

## Dog Behavior Q and A with Dr. Lore Haug, a PWD List Discussion

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This is a consolidation of an email exchange on the PWD list over the course of a week. Questions have been minimally edited for brevity and clarity. Dr. Haug's responses are as written; both questions and answers have been edited only to correct typographical errors. Additional comments by readers that were not specifically addressed by Dr. Haug are not included. Topics are presented in chronological order, and effort has been made to group all content by the original topic of discussion. Kathryn Monroe arranged the session with Dr. Haug; this summary was compiled by Amanda Ford.

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### Packs and Pack behavior

*Question 1: I have two PWDs --- a 9 month old (30 lbs/19 inches) TOOTSIE and a 9 year old (60 lbs/22inches) SASHA. They get along fine most of the time. Every once in a while the younger dog is very aggressive towards the older dog. She will run next to her and nip at her ears, grab at her forelegs etc... The older dog has always been very kindly towards the younger one and unless you are taking her food, she puts up with it all... Both are spayed and neither is at all aggressive towards humans... DO I LET THEM WORK IT OUT OR DO I SHUT IT DOWN?*

Yes! Some dogs do a great job of "policing" puppies and others do not. Some dogs will take anything the puppy dishes out to the point that the older dog gets persecuted. Some adult dogs will reprimand puppies excessively -- to the point of persecuting the puppy. **You have the bigger brain -- it is your job to set the boundaries in a human household where you have forced these two dogs to live together.**

Instill POLITE behavior -- no stealing from each other, no harassing, etc.

*Question 2: I have a 2.5 year old intact male. Upon my husband's return from a long deployment, we had what I term a dominance aggression problem. Our "pack" was in turmoil, and our boy had been pushed out of the #2 position down to #3 and had lost his bed privileges that he had with me for quite some time. Fighting for pack position, our boy lashed out at us a couple times. My question to you is do you think that neutering would help with a dominance aggression problem? And if I were to add another PWD to our family, what sex would you recommend or doesn't the sex matter?*

*Question 3: What suggestions do you have for non-aggressive methods of establishing the humans in the household as pack leaders? I live in a multi-PWD household that changes from time to time and have had between 4 and 6 PWDs at any one time... It is more problematic when introducing new humans into the household (adult children, grandchildren). The dogs don't always "respect" the newcomers. What can I do, what can I teach the new people to help establish/maintain order?*

I'm going to fold these questions together. This is an important topic, in part because there are MANY misconceptions about pack behavior and dogs.

First, the origin of the idea of dog packs came from wolves. Wolves live in true packs in that the group functions in a coordinated manner with a clear hierarchy and "leader." However, wolf packs are actually family units -- parents and offspring. It is not the norm to see genetically unrelated wolves join an existing established pack (although it does occasionally happen). Wolves vigorously drive strange animals away.

## **DOGS ARE NOT WOLVES**

While dogs show behavioral similarities to wolves, their behavior is not identical to wolves. (If it were, there would be much more interbreeding between feral dogs and wolves.) Studies of feral dogs actually show that dogs live in pairs or in loose aggregations -- not packs. Groups exist around concentrated resources and membership is somewhat fluid. Dogs do not form monogamous breeding pairs (wolves do). Dogs in these groups do not show coordinated group activity. While hierarchies may exist, these are not always linear nor is there a clear single leader that dictates group activity.

If you Google image "dog pack", you will get lots of pictures of African Wild dogs but none of dog packs. If you keep hunting you might get a picture of the Dog Psychology Center. But this isn't even a true pack. It's a bunch of dogs that don't fight with each other kept in an enclosure. Their supposed "leader figure" doesn't even live there with them. They are alone most of the time.

**The situation of our domestic dogs living in groups in homes is \*completely\* artificial.** We force dogs to live in groups according to our arbitrary designations. The dogs do not have a choice. We then inflict wolf behavior paradigms on them. In addition, we even misinterpret much of the wolf behavior that we use (i.e. the alpha roll).

We like territorial behavior, then get angry when our dogs exhibit territorial behavior -- i.e., they try to drive away strange dogs and people. Wolves, lions, chimpanzees -- none of them would allow a strange animal to come unimpeded into the territory.

**So in part we've bred dog to be neotenous -- to retain puppy-like behavior so they are more playful and accepting of new members. But dogs retain enough wolf behavior, and we have manipulated behavior traits enough, that dogs often still feel threatened or anxious when we force them to accept strange members into their group or their territory. (You can't breed territoriality in and out at the same time!) Frankly, it's pretty darn unfair what we expect of dogs much of the time.**

I do not evaluate dogs as packs even when they live together. I do look at the individual dyadic relationships between pairs of dogs. Sometimes triads or affiliations will affect resource guarding potential and this has to be factored in. But I do not consider my dogs a pack and I never will. They are more like a group of rowdy children that need supervision.

When you base your training and behavioral interventions on pack behavior and hierarchies, what happens when those interventions don't work? What happens if you cannot figure out which dog is dominant to which dog? What happens if the hierarchies fluctuate depending on the situation? If you have six dogs and you have to remember each dog's status with each other dog in each context, you would go nuts -- and at some point you'd get something wrong and mess them up even more.

**It's interesting that in the majority of "sibling rivalry" cases seen by behaviorists, fighting occurs only in the owner's presence.** Some say that's because the owner isn't alpha enough. But if this is the problem, then why don't they fight even more when the "alpha" isn't even there?

**The reason that "leadership" programs work isn't because they enhance status. It's because leadership programs force owners to be more vigilant in supervising their dogs' behaviors and also force owners to make their behavioral expectations more clear and consistent.**

While social relationships are important, you could program a robot to deal with "pack behavior" successfully, and I just don't buy that dogs would acknowledge submission to an inanimate object. There isn't much biological adaptation for that!

Social behavior is complex. We do our dogs a disservice by trying to reduce it down to something as simple as #1, #2, etc. Think how complex your own social relationships are. There is more to your social relationships than your hierarchy with those people around you. We also do them a disservice by expecting each dog to get along with other dogs no matter what. Sometimes certain personalities just are not going to get along, no matter how badly you want them to. Add to this the fact that many of our dogs have abnormal social behavior, either due to a lack of \*appropriate\* socialization and/or due to genetic or neurodevelopmental problems.

*Question 4: I've heard that one way to settle dominance between two intact males who live in the same household is to securely muzzle them and let them settle it for themselves. Has anyone else been told that? Does it work? How about for females?*

This is a bad idea. It will work for some dogs, but for others it will intensify the fighting to the point where one dog will get killed if they ever get together unmuzzled. This is like letting two little school boys beat each other up. Sometimes dogs don't make good decisions. Also if you have one or two dogs that do not have normal social behavior then this won't work. The people that think this is a good idea obviously don't have pit bulls. ;-)

Suggesting that people encourage their dogs to fight in order to work out our nebulous idea of pack status is extremely dangerous and irresponsible. There is also significant liability involved. If you recommend this to someone and one or both of the dogs is severely injured or killed, you may find yourself in a lawsuit. No one can guarantee that two dogs will get along. That's like saying spouses in bad marriages just need to fight it out to decide who is dominant so that they don't fight any more. This is also a serious welfare issue for the dogs.

Again, social behavior in dogs is NOT that simple. **One goal I would love to see for your club is to expand your knowledge beyond the simplistic, and rather antiquated, idea of simple pack order in dogs.**

*The impact of this statement is underscored in the Health Survey results: The #1 behavior problem cited was dog-dog aggression. How much of that aggression is influenced by our (perhaps unrealistic) mental models of dog interaction?*

### **Dog Motivated Dogs**

*What can you say about a young PWD who has become too attached to an older SCWT & wants to breathe the air, be the shadow of the other dog to the point that it's not healthy IMO? Could separating them until he's older help this situation? Or will he remain dog motivated & not human motivated?*

Another good question. Yes separation will help provided that the dog is able to form appropriate attachments with humans. In fact, in these situations the dogs should spend a lot of time apart to enhance the dog's bond with humans. This dog is at risk of showing pathologic separation distress when separated from the other dog in the future.

### **Fencing and territorial behavior**

*Question 1. Does fencing make a dog more territorial or aggressive?*

Dogs appear to show more intense territorial behavior if the territorial boundary well defined (e.g. a fence) and if the territory is small. This latter effect is in part logistics in that it is more difficult to defend a large territory than a small one. The intensity of the territorial reaction will depend in part on the type and value of the resources inside it -- the higher value the resources and the scarcer they are, the more likely the animal will be to defend the area.

In wild animals, territoriality and aggression are closely linked. I think this association is a little looser in domestic dogs. Some dogs can show marked territorial alerts when they see people outside, but then behave in a very friendly manner once those people cross the boundary (e.g. come into the house).

*Question 2. Do invisible fences make a dog make negative associations with people and dogs?*

They can. There are numerous case reports, including one human fatality, where previously "friendly" dogs attacked people on the shock line of an invisible fence. The concept of invisible barriers is unnatural to animals. Although humans understand the concept, it would still be highly disconcerting for you to walk down the sidewalk and suddenly smash into a barrier that you could not see. Imagine how dogs feel when they can't even understand the concept to begin with.

Dogs that approach a shock line in response to a person or dog and receive a shock often associate the shock with the presence and/or actions of the nearby person or dog. This has led to attacks in numerous cases. These attacks can be directed at any nearby person or animal, familiar or unfamiliar.

Invisible fences do appear to work fine for many dogs. Laying the fencing along a visible natural boundary (e.g. edge of a driveway or garden) can assist the dog in understanding the boundary. The dog also needs careful training in understanding the warning zone and shock zones. Invisible fences are wholly inappropriate for dogs with aggression, especially territorial or predatory. Many dogs will run through the shock line and then be unable to

return home. Receiving a shock while in pursuit of a target can elevate the dog's arousal and then intensify the attack once the dog reaches the target. Additionally these fences do not prevent other people and animals from coming onto the dog's territory. Dogs with aggression should always be contained behind a solid barrier.

### **Treating Barking**

*"I've gotten my dogs to stop barking when I am outside with them. How DOI make the transition to getting them not to bark when I am not outside?"*

This depends greatly on the reason that the dogs are barking. Dogs bark for many reasons, the most common being: alarm/territorial barking, attention-seeking, frustration, anxiety, play, and aggression of various types.

**Essentially, treating barking means treating the underlying cause.** If the dog is barking for attention, then eliminating reinforcement (i.e. attention) will reduce or eliminate the barking. If the dog is anxious or frustrated, the source of these emotions must be dealt with.

If the barking is truly nuisance barking (barking at every little thing), AND the dog's behavioral needs are being met (e.g. adequate physical and mental exercise) then bark collars (e.g. spray collars) can sometimes be used to clean up residual barking.

Bark collars should NOT be used on dogs that are barking from anxiety, frustration or other stressors. Punishing such dogs for barking only increases the dog's distress.

*...will bark constantly especially at night. . Any suggestions?*

Don't leave him outside unsupervised --- keep bringing him back in. Also reward him when he's outside and DOESN'T bark.

### **Reactive vs. Aggressive behavior**

*Do you view aggressive behavior and reactive behavior as the same?*

This is a fantastic question and the answer is "no."

While most reactive dogs are also aggressive, not all of them are. Some dogs are just reactive (usually anxiety and fear) but their reactivity is expressed in non-specific aggression. These dogs appear to have an "overactive" threat detection and response system -- their brains send a lot of "false alarms" which activates the fight--flight system even in the absence of true threat.

For example, a reactive dog smells a novel odor and the dog begins growling. My own dog spent the first 4 months of her life growling as soon as we stepped out the front door to walk the 15 feet to the car. It did not matter what was outside (which was usually nothing). She was anxious, and being a reactive dog, her anxiety manifested by growling and piloerection.

*I thought I read that piloerection is undetectable in PWDs and similarly coated breeds.*

Piloerection will be hard to see in a PWD but you can look to see if the \*other\* dog is showing it.

*How do we know when a growl is a precursor signal to aggression, and when not? Or is it a matter that anxiety not alleviated can become aggressive, i.e., an intent to do harm? Are you saying that warnings should be clearly defined as different?*

Another good question. Sometimes you can't tell especially if you don't know the animal well. Looking at other body signals can be helpful. Anyone that looked at my dog in those situations \*would\* think that she might be

aggressive. I know she is not because I have watched and worked with her for a long time.

Because these dogs aren't exactly "normal", they don't always follow easily defined rules.

*What about the aggressive dog that does not exhibit reactive behavior first, but (seemingly) takes off after another dog with none of the growling, posturing, etc. one might expect to see first?*

These dogs are not reactive -- they are just aggressive. In most cases, silent aggression is predatory.

*"Silent aggression is predatory" --what does this mean and how does one deal with a dog who displays this type of behavior...*

**Aggression falls into two large categories: predatory (related to hunting) and affective aggression (related to "emotion", social issues, threat behavior etc).**

Predatory aggression occurs without warning -- it would not do to growl at your dinner before trying to catch and kill it! Affective aggression occurs with warning because the dog would rather warn than actually get into a fight.

Some dogs show predatory aggression toward other dogs -- they attack silently (and sometimes they do this to people too, esp. children). Predatory aggression is dangerous when it is targeted to another dog or human. It is often severe and difficult to treat.

*For the owner, what does that mean, especially in terms of treatment or owner handling? Harder to change? Easier?*

Predatory aggression is more difficult to control usually. It is a very hard wired behavior so the dog's reaction is more "reflexive" than in affective (emotional) aggressions. This does not mean it can't be controlled, but it is not something that you eliminate.

*Are there other behaviors that go along with this predatory aggression that would give a clue/confirmation that this is the cause? If so, what are they?*

Sometimes you will see true stalking behavior. There typically is NO piloerection (which is seen mostly with affective aggression). Dogs with predatory aggression may "recover" faster and seem less aroused after the attack.

In domestic dogs, predatory behavior is often complicated by barrier frustration. Because the dog is restricted behind a fence or on a leash, barking and emotional arousal may occur even though the aggression is mostly predatory. So this can make distinguishing the components more difficult.

Predation is also more likely to be seen toward moving objects rather than those that are stationary. Sometimes dogs will go after running dogs and then when the dog stops running and freezes, the chasing dog may stop and seem at a loss as to what to do.

*I have a dog that sometimes growls and warns before he becomes aggressive, other times he is aggressive just out of nowhere. Then sometimes he shows no aggression to another dog at all. It is all very random. Can he show both predatory and affective aggression at the same time? Is there some way to foresee this aggression coming on, i.e., body language I should be looking for?*

Yes, most dogs do show precursor signals. However, in some dogs these signals are very subtle and/or so short that they almost occur simultaneously with the outburst. Sometimes these low/short warning dogs got this way because they were previously punished for growling or showing warning behavior in the past -- so the warning goes away but the motivation for aggression is still there. In some cases, dogs show little warning because it is predatory or they are truly trying to ambush the other dog -- element of surprise. I saw this latter behavior frequently in my last

pit bull. In normal social interactions he had fabulous social signaling, but when he got into a fight with some dogs, he never showed any warning at all before attacking the other dog.

*...one of them will silently stalk a particular dog and strike when no one is looking--even if I am right there with them.*

How bad is the aggression when an attack does occur? **One clue that you often see with predatory attacks is that the attacker does not stop when the victim shows appeasement or cut off signals.** In such cases, the safest thing to do is to keep these dogs separated. It is often not fair to subject the victim to potentially risky therapy programs.

*I have 2 males; 1 five and the other 9. When we go out for our daily walks and come upon another dog in the distance, the younger one becomes very aggressive and, since he can't get to the distant dog, he lunges at our 9 year old. I'm not sure if he's attacking the older one or just trying to get him as "worked up" as he is... The older one doesn't seem to care one way or the other and ignores the situation. What's up with that?*

This is called "redirected aggression." It is induced by arousal and frustration. Your younger can't get to the other dog so he "redirects" his aggression to the older dog. This can be dangerous and needs to be addressed. Your dog needs to learn to control emotional arousal and how to deal with frustration. There are exercises that can help with this but outlining them is beyond the scope of what we are discussing right now.

*What is the best way to introduce a visiting puppy to my 4 yr neutered male? Family members are coming to stay for a few days and they have a new 3 mo old male border collie that they are excited for us to meet. Our PWD has been aggressive toward puppies he's met in the park in the past and in general when we are walking he barks, growls and snarls at dogs he does not know, and he will redirect his aggression toward our older female Airedale...which we immediately try to shut down, mostly successfully, but we have yet been able to prevent it. We have taken him and us in for training to deal with the dog aggression and they've advised us to have him on a prong collar....should we use the same approach in our home until he becomes accepting of the puppy? Should we try to introduce them in a neutral territory outside his home?*

Honestly in this situation, I would not try to introduce them at all. I would keep the two of them separate. Your dog has a long history of dog aggression. There is an impressionable puppy coming into your home that hopefully doesn't have a dog aggression problem and we don't want him developing one. Since this puppy is only there temporarily, it's not worth the risk. This process will be rushed because introducing dogs in this situation can take *\*weeks\** to do properly and safely. It is not fair to stress your own dog, nor to risk the puppy to intimidation or an actual "attack" for such a short visit.

*I have a question about dog who seems to display aggressive behaviors related to groups. I have a female who will whine, growl, bark or lunge at a new dog or person who attempts to join a group, enter a room, etc. I believe this is affective aggression as you've described it, as she often looks to me and whimpers as though she is trying to tell me I should prevent this from happening.*

She probably does feel threatened and she probably IS asking you to do something about it. Are you listening?? ;-)

In a situation like this, I would do a lot of work training my dog to pay attention to me. I would also teach some relaxation tasks. I would cue the dog to watch or do a relaxation task EVERY SINGLE TIME a new dog came into the area. **Don't wait to see if your dog reacts because then YOU are reacting after the fact rather than being proactive to help her cope in advance.**

### More on Aggression

*My dog has been showing dominance aggression. I recently found out his thyroid is low. Should I continue the status reduction training or wait until the medications have had more effect?*

It is unlikely that the thyroid problem (if the diagnosis is accurate) is the cause of your dog's aggression. While

thyroid disorders can exacerbate aggression in some cases, they are rarely the sole cause. You should never discontinue appropriate training in the hopes that a medication will cure the problem.

The role of thyroid disease in behavior problems, particularly aggression, is overstated. There is little \*controlled data\* to indicate that thyroid disease plays a major role. In fact one recent retrospective study looking at thyroid and aggression found no correlation.

*Are there situations where it is appropriate for a dog to growl/show its teeth?*

Yes. Aggression is a normal communicative behavior. Growling in a dog is similar to firm talking or shouting in a human. Dogs do have the right to “tell” people or other dogs that they are feeling uncomfortable or threatened by certain interactions. They also have the right to try to maintain resources. So some expressions of aggression are normal.

*Would this behavior be seen differently if it were directed toward a human versus a dog?*

From a communication perspective, no. However, aggression toward humans is less tolerated because dogs must learn to live by human rules and safety is an issue. So while aggression in many cases is normal, you must look at the context of the situation, the target, the intensity of the response, etc. Appropriateness is based not only on the circumstance but also the intensity of the dog’s response. Is the level of aggression appropriate for the level of \*actual\* transgression? (This ties in to reactive dogs whose responses are inappropriately intense for the situation.)

**Also, keep in mind that we do some extremely rude things to our dogs. On top of this, the average person, even long time dog owners, are extremely unskilled at reading and appropriately interpreting the signals that the dog is sending. When these "polite" communications are ignored, then the dog is forced to escalate the intensity of the message.**

*Could you expand on this answer, please? One of the hallmarks of our breed that we have been studying closely lately is its general intensity level, and relatively uninhibited expression of what is on its mind. Sometimes it seems we tolerate more intensity than we would in other breeds, and then have a dog that is "too much" for other dogs and other people. What's too much? What are some basic handling skills we can develop and use to advantage? You mentioned having the dog develop self control and coping with frustration in another post. How do we encourage that--settle exercises? Long downs? Kongs or other toys that are hard to get the food out of?*

Well this is the tricky part. ;-) There is obviously a large grey area in determining what is normal and appropriate. The boundaries for normal will vary some with the breed and the situation obviously. However there are some situations where it is obvious that the intensity of a response is excessive. For example, your dog has a bone. Another dog walks into the room and passes through the room 8 feet away facing the other direction -- no focus on the chewing dog. The chewing dog erupts into aggression, runs across the room and bites the other dog on the head and ear. This is excessive and inappropriate.

**Sometimes it is easy for people to confuse rudeness with eagerness. While we want our dogs to perform their jobs with intensity, we also need to realize that those dogs need to learn how to shut themselves off and know how to "stand down." This is a matter of training and reinforcing self control.**

Enrichment toys can teach some degree of persistence of frustration tolerance but toys cannot shape behavior.

Exercises for impulse control are generally considered to be stationary, e.g. stay, settle, and leave it. These are important for impulse control. However, even moving exercises can shape impulse control. The focus is not so much on WHAT the dog is doing, but on HOW the dog does it. If the dog stays, but is coiled like a spring, then we are not reinforcing \*physiologic\* control. If we only reward the dog when the dog sits and stays CALMLY, then we are shaping behavior and physiology. Ditto for leash walking. If my dog walks on a loose leash beside me but is

wound up and starts to whine or bark, then I stop. I do not continue forward until she has ratcheted down her arousal level. In some cases this may mean I need to practice some relaxation tasks right there on the sidewalk before we can continue. But these interventions are crucial for a dog with impulse control problems.

*Can you be specific, i.e. what relaxation task would you ask for on a walk?*

**These are exercises that are taught in advance in non-distracting environments. Relaxation is built into them as a behavioral criterion.** They may vary somewhat with the individual dog. I choose behaviors that are generally associated with relaxation in dogs as a group or with that dog in particular. One I use frequently is the full lateral recumbency "play dead" posture -- dog is flat on its side with all four legs touching the ground the dog's head completely on the ground (no legs waving up in the air). My dog also chin rests when she is relaxed, so I have put this behavior on the cue and I can ask her to station her chin into my hand when she is aroused. While this does not \*eliminate\* the arousal, it does reduce it consistently. These exercises help the dog refocus and feel "safe".

*Is there anything to the "fear factor" – i.e. that dogs may show aggression to people that are afraid of dogs?*

Yes, but not always for the reasons that people think. We do not know if humans send off a "fear scent." Certainly fear activates certain hormonal responses and affects the sweat pattern which will influence the person's scent pattern. More likely though, dogs are reading the way the person acts. When people are fearful, their movements change as well as their pupil size, direction of their gaze, respiratory rate, etc. Fearful people often act "weird" which then makes the dogs worry about those people. If both the dog and the person are fearful, the dog may decide that it has enough of an edge to try to drive the person away with an offensive display.

*I'm thinking hard about your comment (assertive and fearful,) seemingly an oxymoron, but I'm beginning to think it meaningful in terms of describing certain dogs.*

When I evaluate dogs for behavior issues, especially aggression, I look at more than whether the dog is aggressive. Remember that aggression is normal in many circumstances. So other factors that must be assessed include:

- 1) The level of confidence/fearfulness (on a continuum)
- 2) the dog's assertiveness/passiveness
- 3) the level of anxiety
- 4) the bite inhibition
- 5) the bite threshold
- 6) the frustration/tolerance level
- 7) arousal
- 8) the level of impulsivity

All of these are different facets of the behavior and they affect the treatment and prognosis in different ways.

*Can dogs' aggression be exacerbated by keeping them in a small crate? Can a dog become claustrophobic?*

Certain types of aggression can. Behavior problems in general can be exacerbated if the crate is used too much or inappropriately. Crates are not a substitute for training, yet many people use them that way.

Yes, dogs frequently have barrier or confinement anxiety. This is often confused with separation distress because many people only confine their dog when they leave the house.

*Please provide suggestions on how to respond to early signs of dog aggression displayed by a puppy or adolescent dog. What do you recommend? Jolly routine, reprimand, ignore, increase distance, soothe, use calming signals?*

At the moment of the aggression, there isn't anything you can do that will change the fact that it happened. No

matter how fast you may react, once the dog has "erupted" you cannot take that back. Punishing the dog will not be productive, especially since so much of the aggression is due to fear, anxiety or insecurity. The most effective, immediate intervention is to get the dog away from the situation to give you and the dog time to calm down. This also gives you time to reflect on what happened and what signs occurred that indicated this was going to happen that you either missed or did not know how to react to.

**Jolly and "calming" signals are useful for defusing aggression before it occurs, but not so much after.**

Jolly may help the dog recover quicker. Other fun behaviors and relaxation tasks will help the dog recover faster as well. While soothing isn't recommended (it really ISN'T ok, no matter how much you might tell the dog that!) being supportive of the dog is fine. I \*want\* my dog to retreat to me when she is nervous and let me decide how best to handle things. I'm not always right, but I'm right more times than she is. ;-) If you act worried, then you confirm to the dog that there really is something wrong. Unless you make a habit of screeching at your dog, yelling at the dog tells the dog there is reason to worry also because it's not how you normally act when everything is fine.

*Also, what are some general longer term strategies for preventing and/or managing fear-based aggressive behavior around other dogs?*

**Vigilance is highly underplayed as an intervention for behavior problems. I WATCH my dogs. The more potentially risky the situation, the more diligently I watch. I would rather intervene too soon or unnecessarily than to do the opposite. Redirecting the dog early when it seems like the dog may be about to get into trouble (no matter whose fault it may be) is important. If the dog starts to show aggression, back up to a safe distance and cue an alternative behavior that you can reward. THIS IS NOT THE TIME TO TRAIN THE DOG TO DO SIMPLE BEHAVIORS! These behaviors must be well established in the dog before you need to use them.**

I am always shocked (although by now I should not be) at how many of my clients come to me with dogs with serious problems and the dogs can't even sit reliably, let alone do anything else. When the dog shows aggression they are screaming and jerking on the leash or pushing the dogs to the ground. **On a good day in a distraction free area, if the dog responds to the sit command only 50% of the time, what do you think you will get when the dog is aroused? Nothing.** Train a default behavior if necessary: see a dog, sit and look at me. See a dog, sit and look at me. Let the dog know that if the dog does this, good things happen for the dog (rewards) and the dog will be safe (you will NOT let that other dog come near).

Careful counter conditioning transitions some dogs from fear aggression into actual social behavior -- they will actually begin to enjoy interacting with dogs. For other dogs, the most realistic goal is just to get your dog comfortable being \*around\* other dogs -- as long as those dogs don't get too chummy.

**Submissive Dogs**

*I have a dog that has become more submissive since he was neutered. He had some aggressive outbursts to young male dogs before being neutered; now he is submissive and almost afraid with some male dogs (intact and neutered). He's also become very submissive with the cat who takes advantage of him. I was not expecting this since the neuter. He cowers when the cat walks by despite the cat improving his behaviors. Is this his real "pack" status? How do intervene when he becomes fearful and submissive to dogs, say on a walk or when meeting dogs at a trial who are more assertive? He will sometimes shut down if there is a large very assertive male anywhere in our vicinity. Is it best to avoid them and build confidence by diversion, or should I have him meet these other dogs? This isn't about pack status. (Please read the previous post regarding pack behavior in dogs.) This is your dog's true "feelings" about dogs. Prior to his neuter, his aggressive outbursts were likely due to fear aggression (even if they looked offensive). Now that the testosterone has reduced some of the offensive reactivity, you are seeing the reduced aggression but still fearful behavior.*

Your dog needs counter conditioning around dogs. **Do not force him to meet dogs that frighten him. This will only reduce his trust in your judgment and also may start to trigger defensive aggression** again.

*Are PWDs one-person dogs? Our 6 month old was loving and friendly to everyone as a younger pup but now seems aloof to others. Could this be a puppy stage?*

In part. Dogs do become more neophobic beginning around 6-8 months. At this age, many dogs seem to begin showing fearful behavior toward stimuli that previously did not bother them. This is frequently the age at which dogs begin to show some alarm barking and more wariness around strange dogs. This reaction is partly related to the animal's progressing maturity but it is accentuated by marginal socialization. Just as in humans, adolescence puts dogs in some social turmoil. Careful progression of socialization will often take dogs through this period and they "recover." But in other dogs, the wariness continues to progress.

### **Leash Aggression**

*How do we discern what causes a dog to growl or snarl at other dogs after meeting dogs for a weeks or months?*

There are a variety of reasons for this. Sometimes it is related to the dog's changing (maturing) age. As dogs hit social maturity, they often become more cautious meeting new dogs, especially on leash where their movements are restricted. Also **many times the previous greetings were not as uneventful as owners thought. I frequently see owners watching their dogs play with each other when the dogs are actually not playing. Dogs that pull on leash often approach other dogs with a lowered body posture (as they put their weight into the leash) combined with "choking" on the leash. This can be interpreted by some dogs as a stalking-like behavior and makes the other dog nervous. Then the first dog reacts to the second dog's apprehension and stiffness, by becoming stiff himself. Pretty soon this becomes a vicious cycle, "training" the dog to be nervous about greeting new dogs.** Because this does not happen when the dogs are off leash, they may continue to greet other dogs normally when off leash.

*Does apprehension from the person on the leash contribute to the dog's behavior?*

A resounding YES! This happens for a number of reasons. One, people tend to pull on the leash when they are nervous which contributes to miscommunications between dogs. (See previous post). Also, the owner's reaction serves to intensify or mitigate the dog's arousal level. For example, if a dog is lunging at another dog and the owner punishes the dog, the dog then associates the presence of other dogs with punishment by the owner. This means in the future, the dog not only feels threatened by the other dog, but also feels threatened by the owner. If an owner reacts nervously around another dog, their own dog will pick up on this.

*I think of the leash the same way I do (or did) of reining a horse in terms of communication.*

Very appropriate. In addition, think how perceptive the horse is to even the tiniest changes in your body language whether you are on its back or on the ground. Dogs are the same especially if they have a close association with their owner.

*We have 2 female PWDs, 14 mos apart. From the minute we brought our younger, then 11 week old puppy home, (she came to us via airplane), she did not want to go outside to walk and her anxiety keeps getting worse when we walk her on a leash. We can't walk our dogs together because she attacks the older dog when she sees her target. She is now 2 3/4 years old and has been in obedience classes since she was 4 mos. and loves school. In class she will snap at any "new" dog that comes into class if I am not attentive to her. I feel her problem is definitely fear because if a dog approaches her, she slinks away, or shakes, flips in the air crying, or snaps at the dog.*

There is more than one issue here. The first is that your dog is fearful of going outside. The second is that she is fearful of other dogs. Sometimes these two stimuli come together which makes her even more overwhelmed.

This is a pretty dramatic fear display and your dog needs professional intervention to institute a comprehensive behavior modification plan. In the short term, you should keep her far enough away from other dogs that she does not show these reactions. Do NOT allow other dogs to come up and meet her. Again this reduces her confidence in you to protect her and will sensitize her even more to other dogs.

*... He will respond to my down command. He doesn't do it often but enough that it's disconcerting. Probably about 10% of our off leash walks and usually on the way home. It's as if he's having a temper tantrum and doesn't want to go home, or maybe it's a "play behavior"? We have tried to turn around and ignore him but that doesn't work.>>* I would do a lot of fake leashing for this dog. Call him back and reward him and then turn him loose again. Call him back, leash him, turn toward home and if he behaves reward him by turning back around and turning him loose again.

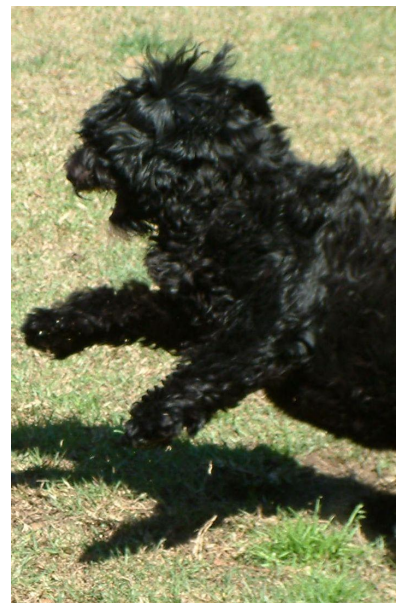
If he knows down so well, then ask him to do it and stay there until he calms down.

*Just wanted to know what some of you folks are doing about pulling Porties? I am looking into the Gentle Leader Harness as a way of protecting his neck until the loose leash training becomes fluent. It could be awhile* Gentle Leaders are a good option for many pulling dogs. They must be fitted properly to be effective and avoid aggravating the dog. Another great pulling resource is the Easy Walk harness which many dogs tolerate even more. (see [www.premierpet.com](http://www.premierpet.com)).

### **Puppy Nipping and biting**

*Is it more effective to ignore puppy nipping or rechannel it to a toy, to scream "ouch", or reprimand the puppy with pinching the lips or other aversive? Why?*

**I tell clients the best way to make an issue of puppy nipping is to make an issue of it.** Puppy mouthing is a normal phase of development. Punishing a puppy for exploring with its mouth will only make mouthing problematic. Redirecting the puppy to toys is the best route. The simple act of making your hands unavailable to the puppy helps tremendously. Yelping "ouch" works very well with some puppies especially if they are under 4 months of age. When I use yelping, I try to do it in a normal fashion and not make it overly melodramatic. I also turn away from the puppy when I do it rather than yelping AT the puppy, which might scare some puppies. Walking away when the puppy gets overly excited is effective. Pinching the puppy's lips is never appropriate nor is popping the puppy on the muzzle. These latter interventions can make the puppy hand shy, scare the puppy, or "enrage" some puppies (i.e. the puppy becomes defensive and will truly bite you then).



*Would you please comment about a young dog/adolescent grabbing at or trying to mouth on people's clothing, i.e. pants legs, shirt sleeves? What are the best ways to prevent this behavior and "retrain" a dog who consistently grabs at clothing? I have seen dogs do this and it frightens children and some adults because they think the dog will bite. I have seen this behavior when dogs are getting really excited especially at agility trials.*

This gets back to teaching the dog the PACE protocol and reinforcing the dog for dealing with excitable situations. This is just flat out rude behavior. For some of these dogs it is helpful to use a Gentle Leader or similar head collar to help gently control the dog's mouth. **Although a lot of this behavior starts as "stupid puppy behavior" it generally persists because it is inadvertently rewarded.** For example at agility trials, most dogs are run or walked onto the field even though they are acting like morons. This starts in the car: the car door doesn't open until the dog calms down. The dog isn't let out until the dog calms down. Then you don't take even ONE step away from the car

until the dog calms down. Then you don't take a second step away from the car until the dog calms down. And on and on.

This is a good place to learn effective use of time-outs as well, because they can be used to teach dogs that all the fun ends if the dog doesn't learn to quiet down.

*See Dr. Haug's PACE handout. Pace = Politeness, Attention, Calmness Exercises.*

This is solid information but a first draft.

*Most of us have multiple dogs. Do you have any advice on how to implement the steps in various training programs (like PACE) without either (a) having the dogs backslide when they are both together and are more excited/competing for attention/playing, etc. or (b) having them spend their lives separated or crated during the entire learning period?*

This is a good question. Any time you teach any new behavior, you should start the process with each dog individually. **It is very difficult and sometimes impossible to train two dogs simultaneously on a behavior that they have never been introduced to.** Once each dog has a fairly good grasp of the concept, then you can begin to do them in pairs, and so on.

Having said that, there are ways to reinforce an individual dog for meeting criteria. For example, if I go to the back door at my mother's house, I have 3-4 dogs to deal with depending on whether my brother's dog is also visiting (along with mine). My dog knows this drill but she gets carried away at my mom's house especially around the other dogs. (Mom's not very good at enforcing these rules which is one reason the dogs are WAY more rowdy and snarly at the door with her.) I body block all the dogs well back from the door sometimes even several feet into the adjacent kitchen. Two of the dogs know how to sit and the other two do not. I can ask the ones that do know how to sit to do so. Then I wait for the calm and focused on me part. Whichever dog gets it first is the one I let out the door. I keep the others pushed back until the privileged dog gets out, then I shut the door and start all over with the remaining three. If they all get it pretty much at the same time, then I will sometimes let them all out simultaneously.

### **Separation Anxiety**

*How do you deal with a dog with separation anxiety?*

Separation distress is a complicated issue and outlining a treatment program is beyond the scope of this discussion chat. See the handout that I have on the subject that gives a brief outline of the treatment process.

*Several days ago Dr. Haug stated that dogs could have claustrophobia, and barrier issues which could cause excessive panting when put into a crate. I was wondering how one goes about differentiating that from true separation anxiety.*

There are a few clues you can look for to distinguish these. First the dog with CA will show anxiety during confinement all the time, not just when the owner is gone. So if the dog is crated when the owner is in the room and becomes anxious, then you have some confinement issues. Dogs with CA often tend to have problems with other types of confinement as well such as tethering the dog or even locking them in a bedroom. I have seen a few dogs with barrier frustration (which actually can be a little different from CA) that would get upset if their crate door was closed even though they were not in it.

If the dog has only CA, and no SRD, then if the dog escapes the crate while the owner is gone, there will be no further anxiety. Often owners come home and find the dog sleeping peacefully on the couch.

There are quite a number of dogs that have both CA and SRD. The dogs often start with one problem and then

develop the other also because they come to make such a strong association between the owner leaving and being locked in a crate. (MANY owners only put their dogs in the crate when they leave the house.)

*For a dog with confinement issues what can be done? Should they be crated more often to "get used to it", should they be medicated? You said one problem (confinement issues) may lead to separation anxiety. So would you at that point do the separation anxiety protocol, or try to work with the confinement issues, or both?*

Do not lock a confinement anxious dog in a crate. They will not just "get used to it". In many cases this will sensitize the dog or put the dog in such a panic that the dog seriously injures itself trying to get out. I go back and begin working with various types of confinement in very small increments: introducing the dog to tethering, baby gates and crates in a very controlled fashion. I never want to make the confinement so intense that the dog starts to get anxious. I want to be able to reward the dog for remaining calm in the situation. (This does mean that most dogs first have to learn some relaxation exercises and have the PACE protocol implemented.)

Medication can be useful especially if the dog MUST be confined for some reason. If the dog also has a separation disorder, this must be treated also.

### **Noise Sensitivity and fear**

*My 18 month old male has a bed on the floor in my bedroom. Every night when I turn out the lights and it gets real quiet, he starts reacting to every tiny noise that he hears. He jumps up and starts pacing and then barking and wants out of the bedroom to go see what kind of monsters are out there... It does not usually happen on nights that he is very tired. What is the correct way to respond to this and help him not be so fearful of the night?*

I would be concerned that there is some degree of this occurring during the day as well although it may be less intense. Playing background noise is helpful. You may also try putting a Dog Appeasing Pheromone diffuser near his sleeping place or try giving him melatonin just before bedtime.

In addition, beginning counter conditioning for noises. Teach him relaxation tasks on his dog bed and spend a lot of time for rewarding relaxed behavior on the bed, even at night (you are awake anyway!). You could also try giving him an enrichment toy to work on at bedtime.

*Would it not also be wise to consider putting this dog in a crate, so he does not feel like he must guard the house?* Definitely worth trying.

### **Submissive Urination**

*Could you talk about submissive urination in pups, and the time frame they can outgrow it. Some helpful tips?*

Some puppies will spontaneously outgrow this and others do not. The time frame is very variable and can take up to 1 year.



Dealing with this in part means learning to be savvy about reading body language. Recognize actions and movements that make the puppy feel threatened. Slow down your movements in general. I never reach over to pet dogs that are showing me passive submission. Passive submission is a distance increasing behavior and indicates fear. I back away

which is what the dog wants me to do. Avoid eye contact with these dogs; turn your face away. I don't know if lip licking helps, but I do it sometimes. Train these dogs with hands-off methods (no modeling or physical prompting) using positive reinforcement, but toss the treats to the dog rather than handing them to it (at least at first). Also, do NOT baby talk to these dogs. It makes the submissive behavior much worse. (I don't know why.) **Talk in calm modulated voice. Keep praise toned down.** And, never, EVER, punish a dog for submissive urination.

### Eating Clothes

*I cannot my PWD stop from eating clothes (primarily socks and underwear). I have tried spraying with water when caught in act or giving him something else to chew, but he knows what he likes! Any suggestions (other than keep the stuff off the floor--we have young kids and sometimes this is hard!)*

How you treat this depends whether this is normal puppy play behavior or whether your dog truly has pica (eating non food items). If this is puppy behavior or attention seeking, then the treatment involves increasing the puppy's physical and mental exercise, as well as keeping the puppy under better supervision so that it does not have the opportunity to make a mistake. Booby traps can help under certain circumstances, but they are somewhat limited in the long haul.

If this is a true pica, then the dog needs a complete medical and behavioral evaluation.

### Wanting your dog to play with others

*So many people want their dogs to be friends with other dogs, especially their own kind, or the dogs of relatives or friends (even strange people). Most seem to totally forget that dogs, like people do not necessarily need or want to be friends with those other dogs (or some people). It's not so much they need to play and romp nicely, but that the owners need to understand that the dogs need to learn to just mind their manners, and know how to back off and leave the other dogs alone. Also, very rude behavior in greeting, overly pushy dogs can set off dogs who are more reactive, or just won't tolerate that rudeness. People need to realize a super friendly in your face dog is not being friendly, it's rude.*

Very astute post.

**Folks should also remember that not all "play" is play. Dogs do test each other and even bully each other during "play."** Play can transform from true play into something much more sinister even though actually growling and snapping are not occurring. I see this at dog parks. People think their dog is just playing rough, when really the dog is bullying the other dog and there is no play happening any more.



On the flip side, as you noted above, some dogs are just plain rude. They have no idea how to temper their play behavior (pitties, labs and boxers are notorious for this) even when another dog asks them to back off. Owners should intervene when, or even before, this happens. But most don't. They either aren't watching or they don't understand what they are seeing.



One picture does not give complete information about relationships. These dogs play with intensity on a regular basis. In addition, the Boxer and the PWD are therapy dogs. Together, they visit a juvenile facility weekly, where they are off lead during part of their work. Photo courtesy of Dale Zimmerman.

*I'm always at dog parks. It's fairly obvious to me when a dog wants another to back off, or when aggressive behavior is occurring.*

This is good; however, many dog park goers can't recognize this. Sometimes owners do see it but they don't realize that they need to step in. It goes back to the idea that dogs will all just work it out. But many of these dogs are adolescents. Any of you that have, or have been around, teenagers know that they don't always make the wisest choices. Heck, even adults sometimes need an impartial person to step in and say "that's enough." Additionally some of these dogs don't have very good social skills to begin with so they do not know how to react appropriately to another dog's signals. If someone was yelling at you in Swahili, wouldn't you hope that a translator would step in to help you?

*I'm not sure I know what I need to look for to determine what I'm seeing is rough play vs. bullying. Can you expand on*

*that?*

**There is a little bit of art to this and a lot of spending a lot of time watching dogs. If the recipient "looks" worried (watch the ears, tail, eyes, pupils, and**

**general body stature), then intervention may be needed** unless the situation changes on its own quickly (e.g. the bullier gets distracted by another dog). I also watch for piloerection. Piloerection is generally NOT seen when two dogs are playing and are completely comfortable with each other. When piloerection occurs, I start watching more vigilantly to see if I need to step in. When a dog goes at another dog \*very\* fast, I get worried especially if there is also a lot of body slamming occurring. The general line of the dog's body (e.g. if the dog's body is in a straight line and the head, neck, shoulders and topline are all level) this may mean more belligerence than play.

*When my dog approaches another, she holds her back in a straight line, bends all four legs slightly and slowly move forward towards the approaching dog, it looks like she is stalking the other dog. Is this a sign of uncertainty? Fear? Or potential aggression? She does this even with dogs she knows - it is not until she is nose to nose with the other dog that she seems to relax.*

Most likely this is some level of apprehension. Dogs often approach other dogs slightly on the defensive until they know how the other dog is going to react. Play bows are often used to defuse tension.

### **Use of pharmaceuticals to control behavior**

*Do you advocate the use of drugs such as Prozac or Clomicalm to control aggression or anxiety issues in dogs?*

Yes, in certain cases. Drugs are neither warranted nor appropriate for every case. Drug therapy is most useful when the animal exhibits high levels of anxiety, is reactive, and/or has impulse control issues. Drugs are also warranted for true compulsive disorders and phobias.

*I have been told anecdotally that such drugs don't work on Portuguese Water Dogs.*

This is hogwash. There are no breed limitations for drug use. Drug efficacy is dependent more on the individual animal.

*One last potentially loaded question- when is it appropriate to consider euthanasia for dogs exhibiting aggressive behavior?*

Euthanasia is appropriate to discuss under the following situations:

- 1) the dog poses a serious risk of injury to a human
- 2) the dog poses a serious risk of injury to another animal and rehoming is not an option
- 3) the dog's welfare is significantly compromised and the situation is not amenable to rehabilitation (could be for many reasons related and unrelated to the actual dog)

Sometimes the perceived risk to humans and animals is different from the actual risk, so euthanasia should not be contemplated without educated input.

*I have heard of vets that prescribe Benadryl for a dog that is too hyped up around the house and wonder what others think of this practice.*

Benadryl's effects are from its sedative properties (as many antihistamines make you sleepy). This is ok for once and a while, but it's not really a long term solution to the problem.

*In an earlier question I asked about using medications for behavioral issues you indicated medications were appropriate for certain conditions. Aggression was not one of them. I'm familiar with using high doses (as compared to humans) of Prozac to treat aggression in dogs. Is the use of Prozac overrated or an ineffective solution?*

Aggression was actually folded into the recommendations, i.e. if the aggression is anxiety related, or the dog is impulsive or reactive (and aggressive) then medication may be warranted. But not all aggression warrants medication. For example, I do not medicate dogs showing predatory aggression.

### **Running in circles**

*Some advice on what to do with a dog that continues to run in circles, even after lots of exercise. This dog will also jump on my back? Could she suffer from some kind of anxiety disorder and if so what can I do about it?*

**I would in part wonder what kind of job your dog has.** This is a stereotypic behavior and these behaviors usually show up for one or more of the following reasons: 1) Insufficient environmental stimulation; 2) insufficient physical stimulation; 3) excessive confinement; 4) social conflict/anxiety; 5) frustration; and 6) neurologic disease.

*I had a bitch that lived with me for a number of years who would do circles -always clockwise. I originally attributed it to the fact that she was kennel raised until 8 months old. What I found most interesting is that I got a call from a family who has one of this bitch's puppies. They asked "what is with the circles?" (always clockwise). This was a puppy that left at 8 weeks, was never kenneled and had limited opportunity to observe mom performing the behavior. I wonder if they would go anti-clockwise if they lived "down-under".*

LOL! Stereotypes do have a strong genetic component. This is why we see certain compulsive disorders more in certain breeds than others (e.g. GSDs tail chase, Schnauzers hind end check, Dobe's flank suck and get lick granulomas)

*If human toddlers exhibit this behavior over and over again always running in circles in the same direction, one of the suspected disorders is "Sensory Integration Disorder (SID)." My question: Do you think dogs who exhibit this behavior could have a similar issue?*

Good question. I am not familiar with this disorder in people and will have to do some research on it. I would suppose it is possible. When these children are described as "sensitive" what type of sensitivity are they referring to? Is this a brain filtering issue (like with autistics), a peripheral sensory perception? Something else?

### **Breeding, PWD temperament, and matching puppies to owners**

*Many if not most of the issues that seem to be coming up today can be traced to inappropriate matching of dog to owner.*

This is very true. But it is also important to remember that there is more variation between individuals of a breed than there is between breeds. Picking a puppy (or any animal) is always a bit of a crapshoot. You can never be fully sure what you will end up with.

*How do we lessen the "crap shoot" or at least put the odds more in favor of success?*

No one has a really good answer for this yet. This was the idea behind puppy aptitude testing. The problem with PATs is that they only reflect the puppy's behavior at the time the test was done. They are not predictive of adult behavior. Ditto for performance tests.

The best we can do now is look at generalizations. IN general, labs like water, are boisterous, dig a lot, and like to retrieve, e.g. So look at breed trends. Also look at familial trends. Different qualities show up more frequently in different lines of dogs -- just like with health issues. Some lines of PWDs are probably mellower than others. Some show more predatory behavior and some are more prone to dog aggression issues, etc. Of course, breeders have to be honest with potential puppy buyers. It does not matter how much a prospective owner researches a breed or puppy, if the breeder is not honest in their information, then bad things are going to happen. I have tons of clients that ended up with inappropriate dogs not because of their mistakes, but because they got shafted by an irresponsible breeder. Even "good" breeders don't want to admit that their lines may have a flaw, but if we want to keep puppies in homes, you had better be honest about your puppies' potential flaws.

Look at the puppy's socialization history while it's at the breeder. How many of you actually take each puppy out individually and take it for a car ride or walk around the block? How many puppies have even left their home before being sold? Too few usually. I worry about breeders that are so worried about disease that they essentially isolate puppies until they have vaccinations. These pups miss huge socialization opportunities.

I also pay a lot more attention to pre- and post-natal environment now that I know more about the effects of gestational stress on development.

*Can you speak more to this topic and/or point the direction to where more information can be found?*

This topic has been studied most in depth in rodents and primates (and humans). I have some references below. The gist is that maternal stress from malnutrition, disease, restraint, drugs/toxins, etc can permanently alter the stress response system of the fetuses. Kittens born to malnourished mothers have learning disabilities, increased predisposition to aggression and other problems. Queens that become infected with panleukopenia virus produce kittens with cerebellar undergrowth. This is permanent. This is one reason why good human moms pay close attention to what they eat, drink, the exercise level, etc. It all affects the development of the fetuses.

I'm convinced my own dog is reactive because her mother had a foreign body surgery when she was 7 weeks pregnant. The surgery, illness, and the drugs used during the problem may have altered her stress response system. This was compounded by her somewhat abrupt transition from a very quiet environment at the breeder's to my rather active and busy schedule.

*How about the post-natal? What can we do as breeders during the pups' very early developmental periods to lay a good foundation?*

Most good breeders already do attend to the physical health of the bitch and this is important. It is also important to attend to her mental health over the long term (her lifespan) and the short term (gestation and lactation).

If something happens to the bitch during gestation, realize that this may make the puppies more susceptible to "Trauma". That is, potentially scary things that a normal puppy might take in stride (e.g. accidentally getting scared by a visiting person), may actually cause some significant long term problems in a prenatally stressed puppy. Environmental enrichment is proven to increase behavioral adaptability in every species in which it has been studied. So make the puppy area variable in terms of gradually exposing the puppies to sounds, odors, sights and athletic opportunities. One "mistake" I see in some litters is removing the bitch from the puppies too soon. Many times as soon as the pups are eating the bitch is separated from them. These puppies need contact with their mother until they leave the home. She has important lessons to teach them. If she is aggressive to the pups, then she should be separated (and not bred again). (Maternal behavior is highly heritable in most species.)

Keep the puppies until they are at least 8 weeks of age, but realize that YOU, as a breeder, must start their socialization experience.

*We know we need to better describe the intensity of our breed. We know that many dog buyers are unrealistic about what a dog is, let alone what a PWD is.*

**You also need to describe it in such a way that the prospective owner actually understands the significance of what you mean.** How will these traits impact their life? What will it mean in terms of money, time, and restrictions to their regular routine? What does it mean in terms of having a future family (human ones)?

*So, what advice do you have for better explanations of our breed (i.e., how do we describe "relentless piranha puppy")?*

This means talking about what mouthing is. If this is serious issue, perhaps it's something that needs to be addressed in a breeding program. Tell owners how this will impact them. Show them your own scars. ;-)

Encourage owners to get puppies into puppy class IMMEDIATELY. Too many owners think puppies should be born well behaved or they think pups will just "grow out" of inappropriate behavior.

*Better analysis of the tendencies of individual puppies (or conversely, how to work with tendencies that we see in order to avoid extremes)?*

Pay more attention to the dogs in the middle especially when evaluating your breeding program. Recognize that even the best breeder is going to pop out some lemons. What happens to these pups? Where do they go and who is responsible for them? Breeders should stop blaming puppy owners when things go wrong. YOU sold them the puppy. Be willing to step in and help. But also be sure to educate owners on what a huge responsibility having a puppy is. Don't let the buyer determine whether they should have a PWD. That should be the seller's job.

*Often we don't speak the same language, frustration occurs and the relationship breaks down. Both breeders and pet owners are guilty and often both go on the defensive because of assumptions we both make. If "getting through" about real PWD behavior to puppy buyers is such an issue then it needs to be addressed in better ways than it is now. I would also argue that not all puppy buyers listen to their breeders.*

Excellent observations. Truly no matter how much you try to communicate sometimes people only hear what they want to hear. Or they think the typical "rules" don't apply to them. This is the broken down rescue syndrome -- "even though he's mauling his current owner, he will not do this to me if I just love him enough"

*Puppies often display adverse behaviors that the owners have taught them – only they don't realize they have taught it! From the Breeders point of view it's frustrating as the breeder always gets blamed!*

Well I certainly don't always blame the breeder. I've been very lucky to have some clients whose breeder actually shows up to the consult with them so the breeder can learn more about what's happening. Now *\*those\** are great breeders!

Sometimes people do really stupid things to dogs, usually out of ignorance, often from frustration. Many puppy owners also take so much advice from arm chair experts that the poor puppy is subjected to so many interventions it's no wonder it's screwed up. But admittedly I've also seen my share of breeders that put all the blame on the puppy owner.

*Nature vs. Nurture. BOTH are at work. Can we ever really separate them?*

No you cannot separate them. There are certain situations where one influence has more hold than another but they interact with each other in an intricate manner. What happens to you (nurture) determines to some degree which genes are turned on and off and when. These genetic responses then influence how you respond to the environment, and so on and so on.

*Do you think that many behavior issues are due to poor puppy socialization early on? I feel that a puppy & dog that has been positively exposed to many different experiences, environments and settings, makes for a confident adult dog. How can we impress upon puppy owners, the importance of early and ongoing socialization, training, etc., to make their puppy a good representative of our breed? Can you recommend any socialization materials or books?*

Yes, socialization is crucial for a puppy especially any puppy that comes from a breed or line that tends to be "suspicious" (e.g. many guarding breeds). Puppy owners need to know exactly what socialization is and they need to be given *\*specifics\** on how to do it properly. Most owners think living with another dogs or seeing dogs on walks means their dog was socialized to dogs. But this is sooo not true.

See my handout called Socialization in Puppies.

*What is your feeling on temperament testing puppies? Is there one test you feel is more accurate at measuring behavior?*

PAT tests are fine for evaluating a puppy's behavior at THAT moment in time but there are currently no tests that have shown predictability for *\*adult\** behavior.

*Can exposing a sound sensitive puppy to repetition of positive experiences make them less anxious and will they always be sound sensitive?*

Yes exposure can help to some degree. If the dog has an exaggerated startle response, this will be permanent – it's how the dog is made. But if the dog is fearful of sounds then counter conditioning and careful exposure can reduce this.

*So I am going to cast a vote that our dogs and temperament are mostly not the problem...that puppy owners need better training and education on training.*

Yes, a lack of training or lack of effective training and upbringing is definitely a big part of the problem. But there are also plenty of dogs out there that have owners that have done everything "right" and their dogs still have issues, sometimes very serious ones.

One of my clients brought me a Sheltie for dog aggression. She is an experienced agility competitor. Her daughter is the dog's primary handler and the girl is a *\*very\** good handler/trainer. This dog was bonkers and reactive. He

would even attack the mailbox when they went down to get the mail. The owner now has his half sister and she is pretty much the same way. This is a breeding problem not a training problem.

### **Depression in dogs**

*I believe dogs can temporarily be depressed at the loss of a favorite friend or a significant change in environment. They seem to adapt and move on. However, just as humans can have a chemical imbalance that requires long term medication for depression, can dogs be more prone to depression – i.e. have chronic depression?*

I believe they can. This has not been scientifically proven in dogs, but we see enough other "mental issues" that are common between dogs and humans and their brains are similar enough that I believe dogs suffer from their own version of depression. In some cases it is caused by similar things (environmental stressors and a feeling of chronic lack of control over their environment).

*Has any study on the physical aspects of autism (brain chemistry) ever been done in dogs?*

There are a variety of human disorders that dogs could have (schizophrenia, autism, delusions, and hallucinations) but we have no way to test for them. Since many of these are based on perceptual changes or changes in thought processes, we can't test or "ask" the dog if they had a visual hallucination. Even in humans these disorders are not well defined such that we can reliably test humans (e.g. special brain chemistry tests) so we certainly are unable to do them in animals.

I personally believe that dogs have hallucinations and probably some version of autism, but I can't prove it.

*I'm worried about the reaction of my younger dog when the older one dies ....what's the best way to deal with the loss for him?*

There's no perfect answer for this. One thing to do for sure is to make sure that the dogs cope just as well when they are separated as when they are together. If the dog has a strong relationship with you and the dog does not get separation distress when separated from the other dog, then your dog will likely cope fine. There may be some "grief" or depression, but if you keep the dog's routine as normal as possible, then they usually bounce back pretty quickly.

### **Poisoned cues and training issues**

*Could Dr. Haug explain the "poisoned cue" and how it happens?*

Poisoned cues can be generated in slightly different ways but always by the same process. This concept (and others) is why it really IS important to understand scientific learning theory. This is a complicated topic but I will try to give the short version (but it still won't be really short).

Poisoned cues come from an interaction between classical conditioning (CC) and operant conditioning (OC).

CC is the conditioning of reflexes and emotions -- responses that the animal does not voluntarily control -- eye blink, salivation, changes in heart rate, etc. OC is the conditioning of voluntary responses -- sit, down, come, etc.

Any associations that a dog makes that do not require a specific response from the dog occurs via CC. Your dog learns about doorbells by CC -- doorbell rings and people come in. This sequence is predictable and occurs no matter what the dog is doing at the time. When you pair a cue word with a behavior i.e. the word "sit" with the dog's action of sitting, the dog learns this association by classical conditioning. (the act of learning to sit happens separately and is conditioned by the consequence the dog gets for sitting or not sitting) Think of cats and can openers, dogs and cheese wrappers, dogs and hearing the biscuit can open -- all of these associations occur by classical conditioning.

When you teach a dog to sit in response to the word "sit" the dog makes three associations:

- 1) between the word and the action
- 2) between the action and the consequence (e.g. getting a treat)
- 3) between the word and the consequence

This means that the dog learns that if he sits in response to the word, he gets a treat. He learns that the word "sit" predicts the opportunity to earn a treat.

Treats make dogs "happy"; this means that anything that predicts a treat makes the dog "happy". These stimuli become conditioned reinforcers --this is the premise behind clickers. Clickers predict food so clickers themselves become rewarding to the dog as long as the association between the click and the food remains consistent.

When you train with positive reinforcement, when the dog hears the word "sit" the dog gets "happy" because the dog knows the word sit predicts the opportunity for food.

If, however, you train the sit with compulsion (negative reinforcement and punishment) -- e.g. you say sit and then pull up on a choke collar until the dog sits, then the word "sit" predicts something that the dog does not like -- i.e. getting "choked" (I use this term loosely). This cue has now become poisoned because the word "sit" evokes fear and negative emotions in the dog. The dog will, if given the opportunity, avoid the cue in order to avoid the potential consequence that follows it.

The kicker is that classical conditioning is more powerful than operant conditioning. When a classically conditioned response competes with an operantly conditioned response, the classically conditioned response will win.

Resolving behavior problems is A LOT about manipulating the dog's emotions. This is **why the way a dog was trained can make a big difference in how easy it is to control certain problems.**

*As a water work instructor, I have seen what I think is an extension or chaining of this negative association in an unintended learning. I frequently see dogs that had good solid "jump from boat" behaviors, but then "something" happened. Sometimes the handler does not have a good way of getting the dog back on the boat, or the dog got hit by the boat, etc. What happens is that the dog refuses to even jump off the boat in the first place because it knows that inevitably leads to having to approach the boat after the task is completed. When the handler learns a good boarding technique, or the dog is gradually helped to reaffirm a positive association with the boat (using a clicker in shallow water and just being rewarded for touching the boat, then for paws on the boat, then for paws on the platform, etc.), the jump performance returned gloriously, even though we didn't work on jumping at all.*

This happens in search dog work too. If a dog's alert cue (e.g. the sit) was trained with compulsion (e.g. collar corrections or a shock collar), the dog may not alert on the odor even when the dog knows where it is. The dog's search performance may be great but the dog knows that when it finds the source, the alert cue will be given and the dog may be corrected. This can then destroy the dog's positive association with the source odor and then poison the dog's search cue as well. You end up with a dog that won't search, not because it doesn't like to search but because of the bad association with the alert behavior/cue.

*You have made a complex subject very easy to understand. It looks like there is evidence to dispute the "pop" then treat school of dog training. Let's hope it trickles down.*

I'm glad you brought this up. There are two sides to this theory. First is the poisoned cue idea.

The second is that you can take a mild aversive and with careful classical conditioning turn them into conditioned reinforcers (CR). This means if you do enough pop-treat, then the dog may start to see the pop as a positive

reinforcement -- a reward. These pops are generally given to the dog when the dog is doing a behavior you want to change, e.g. lagging. If your pops are now CRs, and you pop when the dog lags, you are actually rewarding lagging!

*What are the hallmarks of a good obedience class?*

In a nutshell, it's a class where the needs of the \*owners\* are being met, not the needs of the instructor. It is also that the instructor is actually able to effectively convey the information to the owners in a fashion that they understand and so that they can actually implement the techniques on their own at home.

Of course the information has to be scientifically sound, not based on conjecture and what someone's grandfather twice removed said.

Experience is important but experience alone tells me nothing about whether someone is a good trainer. I know plenty of trainers that have been training for decades and their training reflects the decade at which they started. ;-)

I also know some trainers that have only been at it a few years and they are excellent.

*I was told or read somewhere or just observed that dogs are pretty quiet...unless there is some reason to bark, etc. A calm quiet secure dog is very basically...calm quiet and secure and its owner usually is too. Do you think we yammer too much AT our dogs? Are we talking too much?*

Yes we do, but more importantly we tend to yak at them when we should not and then not say anything to them when we should! I have learned to be particularly quiet and selective with my voice when my dog is trying to learn something. The more I talk to the dog, the more I distract the dog or make the dog feel pressured. This hampers learning. During training I only use my voice to mark the "warmer" and "hot" moments of the dog's progress.

Many owners tend to yell and grouse at the dog when they are not figuring things out and then forget to tell the dog when it's doing something right. The more you chatter to the dog in any situation, the more the dog will filter you out as unimportant background noise.

### **Modifying a "Tarzan" greeting style**

*Do you have any advice on modifying a "Tarzan" style off leash greeting in a 2-3 year old? I'm referring to a grumbly-growly, mouthy, wrestly, rough and tumble, "bust me loose" play style. He is not allowed to greet other dogs on leash but is perfectly polite even at the close distance of a foot or two. I would like to let him meet new dogs as part of his lifelong socialization but he can be overwhelming so I don't.*

There are actually two parts here: the dog's greeting style and the play style. It's difficult to modify a dog's play style but you can temper it some by interrupting the dog whenever he gets too rough (teach an "easy" cue to warn the dog that play is about to be paused).

If the dog's greeting style is rough, then teach the dog to greet other dogs in a sit or down position. Do not release the dog unless he is calm, and then be prepared to interrupt if he gets too rough too soon. Also, use a bridge (clicker) to mark more acceptable play behaviors.

*Do I need to execute a time out every time I use the word "easy"? I guess that would be considered a "No Reward Marker", yes?*

Yes, this is a NRM. If the dog is actually responding to the "easy" cue then you don't need to follow it up with the time out, but you do need to reward the dog for responding. If the dog is not responding, then go back to using the time out consistently.

*I LOVE the idea of using a clicker for marking acceptable play behavior. Do you just shape that or put it on cue?*

You don't have to. You can do some of both. Use the clicker in conjunction with the "easy" cue to reward response

to that cue and then also use the clicker to randomly mark play behaviors that you find particularly appealing or appropriate. When marking play behaviors with the clicker though, you do have to be careful that you really understand what the dog is signaling so you don't accidentally reinforce something belligerent!

### **"High Drive" PWD temperament and behavior**

*Our working breed can be very high-drive. What is your opinion about the correlation between high-drive temperament and the development of aggressive behaviors? If you believe there is a connection, how do we explain this potential to puppy buyers about this without unduly scaring them?*

There is some correlation although not with all types of aggression. Because arousal is linked with aggression, the two are connected. The more aroused the dog is, the easier it is to push the dog over its aggression threshold. This is particularly true for predatory aggression and offensive aggressions (e.g. territorial behavior). This may not apply to PURE fear aggression, but if the animal is also assertive and fearful, then it will apply. This is one reason that so many pit bulls get into trouble -- they are easily aroused and they get there FAST.

**Frankly, scaring your puppy owners a little regarding this might not be a bad thing. It is important that they realize that controlling arousal in a high drive animal is critical.**

*I like the idea of using the phrase "easily aroused" rather than "high drive" or "alert" to describe our breed (if it is correct) because it is a bit more of a "wake up, people!" kind of phrase. At the same time, I think that breeding for more and more drive sometimes is confused with arousal and with energy level.*

Except that arousal and alertness are not necessarily the same. Alertness can have a calmness to it, whereas arousal often does not.

*Some say the breed has become 'soft' and we shouldn't be breeding for that 'pet' home.*

This is a good point. It has happened to Dobermans (one reason you see so few doing law enforcement work these days). BUT, the problem is that most puppies WILL go into pet homes. If you breed for true type, then what do you do with all those "hard" high drive dogs? Who is responsible for them when a buyer finds out they cannot handle the dog's behavior?

I think a most difficult issue for a breeder is finding out how to balance what the dog should be with where the dog is going to end up. I'm not sure there is a good answer to this.

*Could you explain more about the differences and connections between drive, arousal, and motivation?*

**"Drive" is a term that apparently was made up by dog people. ;-)** Drive and motivation are essentially the same thing: food motivation, prey drive/motivation to hunt prey etc. Motivation can change with the circumstances: you have less motivation for food right after you have eaten. So on dog terms, people tend to use "drive" as a temperamental characteristic.

Arousal is something different but it is linked to the others to some degree. Arousal is not a behavioral trait, it is a behavioral \*state\* -- it fluctuates with the situation. In general, the more motivated, or driven, a dog is, the more aroused the dog may become. But as someone mentioned with the BC example, high drive does not always mean excessive arousal.

Energy is something else entirely. **Energy will increase with arousal and with drive typically, but excessive energy can also occur somewhat independently** as someone mentioned. Purposeless energy is what people generally call hyperactivity. Dogs that are in motion all the time, even without specific motivation, are not useful nor necessarily normal. It is biological maladaptive to bleed your energy into purposeless activity.

This is a problem we are seeing on Labradoodles and Goldendoodles. Someone thought they'd get the best of both dogs for working purposes but so many of these dogs are spastic and hyperactive, they make terrible family pets.

*I've seen lots of PWDs exhibit high energy; frenetic energy - and when pushed over the top, they can easily lash out at something they see or are near, as they're clearly not in control of themselves at that point. I don't define this as high drive gone awry. How is that handled?*

This is arousal! In the long term, you deal with it by better breeding. These dogs are destined for the shelter if they start out in a pet home. They are difficult to live with, more difficult to train, and \*sometimes\* more dangerous.

In the short term, you address it by spending a lot of time teaching impulse control exercises, relaxation exercises, and learning to manage the dogs vigilantly. Also, ensuring that the dog is getting \*constructive\* mental and physical exercise to channel the energy.

*How do we "temperament test" a potential breeding pair?*

This in part may mean not breeding to a dog that has not had training and demonstrated the ability to effectively perform some function.

*How much of that high energy (in control or not) is simply lack of learning to control their emotions and responses? I don't think many people realize that you can take a dog with lots of energy, lots of brain power, and spend the time to train them (the biggy here), and end up with a dog who can relax and be a couch potato much of the time, as long as he or she is given the outlet to work and use that energy and focus.*

Very true. **Even a "normal" dog may behave impulsively and frenetically if the animal's needs are not met (in terms of mental and physical stimulation.) So is it a matter of the dog not knowing how to control itself or truly being \*unable\* to do so (that latter dog suffering from a true impulsivity problem). And because many of these dogs don't get the training they need, you then don't know if it's a matter of doesn't or can't. This means that many dogs that truly can't are being bred when they should not be.**

*You want a calm, intensive dog who has the ability to concentrate with "focused" energy not on frantically running around looking for something to do. .... A properly high drive working dog is one who has an "off" switch where the aroused, the frantic dog does not have the ability to turn itself off.*

Exactly!

*I think that sometimes folks tend to confuse biddability with "softness," so, Dr. H., can you give us some perspective on the difference between the two?*

These are obviously not the same. **Biddability is really about responsiveness which is really about training. Responsiveness will be influenced by the sociability of the dog as well as the ease of motivating the dog. I know plenty of soft dogs that are not "biddable" mainly because inappropriate training techniques have been used.** Or the dogs are so fearful in general that they succumb to learned helplessness.

*Outlets for energy that are conducive to producing a more focused dog are somewhat under our control, are they not?*

Exercise is completely under the owner's control. Too many dog owners think a walk around the block or a few laps in the backyard constitute exercise. While these are better than nothing, it barely puts a dent in the needs of a working dog. (This is one area where I truly DO agree with Cesar Milan!) While most of us can't spend 6 hours a day in the mountains and rollerblading, **if we want to have dogs we have to find a way to get AT LEAST 30 minutes of AEROBIC exercise into our dogs daily.**

*Can you recommend some specific exercises that give sufficient exercise during physical immaturity (in this breed, that's around the first 18 months)?*

**The best exercise for a dog, especially a young one is what Dr. Quentin LaHam called broken field running -- taking the dog out to a safe area and turning the dog loose. This allows the DOG to modulate the pace, intensity, and duration of the exercise.** It allows the dog to adapt and control its ability over the ground without fear of being hampered by a leash or the owner. I see lots of dogs going for \*drags\* around the neighborhoods. While it is commendable that people take their dogs out, they also need to learn to observe the dog to see if the dog is enjoying itself or if the dog is being pushed past its limits.

*It seems to me that the "responsiveness to humans" is primarily socialization/nurture, and can be greatly influenced by early socialization*

While socialization is definitely critical for this, sociability to humans has is significantly influenced by genetics (think about breeds that are labeled "independent" or "aloof").

*Does the onset of hormones trigger more "self-will" in dogs or is it just that at the same time the puppy goes through a huge change in personality?*

I think self-will is less related to hormones and more related to brain development and changes in social behavior based on increasing maturity.

*How would an expert like Dr. Haug interpret our standard's verbiage regarding temperament: "Spirited, yet obedient, loyal, alert, highly intelligent. An animal of spirited disposition, self-willed, brave, and very resistant to fatigue. A dog of exceptional intelligence and a loyal companion, it obeys its master with facility and apparent pleasure. It is obedient with those who look after it or with those for whom it works". It seems like one person's perception of "spirited" could be quite different from another's... And how are we defining self-willed?*

**This is one problem with breed standards. It puts the onus of "obedience" on the dog when obedience is ALL about the trainer. Ditto for obeying with "pleasure". Whether the dog obeys with pleasure depends entirely on the trainer.**

**From a behaviorism perspective, we would never use the word "spirited." This term is purely subjective and I could not give you a professional interpretation, only a personal one. Ditto for self-willed. Most people would probably interpret this to mean assertive or even stubborn. But stubbornness goes back to obedience which goes back to the trainer, not the dog.**

**And what does "loyal" mean? Loyalty is really a human construct, so it doesn't even apply to animals. These are the definitions of loyalty: unswerving in allegiance, as a: faithful in allegiance to one's lawful sovereign or government. b: faithful to a private person to whom fidelity is due. c: faithful to a cause, ideal, custom, institution, or product.**

**All of these descriptions center around dogs as beings that should love and obey us without fail \*just because\*. This is the Hollywood version of dogs and, folks, it does not exist!**

### **Diseases that present as aggression or influence behavior**

*Are there any diseases that present themselves with signs of aggression that we should look out for?*

There are many diseases that can \*influence\* the appearance of aggression and a few that can be a sole cause.

Thyroid disease rarely can be a sole cause of aggression, but it also can exacerbate or sometimes mask aggression. Neurologic disease (e.g. brain tumor, hydrocephalus, meningitis) can cause or affect aggression. Any condition which causes the dog pain. Liver shunts can produce aberrant behavior, including aggression. Cancer.

*Would you normally require blood work, etc., before assuming an aggression problem is behavioral?*

It depends on the presentation of the problem. Sometimes it's pretty obvious that it IS behavioral. In some cases it's grey in that there could be medication condition contributing. I look strongly for medical issues particularly when:

- 1) the behavior is of sudden onset especially in an adult or elderly animal
- 2) the behavior changes suddenly in frequency or intensity
- 3) the behavior appear to be truly unpredictable and random
- 4) the animal was recently started on medication in conjunction with the onset or change in the behavior
- 5) the behavior appears when the animal is very very young (e.g. 5-6 weeks of age)

*Would you briefly outline the steps a breeder should recommend to a dog owner regarding a dog that presents with obvious signs of aggression?*

**Avoid putting the dog in situations that trigger the behavior and then seek professional help!**

*How do diseases like Addison's or Cushing's affect behavior? Or things like chronic pain from arthritis, or other chronic health problems?*

Disease states will always affect behavior to some degree (that's how you know your dog was sick to begin with!). How much depends on the dog's individual temperament, genetics, and how severe the disease is, in addition to what medications that animal is taking. How the owner alters his/her behavior in response to the dog's illness will also affect the dog's behavior.

The behavioral response to disease is so highly variable that there is not a lot that can be stated concretely. We do know that Cushing's disease and exogenous administration of corticosteroids can induce agitation and anxiety in dogs, sometimes aggression as well. Arthritis can make dogs grouchy or increase the degree of pain-induced aggression. Dermatological problems, especially allergic disease, seem to frequently deteriorate a dog's behavior and tolerance for certain interactions.

### **Developmental fear periods**

*Could you provide your thoughts and if fear periods are present, how that should impact our actions of puppy development and placement activities?*

Fear periods are generally considered to be around 8-10 weeks of age and then another one that starts somewhere in the 6-8 months of age range. I admit that I do not clinically see a lot of issue with the 8 wk old one, however, I still try to avoid unnecessary trauma at this time. One of the reasons that this 8 week old period may not "stand out" is because ALL puppies undergo trauma around this time. They all start vaccinations, begin to get visitors, and perhaps get placed into a new home. Most have also been separated from their mothers. After 10-12 weeks of age,



puppies show more neophobia so they are more cautious about approaching new things. This means socialization experiences must be highly controlled to prevent the puppy from having a negative experience. Ditto for the 6 month period. Puppies often "relapse" in socialization and "bravery" at this time. Owners need to be patient and carefully continue socialization experiences.

### **Management of car travel**

*I would like to get some feedback on a PWD who just plain does not like the car no matter what adjustments are made, and who gradually began this attitude during the 6-8 month period as a pup. I have tried OTC herbal products, but I wonder if this would be a type of problem that might be mediated by prescription drugs.*  
 Rx drugs may certainly help with this problem. Is this an excitement/arousal issue or a true anxiety about car rides? In some cases car sickness presents like an anxiety problem because not all car sick dogs actually vomit.

The Dog Appeasing Pheromone spray or collar helps many dogs. Counter conditioning can also help by gradually working the dog through the negative emotional association. I've also heard of cases where stray electricity or static was a problem. I don't know enough about electricity to know exactly how that works though. There is also a product called a Calming Cap that is useful for some dogs during car rides.

*I have read that our dogs have an inner ear problem/immaturity (sorry I am not quoting from the book) that doesn't sort itself out until around a year old.*

I can pretty much assure you that this isn't true. If your dog had an inner ear problem, he would have problems with balance and vertigo all the time, not just in the car. But, if there is some reference somewhere to show that PWDs do have some funky issue with this, I would love to be directed to it.

### **Mounting behavior as dominance?**

*Most dog people (trainers, behaviorists, breeders, owners) I talk to all seem to state/believe that all humping behavior is always "dominance" related, even humping of inanimate objects such as beds, rugs, tubs, etc.; that it can't possibly be sexual.*

Good question. Mounting behavior can have social or sexual connotations. Sometimes mounting is just related to arousal/excitement.

*When should humping be considered "dominant behavior"? When is it not? Does this notion of "humping = dominance" fall into the antiquated knowledge bin?*

Certainly if the animal is humping an inanimate object, I think it would be ludicrous to consider that dominance behavior. I would hope our dogs are not so stupid as to try to dominate a footstool or sofa cushion. ;-)

Mounting IS sometimes about "dominance" or testing social boundaries. There are typically other signals occurring between the two individuals that indicate this. Admittedly sometimes it is difficult to determine how much a particular mounting episode is from arousal and how much is social/dominance. Keep in mind too that mounting occurs in puppies and some older dogs in the context of play. This is normal and does not mean the 5 week old puppy is trying to dominate its mother's head.

Sometimes the meaning of mounting can be construed from the recipient's reaction. In social mounting, the recipient often objects to this, sometimes strenuously if there is instability to their relationship or it is a younger dog being "rude" to an older dog.

I don't generally get too worried about mounting behavior but I do interrupt it (calmly) in most cases because I don't want it to escalate into something more serious.

*My PWD loves all dogs and likes to play but can be easily frightened by more assertive dogs. He loves puppies and small dogs, plays really well with them, but as soon as feels he has the upper hand he moves into a humping display. If the dog tells him off, he immediately reverses into scared puppy and then starts all over again.*  
 The mounting in this case is probably related to arousal and "insecurity". He is asserting himself somewhat but become easily scared if anyone calls his bluff. Do not let him play with assertive dogs. It doesn't do him any good

nor the other dogs. If he starts to mount a dog, I would just calmly interrupt him. If the other dog does tell him off and he gets nervous, walk away and call him away from the situation.

**Vocalization**

*I have one bitch that whenever I talk to her or correct her, will stand in front of me wagging her butt and tail, and at the same time give me this Woo Woo Woo talk. Is she trying to talk to me or is she trying to defy what I am saying? I have thought it to be her way of trying to communicate with me.*

She is definitely trying to communicate with you.

Some dogs bark (or woo woo) out of frustration (dog is excited and you are taking too long!) This may then get rewarded (i.e. you put the food down). Sometimes vocalization occurs as a superstitious behavior -- the dog actually thinks you want the vocalization as part of the behavior even though that was not your intention. Usually these both can be cleaned up with proper training.