

SE Minnesota's Premier Animal Magazine ●

Spring 2013

# wagazine

wags, whiskers, hooves and fins



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exercise coach

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## A DOSE OF VITAMIN K-9

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a pet food

Stem cell  
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# wagazine

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COVER PHOTO  
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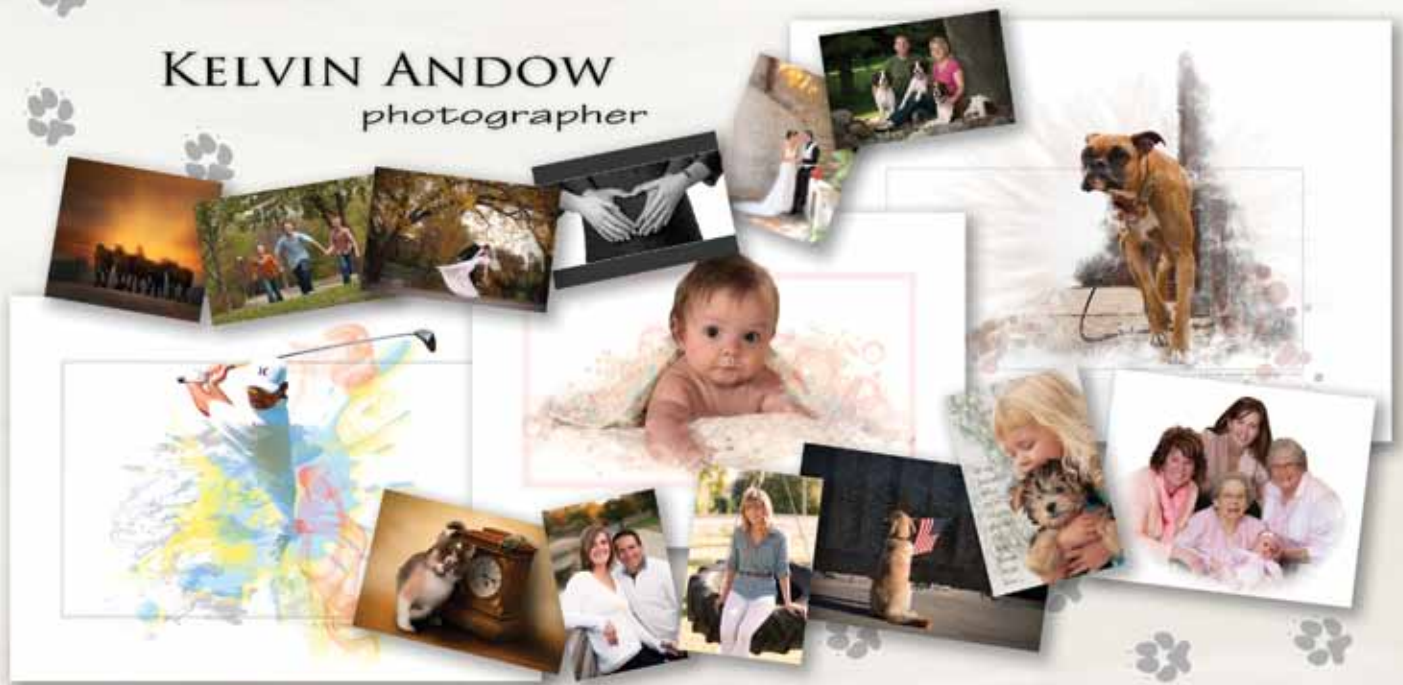
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# WELCOME

to the premiere issue of the **wagazine**,  
a magazine about pets and their people.

We know 62 percent of American households have pets and that pets are part of the family more than ever before. Our animals are our friends and companions; they listen without judgment, love without condition and ask for nothing but time and attention. We owe it to them to provide the best life possible.

The mission of the **wagazine** is to help animal owners better understand, care for and live with their pets. It seeks to chronicle the love affairs we have with our furry family members, to educate owners on proper care and training and to advocate for animal rescue groups.

We are proud to share with you the stories, tips and advice in this issue.

**Bark, Woof, Meow! - Ellie, Kate and Kelvin**

## meet the **wagazine** team...



These four Springers are my daily source of joy. They are the reason I became an advocate for animals, and they allow me to foster several homeless Springers each year for [springerrescue.org](http://springerrescue.org).

The **Wagazine** combines my two passions: storytelling and pet ownership. Our community is full of animals worthy of the spotlight, and we are proud to shine it on them.

Ellington and her four beloved pups: Lady, Budder, Sven and Freddie.



As the mother of two young children, I delight in the joy that being around animals brings my kids. Our 12-year-old cat, Stinky, is loved immensely and usually a source of arguments regarding who gets to sit and look at his cute face first. I am thrilled and honored to be part of a team of incredible advocates for our furry, feathered and finned friends. I truly hope you enjoy this publication. It comes from our hearts!

Kate and her  
cat, lovingly  
named Stinky.



I'm the husband of one, father of two, pack leader of five and ignored by one cat. This is my family, and my family is my passion. Through photography, I've been able to assist in bringing awareness of the animal rescue community to the general public. Through this publication, I hope to increase that awareness and improve the lives of pets and their people.

Kelvin and his 5 furry family members: Zoe, Leven, Mira, Baxter and Bretta.



# Channel the **CHEWING**

Is your dog chewing up your stuff? Here's how to redirect his obnoxious habit

By Sara Reusche, CPDT

**CHEWING is normal dog behavior.** Most people don't mind it if their dog chews on his toys, but don't want him to chew up their socks, underwear or furniture. If your dog is chewing on inappropriate objects, the first thing you need to do is to ask yourself whether you're providing appropriate alternatives.

**Provide plenty of appropriate chew toys** that your dog enjoys. Kongs, Nylabones, knuckle bones, and hollow sterilized beef bones are all acceptable choices. Hollow toys that can be stuffed with your dog's food, peanut butter, or other treats are especially enticing.

**Keep one chew toy available in each room of the house where your dog is allowed.** If your dog feels the urge to chew, he should be able to look around and immediately spot an appropriate chew toy. If he can't find a toy, he's much more likely to settle for one of your shoes.

Don't expect your dog to go all the way across the house to his toy basket: the toy should be right in front of him as soon as he needs it.

**Rewarding your dog for chewing on his own toys.** If you get all excited and chase him down as soon as he grabs one of your socks, then ignore him when he chews on his own toys, guess which option he's going to choose next time he's bored?

Make sure that you make more of a fuss over him for playing with his own toys than you do when he gets into stuff he shouldn't.

Put away anything you don't want him to chew, or spray it with Bitter Apple spray to make it taste icky.

**Don't make a big deal over it.** If your dog does get something he's not supposed to have, chasing him all over will make him think it's a game, and punishing him may cause guarding or aggression issues later on. Trade him a small piece of kibble or one of his own toys for the stolen item, then resolve to do a better job keeping things picked up or be more diligent about using Bitter Apple spray in the future.

Most dogs take to chew-toy training quite quickly, as long as you're consistent and provide plenty of acceptable alternatives. If your dog continues to steal things or if you have problems with possessiveness or aggression when your dog gets into something that he shouldn't have, don't hesitate to contact a Certified Professional Dog Trainer for some one-on-one assistance. 🐾

*Sara Reusche is a Certified Professional Dog Trainer and owner of Paws Abilities.*

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# FEEDING Fluffy & Fido

Pet food comes in endless varieties. Here are some tips for choosing one.

By Penny Marshall



**Gone are the days** when the selection of dog and cat foods at the supermarket consumed about as much shelf space as the baking flour.

Today there are aisles full of choices and at the pet stores, even more: “Gourmet,” “premium,” “natural,” “healthy” and “organic” in bags, boxes and cans. Price is as diverse as the flavors.

And while pet food has become specialized to meet needs based on size, age and health, selecting the right one for your dog or cat can be a daunting task, especially for new pet owners.



## PREMIUM FOOD

According to Kimberly Radke, store manager at Leashes & Leads, premium foods for cats and dogs has its advantages.

“When higher quality ingredients (real meat) are used, the nutrients are more dense, which means they contain higher percentages of protein and fat so your pet eats less to obtain the same nutrition. Due to the nutrient density and quality of ingredients, the average premium food is more digestible than an average standard food, resulting in healthier skin and coat, less shedding and less waste.”

## CANNED FOOD

While canned food tends to be more costly, it is a great option for some pets, including those that are aging or ill.

“Dry kibble does help with teeth cleaning,” says Netta Putzier, co-owner, Rochester Feed & Country Store. “Mixing dry with canned food is OK, and you can also use different brands,” she says.

“Most people feed their cats dry food. In the winter or if your cat has skin issues, top-dress the dry kibble with one tablespoon of wet food to increase fluid intake. This also works well if your cat doesn’t drink enough water to flush out their system, which can result in urinary problems.”

## RAW FOOD

Feeding raw is growing in popularity. “You do need to read up on the different ways of feeding raw,” suggests Putzier. “Some raw have bones ground in, some just raw meat, and some have a vitamin package. You can also feed raw and dry food together.”

## LEARNING THE LABEL

Reading the label is the best way to assure the finest feed for your pet. “When reading a dog food label, keep in mind that the ingredients are listed in order of weight, with the highest quantity listed first,” says Radke. She recommends these tips:

- Look for the first source of fat or oil in the ingredient list. Anything listed before that first source of fat, and including it, are the food’s main ingredients.
- Look for meat and fat products identified by species like chicken, duck, beef or lamb. If the species cannot be identified, neither can the quality.
- Look for quality whole grains. Avoid any products that use unidentified “meat,” “animal” or “poultry” products in their foods.
- Avoid foods with ingredients believed to be carcinogenic or that are banned from use in the human food chain. In pet food these are BHT, BHA, Ethoxyquin or Propyl Gallate.

## RECALLS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Pet foods recalls leave consumers concerned and unsure about various products. If you have questions about content, don’t hesitate to ask your retailer or call the manufacturer.

Remember, too, that just because Fluffy and Fido share the same domain, each requires different nutrients. They should not be fed the same fare but rather food created for their animal type. 🐾

*Penny Marshall is a freelance writer who, along with Baxter, her soft-coated Wheaten Terrier, sends “Wag” readers a welcoming and warm “Wheaten Greetin.”*



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# SPRING AHEAD

## Getting a Jump on Fleas, Ticks & Heartworm

By Penny Marshall

With warm weather just around the corner, it's time to think about flea, tick and heartworm protection for your pet. A few preventive measures can assure you're doing everything possible to keep your best friend healthy and happy throughout the summer and the months ahead.

Mary R. McKie, DVM, veterinarian in practice at Northern Valley Animal Clinic, shares some updated and important information on these seasonal concerns.

### **Q \* What is the purpose of heartworm preventatives?**

**A \*** Heartworm preventatives serve two purposes: To prevent contraction of the heartworm parasite, which is spread via mosquito bites, and to prevent or treat for common intestinal parasites (worms), which are spread via ingestion of egg or larval component of parasites.

### **Q \* At what age should heartworm prevention begin?**

**A \*** All dogs and puppies are susceptible to heartworm disease and intestinal parasites, so we recommend treating puppies with this preventative medicine as early as 8 weeks old.

Because intestinal parasites (though not mosquitoes) are present in our environment all year, we recommend that most dogs and puppies be treated with a heartworm preventative/intestinal dewormer monthly.

### **Q \* How is the treatment administered?**

**A \*** Most dogs receive a tasty chewable tablet once per month, which prevents heartworm disease and treats for many intestinal parasites.

### **Q \* How is heartworm acquired?**

**A \*** Heartworm is caused by a thin worm called *dirofilaria immitis*. In an infected animal (typically a dog, wolf, coyote, fox or cat), the adult female worm lives in the heart. She releases offspring into the infected animal's blood stream, and these tiny larval offspring are then ingested by a mosquito, which becomes infected itself.

After several days, the infected mosquito bites another dog, wolf, etc., and the heartworm disease is spread. Once a dog or cat is infected with a heartworm, the worm may live for up to seven years, causing severe disease if undetected.

### **Q \* What is the prevalence of Lyme disease and what are the symptoms?**

**A \*** In 2012, 9.35 percent of dogs tested for Lyme disease in Minnesota tested positive for exposure to the disease.

Many dogs with positive tests may have already cleared the disease from their body, or don't ever become appreciably ill, but for some the effects can be devastating.

Dogs with active infections may seem tired or lethargic and may have a fever and decreased appetite. These dogs may also have a limp and sore or swollen joints. A rare form of Lyme disease can cause kidney failure and death.

In order to spread Lyme disease to a dog, a tick must be attached and alive for up to 48 hours, so an appropriate flea and tick preventative should also be effective at preventing Lyme disease. There is also a vaccine against Lyme disease, and this is recommended for dogs at risk for tick bites.

### **Q \* At what age should flea/tick treatment begin?**

**A \*** Many flea and tick preventative products are safe to use as early as 8 or 10 weeks of age. Check any medications, even over-the-counter ones, with your veterinarian to make sure they are safe and appropriate for your pet.

### **Q \* Are the generic, cheaper brands of flea/tick preventatives ok to use?**

**A \*** This is a question we get every day! Most flea and tick preventatives are available over the counter, but they are definitely not all the same.

There are several safe products available, and they generally cost slightly more than potentially toxic look-alikes.

For both dogs and cats, look for a safe and effective product containing both S-methoprene and fipronil. These ingredients will inhibit the growth of immature fleas and ticks, while killing adult fleas and ticks within 24 hours,





and are relatively safe for mammals. Some over-the-counter products that are safe for dogs are not safe for cats. Check labels carefully when you purchase these on your own.

**Q \* Is Lyme disease contagious from animal to animal?**

**A \*** No. It is possible that a tick may quickly spread this disease among several animals in close proximity to each other, but it is not possible for one infected dog to spread Lyme disease directly to a canine buddy. More than one dog may be exposed to a Lyme-carrying tick from the same environment. Tick prevention is key!

**Q \* Does heartworm and flea/tick prevention pertain to cats as well?**

**A \*** This question is still being studied, as heartworm testing for cats has just recently been initiated. We do know that cats can get this disease and that their clinical signs may be different.

Cats who spend time outside, or have canine buddies, should generally be treated with a flea and tick preventative to prevent unwanted visitors in the home. Cats who enjoy hunting small rodents are especially at risk for contracting fleas.

**Q \* Are both heartworm and flea/tick prevention necessary even if you live in town?**

**A \*** Absolutely! We see fleas, heartworm and Lyme disease in wooded urban areas every year, spread by our Minnesota insects.

Even indoor pets have access to fleas through their outdoor friends, the things we track in on our shoes and even houseplants. A single flea can lay up to 50 eggs per day. It's worth preventing this problem rather than trying to rid your home of a flea infestation.

Finally, ticks are present in tall grasses, in woods, fields, suburbs and cities. In Minnesota, the deer tick can spread several diseases to dogs, cats and people, but most of these

are preventable with appropriate parasite control. Your vet will be able to explain different safe options for your pet. Prevention is always the best medicine! 🐾

*Sources: American Heartworm Society, Companion Animal Parasite Council, Minnesota Department of Health*

*Penny Marshall is a freelance writer.*



Don't miss the  
**SUMMER ISSUE**  
of The  
**wagazine**

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**"horsing" around**  
AND sharing tips on  
**traveling with pets**  
Look for it JUNE 2013

## PLUS

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Photos by Kelvin Andow.

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# STEM CELL TREATMENT

Modern medicine helps treat our pets

By Penny Marshall

More and more, it seems like our animal friends share much of what we experience in our human world. The good and the bad. Now, modern medicine stem cell therapy has made its way from major medical centers to local veterinary clinics.

This new modality is used to relieve dogs, cats and horses of ailments such as osteoarthritis, ligament and tendon injuries and also in other treatments such as renal insufficiency, hepatic insufficiency, gastric problems, thyroid problems and inter-vertebral disc disease.

"We were the first clinic in the Minnesota to start doing these procedures but I believe a few more may have started," explains Garren Kelly, DVM, Meadow View Veterinary Clinic in Byron. "Overall the outcome has been positive."

### Q \* How does it work?

**A \*** Stem cell therapy might sound rather complicated but it's really quite straightforward. "It's using adult adipose (fat) tissue-derived stem cells to promote healing and decrease inflammation," Kelly says. "We remove some adipose tissue from the patient and then isolate the stem cells from that, which takes about three hours. Then we inject the cells into the injured joint or give them intravenously as treatment indicates."

Some pets require multiple injections and some are best treated with a combination of surgery and stem cell treatment.

### Q \* Is the pet sedated?

**A \*** "For most patients, this is an outpatient procedure. General anesthesia is required to excise the adipose tissue but generally just mild sedation is needed to inject the stem cells. There's always a slight risk with anesthesia, but the agents we have today are very safe."


### Q \* What about risk of rejection?

**A \*** "There's no risk of rejection since we are using cells from that individual patient. If during the initial harvest and treatment there are extra cells left over, we can have them stored by cryo-freezing them with MediVet Labs in Kentucky. These can be used for future treatments at a much lower cost."

### Q \* Can it be done on horses locally?

**A \*** Meadow View doesn't perform this treatment on horses, although Dr. Kelly says that they could isolate the stem cells if needed.

### Q \* Does pet insurance cover it?

**A \*** If you have pet insurance, check with your provider to see if stem cell therapy is included in your policy. Several pet insurance companies do provide coverage for the latest medical advances including this treatment. 

*Penny Marshall is a freelance writer.*



# Camp Companion

[Campcompanion.org](http://Campcompanion.org)

**Established:** 2003

**Based:** Rochester, Minn.

**Mission:** To humanely prevent homeless and future generations of homeless animals.



## WHO THEY ARE:

A 501c3 animal rescue, adoption and TNR (Trap, Neuter, Return) group that works with dogs, cats, kittens, puppies and humans in southeast Minnesota and beyond.

**TNR:** Trap, Neuter and Return (TNR) is becoming widely recognized as an effective and humane strategy for managing and reducing feral cat populations. (Feral cats live outside without direct human contact. Some have been abandoned to fend for themselves; some were born outside. The longer they live on their own, the more feral they become.)

TNR involves humanely trapping feral, feral and stray cats and transporting them to a clinic setting where they are spayed or neutered and have their ear tipped. They may also receive a health check and vaccinations and be treated for minor medical conditions.

After surgery, the cats are returned to their colony and habitat, typically where caring individuals have been providing food, water and shelter. (Young kittens and tame cats are removed from the colony and placed into foster homes where they are nurtured until they can be adopted.) Since the cats are no longer reproducing, the colony will gradually diminish in size.

By reducing or eliminating mating, fighting and wandering, TNR makes the colony more stable, impacts the influx of newcomers and improves the health of the cats and their environment.

## IN ACTION:

Monthly Adoption Events

**1st Saturday:** PetSmart North

**2nd Saturday:** PetSmart South

**3rd Saturday:** Rochester Feed & Country Store

**4th Saturday:** PetCo & Leashes and Leads

## HOW TO HELP:

Volunteer for the following at [campcompanion.org](http://campcompanion.org): adoption site animal care, adoption counselors, cat cuddlers, spay/neuter clinics, TNR crew, foster care, clean team, holiday helpers, ambassadors, pet photographers and assistants.

Michele Quandt, director of Camp Companion, with River, a stray German Shepherd she spent three days trying to catch. "It took a lot of breakfast sausage!" she said.

## PASSION:

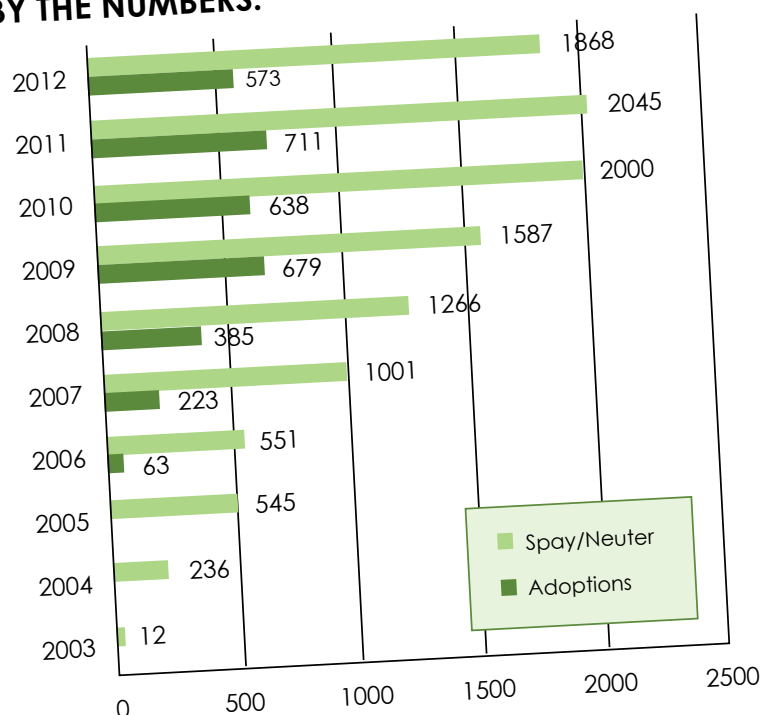
"When I look into the eyes of the dog or cat that I helped, I see compassion, forgiveness and thankfulness," says Michele Quandt, director. "Also the competitive part of my personality finds it a challenge to see if I can truly see a marked difference in my lifetime."

Why does she do this work? "I think that may be the hardest question I have ever been asked.

I guess I don't know the answer except that it is the 'right' thing to do."



## BY THE NUMBERS:



# RUFF BREAK

## Your dog's exercise coach

By Penny Marshall | Photography by Kelvin Andow

**A Ruff Break** is something nearly every dog in the city yearns for. An opportunity for real exercise, adventure and socialization. A chance to revel in the great outdoors. Going beyond the near-sedentary stroll and pushing his limits to embrace the ultimate canine runner's high. Forty minutes and four paws pounding the pavement, burning off energy and boredom previously released by bad behavior..

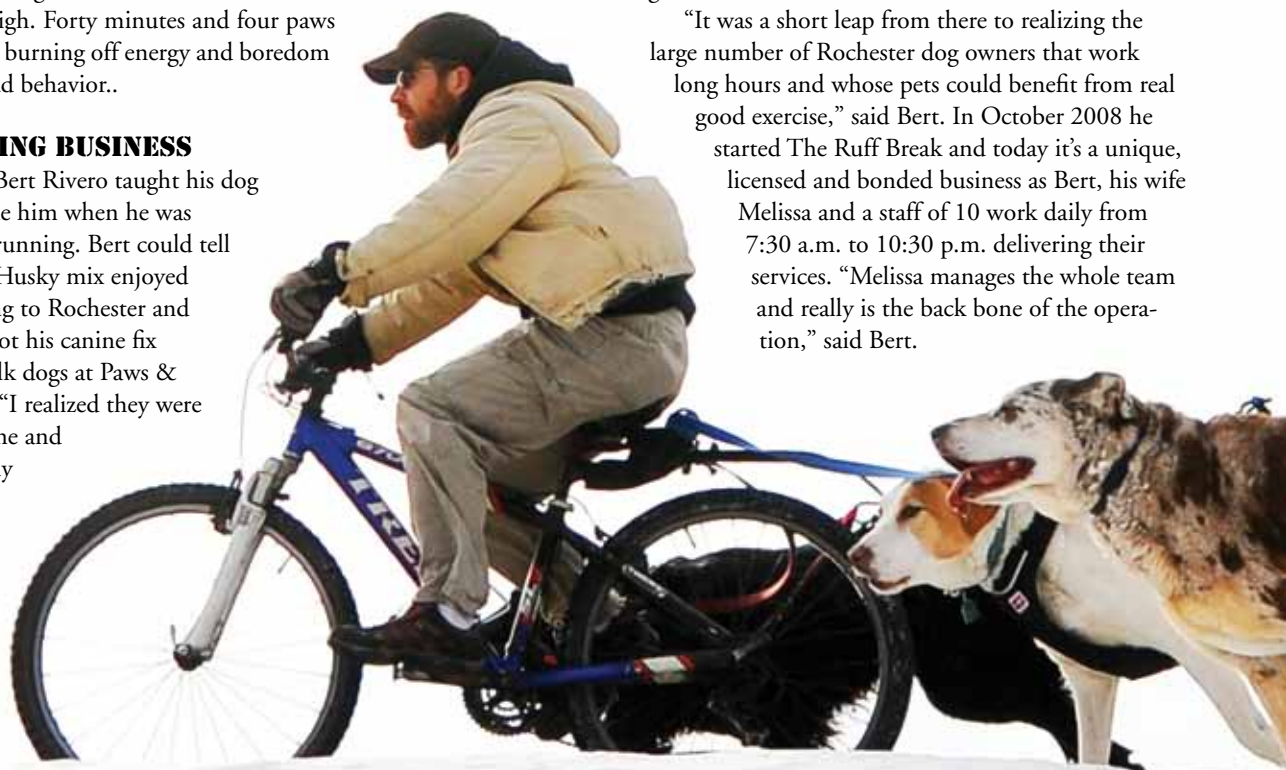
### RUNNING A RUNNING BUSINESS

When living in Miami, Bert Rivero taught his dog Whiskey to run alongside him when he was biking, rollerblading or running. Bert could tell how much the Siberian Husky mix enjoyed the exercise. After moving to Rochester and without Whiskey, Bert got his canine fix from volunteering to walk dogs at Paws & Claws Humane Society. "I realized they were caged so much of the time and thought they would really benefit from running. Running as hard as they could," said Bert.

"I convinced the manager at Paws & Claws to let the dogs run with me when I was biking, running and rollerblading. The dogs loved it."

After a solo spell of affording the dogs a good workout, he began training other interested volunteers to do the same.

"It was a short leap from there to realizing the large number of Rochester dog owners that work long hours and whose pets could benefit from real good exercise," said Bert. In October 2008 he started The Ruff Break and today it's a unique, licensed and bonded business as Bert, his wife Melissa and a staff of 10 work daily from 7:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. delivering their services. "Melissa manages the whole team and really is the back bone of the operation," said Bert.







## PAWS TO THE PAVEMENT

A Ruff Break is a 40-minute session designed to meet a dog's daily exercise needs. Activities are based on what the dog enjoys the most and his endurance and energy levels. They include running, roller blading, biking, weight pulling, treadmill, swimming or Skijoring. Typical walking distances are 2 to 4 miles. Biking varies from 6 to 14 miles with some dogs reaching speeds of 22 mph.

A Fast Break is a 15- to 20-minute visit designated primarily for potty, a short walk, feeding and/or play.

Your dog may be matched with other dogs that are socially compatible and have the same workout drill.

So just who are these lucky clients that enjoy the rigors imposed by their own personal trainer? Eighty to 100 local dogs of all sizes and breeds ranging from toy breeds to Great Danes.

One of Ruff Break's clients is Dodger, a German Shorthaired Pointer who had replacement of his ACL (anterior cruciate ligament). His owner was worried that his friend would never run again. Through regular Ruff Breaks,



including swimming with resistance, slow 10- to 15-minute jogs, then running slowly to build his endurance and speed, Dodger now runs 7 to 8 miles in one Ruff Break with an average speed of 16 mph.

## ALL YEAR IN ALL WEATHER

Under the watchful eye of their trainers, dogs enjoy their workouts outside year round. "We're more concerned with the heat than the cold," said Bert. "We carry water during hotter months to prevent overheating and dehydration and regulate workouts according to temperature."

Bert said dogs weighing 30 pounds and more can handle almost any weather, but those under 30 pounds with light coats have more trouble with the cold. "It depends on the dog and the activity. If a dog likes to run, they will heat up. Rain, snow—doesn't matter. We're out there exercising."

## KEEPING A PULSE ON EACH DOG

"We don't check a dog's pulse on Ruff Breaks. We get to know the dogs very well because of our awareness on the breaks with them and because of the data we gather over a consistent basis like average speed, distance traveled, along with the corresponding temperatures on that day."

Bert and Melissa Rivero and their team provide dogs 40-minute exercise breaks that include biking, roller blading, weight pulling, treadmill, swimming and Skijoring.





Skijoring is great for dogs that love to run in the winter. Their genetic trail-following instincts take over!

Bert said their team communicates to keep everyone in the loop. “If a dog starts to slow down suddenly or limp, we know immediately because these are one-on-one structured exercise sessions allowing us to take whatever next steps are necessary. We are proactive with our breaks so if the temperature is on the hot side, we try to run dogs in the shade as much as possible. We try to run them on the grassy or snowy section on the side of trails to protect their paws and joints.”

### A BREAK FROM BAD BEHAVIOR

A good canine workout yields many of the same results as that for humans: Improved health, better relaxation, less stress and a

reduction in—ruh row—“bad dog” behavior. Many dogs act out by chewing, barking and being aggressive simply because they’re bored and have no other way to get rid of excess energy. “You need to exercise them first and then address the behavioral problem,” said Bert.

The Ruff Break staff reinforces proper behavior and can suggest ways owners can provide the best exercise for their pet.

Take a peek at what the Ruff Break crew is up to this very minute at [theruffbreak.com](http://theruffbreak.com).

Woof! 🐾

*Penny Marshall is a freelance writer.*

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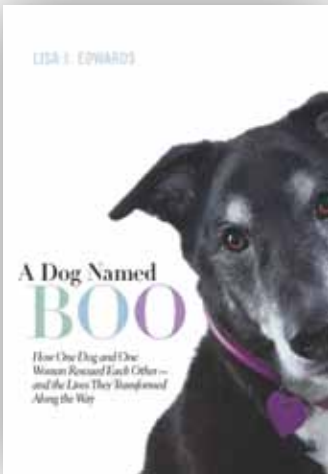
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## A Dog Named Boo

By Lisa J. Edwards, c.2012,  
*Harlequin*, \$21.95  
 \$24.95 Canada, 294 pages

In “A Dog Named Boo” by Lisa J. Edwards, you’ll read about a pup whose talent is to change lives in very different ways.

Unable to hold his own against his brothers and sisters, the little puppy seemed weak. Lisa Edwards watched as its siblings stepped on and around the black-and-white “baby dog” and she couldn’t stop herself from falling in love.

Her two older dogs, Atticus and Dante, indicated toleration for the pup but Edwards’ husband, Lawrence, was against another pet. He’d just had surgery, Edwards wasn’t in the best of health, and neither of them had time for a new puppy.

Edwards brought the little guy home anyhow. She knew it would be an uphill battle — she and Lawrence were both also dealing with abusive childhoods — but this dog seemed to need what Edwards had to offer: a loving home, understanding and guidance.

Boo grew to be a people-dog, so when Edwards’ brother fell ill and needed a service animal, Edwards thought Boo would be perfect. She tried to train him,

but even after repeated classes and training sessions, Boo seemed to be locked. He didn’t listen, couldn’t retain more than the most basic commands, and class-time was pandemonium.

Boo would never be a service dog, but Edwards sensed that he had empathy. It wasn’t until two veterinarian-friends noticed his “silly puppy-walking” and diagnosed a congenital brain condition that everything finally made sense.

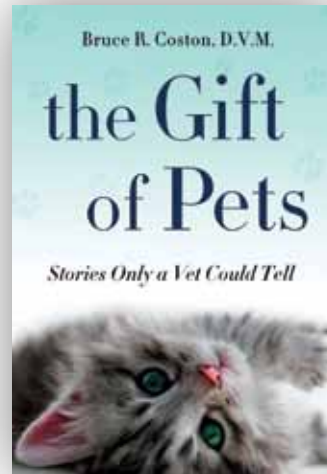
Because she was interested in training, Edwards tried another tactic by listening and observing. She watched for Boo’s strengths and worked around his weaknesses until she found a way for him to make a difference.

She never thought about the difference he’d make in her life...

With a good sense of humor, obvious love for dogs, and an amazingly open demeanor, Lisa J. Edwards tells the story of a hurting family, a handicapped dog, and the healing they did, separately and together.

Because Edwards is a dog trainer, there’s plenty to learn in here; mainly, she subtly teaches her readers to pay close attention to their dogs’ behavior and body language to get the best results in training.

If you’re a dog lover looking for something to curl up with, “A Dog Named Boo” should do the trick.



## “The Gift of Pets: Stories Only a Vet Could Tell”

By Bruce R. Coston, D.V.M.,  
 c.2012, *Thomas Dunne Books*,  
 \$25.99 / \$29.99 Canada,  
 302 pages

People say your pet is lucky.

He’s got a bed in every room — including the one you share with him. She has treats whenever she wants, toys are spread everywhere, you’ve got collars in all colors, and you always remember to sign your pet’s name on every greeting card.

Yep, it’s Pet Heaven around your house, but really, you know who’s got the bigger blessing. In the new book “The Gift of Pets” by Bruce R. Coston, D.V.M., you’ll read about people, pets and a vet you won’t soon forget.

Like many small-town Minnesota kids, Bruce Coston dreamed of becoming a veterinarian. He carried that dream through his high school years until, at age 17, he found a local vet who allowed Coston to job-shadow.


Today, Coston owns a veterinary clinic in Virginia, Minn., where he cares for pets and the people who love them

and where, from both ends of the leash, his clients teach him.

At Coston’s hospital, there are pets that arrive in terrible health and some that come for a happy visit. There are close calls and triumphant treatments. Walk in the door, and you’ll hear barking, greetings from the clinic cat, laughter, horseplay and practical jokes. And, like every other clinic that deals with birth, death, and what’s in between, you’ll also find sadness and missing friends.

Cozy. That’s the best word I can think of to describe “The Gift of Pets.” You just get a cozy, blanket-and-hot-cocoa feeling when you read a book like this.

Coston tells stories of eccentric owners, unique pets, and the relationships they have with one another, and he writes about humans who helped his career and critters that enhanced it. That makes this book a must-read if you’re a pet person, but understand that you’ll want a tissue handy while you’re reading it.

From its irresistible cover to the warm, wonderful story inside, this is a book to wrap yourself in. 

*Terri Schlichenmeyer has been reading since she was 3 years old and she never goes anywhere without a book. She lives on a hill in Wisconsin with one pampered little pooch and 13,000 books.*

# A DOSE OF K-

## VITAMIN

Therapy dog teams know their bedside manners, offering healing that can be measured in smiles

By Bob Freund | Photography by Kelvin Andow

### Calm and quiet, Merc is laying down on the job. Literally.

The British Labrador is hard at work lapping up attention. He rests on his belly in the middle of a circle of teenagers eager to stroke his thick black fur. Merc clearly is the sole attraction, as he absorbs one affectionate petting after another.

That contact is the point of his visit to the half-dozen teens in a class at Saint Marys Hospital in Rochester. They all are living with chronic pain of one type or another. For 45 minutes or so, Merc is a happy dose of medicine for their spirits.

#### MEETING MERC

Merc and his handler, Dave Speich of Zumbrota, comprise one of six therapy dog teams in Mayo Clinic's Caring Canines program. The dogs often visit groups like these teens from the Pediatric Pain Rehabilitation Program at Saint Marys. They also might drop in to see a single patient who is missing a pet while away from home or perhaps just needs a smile for a while.

"It just makes me happy because they (the dogs) love you," said Annie Streeter, 17, of Darien, Conn. Merc's visit provides interaction but also a beneficial "distraction, which is a big thing we learn about in this program," Streeter said.

The 3-week program is not designed to provide a cure for their symptoms, but to help the adolescents live with pain. "We're trying to regulate them (symptoms)," said Erica Johnson, 17, of Rosemount, Minn. "Some people's symptoms don't go away, but some people's do," she explained.

There's also something soothing about petting a friendly animal. "It just calms you down," said Johnson, who has "Lucky," a Labradoodle, waiting for her at home.

Merc also does his part during the visit. On Speich's command, he playfully turns over for belly rubs, which the patients are eager to give.

Speich tells the young patients about his 5 ½-year-old Labrador, who is trained as both a "bird dog" and a therapy canine. For example, they learn that, when he's not making hospital rounds, Merc carries a shoe (sometimes Speich's shoe) in his mouth around the house all day. The patients get to know their four-legged guest a little.

#### PETTING PRESCRIPTION

The "meet-and-greet" visits by Merc and the other Caring Canines are more than social sessions. Researchers have found medical benefits from even short contact with friendly animals, says Dr. Brent Bauer, director of Complementary and Integrative Medicine for Mayo Clinic Rochester. Some effects include increased energy levels, improvements in blood pressure levels and reductions in stress. Controlling tension and stress alone can help healing.



9



Merc and his handler, Dave Speich, visit the Pediatric Pain Rehabilitation Program at Saint Marys Hospital. They are a certified therapy dog team that provides a much-needed distraction to this group of teens dealing with chronic pain.

## NEW PET THERAPY AT OLMSTED MEDICAL CENTER

Patients at the Olmsted Medical Center Hospital now can spend some relaxing time with an animal companion as they heal.

The Rochester treatment center in February opened its first volunteer service designed to bring patients and well-trained dogs together for visits.

The new Canine Companion Pet Visitation Program offers patients comfort and companionship, and patients can ask for a visit. Once a week, one of the two canine teams also goes door-to-door in designated areas for visits with patients and family members who might like to spend some time with the pet.

The volunteer program is one option among a group of non-medical therapies that have been found to help relieve tension or stress and, sometimes, other symptoms, said Kelly Owens, OMC's health promotion and community outreach coordinator.

Both of the handlers not only volunteer with the Canine Companion Pet Visitation Program, but they also are employees of the Rochester-based center, she said.

The dogs and their handlers must be registered for pet therapy with a recognized training agency, such as Pet Partners or Therapy Dogs International. OMC hopes to enlarge the program, Owens said.

## MEET THE DOGS

Merc, whose bloodline is British Labrador, is just one of many breeds of dogs visiting medical patients at Mayo Clinic's Saint Marys Hospital. The variety of breeds is interesting, but a dog's training is much more important for success in therapy visits, Merc's handler Dave Speich said.

Pet Partners, a national training and evaluation service for therapy animals, tells dog lovers exploring its website that both purebred and mixed breed animals make for excellent hospital companions. "What matters most is the individual animal's personality – that (the dog) likes people and has confidence in visiting strange places, the Pet Partners site notes.

Mayo Clinic's Caring Canines Program currently draws on six volunteer teams of dogs with handlers (such as Merc and Speich). They are spread across many breeds:

Merc, 5, is a black, British Labrador weighing about 60 to 65 pounds.

Other breeds represented among the Caring Canine dog teams are:

- Soft-Coated Wheaten terrier, age 6
- Golden Retriever, age 9
- Australian Shepherd, age 10
- Standard Poodle, age 4
- Maltipoo, age 12

The Canine Companion Pet Visitation Program at Olmsted Medical Center currently has:

- Siberian Husky/Border Collie mix, age 7
- Miniature Wire-Haired Dachshund, age 5



Bauer has watched patients for signals of effects. "I think you can see it in something like facial expressions," he said. People smile when they see a dog arrive. Or perhaps a caregiver's shoulders drop and relax a little.

Mayo Clinic Registered Nurse Emily Drescher notices a welcome interruption among her young pain patients. "If a patient is having a difficult day, we don't see as many [pain] behaviors or symptom behaviors," she said. "In this program, we don't focus on the [symptoms] that the patient has; we focus on functioning despite their symptoms. So, the pet therapy is a good distraction."

It's not direct healing. But, when a Caring Canines team comes, "they're bringing something to the bedside that I don't think any medicine can," Bauer said.

## ANIMAL ASSISTED

Like Mayo Clinic, many medical institutions allow what loosely is called "pet therapy" into patient rooms or hospital halls. A more accurate description is "animal assisted."

The Caring Canines program at Mayo Clinic specializes in Animal-Assisted Therapy, which give patients the experience of interacting with a dog. "It's pretty much a meet-and-greet, a friendly visit," said Susan Pronk, who manages the Caring Canines program in her role as coordinator of Mayo Clinic Volunteer Services. Last year, 13 Caring Canines teams made 153 visits to patients, primarily located at Saint Marys Hospital. Some pet teams have been working inside Mayo for as long as 20 years; the current form of Caring Canines is about five years old, Pronk said.

For more than a decade, Mayo Clinic also has offered Animal-Assisted Therapy in which the dog plays a more direct role in a patient's treatment. For example, "Dr. Jack," a miniature pinscher, has prompted patients to stretch out their arms, take walks or wheelchair rides, and perform other tasks, with a doctor's prescription. Dr. Jack is a 4-legged celebrity at Mayo Clinic, with both a children's book and Beanie Baby plush doll to his name. (Dr. Jack and his handler, Marcia Fritzmeier, work separately from Caring Canines.)





"Merc is working," says handler Dave Speich. Being the center of attention and knowing how to handle it is work for both dog and master. Whether in a hospital setting or at home, it's clear that these two are a bonded pair.

## TEAMWORK TEST

But even the most docile dog doesn't just trot into a Mayo Clinic hospital for a visit. The volunteer dogs and their handlers must learn to cope with the unfamiliar hospital setting before they can become effective companions for patients.

The Caring Canines program requires registration as an animal therapy team by Pet Partners, a national organization that provides training and assessment for them. Speich said his animal handler course involved once-a-week training over eight weeks. The training was followed by a Pet Partners evaluation. It assesses how the dog and handler work together as a team, as well as how they function in simulated hospital conditions – for example, avoiding medical

## QUIET BREAKTHROUGH

Outnumbered and constantly pawed, Merc nonetheless is basking in the attention. Handler Speich, who is constantly tuned in to his Lab's behavior, sees the signals. "He is eating this up!" he tells the teens from Pain Rehabilitation. "You guys are awesome!" he adds later.

Speich has been with Caring Canines for two years, but he and Merc have made between 100 and 150 visits to patients in a number of hospitals, nursing homes and other health care centers. "You reach a point in your life where it's time to give back," said Speich, who retired last year after rising to Chief Master Sergeant with the Minnesota Air National Guard.

## PATIENT VISITS AREN'T JUST FOR THE DOGS

In some hospitals, patients might be able to book a visit with a gerbil, or a miniature horse. Local pet visitation programs in Rochester allow only well-trained dogs. But national registry Pet Partners will help train and evaluate animals ranging from "pocket pets" to llamas. The organization includes domestic animals such as: Cats, rabbits, hamsters, donkeys, birds including Cockatoos and parrots, sheep and miniature pigs.

But Pet Partners also excludes wolves or wolf-hybrid and exotic animals, such as snakes, ferrets or lizards. Dogs that have been taught to protect or defend won't make the grade.

*"They're bringing something to the bedside that I don't think any medicine can"*

- Dr. Brent Bauer

equipment, dealing with crowds in corridors, encountering wheelchairs and riding in elevators.

Mayo Clinic's Caring Canines Program requires handlers themselves to be at least 21 years old and to have all required immunizations. Then, the handlers must meet the same qualifications and take the same training as hundreds of Mayo Clinic volunteers in other services.

Mayo Clinic views its Caring Canines as one of an array of complementary treatments that can augment more conventional medicine, Bauer said. Some others include acupuncture, massage therapies, guided imagery, meditation and aromatherapy. Mayo plans to expand Caring Canines from the current half-dozen volunteer teams. "We have more demand than we have capacity [for visits] right now," Bauer said.

"They love their pets; they love being of service," Pronk said of the Caring Canine volunteers. "They feel like they're making a difference in someone's life."

While other teens were petting Merc, one boy hung back from activity. After a while, he came up and timidly started petting Merc's tail. Soon, the boy had found the courage to work his hand up Merc's back to the dog's soft ears. Speich said that was the encounter he'll remember most from the day's visit. 🐾

*Bob Freund is a freelance writer from Rochester.*

If you are interested in learning more about volunteering with **Caring Canines** contact **Mayo Clinic Volunteer Services** at **507-284-5520**.

# No, Virginia, You Can't Get Pregnant from your Dog

## And Other Animal Myths Debunked

By Dr. Ann M. Anderson

### No matter how ridiculous, old wives' tales linger on.

Even though cats don't place curses on pregnant women or suck the breath from babies, there are true health and safety concerns to consider if you're expecting. How do you separate fact from fiction?

## CATS

First, let's dispel the myth that a pregnant woman needs to dump Fluffy to keep her child safe. The biggest risk associated with cats and human pregnancy is the potential for exposure to the rare parasite *Toxoplasma gondii*. This parasite can cause devastating problems in an unborn child: intellectual disability, blindness, stillbirth or pre-term birth.

Still, you don't need to get rid of Fluffy if you take the proper precautions. People are much more likely to obtain this parasite from dirt or raw meat than their cat's stool. Cats do not carry this parasite on their fur, so petting them is safe.

The following common-sense sanitation measures regarding food, hand washing and the litter box will protect you from *Toxoplasma* and other harmful parasites:

- 1 Someone who is not pregnant should scoop litter boxes daily to prevent exposure to *Toxoplasma*, which takes at least 24 hours in the environment to become infective.
- 2 If a pregnant woman must clean the litter box, she should use gloves and then wash her hands afterwards.
- 3 Keep your cat indoors to prevent hunting. Cats contract *Toxoplasma* through eating their prey.
- 4 Never feed yourself or your cat unpasteurized milk or raw meat.
- 5 Cover sandboxes to prevent stray cats from using them as a litter box. Wash hands after sandbox play.
- 6 When gardening, always wear gloves. Wash hands afterwards.
- 7 Wash your hands, cutting surfaces and knives after contact with raw meat.
- 8 Boil questionable drinking water, especially during travel to foreign countries.
- 9 Wash fruits and vegetables before eating.

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Visit [dogsandstorks.com](http://dogsandstorks.com)

Dogs & Storks is a national program designed to help you plan and prepare for baby's arrival, with your dog(s) in mind. Learn basic dog body language, how to handle the homecoming, critical safety tips, and more.

If you live with dogs and are pregnant, are planning to become pregnant, have infants visit, a childcare provider, a childbirth educator, in the adoption process, or just care about infant and dog issues, this program is applicable and valuable.



# DOGS

## Myth #1: Disturbing myths about cross-breeding

The belief that your dog can get you (or your cat) pregnant is easily dismissed. There are no human-dog or cat-dog hybrids. End of story.

## Myth #2: All dogs love kids

Not so. Kids are noisy, abrupt and pull hair. What's not to love, right?

Is your dog used to kids? Socializing a puppy with children is best. If your pet is already an adult, be observant, alert and honest with yourself regarding your dog's behavior.

Does your dog have any trigger issues for growling or snapping? Common triggers are food, sleeping locations, chewies, dog toys or tugging on body parts. Get your pet used to being touched everywhere. Kids yank on ears and tails. If your dog acts aggressive when you attempt these activities, this is a concern.

Don't hesitate to seek professional help (a trainer, veterinarian or veterinary technician) to address any issues.



"Not every dog enjoys being treated like a miniature horse and a headrest, but our wonderful pooch does," says Dr. Ann Anderson. "I often say she has more patience with the kids than I do."

## Myth #3: Certain breeds always love kids and other breeds always bite them

Dog bites are a big concern. According to the American Humane Association, 50 percent of dog attacks involve children under 12 years old.

Although many people blame Rottweilers, Pit Bulls, Chows, Shar-Peis, Dalmations and Cocker Spaniels for all the biting, any dog of any breed can bite. Despite society's preconceived notions, there are plenty of kid-friendly Pit Bulls and kid-aggressive Labradors and Golden Retrievers.

Every dog is different. Respect this. Treat them as individuals.

Never leave a dog alone with your child, no matter what. Remember to teach your kid that even if you have the most tolerant pooch in the world, other dogs are not always friendly. Coach your kids to ask both you and the owner before petting someone else's dog.

## Myth #4: Walking with a stroller, two dogs, and newspaper delivery route is easy

While I was in vet school, I observed a young mother perform this amazing task every morning on my way to class. She made it look so easy. I was impressed.

Once I had a child of my own, I was even more impressed. After crashing my stroller into the road a few times (this is why you practice before the baby arrives), I purchased a leash attachment that wrapped around my waist, leaving both hands free to man the stroller. To avoid having strangers gawk at the empty baby seat, I traversed my driveway to acclimate my dog to walking alongside the stroller.

## Myth #5: Nothing is going to change once we have this baby

Truth: Everything is going to change.

Be honest. Are you going to boot your poor dog off the couch? Where will you let your dog sleep? Institute these new rules now, not when the baby arrives. If Snoopy climbs and jumps all over you, then teach your pooch some manners.

Obedience classes (either for the first time, or as a refresher course) are always a good idea. It can be difficult to drag your pregnancy-weary body out of your favorite easy chair, but activity is good for both of you.

Familiarize Snoopy with the new noises, strange smells and new arrangement of the baby's room. Playing a recording of a baby's cry in the background can get your dog comfortable with the noise before the real deal arrives.

## Myth #6: Your dog knows you're pregnant and is excited to meet your baby

Truth: Fido just thinks you've been gaining weight. Since Fido's love is unconditional, he adores you just the way you are, water retention and all.

And Fido's not excited to see the baby; he's excited to see you. After all, you've been gone for a few days. When you arrive home after the delivery, have someone else carry in the infant, so you can greet Fido first before introducing the baby. And don't forget to have already sent home a clothing item or blanket from the hospital to familiarize your dog with the baby's scent.

## Overall truths: You're better safe than sorry. Always wash your hands. You will turn into your mom. 🐾

*Dr. Ann M. Anderson is a small-animal veterinarian at Quarry Hill Park Animal Hospital. In her spare time, she enjoys running, writing and debunking myths.*

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651-388-5286

*Nonprofit, limited-admission, low-kill shelter taking in all strays from Goodhue County and other areas as well as owner surrenders when space is available.*

#### ITALIAN GREYHOUND RESCUE OF MN/ND

Kristin (MN): igrescuemn@gmail.com  
Michelle (ND): igrescuend@gmail.com  
www.iggyrescue.org

*Foster-based rescue and rehoming service, and an IGCA affiliate.*

#### LUCKY'S PLACE

luckysplace.org  
jan@luckysplace.org  
320-241-1829

*No-kill, non-profit cat rescue.*

#### MARTIN COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY

(Fairmont)  
mchsofmn.org  
pawprints01@hotmail.com  
507-238-1885

*Cares for the homeless animals of Martin County at the Carl Nettifee Animal Shelter, finding placement for them in new homes.*

#### MIDWEST PUG RESCUE - MN DIVISION

mnmidwestpugrescue.com  
mnmpinfo@gmail.com

*We rescue and provide safe and loving homes to abandoned, surrendered, stray and neglected pugs and find them new 'fur'ever homes.*

#### MINNESOTA BOXER RESCUE (Woodbury)

mnboxerrescue.org  
MNBoxerRescue@yahoo.com  
763-647-3037

#### MINNESOTA HOOVED ANIMAL RESCUE FOUNDATION

mnhoovedanimalrescue.org  
info@mnhoovedanimalrescue.org  
763-856-3119

*Non-profit organization dedicated to rescuing, rehabilitating, retraining and re-homing horses and other hooved animals in need.*

#### MINNESOTA SHELTIIE RESCUE

mnsheltierescue.org  
info@mnsheltierescue.org  
612-616-7477  
*Finding the best and last home for Shelties in need.*

#### MINNESOTA WISCONSIN COLLIE RESCUE

mwcr.org  
collietalk@yahoo.com  
612-869-0480

*Dedicated to finding new hope and new homes for Collies in need of homes.*

#### MOWER COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY

(Austin)  
mowercountyhumanesociety.org  
emailmchs-dogs@yahoo.com  
507-437-9262

*No-kill shelter staffed entirely by volunteers.*

#### MORRISON COUNTY ANIMAL HUMANE SOCIETY (Little Falls)

mcpets.org  
connieb@mcpets.org or info@mcpets.org  
320-632-0703

*We take in unloved and unwanted animals to place in forever homes.*

#### NORTHERN LIGHTS GREYHOUND ADOPTION

NLGA-MN.org  
guber2nac@aol.com  
763-754-9754

*Dedicated to finding responsible homes for retired racing Greyhounds and educating the public about Greyhounds as pets.*

#### NORTHSTAR GREAT PYRENEES RESCUE OF MN

northstargreatpyrs.com  
marnie@northstargreatpyrs.com  
612-379-0010

*Dedicated to providing rescue/rehoming, breed education and fun activities for Great Pyrenees and their owners.*

#### NORTHSTAR SHIH TZU RESCUE

facebook.com/NorthStarShihTzuRescue  
tzuresq@gmail.com  
612-209-4502

*We rescue Shih Tzu and Shih Tzu blend dogs, evaluate them in foster homes and then match them to their perfect family.*

#### NORTHWOODS ANIMAL RESCUE SANCTUARY & ADOPTION CENTER

##### "NARS" (Andover)

www.northwoodsrescue.org

#### NORTHWOODS HUMANE SOCIETY

(Wyoming)  
northwoodshs.org  
Info@northwoodshs.org  
651-982-0240

*Serving Chisago County and surrounding communities by caring for animals in need and helping them find a home.*

#### PAWS AND CLAWS HUMANE SOCIETY

(Rochester)  
pawsandclaws.org  
info@pawsandclaws.org  
507-288-7226

*To promote and provide humane protection and shelter for abandoned or lost companion animals, seek adoptive homes, provide public education regarding the societal problem of animal overpopulation, promote responsible companion animal care, and advocate the spaying and neutering of all companion animals.*

#### PAWS=PRECIOUS ANIMALS WORTH SAVING

pawsofjackson.com  
pawsofjackson@gmail.com  
507-841-1834

*Working together to save as many animals as possible in the Jackson County area.*

#### RESCUED PETS ARE WONDERFUL

rpaw.org  
info@rpaw.org  
763-757-8204

*To rescue companion animals and find them loving forever homes.*

#### RETRIEVE A GOLDEN OF MINNESOTA (RAGOM)

ragom.org  
rescue@ragom.org  
952-946-8070

*Rescuing and re-homing Golden Retrievers and Golden mixes in MN, IA, ND, SD and western WI.*

#### RUFF START RESCUE

ruffstartrescue.org  
info@ruffstartrescue.org  
763-355-3981

#### SAVE-A-BULL RESCUE

saveabullmn.com  
Dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation, and re-homing of American Pit Bull Terriers and other Bull breeds.

#### SECOND CHANCE ANIMAL RESCUE

secondchancerescue.org  
651-771-5662

*Foster-based dog and cat rescue organization dedicated to rescuing, caring for and adopting out homeless dogs and cats.*

#### SECONDHAND HOUNDS

(Minnetonka)  
Secondhandhounds.org  
SHHAdoptions@gmail.com  
952-322-7643



**SHIH TZU RESCUE OF MINNESOTA**

shihtzurescuemn.org  
All-volunteer organization with a mission to rescue, rehabilitate, and rehome Shih Tzus and Shih Tzu mixes.

**SMALL DOG RESCUE OF MINNESOTA**

smalldogsmnnesota.org  
info@smalldogsmnnesota.org  
All-volunteer group committed to the rescue, rehabilitation, and placement of dogs 20 pounds and under.

**SOUTHWEST METRO ANIMAL RESCUE**

swmetroanimalrescue.org  
swmetroanimalrescue@hotmail.com  
952-368-PAWS (7297)  
Non-profit organization committed to the rescue of abandoned, abused and stray domestic animals.

**STEELE COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY**

(Owatonna)  
steelecountyhumanesociety.org  
adoptapetschs@yahoo.com  
507-451-4512  
Foster home based rescue helping stray and abandoned animals in greater Steele County.

**TRI-COUNTY HUMANE SOCIETY**

tricityhumanesociety.org  
pets@tricityhumanesociety.org  
320-252-0896  
We believe in the human/animal bond and exist to support Central Minn. by practicing and promoting quality adoption services and education programs.

**WAGS & WHISKERS ANIMAL RESCUE OF MN**

wagsmn.org  
wagswhiskersmn@gmail.com  
Volunteer 501(c)(3), non-profit animal rescue organization dedicated to saving the lives of homeless animals and educating the community on responsible pet ownership.

**WASECA COUNTY ANIMAL HUMANE SOCIETY**

wcahs.petfinder.com  
wcahsadoptions@gmail.com  
507-201-7287  
501c3, no-kill organization that helps homeless animals of all types in numerous counties in South Central Minn.

**WINONA AREA HUMANE SOCIETY**

winonahumanesociety.org  
507-452-3135

## LOST AND FOUND PETS

Report lost and found pets of Southeast Minnesota:  
facebook.com/SEMNLost.Found

Report lost and found dogs of Minnesota: facebook.com/LDoMN

# GET THE SCOOP

Paws & Claws Humane Society new shelter opening soon!  
Follow PCHSRochester on Facebook.

## APRIL

**April 3-6** Collie Club of America National Specialty, La Crosse Wisc., mwcr.org, collieclubofamerica.org

**April 6** Deviant Art show, showcasing work related to dogs, specifically breeds such as pit bulls and Rottweilers 3-9pm, Northrup King Building, Minneapolis, deviantartarp.wix.com/deviantart

**April 6** All About Dogs Day at the Arboretum, 9am-1pm, arboretum.umn.edu/dogday.aspx

**April 6** "Chip & Clip" nail trims and microchipping at Chuck & Don's Pet Food Outlet in Red Wing, 1-3 pm, hsgcpets.org

**April 7** Feline Rescue 14th Annual Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser, 12:30-6pm, Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church, So. Minneapolis, feline rescue.org

**April 13** Retrieve a Golden of Minnesota (RAGOM) Adoption Event, 11am-2pm, Leashes & Leads, ragom.org

**April 13** Small Dog Rescue of Minnesota Adoption Event, 11am-2pm, Rochester Feed & Country Store, smalldogsmnnesota.org

**April 13** Kitten Shower at the Humane Society of Goodhue County, 2 pm, hsgcpets.org/kittenshower

**April 13 & 14** 7th Annual Olmsted County 4-H Horse Project, Olmsted County Fairgrounds, Oc4htackswap@gmail.com

**April 26** Paws and Claws Humane Society 6th Annual Wine Tasting, 6-9pm, Rochester Athletic Club, pawsandclaws.org

## MAY

**May 4** Paws and Claws Humane Society annual Pet Walk, 9am, Cooke Park, pawsandclaws.org

**May 4** Spring into Summer with Basset Buddies Rescue, Inc. 10am-4pm, Stone Mountain Pet Lodge, Blaine, bassetbuddiesrescue.org

**May 4** No-Kill Walk For the Animals (NKWFTA), State Fairgrounds, facebook.com/nokillwalkfortheanimals

**May 5** "Chip & Clip" nail trims and microchipping at Chuck & Don's Pet Food Outlet in Cottage Grove, 1-3 pm, hsgcpets.org

**May 5** Walk with the Animals, Northwoods Humane Society, 12pm, Lent Town Hall in Stacy, northwoodshs.org.

**May 11** CeleBARK Your DOG Day with Bone Appetit Canine Bakery Unleashed and Friends. Eagles Club, Rochester, 11am-2pm BACUnleashed.com

**May 11** 5th Annual Walk-a-Thon for Humane Society of Goodhue County, 10am-2 pm, hsgcpets.org/walk-a-thon

**May 16** 12th Annual Minnesota Welfare Conference, for shelter and rescue personnel, St. Cloud, tchs@stcloudnet.com 320-252-1325. Brochure on the MN Shelter & Rescue Connection facebook page.

**May 17** Camp Companion UnCorked, Salem Glen Winery, 4-8 pm, tickets \$25 at campcompanion.org or \$30 at door.

**May 18** Martin County Humane Society Annual Plant Sale to benefit, 9am-1pm, UCC Church parking lot, Fairmont, mchsofmmn.org

**May 18** Heart of Minnesota Animal Shelter Pet Walk "Paws On Parade," 9am, Hutchinson, heartofminnesota.org

**May 18** Feline Rescue Annual Plant Sale, 9am-3 pm, Adoption Center Parking Lot, 593 Fairview Ave. N., St. Paul, feline rescue.org

**May 18** Waseca County Animal Humane Society Adoption Day with 4H Annual Garage Sale & Breakfast, plus flower sale, wcahs.petfinder.com

**May 25-27** NADAC Agility Trial, Soccer World, Rochester, bestforpetsonline.com

## JUNE

Look for the Summer issue of The Wagazine!

**June 1** Paws and Claws Humane Society Rummage Sale, 7am, Olmsted County Fair Ground, pawsandclaws.org

**June 8** Greyfest, State Fairgrounds, gpa-mn.org/greyfest.html

**June 8** Dirty Dog Day dog washes at the Humane Society of Goodhue County, 10am-2 pm, hsgcpets.org

**June 9** MN Collie Frolic, Minnesota Wisconsin Collie Rescue, Stone Mountain Pet Lodge, Blaine, mwcr.org

**June 21** Take Your Dog to Work Day!

**June 22** Super Adoption Event, Rochester, with the Rescued Animal Coalition of SE MN. www.facebook.com/RACofSEMN

**June 29** Sixth Annual Dachshund Dash, Rochester, proceeds go to Paws & Claws Humane Society, rochesterfest.org

**June 29 & 30** June Dog Jam, Frisbee dog competition, Slatterly Park, Rochester, junedogjam.com

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# A Chance to Dance Again

A Facebook community raises funds for a leg-saving surgery

By Amy Brase

## “Animal people take care of other animal people.”

These words from a friend never seemed more true than when Melissa Cornell desperately needed that care. As Melissa's beloved Chihuahua, Charley, faced a possible amputation, it was a fellow dog lover and many animal people who came to the rescue.

### CHARLEY THE CHIHUAHUA

Charley's story of hope began at Paws & Claws Humane Society in Rochester. Melissa was considering a little dog for her apartment as she perused the website.

When she first laid eyes on Charley, she saw a terrified little dog. “She had been in a puppy mill and was possibly abused, so timid and scared,” says Melissa, who fell in love with Charley's classic Chihuahua face and big bat ears.

After her cats accepted Charley, Melissa knew it was a match. “There was no hissing. They sniffed her and that was it. It was meant to be.”

On July 20, 2010, Melissa welcomed Charley into her forever home. Once Charley realized that Melissa wasn't going to hurt her, their relationship began to grow.

“She has really been such a sweet girl,” says Melissa. “She loves to snuggle and lay right up against me in bed. She waits until I get up and always wants kisses. The cutest thing is how excited she gets when I come home. She gets so excited that she lifts her front paws and does a little dance.”

On February 3, 2013, Melissa was in Atlanta visiting her ailing grandmother when an unfortunate incident happened back home, and a frantic call left her in tears. Her boyfriend was home with

Charley when he accidentally shut a door on Charley without knowing she was underfoot.

“He felt so bad because he just knew it was broken,” says Melissa.

Charley went to Assisi Drive Animal Hospital for emergency treatment. “Tobin Emerich is our vet and he is very, very nice. The whole staff is absolutely wonderful. They go out of their way to be really quiet and calm in the exam room to avoid startling Charley.”

There were two options for Charley. It would cost \$1,200 to amputate or \$3,000 to surgically repair her leg. “I cried the whole flight home. I didn't want Charley to lose her leg just because it was the cheapest option. I was prepared to sell my car and my laptop.”

### FACEBOOK FUNDRAISER IN FOUR DAYS

In the meantime, a friend named Sue Stanek was already on the case.

“I couldn't believe my eyes when I logged onto Facebook the next day,” says Melissa. “I saw something in the newsfeed that said, ‘Charley broke her leg and this little Chi needs a surgery. We are trying to come together to make a dent in those costs. We don't have much time to raise funds so the auction starts Monday, February 4.’”

Sue knew she could count on the generosity of her friends from various rescue groups and humane societies, whom she keeps on a list that serves as an effective tool for helping animals who have fallen through the cracks, have special needs, or just need a direct referral placement to avoid tying up space in a humane society or rescue.

Melissa Cornell and her healing Chihuahua, Charley.

“I thought we might need to reach an even broader audience, though,” says Sue. “I asked people on Facebook to think outside of the box and donate their talents of baking, knitting, crocheting and quilting.”

The wildly successful Facebook auction for Charley lasted four days. When it was all said and done, folks donated above and beyond what Melissa needed for Charley's vet bills.

“I'm telling you, this is an amazing bunch,” says Sue, who has been doing rescue for quite some time and volunteers with Minnesota Boxer Rescue. “People generally want to help others out. So often, we get focused on the negative aspects of our society but there is so much good out there.”

On February 6, Charley had surgery to save her leg. Melissa has experienced an overwhelming, renewed faith in the human race. And soon, Charley will be performing her signature happy dance once again. 🐾

*Amy Brase is a writer who loves her family, her dog Bentley and happy endings.*



Photo by Kelvin Andow.



# More than just surface clean

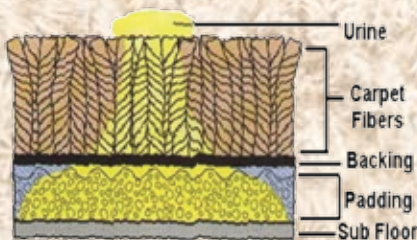
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