



Dog Talk Weekly

Where we talk about dogs, share stories, solve problems

Issue 10.10.1 – October 16, 2010

Welcome back to another issue of Dog Talk Weekly. I'm so excited, you'd think I was getting the new puppy, but in actuality, it's my neighbor. Nothing perks you up faster than meeting a new arrival, does it? Read my personal story on this topic in this issue.

Enjoy!

Sylvia

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## Vaccinations Can Harm Your Dog

It makes sense that giving your dog vaccinations can be harmful, but you don't often think about it. You're mainly focused on protecting your dog from dangerous illnesses than can take his or her life, diseases like rabies and heartworm.

We trust our veterinarians to do the right thing when prescribing these vaccines and expect them to prescribe only those that our dogs really need. Sadly, some vets don't. They see the money and figure giving shots is a quick and easy way to make a profit. After all, they only have to pull out the syringe, load it up, and give it to your dog. It takes less than 30 seconds.

In some cases, they don't even give the dog a physical first to make sure he or she is not sick. They might do a quick once-over and if the dogs show no symptoms (and even if they do), they give them the shot.

Keep in mind that if your dog is already ill, the shot can further weaken his or her system.

What can you do?

Fortunately, there are some things you can do, starting with educating yourself.

Not all shots are required, and not as often as is prescribed. They do not have to be given every single year. In fact, they have new vaccines out now that only need to be repeated every 2 years.

Do your homework. You can research online to find sites that explain the various shots and whether or not you are in an area that requires them. For instance, in the UK, rabies does not exist (last time I heard), so there's no need to give dogs a rabies shot if you live there. If you plan to visit with your dog, that's a different story. Your dog will have to be quarantined to prevent him or her from bringing the disease into the country.

Even if you live in North America there are some areas that do not require certain vaccines because your dog is not at risk there. Lyme disease is a problem in many areas, but not all. It's not as big a concern in Canada as it is in the U.S., for example. It also depends on your dog's habitat and environment.

This disease is most common where dogs roam in fields of tall grass. If your dog doesn't step far off the sidewalk in your neighborhood, it's much less likely he will contract this disease. It is transmitted through the bite of ticks, so keeping out of the tall grass will be a huge deterrent.

Finally, talk to your veterinarian about the vaccines he or she recommends. Ask about the benefits, risks and side effects. Just because your vet recommends a shot, doesn't mean your dog must have it.

## **Personal Story: My Neighbor's New Arrival**

As I said at the beginning, I'm really excited that my new neighbor is about to welcome his first dog into his home. It's a German Shepherd that is about 8 weeks old. Last week, he went to choose the exact puppy from a litter of three.

The first thing he asked me when he returned was if I would allow my Tyler to teach his puppy what he knows. I'm actually quite pleased that he holds such high esteem for my dog.

He wants all of Tyler's good habits to rub off on his puppy.

Well, fortunately Tyler was well socialized when I got him and was quite easy-going with other dogs and people. This is the type of dog my neighbor wants. One with a great personality and that likes to socialize.

As you know, socialization is one of the first lessons every puppy must pass. If kept isolated, it will more likely to become aggressive and defensive around his owner's family, food, toys and any number of other things. This is never a good thing and has caused too many dogs to be put down for aggressive behavior.

Tyler is anything but aggressive. He is ecstatic whenever he sees my neighbor, other people on the street, or my other neighbor's Chihuahua. He just wants to play, especially with Joey. That's the Chihuahua.

This weekend, Joey and his owner was visiting with my neighbor while they ate hamburgers and talked. Being the instigator that he is, Joey would race up and down and bark at Tyler. But Tyler was restrained behind my fence. He raced up and down, his tail raised high and wagging, his ears pointed forward and a playful expression on his face.

It should be quite interesting to see how he behaves around the new puppy. His owner is still trying to figure out a name for him. Since he's Iranian, I asked if he was going to give it a name I couldn't pronounce. He laughed and said, no, it'll be something short and easy.

When he gets the puppy, I'll take a picture and put it up on my blog for you to submit your name suggestions. It'll be fun.

## Photo of the Month - Reader Participation Invite

With Halloween just around the corner, how about snapping some fun shots of your dog and sending them in? I'd love to put them up on my blog and share them with our subscribers.

I'm not really into dressing up my dog, but I know a lot of you are, so let's see some Halloween dress-ups.

## Dog of the Week – The Briard



This week, I've chosen the Briard because when I came across his photo in one of the dog breed books, he made me laugh. It's the type of dog that you can instantly imagine in a cartoon, with his perky, hairy ears, and long-haired face.

It's pretty obvious that they choose show dog photos to give us the most impressive view of the dogs, because most I've seen online are not nearly as "neat" i.e.: well groomed. Regardless, it's easy to see that this breed is naturally beautiful yet comical.

The Briard is actually the French version of the sheep dog. This dog has appeared in art as early as the 8<sup>th</sup> Century and more often in the 1300s which is the official date of origin for this breed.

Originally known as the Chien Berger de Brie (Shepherd Dog of Brie), the name Briard was first used in 1809. It was most commonly used to protect a shepherd's herd and would attack wolves when necessary.

The breed was also a great guard dog, protecting his family and property from animals and humans alike. It's herding qualities were especially beneficial when private land was divided into smaller parcels following the French Revolution.

Around 1900, the Briard became a show dog and soon arrived in America. In fact, Lafayette and Thomas Jefferson brought them here, according to some evidence.

In France, the Briard still holds the position of the most desired sheepherder, but in America, it's popularity waned.

The Briard has an excellent temperament, being devoted and faithful, loving and protective. It is known for its intelligence, self-assuredness and independent nature. Willing to please, it also loves adventure.

With strangers, it is more reserved and can be aggressive towards other dogs. Expect to give this dog a great deal of socialization to help correct this problem. Lots of play and exercise will also be required every day to keep this dog healthy and happy. It will also make training go a little easier, as this dog learns best when it has worked off some of its energy.

As you can see, this dog needs a great deal of grooming, but if you enjoy spending time with your dog, this might be a welcome event. Health-wise, the biggest concern is gastric torsion and hip dysplasia. When choosing a puppy, check for previous evidence of hip and eye problems as well as heart disease in the parents.

The expected life span of this gorgeous dog is 10-12 years. Its height ranges from 23" to 27", with a weight of 50 to 75 lbs. (males tend to fit the larger numbers).

The Briard is described as a "moving fence" and an "independent thinker" as it keeps the flock under control. My favorite phrase from the breeding book is, "It is a loose-eyed, upright herder. Its movement has been described as "quicksilver" with supple, light strides that give the impression of gliding."

Take from the "Encyclopedia of Dog Breeds", Second Edition, D. Caroline Coile, Ph.D., Barron's Educational Series, Inc., Hauppauge, NY, USA 1998, 2005.

## **Dominance Aggression and What To Do About It**

Dominance aggression makes for a very dangerous dog, especially if it is a large breed, like the Shepherd, Lab, Rottweiler, and others. People have been maimed and even killed by aggressive dogs.

I hate to hear those stories of dogs being put down because they attacked someone and that is why I wanted to do this extra article this week. Hopefully, it will help you to prevent your dog from attacking someone, including household members and strangers.

First, understand why a dog is aggressive. Dominance is commonly the cause because they are living their pack intelligence. Aggression is their way of letting other "animals" know they will not tolerate anyone overthrowing their position. In other words, they are the Masters of Their Domain and they will fight to the death to protect it. Keep in mind that this is normal behavior for a dog. Fortunately, not all dogs are that protective of their status.

Many dominant dogs will simply respond to various situations in certain ways, like barging through the door ahead of you, pulling on the leash and pushing you in some way, either with their bodies or the noses.

Tyler is a dominant dog, but fortunately he is not aggressive to humans. He loves them. But he is "pushy", and I'm constantly telling him "don't be pushy", which he now understands, especially when he forcefully nudges my hand or pushes his body against me.

We often tend to think that being nudged by our dogs is a gesture of friendship, when in fact it's their way of making demands on you.

## Triggers can be a clue

Just because your dog is kind, gentle most of the time, and a joy to be with doesn't mean he cannot be aggressive. This is something many owners do not understand. Never underestimate your dog. Although domesticated, its instincts are still linked to the wilderness and they can emerge at any time.

Dominant dogs like this might be perfectly fine in most situations but less tolerant of your presence around his food dish or his bed or toys. If your dog growls at you in any circumstance, do not tolerate it as this gives him the okay to dominate those situations.

Watch your dog around other people, because joggers and people participating in activities as well as strangers who want to pet your dog can trigger an aggressive response from your dog. Even someone who wants to stop and chat with you on the street can trigger it. In a sense, the dog sees these people as a threat to the pack, which he must protect at all costs.

Fearful aggression can be inherited, but it's generally directly linked to poor socialization of your dog at an early age or because of a traumatic event. In the case of Kobe, he developed fear aggression because he was abused in his first home. But it doesn't have to be abuse. Something could traumatize a dog, such as being tripped over when it was a puppy. Surprisingly, some breeds have a predisposition to becoming fearful, such as herding and toy breeds.

There are way too many triggers to list here, but the point is that you must do whatever you can to prevent your dog from attacking strangers. Be aware of his or her attitudes, learn to read the signs when she might attack. Keep a safe distance from people. The farther you are from the triggers, the less likely she will respond. Figure out whether that's 10 feet or 3 feet and stick to that.

Always control your dog with a muzzle if necessary, but certainly with a collar and lead.

Have visitors and passers-by act normal and even ignore the dog. Kobe was extremely intolerant to people who entered my home, including servicemen and strangers. I told them, "just ignore him" and he would leave them alone. The more they tried to communicate with him, the more aggressive he would become.

It's always best to start socializing your dog as a puppy. Take him to various neighborhoods and let him experience a range of new sounds, sights and smells. Often, aggression can result from a simple fear of the unknown.

Let your puppy interact with children, different people, strangers, men, women, people in wheelchairs, garbage collectors, postmen – every type you can think of. Let her sense what it feels like to interact with people with deformed hands, unfamiliar smells, unique modes of transportation and various physiques, big, tall, short, fat, happy, playful.

One vital tip to protect your dog and those she meets – tell them not to impose themselves on your dog. Tell them to move normally, don't look at the dog, act calmly. This is usually the best way to act around an aggressive dog.

Looking at a dog is a signal of confrontation to the dog. Many friendly dogs have learned that when a human looks at them, it's not in defiance or as a challenge. Aggressive dogs have not learned that.

As you can see, there are ways to live with an aggressive dog. The best thing is to start training your dog as a puppy on how to socialize with humans of all varieties. Exposure is usually the most effective solution, but it must start at an early age.

## **Regular Sections:**

### **- Dog Care**

Is your dog aggressive during your grooming sessions? Some dogs are, especially if they are older when you first begin grooming them. There can be any number of reasons for the aggression: previous abuse, pain and illness, rough handling, distrust, and dominance.

If the aggression persists, you might want to take your dog to the vet to make sure there are no illnesses that could be causing him or her pain and discomfort. Dogs don't always show us when they are sick because in the wild, this would be disastrous for them. The fitter dogs would attack the sick dog to maintain the health of the pack.

One of the first steps, then, is to gain your dog's trust.

My dog, Kobe – an American Eskimo that came from an abusive home – hated me to hold him or groom him. He would issue an extremely nasty growl, show his teeth and he would bite me, or attempt to. My first challenge was to gain his trust, to let him know that I was not going to hurt him.

To do this, I sat on the floor with him, coaxed him over and petted him calmly while talking to him in a soothing voice, telling him to "Relax. It's okay. Just relax." Then when he was somewhat calm, I showed him the brush. He sniffed at it and immediately pulled away. I stroked the brush very gently over his front leg, so he could see what was happening. He pulled back because it was an odd sensation and obviously he did not know what was going to happen. It was a strange object he'd never seen or felt before.

If he tried to leave, I would coax him back and repeat the calm stroking and "Relax, it's okay." Believe me, it took a long time for him to trust me, which is perfectly understandable. I didn't get to brush him for several attempts. When I moved the brush over his back, he'd pull away and growl.

Now, Kobe was an exaggerated example, but the method works just the same.

The first time I got to brush him on the back, I did so extremely gently. He eventually learned to relax while I did it, but the sessions were short. Although he seemed relaxed, he was still nervous about the whole procedure.

Over time, I was able to give him a proper brushing as he began to trust me not to hurt him. At this point, I cannot recall how long it took, but it was several weeks at least.

The key is to introduce your dog to the grooming tools first so that he gets a chance to examine them, smell them and determine what they are for himself. Find the spots on his body that he seems to enjoy being petted the most. This might be under the chin or on the top of the tail. Start the test grooms there as he will be less sensitive to being touched in those spots.

Gradually work to other parts of his body, kind of like sneaking up on him. Start brushing above his tail and gradually extend the length of each stroke until you are beginning on his shoulders. Most dogs like being brushed down their spine, so this is a good place to start.

Before long, and with patience and persistence, you can teach your dog to enjoy the grooming sessions.

The important this is not to force your dog in any way. Gently encourage him to lie down. Don't force him down or onto his back as this is a sign of aggression to a dog. Once he lies down, pet him normally, tickle his belly, scratch his chest before applying the brush.

If your dog continues to be aggressive, use a muzzle to protect yourself.

During the learning process, do not yell or become upset with your dog as he will sense that and it will make matters worse. If you lose patience, end the session before your feelings become known to him.

Approach grooming as a fun, enjoyable experience. Be happy when you groom him. Don't pressure him or force him in any way. Let him see that you are not trying to dominate him but, rather, are just socializing with him.

Of course, the best choice is prevention, by grooming your dog from his very early days as a puppy. This is not possible when you adopt an older dog, but it doesn't mean an older dog cannot learn to enjoy it. Kobe learned, and if that scared and aggressive dog could, I believe any dog can.

## **- Dog Talk Weekly News**

Do you have a story of your own to share? Send it along and if it is appropriate, I will publish it in an upcoming issue of Dog Talk Weekly. Make it fun – interesting – informative – or just funny. If you can, include a photo of your dog to go with your article. Or if you don't want to write an article, send me your photo. I'd like to run a photo contest, but I need your input.

I tried this back when I first launched Dog Talk Weekly, but the response was not what I expected, with only one person submitting photos. Now that you've had a chance to see what Dog Talk Weekly is all about, how about getting involved? Share your news.

Here's one you can expect next week.

My neighbor is getting a German Shepherd puppy next week. I'm so excited, you'd think I was the one getting the puppy. Expect to see some photos here of this new arrival. Puppies make great photos, don't you think? But so do dogs of any age.

It's Halloween. Show us your dog's favorite hat or scarf/collar.

You can send your photos to me directly via email to [sdickens@ebook-haven.com](mailto:sdickens@ebook-haven.com)

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To protect yourself and me, please only send in your own work. That way we will be absolutely sure. I appreciate your help in this regard.

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That's it for this issue. I hope you enjoyed it.

Until next week...

Get out there and have fun with your dog. Take some great photos.  
Collect wonderful memories.

Sylvia

P.S.: Don't forget to send me your stories and ideas for upcoming issues of Dog Talk Weekly. Just send them to me through my contact form here:  
<http://sylviadickens.com/contactform/contactus.php>

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