pulls the leash almost out of your hands to chase that squirrel when out on a walk? Sound familiar? All these behaviors have been trained by you. They didn't just happen.

You've simply employed the best training methods of motivation and reward to achieve these responses.....and been successful. So too can you be successful at teaching good behaviors intentionally by employing these same methods in a more thoughtful way: motivation, reward, and intelligent repetition that stops at the point of success. Two effective tools are your voice and hands, but you have another set of tools readily available to help you to communicate: collars and leashes.

They are available in a dizzying array of colors, styles and sizes that make you wonder what might be best for you. In this month's Newsletter we will discuss collars. The collars described are found in varying weights and sizes. In every case the dog owner should purchase collars that are in keeping with the dog's size and weight. That means the lightest collar that achieves the appropriate result is the best for a particular dog.



**Buckle Collars:** These collars are available in cloth and leather of different thicknesses and widths. Leather collars can be flat or rolled. ID and rabies tags are often attached and these collars are relatively safe when worn by the dog full time. Since dogs are sound sensitive, if more than one tag is used they should be taped to one another to eliminate annoying constant jingling so close to the dog's ears. Buckle collars are currently the favored choice for teaching, but they have built-in problems. If the collars are put on loosely, or the dog's head is not much larger than the neck the dog can pull out of the collar at will. That happened several times in my classes and resulted in owners chasing after dogs. Not safe, and

not funny to anyone. The dog is put in a position of learning an unintentional pattern of behavior. I do not recommend them for training. After those experiences they were not allowed in my classes.



**Two ring slip collars:** Often the choice for training, they are available in cloth and chain, and often sized in increments of 2". They are placed on the dog so there is a "live" or training ring that is attached to the leash. To use, the two rings are slipped inside one another so a continuous circle is formed. With the handler facing the dog he makes a "P" and places the collar on the neck. The side with the leg of the "P" to the left goes over the top of the dog's neck and attaches to the leash. A few people claim that the slip collar is responsible for trachea injuries, but after teaching for 30 years not one of my students' dogs had this occur.

**Snap-around collar:**

Similar to the slip collar, they are usually made from hard nylon in 1/2" increments. This makes for a better fit, and the hard nylon does not fray. They are available in either a bolt or trigger snap. Both the slip and snap-around collars should be fitted high on the neck behind the occipit, not low down on the shoulder. The correct fit will be to enable the owner to quickly snap and release rather than pull to gain the dog's attention.



**Martingale collar:** These collars are usually available as leash and collar in one. They provide more control than a buckle collar, but not as much as a slip collar.



**Harness:** Non-restrictive harnesses are great for scent trail tracking, but guess what? When scent tracking, the dog is actually leading and pulling his handler for all he is worth, as he should. He is not walking alongside his owner. There is not much handler control or interactive communication provided by the harness. However, if the dog has been diagnosed by a licensed veterinarian as already exhibiting cervical or trachea difficulties, it is the correct choice.



**Head halter:** Sold under brand names such as Halti or Gentle Leader, I have used them occasionally. They sometimes can be quite useful to teach specific skills, but dogs do not seem to be generally comfortable wearing them. The proponents say that they resemble halters used to lead horses, but others warn of the dangers.

**Prong Collar:** These collars are all made of chain. They are available in small, medium and large, and micro-mini. To use, links are added or removed so that the collar prongs just rest against the dog's skin. There are now snap-on styles available so once the collar is correctly fitted to an individual dog, attachment and removal is much more convenient. People have been taught to think of these collars as cruel devices, but the reverse is actually true. They were originally known as the humane collar.

Why? Let us experiment. Place a buckle and slip ring collar in turn around your wrist. When you pull on either one, you feel the pressure at one point, the point opposite where you pull. Now place the prong collar around your wrist so each prong is touching your skin. Now pull. You will find that the pressure is felt equally all around. Dogs that are touch insensitive benefit from the use of these collars.



Norwegian Elkhound  
Ch Windy Cove Dasher's Winning Race, CD, RN, CGC, ASCA-CD Owner Cathy Garrett



Dachshund  
Dual Ch Primadox Shambala CD, RE, CGC, TDI Owned by Sandi Myers

So do people and dogs where size is incompatible: that means little or weak people with large, energetic dogs who otherwise could pull them off their feet, and those owning very small breeds where a snap of leash and collar could flip the dog into the air.

Correct use of training tools must be reinforced by the trainer's accompanying simultaneous verbal cues, praise and motivational repetition. For safety's sake collars should be removed when the dog is not under supervision and before crating.

All collars and leashes can deteriorate with use, and/or can exhibit defective parts, especially clasps or bolts. In the interest of safety the careful owner should check his equipment before every use.

For micro-mini prong collars contact:

Sylvia's Tack Box, Connie Timmerman [tacbox@iglide.net](mailto:tacbox@iglide.net) or phone 507-931-2292

For some interesting perspectives on training equipment log on to Suzanne Clothier's website.

<http://www.flyingdogpress.com> Once there, click on Articles and read:

- Selecting Training Equipment
- The Problems with Head Halters
- Training With the Prong Collar

*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.*

## **In Their Own Words** ■ **Quotes from leaders in the animal rights movement.**

The Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR) does not support any breeding of cats or dogs, be it by AKC affiliates or any other breeders, while millions of animals are being killed each year due to overpopulation. *Directions, Summer 2004, Newsletter of the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights*

"The cat, like the dog, must disappear... We should cut the domestic cat free from our dominance by neutering, neutering, and more neutering, until our pathetic version of the cat ceases to exist."

*John Bryant, Fettered Kingdoms: An Examination of a Changing Ethic, PETA 1982, p.15.*

## Noted from AVMA

Andrew Rowan, PhD, executive vice president for operations at the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) discussed the new Humane Society Veterinary Medical Association (HSVMA) at the AVMA National Convention.

The HSVMA resulted from a recent merger between the HSUS and the Association of Veterinarians for Animal Rights (AVAR). According to Rowan, the new HSVMA will focus on the protection of animal health and the relief of animal suffering by building on existing HSUS and AVAR projects. Policy work will promote animal welfare in legislation, education, and enforcement. Field services will include the HSUS Remote Area Veterinary Services, emergency services, and spay-neuter programs. The HSVMA also plans to develop student chapters and offer member benefits, including insurance, but those items are works in progress. *Source: JAVMA News, September 15, 2008. <http://www.avma.org/onlnews/javma/sep08/080915i.asp>*

## Durham – Not a Class Act

Durham County is set to vote September 8<sup>th</sup> on a revised animal ordinance. The ordinance bans tethering except for use in hunting and sporting events but may not exceed one-week duration.

Tethering is a primary means of control and training of hunting dogs. Tethering can also be the safest method of controlling a hard to contain animal. There are dogs that can escape from anything. They can chew through fencing and even chain link, break out windows, open doors, climb or dig under fences, and destroy wire and plastic shipping crates in seconds. These dogs can only be contained securely (and humanely) with a well thought out tether system.

The proposed ordinance will also set size requirements for pens: 100 square feet of unobstructed area per each animal weighing 20 pounds or under, and 200 square feet of unobstructed area per each animal weighing greater than 20 pounds.

By definition *Animal* means every nonhuman species, both domestic and wild. Unless being raised for food, this would include all pets - such as rabbits, pigeons - which would now be required to be kept individually in the minimum of 100 SF of space. For sportsmen and hobby breeders, 6 beagles or medium size dogs would require 1,200 SF of kennel runs – unobstructed (no trees). Outdoor catteries would also be affected.

Failure to provide these absurd pen sizes will result in charges of animal abuse / cruelty. The county has exempted their own animal shelter from these regulations, along with local boarding kennels.

Anti-tethering activists are currently canvassing the county in search of chained dogs and offering to build fences in order for those dogs to become “unchained”. This citizen program can continue without enacting a law that unfavorably impacts hunters, breeders, and owners of multiple dogs.



NCRAOA maintains the position that county administrators should not dictate methods of containment which are better left to the discretion of responsible dog owners and hunters. The current Durham ordinance is sufficient for animal control to intervene in cases of abuse and neglect.

A tethering ban will NOT:

- protect dogs from abuse. Dogs can be abused in the home, inside a fence, in the house
- stop dog fighting. Dog fighting is already a federal offense – if that is not enough to deter them an anti tether law certainly won't

There is absolutely NO logic or basis in either science or animal husbandry to justify Durham County dictating these pen sizes. Dogs are pack animals and do not need to be kenneled individually. Dog owners need a full range of choices in order to choose what works best for their situation.

The following is from, *A Comparison of Tethering and Pen Confinement of Dogs* Seong C. Yeon, Glen Golden, Wailani Sung, Hollis N. Erb, Arleigh J. Reynolds, and Katherine A. Houpt College of Veterinary Medicine Cornell University.

“The dogs spent most of their time in a recumbent position on the tether (male dogs 72.5% and female dogs 67.8%) and in the pen (male dogs 64.5% and female dogs 66.8%). The dogs were inactive, either lying or sitting (male dogs 85.7%, female dogs 76%) when on the tether and when in the pen (male dogs 81%, female dogs 84.2%).” “Whines tended to increase in the pen (0.17%) in comparison to on the tether (0.08%,  $p = .055$ ). Female Tethered male dogs sat inside the shelter significantly less ( $w = 433$ ), lay on the shelter less ( $w = 420$ ), lay in the shelter less ( $w = 523$ ), and barked less ( $w = 453$ ) but spent more time eating ( $w = 480$ ) and running ( $w = 271$ ).”

This same study states: In our study, frequency of vocalization was greater in the pen (2.34%) than on the tether (0.83%) but was not significant because one dog contributed most of the barking. Barking, when not in response to another dog's bark, may be stereotypic and a sign of frustration (Adams & Johnson, 1994). Although tethering is intuitively less acceptable, the fact that the dogs rarely pulled at their chains and the lack of major differences in behavior indicate that tethering may be an acceptable alternative housing method, but this may depend on the breed and experience of the dog. Our findings provide no evidence that tethering was any more or less detrimental to dog welfare than being housed in pens.”

This study also indicates that pen size is of little importance as dogs spend most of their time lying down (male dogs 64.5% and female dogs 66.8%).

Durham County held a public hearing on August 25<sup>th</sup>. NCRAOA board member, Natalie Rowntree, presented our opposition statement over the boos and hisses of the anti-tether, anti-breeder crowd. Durham County officials did nothing to keep the meeting civil.

The ordinance is being pushed by the new Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) state director, Amanda Arrington. According to the HSUS website introduction, Arrington is already hard at work in her new role, not only tackling anti-tethering for dogs and kennel requirements, but also encouraging restaurants to use cage-free eggs. Arrington states, ***"I believe legislation is the key to making real advancements in the fight for animal protection."***

[http://www.hsus.org/about\\_us/offices\\_and\\_affiliates/regional\\_offices/eastern\\_mountain\\_regional\\_office/new\\_north\\_carolina\\_state.html](http://www.hsus.org/about_us/offices_and_affiliates/regional_offices/eastern_mountain_regional_office/new_north_carolina_state.html)

## Hill's Donates Genome Data

Hill's Pet Nutrition Inc. announced the donation of its feline genome database to Morris Animal Foundation for the advancement of feline research.

In addition, Hill's has made a \$1 million commitment to MAF, and a portion of the funds will be used to establish a Coalition for Feline Genomic Research. The coalition will use the genetic data to study biochemical differences between healthy and unhealthy cats.

The genetic data were the result of Hill's years-long investment in nutrigenomic technology for identifying ingredients that will enhance functional pet food products. The project yielded a wealth of feline genome sequence data with DNA samples from seven cats of various breeds and both sexes.

Cats and humans share 250 genetic diseases, so the donation could also lead to discoveries affecting human health. *Source: JAVMA News September 1, 2008 <http://www.avma.org/onlinews/javma/sep08/080901u.asp>*

## Ideas For Getting The Truth Out

Kudos to the McKenzie Cascade Dog Fanciers and the Eugene Kennel Club for this excellent idea! At their current four day dog show cluster there is an entry of 1500 conformation dogs, plus obedience and agility. The local legislators are awarding the trophies in Groups. The show photographer is taking gratis pictures of the dignitaries kids standing on the Best in Show podium. After the shows, the photos will be framed and sent to the trophy presenters.

In addition, the clubs requested their show superintendent print the following message on the back of the armbands:

As a pure-bred dog lover, and one who counts pets as an important part of the family, I wish to thank those legislators who represent dog-friendly districts and continue to oppose anti-dog legislation, such as mandatory spay/neuter, breed specific legislations, and unreasonable controls on responsible breeders.

Be proud of the fact that you have encouraged knowledgeable pet owners to nurture and educate all those within your community. You have proven that you understand the human-animal bond that affects human behavior, both in everyday life and in times of crises.

Besides the opportunity to educate your community, we have also spent a good deal of money in your town. I estimate that for the duration of the dog shows in Eugene, I spent \_\_\_\_\_ dollars. Thank you for your good work. Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Yellow bags with purple crepe paper streamers that say "DEPOSIT USED ARMBANDS. Thank local legislators for their help. Let them know how much you spent." are hanging from the ring standards for the exhibitors to drop their arm bands in them when they are done. After the shows, the huge box full of these used armbands will be taken to the city and county meetings for both Eugene and Springfield where the text can be read by local legislators. One of the club members will tally up the amount of dollars spent and give that figure as well.

North Carolina Responsible Animal Owners Alliance, Inc. (NCRAOA) is a statewide organization of animal owners and professionals dedicated to animal welfare, responsible animal ownership, and maintaining the rights of responsible citizens to breed and own animals. NCRAOA, a 501(c)3 organization, provides education and information to the public and supports reasonable and humane animal welfare laws.

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