



Dog Talk Weekly

Where we talk about dogs, share stories, solve problems

Issue 11.1.2 – Jan. 19, 2011

ANNOUNCEMENT: I need your Ideas!

What topics would you like covered in Dog Talk Weekly? You're sure to have some questions or curiosity about something related to choosing, getting, owning, training and caring for your dog.

Let me know the breed you have or any that you're interested in and I'll use them as *Dog of the Week*. If you have a story idea, send it along. Just send the details to me through my contact form: <http://sylviadickens.com/contactform/contactus.php>

Did you miss an issue of Dog Talk Weekly? You can access all issues in the archives here: <http://www.dogtalkweekly.com/archives.htm>

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## **Feature Article: Flea Control in Winter?**

Flea control in winter? Really?

It's a common misconception that fleas are not a bother in winter. After all, most wild animals that carry them usually hibernate during cold seasons. Besides, the grass that harbors them is often blanketed in snow (unless you are fortunate enough to live in a perpetual warm climate).

The other day, someone mentioned that they did not understand why they were covered in little bites. This is what triggered the question about fleas in winter.

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Fleas do not hibernate, unfortunately. They attach themselves to warm places, which means they won't spend much time away from warm bodies in winter. This means they will seek out animals that are active in winter, like squirrels and even moles and mice.

When those animals surface, the fleas can hop onto another surface for a short time, and from there onto your dog.

Lucky fleas find their way into your house long before the cold weather set in. They make homes for themselves in your carpets, in your dog's blanket, in pant cuffs, and other places. When hunger strikes, they wait for a warm body to pass and leap on.

Since your dog and your family are always moving around, it doesn't take long for them to find that food. They hop onto your slippers. They climb onto your dog while he or she is lying down.

Oddly, they do not stay on their "food source" once they've eaten. They leave the warm body and take refuge in bedding and such.

As you can see, it's important to protect your dog and your family from fleas year-round, even if you live in a cold climate.

## **Personal Story: Tyler's Fence Climbing Antics**

You're probably getting tired of hearing about Tyler by now, but you can soon relax because I'm running out of things to write about him. He's gotten into a rut of doing the same things day in and day out. Nothing much new happens. The puppy next door is gone. He doesn't get to interact with dogs on the street because it usually turns into a tug of war between him and me.

The only thing that seems to work is the halter, a small nylon device that fits around his muzzle and clips around his neck. When he goes nuts and is determined to drag me off, I simply give the leash a pull. The halter forces him to turn his head and listen to me. Discovering this device was a life saver.

His most recent antic was to climb the fence.

I've discussed this before, I know. He's just so anxious to "visit" that nothing stops him. He knows not to go over the fence. When I tell him no, he waits for me to look away and over he goes.

Fortunately, he only does it when people are around, and especially if they are playing with a toy or enticing him over.

My tenant took a video of him climbing the side gate the other week. It wasn't a big challenge for him, since it's only 4 feet high and it's made of chain link. This provides him with the perfect foothold. Up he goes with his rear feet in the lower links until he gets his elbows up over the top. Then, he just boosts himself by literally climbing the links like they were stairs. As soon as his chest is at the top, it only takes one more push to get over.

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The good thing is that this gate leads into another gated area, so he can't escape unless he wants to repeat the process on the second identical gate. Just to be sure, I created a trellis-type shield that hooks across the fence posts on either side of the gate. He cannot get over that. The top is closer to 6 feet high. Problem solved.

The amazing thing is that he does it with ease now. Considering that he weighs around 70 pounds, that's a lot to haul over a fence. But then, he is very strong.

## Dog of the Week: Pumi

The other day, I noticed that a new neighbor up the road has a rather interesting looking dog. I haven't had a chance to talk to him yet to find out the exact breed, but it looks kind of like the Pumi. It looks kind of like a poodle and has perky, flopped over ears and a funny expression on its face. He's very cute. I hope in summer to get a closer look at him.

Anyway, that's what made me choose the Pumi for this issue's Dog of the Week.



This picture, taken from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pumi\\_dog](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pumi_dog) gives you a general idea of what my neighbor's dog looks like. His is closer to white, however. Go to that page and you can see more images.

The Pumi is a medium terrier-type dog is the result of native Hungarian dogs mixing with imported varieties. It came into its own as a separate breed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. It is a common dog in that country.

The Pumi is said to be a clever and adaptable working dog. It's character is to be an active contributor in everything.

Although cute and fun to have around, this is not a suitable choice for non-active owners. Know for its barking, the dog requires considerable patience. One excellent feature of this dog is its apparent lack of known diseases. It has a life expectancy of 12-14 years.

The Pumi is typically 13-17 inches high and weighs 17 to 29 lbs. Its fur is short and curly with an undercoat. The usual colors are white, black, gray, and reddish brown.

If you're interested in a bouncy dog with lots of energy, take a closer look at the Pumi.

As I said, I don't know if this is what my neighbor has, but it sure looks a lot like the one in the book, *Dogs from A to Z*, Barron's Educational Series, Inc., 2005. New York.

## Regular Sections:

### - Dog Nutrition

What type of water and food dishes are best for your dog?

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You might think that the answer lies in whichever one is the brightest color or cutest shape or holds more food and water. It's natural to think this way. After all, a dog bowl is a dog bowl, right? Well, apparently they are not.

Some bowls absorb the food's moisture and chemical ingredients. Over time, these stale remnants can leach bacteria and contaminants into the food or water. This is more likely with plastic or aluminum bowls. The best dishes for your dog should be made from glass, stainless steel or safe ceramic (American-made is best since many foreign-made ceramic products contain high lead levels).

To ensure your dog is protected, choose the right type of dog dishes, keep them away from household cleansers and sprays, and pesticides. Prevent wild animals (raccoons, squirrels, and rodents) from accessing the dishes. Scientists have learned that rodent urine contains a deadly strain of leptospirosis that is not protected by your dog's vaccine.

Clean the bowls every day with soapy water and rinse well before reusing.

### **Safe, Tasty, Quality Treats are Best**

Treats come in all shapes, sizes and fancy packaging, but how do you know if they are really good for your dog? In many cases, you just can't know. Often, treats include many ingredients that are not really good for your dog, like sugar, salt and flavor additives.

Why take the chance when there are other, more easily accessible and safer items you can give your dog.

The best treats come from raw foods, but not necessarily raw meat.

Use carrot sticks, dried meat, or make some home-made dog cookies from recipes you can find on the Internet. Just make sure they do not call for unwanted ingredients.

Still, you need to be cautious in what you give your dog.

A few years ago, I was filling used plastic water bottles with water, freezing them, and giving them to Tyler after our walks or after playing in the yard on a hot day. He loved them. But then I discovered that those plastic bottles release dangerous chemicals into the water when they are reused. Plus, the plastic itself was bad for my dog, since he liked to eat it which made him slightly sick.

That's when I switched to giving him ice cubes, which he really appreciates.

### **- Dog Care**

Fleas can pester your dog like nothing else. They can cause skin sores and restlessness in your dog. Most of us prefer not to introduce chemicals into our homes and especially around our families and pets.

You must catch fleas early to prevent them from reproducing and taking over your entire house. This means getting into the cracks and crevices around your base boards as well as other areas where they can hide, like in your carpets and dog beds.

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One way to tell if you have fleas in your home, apart from your dog scratching and biting himself, is to look for 'flea dirt'. This is actually flea feces that are black and the size of a poppy seed.

Here's what to do.

1. Bathe your dog with a natural herbal shampoo to kill the fleas. You might find some sores on your dog from a reaction to the fleas. Some dogs are allergic to flea saliva and will tend to break out. Or your dog can create sores by scratching and chewing on the skin to ease the itching. Take him to the vet to see if special medication is necessary. Oatmeal shampoo is said to provide relief from itching.

2. It might turn out that your home is not infested and that your dog simply had a few fleas. In this case, you probably do not need to spend a great deal of time 'treating' your entire house. Instead, focus on areas where your dog spends a lot of time, like his bed, on the carpet, and all favorite spots. Wash his bedding and apply special products to rid them from the carpet and along the baseboard in those areas.

3. If you and your family are getting bitten, it's necessary to do your entire house. Here's a recipe recommended in Nutrition and Health For Dogs, by Dr. Earl Mindell, R.Ph., Ph.D., Basic Health Publications, Laguna Beach, California. 2007.

Combine 1-1/2 pounds of diatomaceous earth, 1-1/2 pounds natural borax and 1 cup of salt. (The diatomaceous earth contains tiny particles with sharp spines that puncture the flea's exterior. The borax and salt draw moisture out of the flea. These products should be available from your local garden center. Dr. Mindell suggests that the diatomaceous earth found at a pool store is actually dangerous to your dog. You want the earth with a **crystalline silica content of less than 3%**.

Sprinkle the mixture along baseboards, into crevices where fleas hide. Put it inside your vacuum bag. When you vacuum, this will help to destroy the fleas so that they do not find their way back into your home. Expect this treatment to take up to a few months before the fleas are all gone.

Of course, you can always spray with the same flea product you can find for your dog.

## - Dog Games

### Talking Dog

Here's a fun game that does several things; among them it teaches your dog when and when not to bark. It's also a great way to retrain a barking dog.

Wait until your dog is calm and quiet before starting the game. Find a place without distractions. You want him to pay full attention to you throughout this exercise.

You will need one of your dog's favorite toys. Holding it a little out of his reach, call his name to bring his attention to it. Instruct him to "Speak". You will notice him get a little frustrated that he cannot get the toy. This is good, because it will cause him to bark. Praise him and tell him to 'Speak' again.

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When he begins barking on your command, it's time to teach him to whisper.

Dogs are smarter than you might think. It won't take much for him to get the idea that you want him to speak more quietly. Hold the treat for him, say "Speak", and when he does, quiet your voice and say, "Shhh. Whisper."

It will take a few tries, so be patient. Simply ask him to "Whisper" a few more times and watch him try different levels of loudness. When he hits the right one, praise him and give him the treat.

Dogs love this game. I've yet to see one that doesn't wag his tail and look happy while playing it with you. Try this exercise with "Speak", "Whisper" and "Quiet" to achieve a range of loudness to silence. This really is easy for your dog to grasp.

(For more fun games, look for the book, *"50 Games to Play With Your Dog"* by Suellen Dainty, Ivy Press, East Sussex, U.K., 2007. I found it at my public library.)

### - Dog Trivia

Some dogs don't like to give up their toys or treats, yet it's a good thing for them to learn. Place your hand gently under your dog's lower jaw, then say 'drop it'. Carefully take the toy. Immediately give it back, and you will teach your dog to trust you. She will readily give up her item when she learns that you won't be taking it away.

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### Do You Need Professional Dog Training Advice?

Who **can't** use input from someone who knows all the secrets to developing a cooperative and abiding dog? I know I sure could. In my travels, I came across a program that has received high praise for its effectiveness. It was created by a professional dog trainer. I like that his instructions are so easy to follow.

Shortly after opening the package, I discovered what I needed to do to stop my dog from pulling on the leash. Admitted, it's not a permanent solution because Tyler is so demanding, energetic and dominant. He KNOWS how to heel. He just refuses to obey. And I'm not physically strong enough to stop him. It's probably me, but I did make huge progress with this advice. At least he doesn't drag me off into the bushes any more.

Take a look at [Secrets To Dog Training](#) by Daniel Stevens. Dogs love to play catch, fetch things and in general, please their owners. In his book, he demonstrates how to train your dog to do all these things, and more.

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**Dog Nutrition** is vital to your dog's life expectancy and quality of life. I've written a book on how to make sure your dog gets a healthy, nutritious diet and avoids many of the dangers that come with certain foods. Find out more at <http://healthydognutritionsecrets.com/healthydogPP1.htm>

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