

# Your Dog



The Newsletter for Caring Dog Owners

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**If You Suspect Abuse**

Prevent a tragedy by knowing the signs and speaking up effectively for the victim

BY DAWN WEINBERGER

When Elizabeth Lunday's neighbors first brought home their new puppy, Lucky, the playful Dalmatian mix seemed to receive plenty of love and attention. That all changed when one-half of the couple who owned him moved out.

"Pretty soon, we started seeing the dog tied up all the time, rain or shine," Lunday said. "He wasn't being fed very well, and he was stuck on a short little chain that kept getting tangled up."

Lunday reported the neglect to her local animal control agency — she lived in Austin, Texas, at the time — but she said the agency didn't act immediately, and her concern for Lucky escalated each time she saw him sitting alone in the rain, crying. Her only option: Step in and take care of the problem herself. Despite what she perceived as the intimidating personality of her neighbor, Lunday rang his doorbell. Initially, he thought she was there to complain

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## News & Views

# A Risk in Raw Meat Diets?

## Researchers find bacteria in commercial foods

BY BETTY LIDDICK

We frequently receive letters from impassioned readers extolling the benefits of raw food diets. Just as frequently, *Your Dog* advisory board member and nutritionist Rebecca L. Remillard, DVM, replies that the diets pose a risk of bacterial contamination.

A new study confirms that stand. In an evaluation of 288 samples of dog food, including 240 commercial raw meat diets, researchers found that 53 percent were contaminated with *E. coli*, a bacterium in fecal matter. "There is a risk of food-borne illnesses in dogs fed these raw food diets as well [as] possible risk for humans associated with the dogs or their environments," researchers reported in the Feb. 15th issue of *JAVMA*, the journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association.

They also found salmonella, which can cause food poisoning, in 17 samples of raw meat. Researchers cited another study that found 30 percent of fecal samples from dogs who ate homemade BARF (biologically appropriate raw food) diets contained evidence of salmonella. Contact with affected animals can result in the infection salmonellosis in humans.

The researchers examined samples of raw beef, lamb, chicken and turkey. Their findings showed less contamination in commercial dry and canned diets, but they studied a limited number of those — 24 each.

More investigation of raw food diets is needed, the researchers concluded. "Results of this study indicate that raw meat products sold as dog food are commonly contaminated by various microbial agents ... given the frequency with which microorganisms of fecal origin were detected ... there may be potential for animal and hu-



The study found fewer contaminants in dry and canned food.

man infections to occur as a result of feeding raw meat diets to pets."

### Conference on Behavior

Dog owners, veterinarians, technicians, behaviorists and trainers are invited to attend a conference on behavior April 7 and 8 at Tufts University's Boston campus. The conference, entitled Addressing Canine Behavior Challenges: Solutions for the Real World, is designed to offer an understanding of behavior problems' development and practical information to modify it.

Speakers will be Nicholas Dodman, BVMS, MRCVS, director of the Behavior Clinic at the Cummings School; Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist Alice Moon-Fanelli, Ph.D., at Cummings and Brian Kilcommons, part-time lecturer at the school and director of training at Animal Care and Control in New York City. Among the topics to be covered are compulsive disorders, puppy training and medical causes of common problems.

The registration fee is \$250. Contact information: [www.tufts.edu/vet/continuedu](http://www.tufts.edu/vet/continuedu), Susan.Brogan@tufts.edu or the Office of Continuing Education and Conference Planning, (508) 887-4723. ♦

# A Biopsy Doesn't Spell Doom

When it comes to the health of your dog, knowledge is power

BY EVE ADAMSON

**T**hey say no news is good news, and that may be what pet owners hope for when their veterinarian suggests a biopsy. The very word conjures images of terminal cancer, pet loss and vet bills, but in many cases, these worries won't materialize, said John Berg, DVM, chair of the Department of Clinical Sciences at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University.

"People fear bad news. It's a common mistake they make when they find a lump or bump on their dog. They fear it might be cancer, and they don't get it checked out because they don't want to hear something bad," said Dr. Berg.

**“Ignoring the problem can allow a disease to progress.”**

However, refusing a biopsy can be a mistake that can make a condition much worse for your dog. "When you know exactly what the problem is, you can make a smarter decision about treatment," said Dr. Berg. Ignoring the problem can allow a disease to progress beyond the point where it can be successfully treated.

## Successful Treatment

"If your vet recommends a biopsy, that doesn't mean your dog is doomed," Dr. Berg assures pet owners. Many cancers and other diseases diagnosed by biopsy can be treated, and even cured, he said. "A suggestion to get a biopsy means your veterinarian needs more information, and that information could save your



*Caring owners like this, here with her Red Tick Coonhound, regularly check their dog's body for lumps that may require a biopsy.*

dog's life."

Here's what you need to know about this valuable tool.

A biopsy is, quite simply, a procedure in which a veterinarian takes a tissue sample from the dog in the area of the problem — a "core sample" or slice of an unusual lump, mass or other tissue — and sends it to a laboratory, where a pathologist examines the tissue under a microscope. The

examination can reveal abnormal cells that can identify the exact nature of the problem in the tissue, whether that problem turns out to be cancer, inflammatory bowel disease, a benign cyst or something else.

Dog owners often assume the only purpose of a biopsy is to shed light on the malignant or benign nature of lumps and bumps, but biopsies frequently aid in the diagnosis of other

conditions, said Dr. Berg. “Many skin diseases require a biopsy to differentiate them from each other because they look alike on the surface. Certain nasal cavity diseases in dogs are best diagnosed with a biopsy. To diagnose inflammatory bowel diseases, the vet uses an endoscope in an anesthetized patient to grasp bits of tissue from the intestine or stomach.”

Depending on the extent of the

problem and the affected area, your veterinarian may recommend any of several types of biopsies. They include needle biopsies and surgical wedge biopsies, which can be incisional or excisional. (See sidebar.)

In many cases, if a dog has a problem and the veterinarian needs more information, he or she will suggest a biopsy, but sometimes a pet owner can request one. “If a dog has a significant

problem of any kind, and it seems as if the veterinarian isn’t able to establish a definitive diagnosis, the owner might inquire about a biopsy,” Dr. Berg said.

Anytime a vet or a pet owner believes a dog may have cancer, a biopsy is appropriate. “When I teach veterinary students, I tell them that it is almost never wrong and almost always correct to do a biopsy when you suspect cancer,” Dr. Berg said.

Biopsies can accomplish several important goals in the diagnosis and treatment of disease. “One, you can confirm a disease when you aren’t sure. Two, you might be pretty sure the dog has cancer, but you need to know what kind of cancer. Three, a biopsy can tell you how bad the cancer is: its grade, which is a system pathologists have for characterizing the severity of the cancer based on what they see when they look under a microscope,” said Dr. Berg.

### **Influencing Treatment**

Knowing the cancer’s grade and type can influence treatment decisions because different types of cancers of different severities will often behave in predictable ways. “For instance, mast cell tumors are common skin tumors in dogs. We know that the high-grade mast cell tumors behave much worse than the low-grade mast cell tumors, even though they are both malignant,” Dr. Berg said. “Sometimes you can make a pretty good guess, but a biopsy tells you for sure.”

A biopsy delivered good news for Ruth Darlene Stewart of Theodore, Ala., when cancer became the primary culprit in her Beagle’s recurring leg growth. Because he was a year old, cancer seemed a remote possibility in Happy, Stewart’s little show dog. Suspecting a sebaceous cyst, Stewart’s vet removed the growth but didn’t do a biopsy.

“To really see what it was, he would have had to take a wider section, shave the leg and make a bigger scar,” said Stewart, who was reluc-



*A biopsy is, quite simply, a procedure in which a veterinarian takes a tissue sample from the dog in the area of the problem — a “core sample” or slice of an unusual lump, mass or other tissue — and sends it to a laboratory. An examination of biopsied tissue under a microscope can reveal abnormal cells and determine if disease exists.*



A veterinarian uses a small needle to aspirate a possibly cancerous mass on a 10-year-old black Labrador. Unlike a true biopsy, needle aspiration retrieves small quantities of individual cells and doesn't require anesthesia or sedation.

## “A biopsy can determine the severity of a cancer.”

tant to mar her show dog when all signs pointed to a non-malignant growth. But when the growth returned a third time, Stewart and her vet began to suspect a mast cell tumor. An excisional biopsy completely removed the growth and the surrounding area, and also revealed an inflammatory process, not cancer.

“After he took the wide margins, the growth never came back,” said Stewart, explaining that the biopsy gave her the information she had hoped for, leaving her beloved pet with only a small scar and no need of cancer treatment after all.

### When Not to Get One

While biopsies almost always offer helpful information, sometimes they're neither appropriate nor necessary.

## Your Guide to Four Diagnostic Procedures

Different types of biopsies work best for different problems. Here's a guide to the various types your veterinarian might recommend:

◆ **Needle biopsy:** A veterinarian uses a needle to extract a core of tissue in the tissue or organ of interest. The type of needle depends on the type of tissue. Needle biopsies also use other tools to maximize the chance for a helpful tissue sample. “For biopsying internal organs, we can directly pass the needle into the correct spot using ultrasound or even CAT-scan guidance,” said John Berg, DVM, at the Cummings School. The needle biopsy is minimally invasive, typically done either under general anesthesia or a local nerve block.

◆ **Needle aspirate:** While not technically a biopsy, an even less invasive but similar diagnostic procedure called a needle aspirate extracts only a few cells from an area using a much finer needle. “The needle aspirate gives the pathologist less information than a biopsy because it doesn't show the tissue architecture as well and is not as easy to interpret, but in some situations the needle aspirate can result in a definitive diagnosis,” said Dr. Berg.

Other advantages are that results are often available immediately because a veterinarian can obtain and look at the

sample in the office without sending it to a pathology lab and the fact the procedure doesn't require anesthesia, as many biopsies do.

◆ **Surgical wedge biopsy:** With the dog under general anesthesia, the veterinarian makes a small incision using a scalpel blade to get a piece of tissue from the affected area. This is called an incisional biopsy. “The tissue is fixed and placed in formalin, stained and sliced into very thin slices so a pathologist can look at it under a microscope,” Dr. Berg said. This type of biopsy can sometimes be more informative than a needle biopsy because it gives the pathologist a larger piece of tissue to examine.

◆ **Excisional biopsy:** This dual surgery-biopsy removes the entire affected area, such as a tumor or other mass. Excisional biopsies double as surgical therapy, diagnosing and removing a mass in one step. “If it is just as easy to completely remove a lump as it is to biopsy it, then we usually recommend removal without a prior diagnostic biopsy,” Dr. Berg said. “Then we submit it for pathology so that we can give the owners a definitive diagnosis. In addition, pathologic examination of a specimen can give us an indication of whether the excision was complete or not.”

When the information wouldn't change the treatment plan, when the diagnosis is obvious without the biopsy or when the risks of an invasive procedure and/or general anesthesia are too high, dog owners may decide against it.

Sometimes, surgical intervention makes more sense than doing a biopsy followed by an additional surgery to remove a lump. "A lung mass is a good example," said Dr. Berg. "Most single, isolated lung masses in dogs are cancerous. We know it's probably cancer, so we usually don't recommend a preliminary biopsy. We remove the entire mass, not just a sample as we might for a regular biopsy, and we submit the tissue to a pathologist for confirmation."

When the owner won't treat the disease no matter the diagnosis, Dr. Berg also advises against a biopsy. "A biopsy should be performed because it helps decision-making. If an owner doesn't intend to treat, then even though a biopsy isn't a particularly traumatic event, it doesn't make much sense to put the animal through the procedure," said Dr. Berg.

A biopsy also may be unnecessary if other tests strongly support the diagnosis. "A good example of this would be dogs with osteosarcoma [bone cancer]," said Dr. Berg. "If we're confident from an X-ray that we are seeing a bone tumor, there is no real reason to biopsy it. We can proceed with whatever treatment the pet owner chooses without going through the initial step of a biopsy."

Stewart experienced this scenario with another Beagle, named Baby, suffering from bladder cancer. "The ultrasound showed a huge tumor," she said. "We had the stain of urine cells on the slide that showed cancerous cells. We knew that a biopsy would be pretty invasive considering where the tumor was located right at the bottom of the bladder where it empties, so we opted not to do it. Ba-

by was 13 years old, and we didn't want to put her through the surgery."

Instead, Stewart proceeded with drug therapy using peroxicam, an anti-inflammatory drug with good results in treatment of bladder cancer in dogs — and now in humans because of its success in dogs. "This bought her almost a year and a half. She became completely asymptomatic and in an ultrasound [about 9 months later], you could barely see the tumor," Stewart said. "A biopsy just wasn't necessary."

### Negligible Risks

Some owners fear a biopsy because of the risks, but the benefits usually outweigh them, Dr. Berg said. "In most cases, the risks are negligible. Certain tissues, such as the brain and spinal cord, may be dicier to biopsy than others, but these are less common areas to biopsy. The kidney and liver can bleed a little bit after a biopsy,

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“Many cancers and other diseases can be successfully treated.”

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but this isn't life threatening."

In older dogs, the stress of surgery and/or general anesthesia may be a relevant consideration, but often isn't reason enough to avoid a biopsy when the results would affect treatment. "An experienced anesthesiologist or regular veterinarian can minimize the risks of anesthesia in older dogs, so when we really need the information, this risk rarely stops us from doing a biopsy," said Dr. Berg.

The results are usually accurate, but sometimes they're inconclusive or, worse, incorrect. "If it's cancer we're worried about, the most common event is a false negative. If the



*An excisional biopsy diagnosed and removed the growth on Happy's leg. It was found to be the result of inflammation rather the cancer her owner had feared.*

biopsy is positive for cancer, you can be pretty sure it is, in fact, cancer," said Dr. Berg. "The results depend more than anything else on the quality of the sample. Generally, if a biopsy is wrong or non-diagnostic, it isn't the fault of the pathologist. It means the person who obtained the biopsy probably made a technical error — too small a piece, missed the mass or didn't handle it carefully."

In some cases, veterinarians may be reluctant to be too aggressive in sampling a very deeply embedded mass because they don't want to traumatize the tissue, Dr. Berg said. The resulting sample may be too small to be diagnostic. In the rare event of a false positive, the fault probably lies with the pathology lab, he said.

When it comes to the health of your dog, knowledge is power. "The big message here is, don't be afraid of the biopsy," Dr. Berg. "You want to find out as soon as possible what exactly is going on so you can make a decision about treatment. A biopsy is quite often the very best way to get a definitive answer. It's the gold standard for making diagnoses." ♦

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*Eve Adamson is a free-lance writer in Iowa City.*

# Scientists Unlock the Secrets of the Heart

They compare the size of its components to the aorta to detect abnormalities

BY ELISSA WOLFSON

**E**lectrocardiograms have been a staple in veterinary medicine for more than 40 years. They provide important information about the electrical activity of the heart but don't allow the veterinarian to visualize the heart. Ultrasound, or echocardiography, which provides an actual image of the heart, has been widely available in veterinary medicine for about 20 years. However, its use in dogs has presented a unique diagnostic challenge.

"The various ultrasonic measurements of a dog's heart — such as how big it is and how fast the heart muscle is moving — must be interpreted in terms of what is normal for that dog," said cardiologist Donald Brown, DVM, Ph.D., assistant professor at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. That's difficult for veterinarians to determine when breeds run the gamut from a 5-pound Chihuahua to a 150-pound St. Bernard.

## Ultrasound Evaluation

Because their heart sizes range similarly, methods of ultrasound evaluation used by human cardiologists can't be directly applied to dogs. Dr. Brown determined that abnormalities might be more accurately detected by comparing the size of the heart and its components to the size of the aorta, the largest artery in the body, which is easily seen on echocardiograms.

For example, the left atrium, one of the upper chambers of the heart, is nearly one aorta across, Dr. Brown said. "This holds true for mammals ranging from rats to horses." He ap-

plied this principle to other components. He discovered that, when relaxed, the left ventricle — a lower chamber of the heart — measures about one-and-a-half aortic diameters across. He then went on to develop other "ratio indices" describing the shape of the normal heart. His work, in collaboration with other investigators, was published in the *Journal of Veterinary Internal Medicine*.

To develop the ratios — called cardiac ratio indices — Dr. Brown examined a decade of echocardiogram records at the Foster Small Hospital at the Cummings School. "We selected the records of all the dogs with 'normal' hearts — mostly dogs owned by our veterinary students. We ended up with records from 50 dogs, ranging from 5 to 150 pounds. From these we developed a database."

The most practical development to emerge: a computer program incorporating all the ratios and displaying their divergences in graphs. It quantifies and ideally confirms a disease an experienced veterinary cardiologist might suspect while interpreting an ultrasound, Dr. Brown said.

The Cummings School uses the program regularly. A spreadsheet with the same calculations has been distributed to many veterinarians.

Dr. Brown's next project is developing ratios for two-dimensional echocardiograms. Up to now, they have all been one-dimensional. "These can miss certain irregularities," he said, "so we need heart measurements from another group of normal dogs."

One of the 15 indices he's identified includes thickness of the heart



*It had been difficult for veterinarians to interpret ultrasounds showing the heart's size and movement because of the varying sizes of breeds. Dr. Donald Brown and his colleagues developed a database of more than 50 healthy dogs' heart measurements for comparison.*

walls. Another is the amount of blood the heart ejects. "This allows us to look at dogs of varying body sizes as if they all had the same heart," Dr. Brown said, adding that additional information would be an exceptional aid in a dog's diagnosis and treatment.

"We know that in older dogs, the mitral valve — the valve between the left atrium and ventricle that prevents backflow — often begins to leak. This sends blood back into the left atrium, where it's not supposed to be. Might the size of the left atrium relate to the dog's prognosis? It turns out, when the left atrium is significantly larger than one aorta, we can plot the probability of heart failure. At five standard deviations larger than one aorta, there is a 50 percent probability of heart failure."

Cardiologists can use the ratios to determine dogs to be likely candidates for surgery and/or medications, said Dr. Brown. "Their owners might consider starting their dog on appropriate medications before heart failure occurs." ♦

*Elissa Wolfson is a free-lance writer in Ithaca, N.Y.*

# CUMMINGS' Timeless Tips

*Advice for  
every stage of  
your dog's life.*

## quick tip

*Don't force your puppy into a car for his first ride; this can spark a lifelong fear. Instead, lure him inside with treats and praise until he eagerly leaps in.*

# Warmer Weather Means It's Time for a Road Trip

Provide a restraint in the car and plenty of water and exercise breaks

Nothing beats a road trip to celebrate the return of warm weather, and many owners include their dogs in the journey. More than 15 million Americans travel with their pets each year, according to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association. But before you leave, plan ahead to ensure that your dog's vacation is as relaxing and enjoyable as yours.

— C.C. Holland

## Don't Let Him Become a Projectile in the Car

Car travel with a puppy can be challenging for a variety of reasons. Puppies have different nutritional needs than adult dogs, are often more rambunctious and may be unreliably housetrained.

If your puppy has never ridden in a car, take the time to accustom him to the idea with several short trips. And although he may be small, don't assume it's safe to let him roam freely in the car.

"The last thing you want is a puppy, or any other dog for that matter, getting tangled up in the owner's feet, hands or line of vision," said John Berg, DVM, chair of the Department of Clinical Sciences at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. "You're also endangering a puppy if you have him loose in the car, where he can become a projectile."

The safest option for traveling with a puppy is to crate him, Dr. Berg said. Secure the crate with a seatbelt to provide a stable ride. As a bonus, crating also solves the problem of potential elimination accidents — your dog won't want to soil his den. If your car is too small to accommodate a crate,



use a harness seatbelt especially designed for dogs — never tether a dog by his collar or a walking harness.

If your car trip will be lengthy, make sure you feed your puppy frequently. "Puppies tend to get hypoglycemic if they don't eat on a regular basis," Dr. Berg said. "Also, make sure they stay well hydrated."

Finally, watch your puppy's reaction to car travel. Some have a tendency to become nauseated or carsick on long trips; if this is the case with your dog, medication can help — check with your vet for advice.

## Be Alert to Environmental Hazards During Rest Stops

Dogs become restless sitting in cars for long periods, just as children do. Dr. Berg recommends making regular rest and exercise stops where you can give your dog a quick walk. Never let him off-leash. No matter how well-trained, he'll be in an unfamiliar place and could become injured, lost or stolen. For the same reason, he should wear a flat-buckled ID collar bearing his name along with your address, telephone number and a temporary number where you can be reached — the hotel or friends' home, where you'll be staying.

Be alert to environmental hazards during your exercise stops, Dr. Berg said. "There may be antifreeze, which can be toxic to dogs, in park-

ing lots as well as broken glass or garbage on the ground."

Back on the road, don't let your dog stick his head out the car window unless he's wearing dog-specific protective goggles, such as Doggles ([www.doggles.com](http://www.doggles.com)). He risks getting a piece of debris in his eyes, causing injuries ranging from discomfort to blindness.

### adult

You need to restrain adult dogs, too. They should ride inside vehicles at all times. "Transporting dogs in the back of pickups is a very bad idea," Dr. Berg said. Dogs can be badly injured if the truck gets in a crash, even if they're restrained. If they're not restrained, they can get very nasty injuries if they ever try to jump out of the truck at 30 miles per hour."



### quick tip

*Veterinarian-prescribed tranquilizers can be effective for dogs who experience hyperactivity or anxiety during travel.*

## If He Has Health Problems, Identify Clinics on the Route

Dehydration is a health risk for older dogs. Provide plenty of water and be careful not to let him overheat. If you're traveling in warm weather, start early in the day or later in the evening. And never leave your dog alone in a parked car — he can develop heatstroke in minutes.

Some older big dogs may be arthritic, and sitting or lying for extended periods can lead to stiffness and pain. "Even though they might not need much exercise, they still need to move around every hour or two," Dr. Berg said.

If your dog has serious health problems and requires regular medication, make sure you travel with an adequate supply. It's also smart to research veterinary hospitals on your route ahead of time in case of emergency. Also, because some dogs don't like to eat when traveling, Dr. Berg suggested learning how to administer pills to your pet without hiding them in food.

Simply hold your dog's upper jaw



### senior

in your left hand, tilt his head and gently fold his upper lip over his teeth — this protects you from his teeth. Holding the pill between your index finger and thumb of your right hand, use your middle finger to gently pry open the lower jaw. Drop the pill at the base of the dog's tongue as far back as possible and close your dog's mouth. To encourage him to swallow,

stroke his throat or blow on his nose.

For any extended trip, be sure to take a first-aid kit. Buy a kit or at minimum, assemble flexible bandaging material, gauze pads, alcohol prep pads, scissors, tweezers and antibiotic ointment. ♦

*C.C.Holland is a free-lance writer in Oakland, Calif.*

# Crate Expectations: Dogs Usually Learn to Love Their Portable Dens

Houstraining is only one of the many benefits

BY PAT MILLER

**W**e recently had the privilege of adopting the world's most wonderful 5-month-old Scottie mix pup. Bonnie's prior owners had kept the black, wiry soft-coated dog for only one week. Friends who gave them the dog had assured them she was houstrained, and she wasn't. When they tried to use a crate to prevent accidents in the house, they discovered that she whined and cried in the crate. They quickly gave up on her.

Their loss was without a doubt our lucky day. When I was doing behavioral assessments at the shelter one day, I looked into her big dark chocolate brown eyes, kissed her sweet fuzzy face and was smitten. Bonnie Wee Lass came home with us that same day. We couldn't ask for a better dog, and it didn't take us long to solve her crating challenge.

Houstraining is only one of the many benefits of crating. When used properly, dogs usually learn to love their crates, making them handy, portable dens you can take with you when you travel. You can relax, knowing your dog won't damage your hotel room while you're asleep, and he'll be comforted by his own little personal piece of home should you have to leave him with friends, family or a boarding kennel.

## Maintaining Peace

You can use crates for behavior management, to prevent your pup or adolescent canine from morphing into Destructo Dog when you're not there to supervise. Crates can maintain peace between dogs who are competitive over food or bones, give a time out to an overexcited dog and keep your playful pooch from romping



*A Jack Russell Terrier was easily trained and now goes to his den on cue. He even opens its door.*

“Crates can give a time out to an overexcited dog.”

with kitties in your bed in the middle of the night.

If you're having company and your dog's not fond of your guests — small children, perhaps — a crate can be his safe haven. Set it up securely in a quiet room, locked if necessary, where visitors are forbidden to intrude. It can also be a handy place to stash him at events such as dog shows, as long as you monitor closely enough to ensure no one is pestering or harassing him in his crate.

The crate is a sturdy plastic, fiberglass, wood, metal or wire box just big enough for your dog to stand, turn around and lie down comfortably. He doesn't need to be able to play football in it. If it's too large, he'll be able to eliminate in one end and still lie down in the clean end, defeating the crate's houstraining value.

If you want to get one crate large enough for your puppy to grow into, block off the back and increase the space as he grows. Some newer crate models have a moveable wire barrier, so you can change the size of the crate at will.

You can use a crate with the door open for your dog's convenience or with the door closed, when mandatory confinement is called for. Some pups walk right into their crates and

almost hang up a Home Sweet Home sign. Others need more coaxing. Even adult dogs with prior bad experiences can usually learn to love their crates if you take it slowly and make training positive. Cover the floor of the crate with a rug or soft pad to make it comfortable and inviting, and you're ready to begin training.

### Toss in Treats

Start with the crate door open, and toss some irresistibly yummy treats inside. If your dog is hesitant to pursue them, toss them close enough to the doorway so he can stand outside and poke his nose in the crate to eat them. If that's still too scary, scatter treats around the outside of the crate until he's more comfortable in its presence. If you're training with a clicker or other reward marker, each time your dog eats a treat, Click the clicker, or say "Yes!" if you're using a verbal marker.

Gradually toss treats farther and farther into the crate until he's stepping inside to get them. You can drop them in from the top or side grates if you're using a wire crate to position them deeper inside without startling him with your tossing motion.

Continue to Click each time he eats a treat. When he's entering the crate easily to get the treats, Click and offer him one while he's still inside. If he's willing to stay in, keep clicking and treating. If he comes out, that's OK, too. Simply toss another treat inside and wait for him to re-enter. Don't try to force him to go inside or stay in the crate.

When your dog's entering the crate to get the treat without hesitation, start using a verbal cue, such as "Go to bed," as he goes in, so you'll eventually be able to send him into his crate on only a verbal cue. When he's happily staying in the crate in anticipation of a Click and treat, gently swing the door closed. Don't latch it! Click and treat, then open the door.



*Sprinkling high-value treats inside a crate at the door or through the roof, right, encourages a dog to enter it.*

## “Sometimes dogs can do the entire crate training program in one day.”

Repeat this step, gradually increasing the length of time the door stays closed before you Click. Sometimes you can Click and reward without opening the door right away.

### Latch the Door

When he's staying in the crate with the door closed for at least 10 seconds without any signs of anxiety, close the door, latch it, and take one step away from the crate. Click, return to the crate, reward and open the door. Repeat this step, varying the time and distance you leave the crate. Don't always make it longer and farther — intersperse long ones with shorter ones, so it doesn't become harder and harder for him. Start increasing the number of times you Click and treat without opening the door, but remember that a Click or a

“Yes!” always gets a treat.

It's a good idea to leave the crate open when you aren't actively training. Toss treats and your dog's favorite toys in the crate when he's not looking, so he never knows what wonderful surprises he might find there. You can even feed him his meals in the crate — with the door open — to help him realize his crate is a truly wonderful place.

Another trick to motivate him to want to go into the crate is to take a particularly smelly, enticing stuffed Kong or similar toy and wire it inside to the back of the crate. Then close the door so he can't get in. If he wants the tempting object, his frustration at not being able to get it will motivate him to go in a little later when you do open the door. Because the yummy object is at the back of the crate, he'll have to stay inside to eat it even though you leave the door open for him.

Sometimes dogs and often puppies can do the entire crate training program in one day. Some will take several days, and a few will take weeks or more. If at any time during the program your dog whines or fusses

## Overcoming Resistance and Other Common Challenges in Crate Training

Crate training will go easier if you know the solutions to these common problems:

- 1 **Over-crating:** It's imperative that you not crate your dog — or pup — for longer than he can physically "hold it." Forcing your dog to soil his crate will break his clean den instincts and make house-training more difficult. In addition, be careful not to over-crate and deprive your dog of the opportunity for social contact and physical exercise. If he's crated all day while you're at work and crated at night, the crate should be in your bedroom. When you're home and awake, give him plenty of exercise and time with you.
- 2 **Soiling:** If you're not over-crating and your dog still soils his crate, take him to your veterinarian for a complete physical to determine if a medical problem, such as a urinary tract infection, is making it impossible for him to avoid soiling. If there's no medical problem, it could be stress related (see No.5), or he may have learned to soil his den in a prior unclean environment. Remove his bedding, make sure his crate is sized properly, and start taking him out far more often than he could possibly have to go. Consider

putting up an exercise pen with a crate in one corner and newspapers or urine pads in the other, so he has an appropriate alternative to soiling his crate.

- 3 **Resisting:** Your dog may have had bad experiences in his crate before or simply was never crated and is suspicious of this strange box. Try a different type of crate — wire mesh instead of plastic or vice versa. If necessary, start a new program to train him to go in his crate. Use positive, non-force methods and take your time, gradually desensitizing him to the crate and convincing him that being in and around the crate makes wonderful stuff happen.
- 4 **Vocalizing:** This may be anxiety-related; your dog may have a low tolerance for frustration. He's letting you know he wants out, and/or he may have been previously reinforced for barking or whining in his crate when someone let him out rather than listen to the racket. Depending on the severity of anxiety, you may need to consult a behavior professional. For frustration intolerance or reinforced vocalizing in the crate, you may need to suffer through an "extinction



*If your dog displays uneasiness about his crate, try a different type — wire instead of plastic or vice versa.*

burst" — where the behavior gets worse before it gets better. Your dog may try very hard and become very loud because the behavior got him out of the crate previously.

- 5 **Experiencing anxiety:** Many dogs who suffer from separation distress or anxiety can't tolerate crating. If your dog panics in his crate, including hysterical, non-stop barking, howling and frantic attempts to bite and claw his way out — often breaking teeth and ripping out nails in the process — or if he experiences stress-induced urination and defecation, which he proceeds to paint all over the walls of the crate as he thrashes around, stop crating immediately, and consult a good positive behavior professional.

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about being in the crate, don't let him out until he stops crying unless you think he may legitimately have to go to eliminate. This is one of the biggest mistakes owners make when crate training, and the reason Bonnie's prior owners were unsuccessful in their attempts to crate her.

## Heed His Call

If your pup's been asleep in his crate for a while, wakes up and starts to cry, he probably does have to go out, and you'd be wise to heed his call. Similarly, if he has a medical condition that requires him to go frequently or urgently, pay attention when he speaks to you from his den. Otherwise, wait for a few seconds of quiet,

**“A crate isn't recommended for dogs with separation anxiety.”**

then Click and reward. Then briefly work with shorter periods of time between Clicks and treats.

When your dog does well at that level again, increase the difficulty in smaller increments, and vary the times rather than constantly making it harder. For example, instead of going from five seconds to 10 to 15, start with five seconds, then seven, then three, then eight, then six, then four, then eight and so on.

This is a vital part of a successful crate training program. If you let your dog out when he's fussing, you'll teach him that fussing sets him free. If, however, he panics to the point of risking injury to himself, let him out. You may have a dog with separation anxiety. A crate isn't generally recommended for dogs with separation anxiety because they tend to panic in close confinement. If you

believe your dog has that condition, stop crate training and consult a behavior professional who has experience with the problem.

Once your dog is crate trained, you have a valuable behavior management tool for life. Respect it. If you abuse it by keeping your dog confined too often, for too long a period of time or by using it as punishment, he may learn to dislike it. Even though he goes to bed willingly and on cue, reward him often enough to keep the response happy and quick. Keep your verbal "Go to Bed" cue light and happy. Don't ever let anyone tease or punish him in his crate.

My husband spent the first two nights sleeping on the downstairs sofa so he wouldn't be tempted to yell at Bonnie to be quiet, while I lost sleep debating whether she was crying because she really needed to go — a few times she did — or was protesting being in the crate. In less than a week our new girl was happily hopping into her crate when we told her to go to bed, sleeping through the night without making a sound in her own "room" in the corner of our bedroom, surrounded by our four other dogs and two cats in their various beds and crates.

I couldn't have been more pleased with our wee lass this past weekend, when I took her with me to help staff the Peaceable Paws booth at World Pet Expo. She was delighted to greet every dog and human who walked by the booth, cuddled with kids on the booth floor and demonstrated her newly acquired clicker skills. When she needed a rest or I needed to attend to business without her, she curled up happily — and quietly — in her crate at the back of the booth. ♦

*Pat Miller, past president of the Association of Pet Dog Trainers, is a dog behavior consultant and trainer who uses positive methods at her Peaceable Paws Center in Hagerstown, Md.*

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# Choking Calls for Immediate Action

You have only minutes before dealing with a matter of life or death

BY DAYNA GARNEAU

**C**hoking is one of the most frightening events you can experience. Once an object or piece of food becomes lodged in your airway, a tremendous nervous system discharge tells your body something is terribly wrong. Whether human, horse, cat or dog — any species can find themselves in this critical situation. In only minutes, unconsciousness sets in, followed by brain damage after seven minutes and death in about 10 minutes.

Quickly reestablishing the open airway is the only way to resolve the crisis, either by your dislodging the trapped object or by the veterinarian's opening the trachea with the temporary surgical placement of a tracheostomy tube. The procedure permits breathing by bypassing a blockage.

## Intensive Care

The emergency intensive care unit at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University sees about two cases of choking every month. "Acute cases are almost always caused by food products or toys ingested by the pet," said Scott Shaw, DVM, a specialist in emergency and critical care. "But less commonly, slow progressive cases of airway obstruction may arise due to laryngeal tumors or inflammatory causes. Although rare, we also have performed tracheostomies on patients whose throats swell due to an allergic anaphylactic reaction to food or medication."

Choking occurs frequently in dogs because they're eager to play with toys and rarely consider the size or the quantity of food going into their mouths. A rawhide strip or tasty marrow bone are delicacies to them — they eat them fast for fear they'll



*If your dog is choking, try to check the gums, tongue and surface of the lips to see if they're pink, which is a sign he's getting oxygen. You risk being bitten trying to remove the object yourself. Seek veterinary care.*

be taken away. "Here at Tufts, the breeds we see most frequently for choking emergencies tend to be the large breeds like German Shepherds, Labrador and Golden Retrievers, mainly because they are so active and frequently play with bones, balls and other toys," Dr. Shaw said. "In fact, balls are the most commonly removed item."

Smaller breed dogs like Scotties and Westies are more prone to esophageal obstructions, which require removal by endoscopy. Patients with material lodged in the esophagus may show symptoms of hacking, discomfort and excess salivation, but

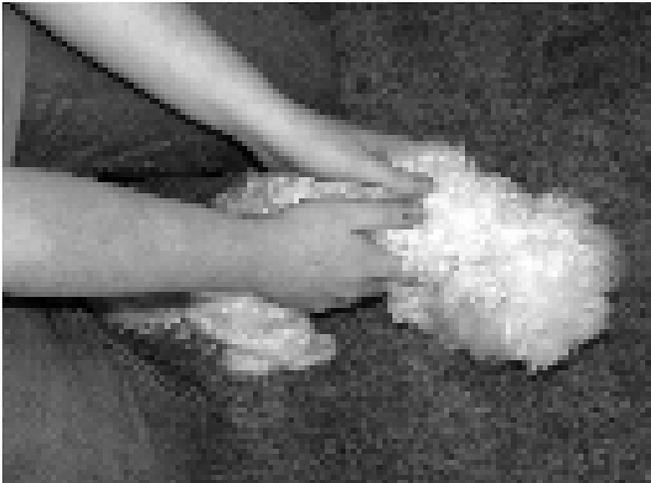
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**“Acute cases are almost always caused by food or toys.”**

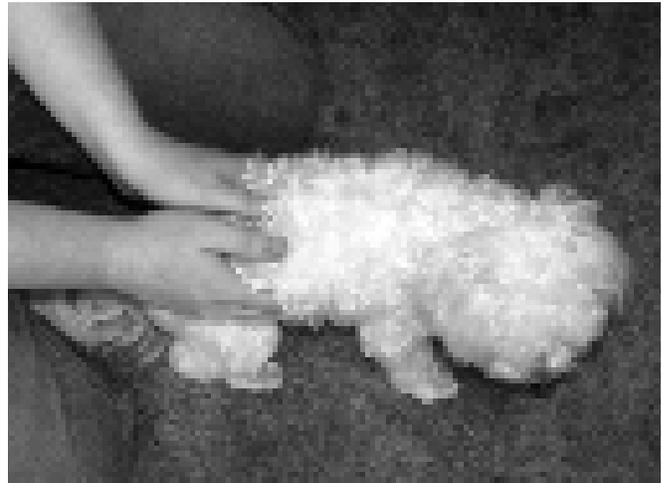
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in general the condition is less critical. They won't show the level of distress seen in patients with airway obstruction.

If your dog is choking, the most important thing is to recognize the urgency of the situation. If the airway is blocked, you have only minutes before dealing with a matter of life and



① To use the Heimlich maneuver on a dog choking on an object, rapidly and vigorously squeeze each side of the chest several times. Be careful not to apply excess pressure, which could cause injury, especially in small dogs.



② Compress each side of the abdominal wall several times, alternating with pumping the chest. That may create enough pressure to force the object from the throat.

death. Check the dog's gums, tongue and inner surface of the lips to see if he's being deprived of oxygen. A healthy dog has pink tissues. Those lacking a normal oxygen supply will have gray or bluish tissues — a sure sign that oxygen must be restored immediately. Additionally, a critical patient will appear obviously agitated, while forcefully and rapidly contracting his chest and abdominal muscles to no avail.

### Canine Heimlich

You can take immediate action by using the canine version of the Heimlich maneuver — it's a quick and easy fix. When a human chokes of a piece of food, a well-educated onlooker often comes to the rescue and performs a quick hug around the waist, squeezing upward under the rib cage and, voila! Out pops the offending object.

Using the maneuver on dogs, you apply a rapid, vigorous squeeze to each side of the chest wall and then to each side of the abdominal wall. Several alternating repetitions may create enough pressure to force the object from the throat.

Although ample force may be required to be effective, it's important not to squeeze to the point of internal

## Common Culprits: Balls, Grapes and Pieces of Meat

These items are among those commonly implicated in canine choking emergencies:

- ◆ Tennis ball fragments. The balls are safe for a quick game of fetch, but, in addition to the fragments' choking risk, veterinary dentists caution against dogs' chewing on them because they can cause dental abrasion.

- ◆ Racquetballs
- ◆ Grapes. They are also potentially toxic to dogs.
- ◆ Beef, chicken and pork bones
- ◆ Rawhide
- ◆ Larger than bite-size pieces of meat
- ◆ Toys



injury. It's also important to realize that choking dogs are very fragile and easily stressed. Keep noise and handling to a minimum to avoid exacerbating the symptoms.

If you can't clear the blockage with the Heimlich approach, immediately rush the dog to the nearest veterinary hospital. A veterinarian will perform an oral exam on the patient to see the obstruction. Doing so usually requires that the dog be mildly sedated, often with a combination of sedative agents like Dilaudid (hydromorphone) and Valium.

"This level of sedation is usually enough to take the edge off of these anxious and excitable patients while also helping to restore a slower, more rhythmic respiratory rate," Dr. Shaw said. "When we begin the oral exam, we may use an additional short-acting intravenous anesthetic called Propofol to achieve a deeper plane of anesthesia. At this stage, an ECG is used to monitor the heart and a pulse oximeter is affixed to the tongue or upper lip to give us a good estimate of the circulating oxygen levels."

Monitoring the patients is critical; a



## How to Handle a Sudden Choking Crisis

Every second is critical, so understanding and following the appropriate series of steps in a choking emergency are your best tools:

- ◆ Observe the dog for signs of distress: inability to breathe, gray or blue gums and tongue, extreme agitation, arched back, guarded gait, swinging head.
- ◆ Attempting to remove the obstruction yourself by hand is dangerous. Your dog may bite you because he's anxious and disoriented.
- ◆ Attempt the canine Heimlich maneuver by applying a few strong, brisk pumps — first to the chest and then the abdomen. Press on both sides simultaneously.
- ◆ If your dog is still choking, immediately take him to the nearest emergency veterinary hospital. Try to have someone call and alert the staff that you're coming.
- ◆ When you arrive, tell staff members your dog is choking and unable to breathe. They'll take care of the rest.

depressed pulse oximetry reading means there is little time to spare. To remove the obstruction, veterinarians use hemostats or other long forceps to grasp the object. Although the procedure sounds simple, the foreign objects are usually soaked with saliva, making them slippery and difficult to extract.

If quick removal attempts are unsuccessful, veterinarians perform an emergency tracheostomy. They make a small incision in the neck and insert a thin, sterile tube into the trachea. They suture plastic wings on the sides of the tube to the skin and wrap a bandage around the neck. At first glance, the procedure may seem gruesome and invasive because it involves cutting into the neck and trachea; however, the incision isn't aligned with any major vessels or nerves, and bleeding is minimal. An experienced veterinarian performs the procedure in 30 seconds.

### Diagnostic Tests

With a tracheostomy tube in place, the dog can be hooked up to a ventilator and stabilized, providing more time for removal of the obstruction and diagnostic blood work. Basic blood tests include a complete blood count, a chemistry profile to assess organ function and blood gas analysis for oxygen/carbon dioxide levels and acid-base balance. They indicate whether the dog is in a state of systemic acidosis — a state of shock — due to inappropriate gas exchange in the lung. The veterinarian will use the findings to decide about fluid therapy and the need for mechanical ventilation.

Most important, the veterinarian may order X-rays to rule out aspiration pneumonia. It can be caused by excess saliva produced when swallowing is impaired. Often during choking, there is abnormal function of the epiglottis, the valve that keeps food and water from going “down the wrong tube.” Saliva

and/or vomit can then make its way into the lungs and cause a pneumonia that may prove life threatening. The patient may be required to stay in the hospital for a few days for treatment, observation and repeat X-rays.

Veterinarians remove the tracheostomy tubes once the obstruction has been removed and the patient has resumed normal breathing. Sometimes the tube is kept in place for several days as a safety precaution. The incision generally takes only three to four days to heal.

### A Permanent Tube

Obstructive tumors of the throat aren't treated on an emergency basis. They require surgical removal, and their prognosis is guarded. Post-operative chemotherapy and radiation treatments are often needed for malignancies. In many cases, surgery alters the throat's anatomy to a degree that it disables normal breathing. A permanent tracheotomy tube may be the only option, but devoted owners can manage these patients at home relatively easily.

The cost of an easy foreign body extraction may include only the emergency exam and sedation fees. More complicated cases, including extended hospitalization, nursing care, a possible tracheostomy, blood work and X-rays, may cost \$400 to \$3,000 depending on the severity.

Choking warrants attention because even a minor disruption of the respiratory system can lead to a dog's rapid deterioration and death. Because an activity as simple as his playing with a ball or eating treats could lead to choking, it's crucial to be vigilant — and know the closest available emergency hospital and the quickest route to it. ◆

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*Dayna Garneau, a certified veterinary technician, is a student at Texas A & M's College of Veterinary Medicine in College Station, Texas.*

# When Drooling Becomes More Than an Irritant

Its sudden onset may indicate illness or a foreign object in the mouth

BY BETTY LIDDICK

If you have a Basset Hound, St. Bernard, Newfoundland or another dog with similarly loose lips, you know one inescapable fact about them: They drool. They drool when they're excited, when they see you filling the food bowl, when they're engaged in vigorous play. They drool when they're simply sitting around.

"This is a normal breed behavior, known to occur in heavy jawed breeds," said Michael Stone, DVM, a specialist in internal medicine at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. "Drooling can result because of excessive production of saliva or because of failure to swallow saliva produced in normal quantities. There's no obvious cure for most dogs."

Other dogs may also salivate occasionally when they anticipate food or

they're fearful, anxious or suffering from motion sickness. "Some get frothed up during play," Dr. Stone said. "Since they must pant to cool down — dogs cannot sweat except through their foot pads — the increased water evaporation from the mouth may be a cooling-off mechanism."

That usually isn't cause for concern. A sudden onset of drooling may be. "It can be associated with obvious illness, such as nausea, toxin ingestion, bitter medications, foreign bodies in the mouth and irritation of the teeth, tongue, gums or oral cavity," Dr. Stone said.

In rare cases, a serious disease or disorder may be involved. For example, dogs with the paralytic form of rabies have difficulty moving and swallowing, which causes drooling and foaming at the mouth. Dogs with



Basset Hounds are among breeds known to drool excessively because of their heavy jowls.

life-threatening heatstroke will also froth at the mouth. They require immediate lowering of their body temperature with cool water and emergency veterinary care.

However, salivary diseases themselves are rare among dogs. Even when drooling does suddenly increase, it usually doesn't indicate a disease of the salivary glands or ducts.

The most common salivary system disease in dogs is salivary mucocele, an accumulation of saliva in the tissues, usually in the neck. Dogs don't drool but will have a soft, non-painful swelling in the upper neck that feels like a bag of fluid under the skin. It's caused by leakage from the duct of the sublingual gland — the gland situated on the floor of the mouth beneath the tongue — and there is usually no known cause of the leakage. Treatment is removal of the gland on the affected side.

An owner's first step to determine the cause of drooling is to check the dog's mouth. Does he have a chipped tooth? Do you see swelling or redness of the gums indicating an infection? Is there a foreign object you can easily remove without being bitten? In all likelihood, if the dog continues drooling and the cause is a common one, your veterinarian can quickly diagnose the condition and remedy it. ♦

## Call it Ptyalism, and it Still Means Slobbering, But These Tactics Can Help

Ptyalism is the technical term for drooling. Owners of dogs who have no other health concerns but are known to drool copiously can try these tactics to lessen its effects:

- ♦ Frequently clean around the dog's mouth to wipe off food crumbs and a sticky haircoat.
- ♦ Keep food and water bowls on a mat that is easily cleaned. "Drooling dogs are often messy eaters and drinkers," said Mike Stone, DVM, at the Cummings School.
- ♦ Give your dog chew toys that may help him swallow saliva.
- ♦ And when nothing else works, said Dr. Stone: "Keep a towel handy for saliva showers."

# Removing a Foreign Body From the Paw

Splinters are easy — fish hooks will most likely require veterinary care

BY DEBRA M. ELDRIDGE, DVM

Horse owners have long known to carefully check their horse's hooves when lameness develops. Knowledgeable dog owners check their dog's paws. One of the most common problems can be a foreign body in the paw. This can include glass, wooden splinters, needles, metal and plant material, such as awns.

The easiest foreign bodies to find and remove are the most obvious: a protruding thorn, a wooden splinter sticking out of the paw or a fish hook cutting through the skin. It's important to carefully feel all the skin between the toes and along the paw for any unusual bumps or swellings. The tiny prick you feel from a glass shard could be the tip of the iceberg — the edge of an inch-long piece of glass!

Removing a foreign body may be as simple as pulling out the thorn, just as Androcles did for the thorn in the lion's paw. You can't pull out fish hooks in the direction they entered the paw, however. You must push the hook through so you can cut off the barbed end and then pull out the slim, smooth section of hook. Best seek veterinary help for this.

If your dog is very lame and sore, you'll need a muzzle or help in removing the object. Even a sweet-tempered dog could bite when in pain.

## Bandage the Foot

"You should be prepared for some bleeding if you remove an object from your dog's paw. The paw is a very vascular area," said surgical specialist John Berg, DVM, chair of the Department of Clinical Sciences at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University. "You may need to apply direct pressure to the spot for 5 to 10 minutes or even wrap the foot with bandage material."

Once you've stopped the bleeding, your veterinarian can advise you as to whether the paw would heal better with a bandage or left open to the air. "Your veterinarian may decide not to suture the wound left by a foreign body removal," Dr. Berg said. "The risk of infection is less in an open wound, and pad tissues don't hold suture material well."

You'll have to keep the wound clean and free of contamination from dirt and debris if it's left open. Your



Carefully feel the skin between the toes and along the paw for bumps or swellings that could indicate a foreign object.

veterinarian will explain the best way to do that. Soaking and cleaning the wound daily may be adequate.

Sometimes a foreign object will penetrate your dog's paw and the wound will close over, trapping the foreign body inside. Eventually, this will lead to an infected or abscessed area. Puncture wounds that have sealed over are especially prone to it but, in reality, most, if not all, foreign bodies in the paw leave behind contamination. Your veterinarian may prescribe antibiotics to deal with the bacteria from deep wounds and dirty objects.

Detecting a foreign body in a healed wound can be difficult. Your veterinarian may use X-rays or ultrasound. Metal objects show up clearly on X-rays, but wood and plant material may not, though ultrasound will sometimes show them. In some cases, the veterinarian will need to anesthetize your dog and surgically explore the sore area. Objects that are deep in the paw or that have splintered, such as old wood, require surgical exploration.

When checking a lame dog, feel the leg carefully from the paw up. However, if your dog holds his paw up, it simply means that his leg is painful, not necessarily that the problem is located in the paw. If you can't find any obvious cause for the lameness, you need to contact your veterinarian. ♦

*Debra M. Eldredge, DVM, is in private practice in Vernon, N.Y.*

## Watch Where You Walk

One way to prevent foreign bodies from getting in your dog's paw is to take him on frequent walks on different surfaces — not just grass — so the pad tissues will toughen. Regularly swept sidewalks are a good option.

Avoid areas where foreign bodies are common, such as parking lots where there might be broken glass, beaches where broken shells and fishing gear may be hidden in the sand and areas where garbage has been dumped.



SPCA OF ENE COUNTY

Samson had sores and weighed a skeletal 40 pounds — while 70 is standard for the breed — when he was turned in to an animal shelter. Here, two months later, he had begun to heal and was gaining weight.

about Lucky being a nuisance to the neighborhood.

“He came to the door and asked me if ‘that stupid dog’ was bothering me. I said, “I think he’s hurt — I think the chain is twisted around his neck,” she recalled.

While the neighbor fixed Lucky’s chain, he complained about Lucky’s behavior and his inability to take care of him, she said. Lunday, who has since relocated to Fort Worth, immediately volunteered to foster Lucky until a suitable home could be found.

“The man’s face lit up,” she said. “Pretty soon, I had the dog in my arms. Then I mentioned I had a friend who really wanted a puppy, and the neighbor’s enthusiasm was endless.”

Within days, Lucky was adopted by one of Lunday’s co-workers and was once again receiving the love and attention he deserved. Unfortunately, Lucky’s experience as a neglected pet is all too common. While pet advocate organizations like the Humane Society of the United States and the

**“Cruelty to animals is a problem we all have a responsibility to address.”**

American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals are unable to accurately track abuse and neglect cases, they know one thing: It happens every day. But ordinary people can help prevent tragedies by knowing the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, and making sure victimized dogs are spoken for, said Annette Rauch, DVM, at the Center for Animals and Public Policy at the Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine at Tufts University.

She defines neglect as the failure to provide animals with basic needs, such as clean water, food and shelter, often the result of poor education or lack of financial resources — not necessarily a desire to purposely cause

## Celebrating

American Humane Association's



**Be Kind to Animals Week**

May 7-13 marks the 91st annual Be Kind to Animals Week, an event created in 1915 as a way to honor pets and the special bond humans share with dogs and other companion animals.

In partnership with the American Humane Association, shelters across the country will mark the occasion with special activities, such as spay/neuter campaigns, pet adoption rallies and other programs to encourage citizens to treat animals with love and respect. It will also offer an opportunity to nominate a child for an award that recognizes outstanding commitment to the welfare of pets.

For more information, visit [www.americanhumane.org](http://www.americanhumane.org) or call its national headquarters in Denver at (303) 792-9900 from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mountain Time. The association develops policies, legislation, curricula and training programs to protect children and animals from abuse, neglect and exploitation.



**“A friendly, rather than accusatory, approach is always best.”**

pain and suffering. Deliberate abuse involves beating, kicking, denying veterinary care and other forms of physical mistreatment.

### Signs of Health

“When we as pet owners observe our own animals, we are able to recognize animals that are healthy,” she said. “They are active, don’t have a thin coat, don’t limp and they are interactive with people. When we see animals that are not like that, there is a reason for concern.”

Other indicators include low body weight, sores on the dog’s coat, inactivity and eye or nose discharge. Also, take note when a dog is kept outside in harsh weather — hot, cold, rainy — without shelter and an adequate food and water supply in reach, Dr. Rauch said. All are signs that a dog may desperately need help.

Often, help comes from the local law enforcement authorities, such as the sheriff’s office, government animal control agency or humane organization — but only after the situation is reported, said Peter Wood, deputy manager for animal cruelty issues with the HSUS. Ideally, authorities will investigate allegations and either offer an opportunity for dog owners to change their behavior or remove the dog from the home. Wood urges people to make the call if they have even the slightest suspicion that a dog is suffering from abuse or neglect.

“Do not think someone else will do it because they may or they may not,” he said. “And cruelty to animals is a problem we all have a responsibility to address.”

## A Greyhound’s Remarkable Recovery

In March 2005, Samson arrived at the SPCA of Erie County, New York, barely resembling a Greyhound. He had been abused and starved to 40 pounds. A relative of the owner surrendered him for euthanasia. Thanks to medical care at the shelter and \$10,000 it raised — including donations from around the country — Samson made a dramatic recovery. In two months, he began to heal, gained 36 pounds and a new, loving home. His owner pleaded guilty to animal cruelty in Buffalo City Court and was sentenced to three years’ probation and 100 hours of community service. It was a light sentence for her because budget cuts had eliminated a pre-sentencing investigation, a requirement for the judge to impose the maximum sentence of jail time. To follow Samson’s journey, visit the news pages on the shelter’s Web site, <http://ecspca.convio.net>.



Samson, on the right, joined another Greyhound, Rover, at his new home in May 2005. The two became immediate friends.



A relative of Samson’s owner turned him into the SPCA of Erie County, New York, for euthanasia. Staff members and dog lovers nationwide came to his rescue.

Before dialing, however, be prepared. Wood and Dr. Rauch suggested providing the authorities with as much information as possible, including a summary of the dog’s experience and the name and address of the alleged culprit. Most agencies will keep the name of the reporting party confidential.

“Say something like, ‘I see the dog tied up at midnight, and the temperature is 5 degrees and he does not have a dog house,’” Dr. Rauch said. Accurate and specific eye-witness accounts will help animal control officers when they go to investigate.

Most importantly, be persistent. Animal control staff members are often overworked and underpaid, Wood said, and complaints aren’t always handled as quickly as concerned people would like. But repeat reports about the same dog are bound to get attention, he added, so keep calling. And if the dog is still in danger, don’t hesitate to place a call to a local humane society chapter or the HSUS national office at (202) 452-1100.

“If it looks like (you) have hit a brick wall, contact someone like us,” Wood said. “We try to work with the



SPCA OF ERIE COUNTY

Staff members of the SPCA of Erie County, N.Y., bid an emotional good-bye to Samson, here with his new owners, left.

complainant to get action taken.”

Another option: Follow Lunday’s lead by getting personally involved. Her case had a happy ending, but proceed with caution, Wood warned. Some dog owners won’t appreciate outside involvement and could lash out at you. Some, however, may simply need more education on how to care for a dog. A brief conversation could go a long way.

### Share Knowledge

A friendly, rather than accusatory, approach is always best, Dr. Rauch said. If the person in question is a friend or neighbor, start by asking permission to walk the dog or offer to help with obedience training rather than pointing out all the things he or she is doing wrong. This will provide a sense of whether the dog owner is receptive to change. If so, consider it an opportunity to share some personal knowledge or offer a referral to an organization that helps dog owners learn about proper pet care.

Tempted to bypass these suggestions, sneak into a neglectful neigh-

**Provide authorities with as much specific information as possible.**

bor’s yard and rescue the dog? While it might seem like a quick, kind solution, it’s better for everyone, especially the dog, to go through the proper channels. The potential legal problems that could result from “stealing” a dog aren’t worth the risk. The only exception: a dog in imminent risk of death.

“If it is in danger of death or is dying, remove the animal and immediately take it to a veterinary hospital,” Dr. Rauch said.

Though dog lovers and animal advocates long for accountability for anyone caught mistreating a pet, laws vary from state to state. It’s difficult to predict how abuse and neglect will be dealt with — if at all. Some states label it a felony, others a misde-

## Resources for Laws on Animal Cruelty and Neglect

Curious about animal abuse and neglect laws in your area? The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals lists animal cruelty laws in individual states on its Web site, [www.asPCA.org](http://www.asPCA.org), under the heading “lobby.”

Another excellent resource, which is run by volunteers: [www.pet-abuse.com](http://www.pet-abuse.com). It regularly posts news about pet abuse and neglect, including recent cases and legislative alerts.

meanor. Some law-enforcement officials simply ignore animal abuse, regardless of what the law says, said Stephanie Lane, director of canine legislation for the American Kennel Club in New York City. And while the overall trend is toward tougher laws and more severe punishment, none of that matters if those who violate the animal cruelty laws aren’t punished.

“In some cases, the district attorney says, ‘I have more important work to do, and I am not going to pursue this,’” Dr. Rauch said. “But laws are getting tougher, reflecting the fact that we as a society value animals more. In addition, many prosecutors are becoming more aware of and more sensitive to animal crimes.” ♦

*Dawn Weinberger is a free-lance writer in Hillsboro, Ore.*

# Hardwood and Tile Floors Scare Him

He may have vision problems or memory of a fall

**M**y Golden Retriever, Alex, is 9 years old and has begun to pause before walking across a hardwood or tile floor. It is almost as if he is having problems with depth perception or that maybe some glare creates a water-like appearance.

An older German Shepherd Dog we baby-sit has had similar episodes, where she appears afraid and won't cross the floor. I was curious what may be causing this and if it is something that should be pursued further via a checkup with our vet.

Sean Ryan  
Via e-mail

*It may be that your dog has a vision problem and you certainly should have his eyes checked by your local veterinarian and/or a veterinary ophthalmologist. If his eyes are fine, there is another explanation. Some dogs, like the German Shepherd you mention, develop a fear of slippery, shiny surfaces, presumably because they have slipped on them and hurt themselves in the past.*

*To us, the fear appears irrational, but to the dog it makes perfect sense! The solution to this problem is to make sure the dog doesn't slip again, say, by putting down a carpet runner or dusting his paws with Stickum. In time, most dogs learn that the floor isn't as malicious as they first thought. For refractory cases — those resistant to a cure — anti-anxiety medication may help the dog get over his angst.*

*Since your dog is an older Golden, it might also be a good idea to check his thyroid status. I believe that borderline-to-low thyroid levels may increase a dog's anxiety, setting him up for a plethora of fear-based problems.*

*Optimizing thyroid status seems to help in such cases. Good luck!*

Nicholas Dodman,  
BVMS, MCRVS  
Director of the Behavior Clinic  
Cummings School

## Accentuate the Positive

My husband and I have been doing German Shepherd rescue for many years now. About two years ago, we took in a 3-year-old male with horrible skin. A blood test told us he had a disease in which he was allergic to his own hair!

Over the last year and a half, 98 percent of his hair has re-grown with a combination of a good diet, herbal supplements and a bi-weekly anti-micro bacterial shampoo.

We are having trouble placing him because no one wants the "trouble," but it isn't. We haven't been put off by the skin problems, and treating it isn't expensive. This dog is wonderful — he loves children, cats and dogs, and gives great hugs. What can we tell potential adopters to inform them and ease their mind about this disease? Any information would be greatly appreciated.

Gretchen Burford  
Shreveport, La.

*When attempting to place this dog, concentrate on his attributes, but be very honest about the skin condition and the requirements for managing it. The diagnosis you mentioned is not a recognized medical condition, so if this label is turning off potential adopters, consider taking the dog to a veterinary dermatologist to get an accurate diagnosis and prognosis.*

Lowell Ackerman, DVM  
Dip., ACVD  
Cummings School



Alex hesitates before navigating a shiny floor.

## Removing Skunk Odor

I have a question regarding the skunk odor remover suggested by Scott Shaw, DVM, published over a year ago. We had the unfortunate occasion to use this last month and were grateful to have the recipe on hand. It does not indicate shampooing the dog afterward, and we wanted to be clear whether or not the solution is meant to left on the dog.

Lory Alexander  
Austin, Texas

*Here's the recipe for readers who missed it: Mix together ½ cup of baking soda, 1 teaspoon of liquid soap and 1 quart of hydrogen peroxide (3 percent solution). Sponge the solution onto the haircoat and let it air dry.*

*Multiple applications are sometimes needed. Don't bathe the dog until there is no hint of skunk odor, which could take several weeks. If you bathe the dog, wet fur tends to smell worse. ♦*

Scott Shaw, DVM  
Dip., ACECC

## Want More Expert Advice?

*Ask the Experts: Answers and Solutions to Your Dog Care Problems* is a book-length compilation of reader questions and replies from veterinarians at the Cummings School. It's available for \$19.95, plus \$4 for shipping and handling, at (973) 579-3760 or [www.tuftsbooks.com](http://www.tuftsbooks.com).

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to twisting on its axis. Because of this risk, large and giant breed dogs should not be fed from a raised bowl. In middle-sized and smaller breeds, the overall risk of GDV is negligible, and feeding from a raised bowl is fine.

— John Berg, DVM  
Editor in Chief

### Address on ID Tags?

Once again, I am enjoying my current edition of your newsletter. I will share the section on diabetes ["Diabetics Require Vigilant Care," January 2006] with a friend who almost lost her little mixed breed to diabetic ketoacidosis.

I was interested in your article on safety tags ["ID Tags Can Bring Them Back Home"]. I am never sure whether to write my last name and address on the tag or just a telephone number. I worry that the full information can lead to some wrong people having all that info. What is your experience on this?

Last point: Love the lists of doggie specialists but would really appreciate some info on doggie dental specialists. They are very hard to find in Northern California.

Joanna Weinberg  
Redding, Calif.

We understand your unease about providing a lot of information on an ID tag, but an address in addition to the phone number may enable someone to quickly return your dog to you if lost. As writer Phyllis DeGioia noted in her product review of tags, neighbors who found her dogs outside walked them back to her house because they saw her address on the dogs' tags. "To me, that outweighs the possible negative consequences of not using a street address," DeGioia said. An address and phone number are probably more important than your name.

For a veterinary dentist, check out the state by state listing on the American Veterinary Dental College Web site, [www.avdc.org/dipl-list-table.htm](http://www.avdc.org/dipl-list-table.htm). ♦

— The Editors



# Why Do Raised Bowls Increase the Risk of Bloat?

I was surprised to read that one of the risk factors for gastric dilatation volvulus that puts dogs at a statistically greater risk for the condition is "dogs who eat from a raised food bowl" ["Expert Advice," February 2006]. Would you please explain why eating from a raised food bowl elevates the risk for GDV, also known as bloat?

I had read that for large dogs, eating from a raised food bowl was better for their digestion, neck, back, etc. because they don't have to bend all the way over. Now I am confused about what is best for my dog. We have a Labrador, and he is currently being fed from a raised food bowl. As a puppy, he was

fed from a regular bowl on the floor, but as he got taller we switched to the raised bowls in the kitchen, where he is given food and water two times a day. He has a regular bowl on the floor for water in his room that is left out all day. I would appreciate further explanation or clarification on this issue.

E-J Gomez  
Via e-mail

*Although it is not known for sure why raising the food bowl may predispose dogs to GDV, the answer may be that dogs are more likely to involuntarily swallow air if they eat from a raised bowl. The ingested air may expand the stomach and make it more prone*



## In the Next Issue

### Behavior

How to cope with big little beggars.

### Medicine

Cruciate ruptures are common, but several surgeries — including a newer, less invasive procedure — can repair the disabling knee injury.

### Health

Even if he appears unscathed, your dog needs a veterinary exam after being hit by a car.

### Product Review

Essential items to outfit a new dog or resupply your current one.